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**Towards a Creative Aesthetics - With
Reference to Bergson**

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Summary

This thesis explores issues in aesthetics with reference to Bergson. The first chapter outlines and assesses Bergson's interesting and subtle theory of humour, which emphasises the necessary lack of sympathy in humour, and its generalising, external methodology. In doing so it explores the different ways the motif of 'something encrusted on the living' functions on various levels. This is ultimately found to be an interesting account which has many merits.

The second chapter then begins to outline the theoretical structure of Bergson's account of humour in terms of vertical and horizontal movement. This leads to an account of Bergson's critique of 'ordinary' conceptual language and a consideration of other alternatives, including metaphor.

The third chapter discusses Bergson's notion of intuition and levels of interpretation - assessing what, if any, relation there is between Russian Formalism and Bergson's own understanding of poetry. The notion of levels helps to define Bergson's anti-modernism, when modernism is understood as the self-referential exposure of the art work's own conditions of possibility.

The fourth chapter examines several art forms. Music is discussed in some detail with particular attention being paid to the distinction between rhythm and melody, notions of repetition, creativity and difference. A comparison is then made between Bergson's thoughts on evolution and melodic creativity. This discussion is of importance not only for the light it casts on aesthetic issues, but also because music, or more specifically melody, is often given as an example of the heterogeneous continuity of duration. The thesis also examines painting, particularly in relation to duration, comparing it with photography. Bergson's arguments against cinema are then discussed. The thesis also examines how the role of sympathy functions in artistic production generally. Finally Bergson's ability to distinguish between art and philosophy is examined referring back to notions of self-reflexivity in art.

INTRODUCTION

The Topic

This thesis is primarily concerned with aesthetics with particular reference to the French philosopher Henri Bergson, including the "justement célèbre" third chapter of his work Laughter.¹

The reason for such particular reference is the explicit emphasis Bergson's aesthetics place on the involvement of duration in art, which considering the recurrent themes of his work is unsurprising. Such an emphasis on duration engages Bergson in a series of positions on art which are original and in some cases unusual. Bergson's attack on cinema is a good example of such a position. On the other hand the art form which is most associated with time is music indeed one critic has gone so far as to claim:

Music is the art of all creation and Bergson understands it best.²

As the author of this thesis is an active composer as well as a philosopher, the centrality of sound and music to Bergson's aesthetics is immediately attractive.

¹ Vladimir Jankélévitch, Henri Bergson (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959) p. 122. (Henceforth, Jankélévitch)

² Hillary L. Fink, Bergson and Russian Modernism, 1900-30 (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999) (Henceforth, RM) p. 44

Secondly, Bergson's extremely detailed philosophy of humour has been much commented on, such commentary has more often than not isolated this work from Bergson's aesthetics. Given that philosophical considerations of humour are, at best, most often peripheral to aesthetics, it is interesting to see how Bergson tackles the issue. This is especially important considering the amount of humour present in some of the great art works of the twentieth century: Duchamp, Cage, Joyce and Beckett to name but four examples. It also seems peculiar considering the number of comic artistic works pre-dating this century such as, Tristram Shandy, Goethe's Faust, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Voltaire's Candide or Rabelais' Gargantua and Pantagruel (the last two directly attacking certain philosophical positions). So in this light the desirability of an examination of humour and its relation to aesthetics constitutes another attractive reason for referring to Bergson's philosophy.

These, then, are the two main reasons behind this works' choice of topic. Why, however, has this thesis chosen to deal with humour *and* aesthetics, rather than selecting one of these topics? The simple answer is that humour and aesthetics are often treated as opposites which in some sense define each other through that opposition, an idea which will become clearer in the main body of this work.

A Brief Outline

The thesis is divided into two main sections, the first section deals explicitly and specifically with humour.

The second section begins with chapter 2 and concerns itself with the theoretical structure of Bergson's account of laughter, examining in particular Bergson's use of the term 'motif' and his distinction between central and peripheral examples of humour and the nature of the 'connections' between the various central examples, on the one hand, and between peripheral and central examples on the other, i.e. vertical and horizontal movement respectively. In this connection Moore's account of the theoretical structure of Laughter will be examined and found to be inadequate. Bergson's account and criticisms of 'ordinary' concepts as used in philosophy will then be explored in order to assess Bergson's attempts to outline alternative types of concepts.

Chapter 3 will start by examining his description of *intuition*, a seemingly non-conceptual mode of knowledge. This will in turn lead to a discussion of the *element / part distinction* which is important for understanding the difference between an intuitive understanding and one based on analysis. Poetic language will then be explored. Poetic language is seen to present the 'part' rather than the 'element'. Bergson's account of rhythm in poetry will then be discussed with reference to the Early Russian Formalist literary critics and Bergson's relationship to modernism in art, understood as the exploration of the basic conditions of possibility explored.

Chapter 4 focuses on *music*, firstly looking at the general account which Bergson gives of music. This account emphasises the similarities between the understanding of music and poetry. Moving more deeply into Bergson's understanding of music, the dichotomy between *rhythm* and *melody* is emphasised and explored. Particular attention is then paid to the notion of rhythm and the distinction between repetitious and creative changing rhythms.

According to Bergson, rhythm in both poetry and music works on the listener via a process of *suggestion* which is linked to rhythm. This process of suggestion involves a revelation of truth, not only in poetry and music, but also in the aesthetic sphere in general. The differing relations between duration and painting, photography and cinema will then be explored. The truth which art attains, according to Bergson, is *specific*, as opposed to the *general*, which is the province of humour. How art accesses the truth in the case of both literature and painting is then discussed.

The *creativity* which is at the heart of Bergson's notion of truth in art, which is equated with 'life' and opposed to *repetition*, is then explored in terms of processes which work with elements rather than parts, i.e. in terms of a homogeneous spatialisation. In this regard three processes which Bergson claims are humorous are examined in detail. This in turn then leads to an account of word play, which Bergson opposes to living, flexible thought. The relation of certain processes in music, which are supposed to provide a model for creative change, is then contrasted with

the humour producing processes, to demonstrate how or if Bergson can distinguish between them.

The distinction between art and philosophy is then studied in greater depth. In attempting to distinguish philosophy and art, issues of creativity and self-reflexivity are to the fore, in addition to intuition.

Section I

Chapter 1

Introduction

The thesis will firstly examine the relation between humour and sympathy, phenomena which are, according to Bergson, incompatible. The reasons for this incompatibility will be shown to reflect directly on Bergson's whole conception of humour. The chasm between sympathy and humour is also important for the later discussion of intuition and art, which are both distinguished from humour by the very fact that they are said to require sympathy. The depth of insight attributed to humour, its inability to move beyond 'superficial' observations, leads to Bergson's denial of self-mockery, our inability to view ourselves superficially which in turn leads to the notion that the type, rather than the individual, is the object of ridicule - the individual instantiating the type. This notion of the type is seen to be linked to humour's role as a normalising influence.

The thesis then concentrates on how Bergson uses the notion of inattention, something mechanical encrusted on the living, to describe various types of humour involving the eccentric and, more obviously perhaps, humour based on habit, both of which are seen as 'anti-life' impulses. The metaphysical basis for Bergson's attack on "habit" is then explored.

Types of rigid behaviour which can be amusing, according to Bergson, are then discussed in greater detail: ceremony, unfashionable clothing,

disguise as an explanation for racist jokes, rule-following behaviour in individuals and rule-following in sections of society, for example, particular professions. This section will conclude by suggesting that it is not a necessary pre-condition of something being a joke that it has a single point or a single meaning or indeed any 'meaning' beyond the fact that it tends to cause amusement.

HUMOUR AND SYMPATHY

Bergson's claim in Laughter, that humour and emotion are incompatible,³ has often been taken at face value. Lacey,⁴ for example, merely presents a list of emotions which are compatible with humour in order to show the implausibility of Bergson's position. (Lacey, p. 191) Yet Bergson's initial claim is not this wide ranging. Bergson does not deny that some emotions are compatible with humour, only that amusement is incompatible with sympathy.⁵ Support for this interpretation is found in Bergson's first statement on emotion and humour where he uses pity and affection to illustrate his thought, both emotions being based on a sympathetic relation with the object of the emotion (Laughter, p. 4). However, later in Laughter, when the distinction is reiterated (Laughter, p. 139), the examples used are sympathy, fear and pity.

Although sympathy and pity appear to support the more modest claim this thesis is ascribing to Bergson, fear might not. Fear of an object could

³ Michael Clark, "Humour, Laughter and the Structure of Thought," British Journal of Aesthetics Vol. 27 / No. 3 (Summer 1987): p. 242. (Henceforth, HLST)

⁴ A. R. Lacey, Bergson (London: Routledge, 1989). (Henceforth, Lacey)

⁵ Bergson makes one exception to this rule and this relates to the absurd humour relating to dreams and false logics, where sympathy is required to make the humour acceptable. But even here the sympathy has to be checked in order that the absurdity is acknowledged and laughter can begin. Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Comic, trans. Cloudesley Brereton & Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan and Company, 1911) pp. 194-7 (Henceforth Laughter)

conceivably exclude a sympathetic relation. Yet context is all, as the fear referred to at this juncture relates to the theatre, it is the fear of the actor which is sympathetically transmitted to the audience, a fearing for a character on stage. As will be detailed later, Bergson thinks that the aesthetic in its authentic form, e.g. painting, or non-comic theatre, as opposed to the comic, is essentially defined in terms of a sympathetic relation between the 'viewer' and the art work. The cutting of this relation is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, according to Bergson, for amusement, whilst, on the other hand, preventing *any* humour being regarded as an art form. Art and comedy are thus, for Bergson, incompatible having different methods and *raison d'être*.

The necessary incompatibility of sympathy and humour, in Bergson, plays a specific role - it enables laughter to be defined as humiliation which cannot be viewed in a disinterested manner. (Laughter, p. 136) If an individual were sympathised with in laughter, that individual would by that fact alone fail to be humiliated, according to Bergson. Humour denies the individual being laughed at authority, whilst at the same time seeking a certain authority over that individual - it attempts to effect a change in them. Authority in the case of humour is not that vested in an individual, for example a king - instead it is an authority radiating through a whole system. For example, long hair might be generally unacceptable in a society and result in that individual being put under pressure to change their hairstyle; the rule would be implicit, and part of 'public opinion'. In another society, or even in an institution, say among children in a school, the rule might be explicit, with appropriate punishments for disobedience.

What might be called normalising practices (implicit) as opposed to specific command structures (explicit) may be far harder, if at all, possible to define in terms of rules. It is these normalising practices which are, for Bergson, at the heart of humour. These normalising practices, as Kierkegaard points out with regard to public opinion, which is often their source, can about turn and still be seen as consistent, because public opinion is an abstraction which belongs to no individual.⁶ Humour on this model would be relative to public mores, and have little accountability for 'its' past instantiations, as the 'its' does not refer to any individual. Kierkegaard opposes public opinion to an allegiance to an individual who one follows, where there is responsibility which can be pinned down. *You* used to believe such and such, now *you* don't seem to, hence *your* opinions are not consistent.

Bergson's position, then, is that humour is incompatible with sympathy because humour essentially acts to humiliate an individual to effect a change in the subject of ridicule. The source of humour's authority initially appears to come from normalising practices, rather than from any specific command structure. Bergson's forceful advocacy of the incompatibility of humour and sympathy is tied to the very *raison d'être* for the comic, according to his account. Society must not have sympathy with the object of humour, otherwise humour will fail to achieve its

⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, trans. Alexander Dru (London: The Fontana Library, 1962). p. 69

intended effect (Laughter, p. 196) as a useful method of social control. (Laughter, p. 197)

How convincing is the general claim that sympathy is incompatible with humour? The most plausible examples supporting Bergson's account on this point are those where amusement is at the expense of someone - like a child, for example, who has accidentally glued a toy plane to their nose. In this example, an individual's amusement at the plight of the child must be conquered if they are to truly feel sympathy towards that child, or rather, as Bergson puts it "... we must, for the moment, put our affection out of court and impose silence upon our pity." (Laughter, p. 4) Characters who, like Basil Fawltly, inevitably fail in whatever task they are undertaking, whether it is trying to impress food inspectors or get himself a 'better class' of guest, (and the audience knows he will fail) must have no sympathy felt for them if the audience is to continue to be amused. But can Bergson's theory account for the phenomenon of the loveable rogue?

The very fact someone is a loveable rogue, Falstaff say, allows us to laugh at the incorrigibility of their exploits, whilst at the same time acknowledging that there is something wrong with them. What seems to be essential in this case is the coexistence of the two states, amusement and sympathy; as it seems one would stop laughing and have moral disapproval if one did not have sympathy. Sympathy in this case suspends moral judgement and allows amusement. Instead of discouraging Falstaff's behaviour by laughing, the laughter appears to encourage it, and there seems no reason on Bergson's account, why this

should be. It might be argued that it is only a certain part of the individual who is laughed at and that this is not the part of the individual which is sympathised with. Certainly Bergson argues that sympathy is alienated when the emotion in a comic individual is parasitic, does not affect the whole of them. (Laughter, p. 140) However in the case of the loveable rogue, it seems clear that it is in fact the same part of the individual which is sympathised with at the same time as it is being laughed at. So, contra Bergson, vice can arouse the emotions and still be humorous. (Laughter, p. 139) Having said that, when Falstaff is shown to be cowardly in Henry IV (Part I) and tries to artificially bloody his nose to make himself look heroic, the audience is meant to feel no pity for him, amusement here coming from the fact he cannot hide his cowardly behaviour from Hal. But it seems difficult to understand the laughter which accrues to him as a loveable rogue without sympathy being present.

Another possible problem for Bergson's account, as so far outlined, might relate to animals, for two reasons. Firstly, amusement at the behaviour of animals might appear to require some kind of sympathy on the part of the amused individual, a kind of fellow feeling acknowledging that they are, in some way, like us. Secondly, it is unclear what authority laughter at animals would have even if, as Westermarck claims,⁷ dogs do dislike being laughed at. One way to tackle the first problem and avoid ascribing

⁷ This claim is attributed to Westermarck without any reference. Marie Collins Swabey, Comic Laughter: A Philosophical Essay ((Unspecified): Archon Books, 1961). p. 212. The book contains no bibliography. (Henceforth Swabey)

sympathy to humour involving animals is to claim that such humour is necessarily related to the human case, as Bergson indeed does. (Laughter, p. 3) Bergson argues for this position by claiming that sympathy in relation to animals is a matter of anthropomorphism, not fellow feeling. An example of such anthropomorphism would be the amusement at the sexual reproduction of squids, where one of the male squid's tentacles filled with sperm detaches like a torpedo and moves to the female where it is inserted up her nostril in order to fertilise her. If there is anything faintly amusing about this account it lies in the relation human reproductive behaviour bears to that of squids, otherwise amoebas' asexual reproduction, which is even more foreign than that of squids, would presumably be even more amusing; which it does not appear to be. On the other hand, it would be possible to produce a humorous sketch where the reproductive behaviour of human-like aliens was akin to that of amoebas. In this case again it is the relation to the human which allows the comedy.

Bergson argues a similar line with regard to inanimate objects which are deemed amusing solely through their relation to the human, (Laughter, p. 3) in terms of us laughing at their creators. Laughing at animals does not require sympathy as fellow feeling, but instead a mere projection of some human characteristics, which does not involve sympathy. What is important for Bergson is not whether animals' behaviour can generally be understood without anthropomorphisation, but whether humour can be directed at animals in a non-anthropomorphic manner, which Bergson plausibly argues it cannot.

The above considerations on humour involving animals and the relation such humour would have to the question of sympathy helps Bergson avoid the second problem so far highlighted, namely what kind of authority humour could possibly have over animals. The simple answer is that it does not have any, yet this is not a problem for Bergson. Animals are laughed at *as if* they were human, and thus *as if* the same normalising authority were being applied to them as is applied to other humans. Although this appears to remove the initial problem it does raise the question of whether laughter, as in the case of that involving animals, is in some sense "incorrect", as it fails to fulfil its normalising role, a point which will shortly become more pressing for this thesis.

Before this thesis can progress it must deal with a potential objection to the above position made by Swabey. Swabey claims, in contrast to the Bergsonian position outlined above, that a direct relation to humans is not necessary for humour. (Swabey, p. 32) Are there any examples which would suggest this were the case? Swabey gives two such examples - putting an elephant next to a mouse, and laughter at the puncturing of balloons. (Swabey, p. 32) Both these examples, however, appear highly questionable, the first because there seems nothing remotely funny in the mere contrast between a mouse and an elephant. If the reference here is to a scene which might be found in, for example, Walt Disney's film Dumbo, then it is surely the anthropomorphic treatment of the animals which is the basis of this humour. If Swabey is thinking of a joke based on the fact that elephants are supposedly afraid of mice, then the contrast between the might of an elephant and the powerlessness of a mouse would be an obvious case of anthropomorphism, as it would be seen as if

it were an irrational human fear, like the fear of non-poisonous spiders. So this 'joke' does not give any cause to amend the above claims with regard to 'animal humour'. What about the popping of a balloon, is this example a problem for Bergson's position? Certainly there seems to be no necessary relation to the human as it is not the creator of the balloon which is being laughed at and no human need even be present apart from the amused individual if a balloon attached to the ceiling falls off and bursts on a naked flame. This example would be relevant if Bergson was giving an account of *all* types of laughter, which he is not. Bergson's aim is to give an account of humorous laughter, (Preface, p. 383) and it would seem that any laughter elicited from the puncturing of balloons would be surprised rather than humorous laughter. It is not that Bergson has to deny that there are indeed cases of laughter which are not humorous, but his account does not try to explain these cases, so they do not constitute counter-examples to it.

In addition to the apparently necessary relation humour appears to have to the human, another relation is also given as necessary by Bergson, the existence of a community (Laughter, p. 6). Presumably, whether the community is actually present or the individual is merely aware of its values (if marooned on a desert island, say), a community allows sympathy between members of that community who are laughing, whilst excluding the subject of ridicule from sympathy; placing them in a partially ostracised position. Such ostracism, as Monro comments, is incompatible with hero worship,⁸ but only in the sense in which humour

⁸ D. H. Monro, *Argument of Laughter* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963) p. 61. (Henceforth, AoL)

is directed *against* the individual who is the subject of the laughter's derision. Humour aims to exert an authority over its object.

In conclusion, Bergson's position that humour is necessarily without sympathy appears untenable, whereas his position that humour must relate to the human appears more tenable.

Self-mockery

If Bergson is to maintain that humour is in some sense necessarily communal, then he will have to explain how self-mockery fits into the picture of humour he has painted. Bergson is often thought of as a kind of superiority theorist of humour: (Swabey, p. 10) a position which has often been criticised for its failure to adequately explain apparently sympathetic laughter, especially if it is self-directed. (Swabey, p. 213) Indeed, like Hobbes⁹ before him, Bergson appears to make no distinction between 'laughing at' and 'laughing with' the object of amusement, with no real account of pleasant condescension which can be affectionate as well as scornful. (AoL, p. 86)

Concentrating on the specific problem of self-mockery, there does not appear to be any immediate orientation towards a normalisation of behaviour in self-mockery, and it is not immediately clear what relation would exist between sympathy and humour in such a circumstance. Additionally, the social as a controlling mechanism would have to be internalised in some way by the individual and triggered in the case of self-mockery, which would certainly be a stronger claim than that the individual is subject to humour when other individuals who make up 'the social' find a particular individual amusing. A plausible account outlining how such an internalisation of humour would work might be conceivable, if it were not for another more pressing problem which Swabey brings to our attention. It is quite possible for an individual to laugh at him or

⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1973) p. 27

herself, but have no desire to transform or to remove what is laughable. (Swabey, p. 37) This is a difficult problem as it is obvious that, if laughter at oneself can be pleasurable, which seems to be the case, it would not act as an incentive for an individual to change; whereas in the case of being laughed at by others it might do so. Laughter in self-mockery can give the individual who is both object and subject of that laughter pleasure.

The above problems which self-mockery might cause for Bergson's account of humour are in fact avoided by Bergson who denies that genuine self-mockery is possible and re-describes the phenomenon usually referred to as self-mockery in other terms. Bergson boldly claims that comedy is always based on the observations of others, never the self. (Laughter, p. 168) Such a position, although initially appearing unpromising, does have some positive features: at least some apparent examples of self-mockery can be re-described in other terms. One example would be comics who, whilst apparently making fun of themselves are actually taking on the personalities of others, or taking on eccentricities, in order to make fun of *them*. In this instance there is a separation between the humorist and the part he is acting and whilst the self who is played is not conscious of their amusement value, the person acting them is. (Laughter, p. 146 fn.) Hobbes, also attempting to re-describe the phenomenon of self-mockery, claimed that when individuals laugh at themselves they are laughing at their *past* selves, and these past selves are something they were now superior to. (AoL, p. 83) It could be argued that those examples of apparent self-mockery which cannot be explained in terms of the taking on of others' personalities or

mockery of a past self might be alternatively explained in terms of defensive laughter aimed against potential jokes which could be made at the individual's expense. One example of defensive laughter Ludovici gives is of a man laughing as he chases his blown-off hat down the street. (AoL, p. 27) There are, however, two problems with this explanation.

Firstly, defensive laughter does not appear to explain all examples of self-mockery: individuals often find themselves in ridiculous positions, laughing at themselves for slipping over in mud despite their best efforts. This behaviour is not always defensive, it can occur when individuals are alone. The only way to explain this and retain consanguinity with Bergson's account would be to claim that individuals habitually acted *as if* others were watching them. This kind of argument appears somewhat strained within the current context as individuals do not usually appear to act as if they are being watched in this way. Appearances might of course be deceptive but there is a second and more serious problem.

Bergson's claim that it is impossible to find oneself amusing has an epistemological basis:

... we are never ridiculous except in some point which remains hidden from our own consciousness.¹⁰ (Laughter, p. 168)

¹⁰ Plato argues a somewhat similar position in the *Philebus* when he describes comedy as:

... a vice which gets its name from a certain habit of mind, and is that particular form of this vice which exhibits the contrary of the state of soul spoken of in the inscription at Delphi ... entire ignorance of self. (Plato, "Philebus," *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett, 3rd ed.,

The reason why ridiculousness "... remains hidden from our own consciousness" is linked to the 'normalising' practices which have been identified with humour. Humour necessarily works by identifying generalities, which is one of the reason why it is inevitably a surface phenomenon. Bergson claims that comedy works in a manner not unlike science, bringing together several facts to produce an average. He thus claims that humour works from the 'outside', as the laughable would be demolished if it went too deep, (Laughter, p. 169)

There is, however, a problem relating to the generalised method of humour which has been assimilated to science and averages. Bergson claims that humour as a corrective moves to the general in order to correct as many individuals as possible; (Laughter, p. 170) and certainly if it were a surface phenomenon, formed merely by averaging, then it would of necessity apply to a large number: the problem is whether this generality is a necessary feature of humour. If comedy penetrated too deep into an individual, would it stop being comedy, or, on the other hand, is it general merely for practical purposes? If, as Bergson wishes to claim, it is *essential* that comedy act on the surface, then he must regard generality of application as an additional benefit. However, if humour is essentially general, then Bergson must seemingly also accept another consequence - that the general will be ineffective against the lone eccentric who is by definition not 'average'. Bergson could argue that it is the eccentric impulses found in *all* or *most individuals* which are given expression in the lone eccentric. Although initially plausible, this position

seems ill suited to explaining the invented eccentricities of Exodor which no one would be likely to have, even in a reduced form. This, then, means that Exodor would have to be seen amusing on account of his 'madness' being seen as a masquerade.

The above method of generality would not as yet appear to give sufficient grounds to assert that individuals never find themselves amusing - as even if humour does work by finding generalities on a 'surface' level in others, this would not necessarily prevent those generalities being applied to oneself. Bergson claims, in order to show that an individual cannot apply generalities to themselves, that what is amusing is in some sense external to that individual. (Laughter, p. 170) What Bergson means by this is that the amusing element is not part of the true self, but parasitic on it. There is thus some sense in which that which is humorous is unknowable to the individual. This position also ruling out the possibility of laughing at a past self, whether or not such a conception were possible for Bergson.

This superficial self is linked, in Time and Free Will, to a consciousness which has become spatialised. In this condition the self becomes a series of states which are linguistically fixed, general¹¹ and homogeneous, as opposed to a deeper profound non-spatialised self.¹² This superficial self

¹¹ Jean Hyppolite, "Du Bergsonisme à l'Existentialisme," Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique, vol. 1 (First published 1949; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991) p. 446. (Henceforth B&E)

¹² John Mullarkey, Bergson and Philosophy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 20. (Henceforth Mullarkey)

is linked to society, and the common which cannot access our 'secret life,' (Jankélévitch, p. 192) it cannot but spatialise, the intimate time of this 'secret life'.¹³ Given this kind of description existentialist philosophers have found it easy to give an exegesis of Bergson in terms of an authentic and inauthentic self.¹⁴ Indeed such a position can easily lead to a critique of science as dealing with a common social and thus spatialised account of time, as opposed to the individual's authentic personal experience of time. It is then left to the individual to conquer the social spatialising commonness in order to find their own authentic self.

This kind of exegesis can be given an even more existential feel if emphasis is placed on the spatialised self composed of a multiplicity of moments, which are exterior to each other is compared to the unity and originality of our profound self. (B&E, p. 446) Indeed the unity of the profound self is linked to liberty, whilst the superficial is forgetful of the self, and determined.¹⁵

¹³ Georges Mourélos, Bergson et les Niveaux de Réalité (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) p. 56. (Henceforth Mourélos)

¹⁴ Hyppolite remarks that Bergson has had a profound influence on his generation, including Merleau-Ponty. (Jean Hyppolite, "Sense et Existence dans la Philosophie de Maurice Merleau-Ponty" Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique. vol. 2 (First published 1949; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991) p. 732 (Henceforth SE)

¹⁵ André Robinet, Bergson et les Métamorphoses de la Durée (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1965) p. 34 (Henceforth Robinet)

Yet despite this analysis there is also, to some extent, a lack of a specific self, in terms of some sort of unity, in Time and Free Will, the notion being replaced by the notion of a qualitative multiplicity, and by the time of Matter and Memory there are, as Mullarkey points out, multiple versions of the self according to various modes of duration. (Mullarkey, p. 21) At the most superficial level we exist as "... living automata ..." as opposed to the "... complex, creative thoughts and emotions wherein our whole personality is involved and which can never be repeated." (Mullarkey, p. 37) It is the first level which is amusing, that closest to the living automata. The amusing element does not involve our whole past, but only the most immediate part of our consciousness. It is sometimes "[i]n a vice, even in a virtue, the comic is that element by which the person unwittingly betrays himself - the involuntary gesture or the unconscious remark." (Laughter, p. 146)

An example of this kind of behaviour would be Eugene Terre Blanche (head of South Africa's neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement) who claims "I talk in my sleep. I give incoherent speeches, discuss politics with myself and address phantom public meetings"¹⁶ seemingly without any awareness of the amusement such an admission might cause. The fact he rides a horse called Attila and has "... portraits in my study of old Anglo-Boer war heroes, who I salute every day. Mounted next to them is my collection of Antelope heads. I usually shoot one or two Antelope

¹⁶ Marcelle Katz, "A Life in the Day of Eugene Terre Blanche." The Sunday Times Magazine 22nd August, 1999: p. 50. (Henceforth, Terre)

when I'm out hunting in the veld and then eat the meat. I love animals ..." (Terre, p. 50) merely makes him more amusing. It is Terre Blanche's candour and failure to understand his actions and pronouncements as bizarrely eccentric which is at the root of the amusement he causes. Granted, in this kind of case, humour might be 'invisible' to the individual who is the cause of amusement, especially in the case of eccentric habits (discussed in the following).

Whilst eccentric habits might not be noticed by the individual who has them, but the ideas that the amusing element in an individual's behaviour must necessarily be hidden from them seems to make no sense in the case of small misfortunes, like slipping over in mud, even though it is a clear case of mechanical inattention to one's surroundings, or appears as if it is. It is surely possible to imagine how others would see us, in the case of a small misfortune, and find that amusing as opposed to only acknowledging what we might look like to others only after they have been amused.

Given Bergson's above position an individual could not laugh defensively, as to acknowledge the possibility that one was in some way humorous and try to deflect this potential humour before others found it amusing would already be recognising oneself as funny. All that humour has to work with are the 'surface' properties of other individuals, which are then generalised. Bergson refers to it as a "mechanism." The mechanism functions like a disease which overall shows justice when averaged out, but individually is often unjust. Humour is, then, often an

evil on behalf of the greater good. (Laughter, p. 198) In the next section the thesis will begin to explore the purpose of this 'normalising force'.

Flexibility versus Types

The purpose of humour's normalising force is, on Bergson's account, to eliminate any disturbing (non-plastic) elements from society. This is important as Bergson maintains that the more plastic (i.e. flexible) the members of a society are on an individual level, the greater that society's stability will be. Laughter is an attempt to eliminate inflexibility (Laughter, p. 199), much of it manifested in social life.¹⁷ Bergson often refers to individual's inflexibility as eccentricities. (Laughter, p. 135 & p. 17)

The argument Bergson presents linking eccentricity and social stability is based on a particular view of what eccentricity is. Eccentricity is seen as a lack of striving on the part of the individual to adapt to their circumstances, (Laughter, p. 19) including their social surroundings. (Laughter, p. 135) As the eccentric lacks adaptability they will no longer be striving to keep in flexible relations, not only with their circumstances, but also with other people. These flexible relations between people are the essential foundation for the toleration of others in society. If there were no flexibility and hence no tolerance, then society would, in the most extreme cases, break up. Eccentricity is thus the inability to adapt and fit in with other wills without friction. (AoL, p. 113) As such eccentricity is a potential threat to social stability, and is therefore laughed at and, thereby, discouraged. As in most cases eccentricity is not

¹⁷ Michael Clark, "Humour and Incongruity," *Philosophy* 45 (1970): p. 21. (Henceforth H&I)

extreme enough to be of real concern, it is dismissed by laughter without being given serious consideration. (Laughter, p. 133)

Bergson though does not only see inflexibility in terms of single individuals and their inflexible relations to others - but also in terms of groups who are inflexible towards others. Inflexibility in the relations between a group and the rest of society at large suggests separatist tendencies, a fracturing of the common consensus and a swerving from society's common centre. (Laughter, p. 19) Humour in this case can be seen as a process of normalisation preserving the pre-existing societal structures, as opposed to fostering change in them.

So humour, attempts to ensure that individuals in societies are flexible in their relations to each other, the society they are in defining such flexibility, as that society is in part creative of the environment into which they must fit. Individuals who are inflexible lose their connection to other individuals - this forming the essence of an individual's comical status, (Laughter, p. 134) and of the lack of sympathy with which they are regarded. Laughter is thus a reflection of this exclusion, however temporary that exclusion may be.

According to Bergson, fictional comedy can identify various eccentrics as types, general categories into which individuals can be pigeonholed. This notion of 'type' helps Bergson counter an obvious objection to his social model of humour - the role fictional characters play in his account. This kind of objection would question why we laugh at characters who are pretending to have eccentricities, if humour is a matter of social control,

when the audience are fully aware that the individuals in question are merely acting. Bergson can, however, quite easily maintain that when individuals laugh at a comic actor they are treating the actor with pretend eccentricities as if he did indeed have those eccentricities which required correction. This would, however, leave open the question as to why comic plays are put on in the first place: why should someone pretend to have eccentricities? This is where the notion of type helps Bergson. If fictional comedy merely identified individuals who were rigid eccentrics then the question 'why are there any comic actors' would be entirely reasonable, but if comic actors exemplify types, this problem is dissolved. As humour, for Bergson, can be based on the identification of types, then a comic actor can be taken as a general model or *type*, a caricature which exaggerates, but also allows similar exemplifications of the type to be identified in everyday life and laughed at. Indeed when someone takes on a comic character they always play a double part, according to Bergson, whilst the self who laughs is conscious, the self laughed at is not. (Laughter, p. 146fn) On this basis fictional characters could still have a useful social role. This explanation fits well with Bergson's fondness for Molière and the "type", e.g. *Le Misanthrope*. But can Bergson's account cope with all comic actors? Exodor from the television series *Mork and Mindy* may figure as a potential counter-example here.

Exodor possesses highly unusual invented eccentricities. It is unlikely, for example, that individuals will meet someone who, when arranging the film for a stag night, will bring a completely empty reel of film to the party to watch instead of the expected blue movie. It could hardly be said

that this was an exaggeration of how individuals usually behaved, and as such there would seem little point in trying to 'iron out' this type of eccentric behaviour with laughter. This is particularly important if the fictional token is supposed to act as a model for us to generalise from. (This example also raises the more general question of what type Exodor would exemplify.)

If specific types are to be laughed at, in order to discourage the rigidity they display, then the type which is causing laughter in each case has to be identifiable. This is particularly important if comedy is pointing to types to help us recognise and guard against them, like a disease, as Swabey claims. (Swabey, p. 11) Types are, as has been said, essential for the generalisation from any particular fictional example of the humorous, otherwise only a particular form of behaviour, if repeated, could be laughed at, but no extrapolation made to *similar* instances of behaviour. We must however be careful. It is not a case of looking at something comparing it to the model of the type possessed to see if it fits the type and then laughing. Instead general ideas are initially built up from habit resemblances which are characterised in terms of the same motor reactions being elicited by different sensations - they are felt - not represented, it is thus not as such a conscious process.¹⁸ (MM) Generality is built up from these initial motor reactions by memory spontaneously grafting distinctions onto the spontaneously abstracted resemblances to form clear generalities, which can then be used to make

¹⁸ Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988). p. 160. (Henceforth MM)

new motor mechanisms. (MM, p. 161) So a pure vital and social reflex laughter can rise to the comedy of character.¹⁹ It is this automatic character and lack of conscious reflection which Bergson is referring to in Laughter. (Laughter, p. 198) a forgetfulness of self.²⁰

To summarise: Bergson sees eccentricity as a form of rigidity in individual members of a society. This rigidity is threatening to society because society is founded on the ability of individuals to relate flexibly to each other. In order to generalise from particular examples of rigidity, Bergson invokes the notion of the type in fictional comedy, these *types* being what is identified and laughed at. Fictional characters embodying types, perhaps in an exaggerated form, would then act as models to allow individuals to identify and laugh at similar non-fictional individuals embodying the same type. It was latterly carefully noted how the notion of generality was initially a product of similarity in motor reactions which was used as a starting point for the formation of generality which is at the basis of the type.

So far the thesis has looked at the identification of rigid types but has not fully explored Bergson's account of the cause of rigidity. In the next section the thesis will do just this. The thesis will detail Bergson's identification of the major cause of rigidity in individuals as inattention,

¹⁹ Frédéric Worms, Introduction à Matière et Mémoire de Bergson (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997) p. 179. (Henceforth Worms)

²⁰ Jeanne Delhomme, Vie et Conscience de la Vie: Essais sur Bergson (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954) p. 28 (Henceforth Delhomme)

using an extended example to explore this explanation. This thesis will then look at another aspect of Bergson's notion of inattention, a series of dominant memories which are inflexibly applied by individuals. Given this notion of the dominant series of memories, another example will be used to explore inattention, as Bergson outlines it, and its relation to madness. The problems which madness might cause for Bergson's account of the fixed idea will then provide the link to the next section of the thesis which gives an initial analysis of Bergson's position as regards the relation between madness and the comic.

Eccentricity as Rigidity

Rigidity, which Bergson has identified as the object of laughter, has as its chief cause inattention resulting in an inability to adapt oneself to one's surroundings. (Laughter, p. 147) The comic character's attention to life is automated, without the involvement of pure memory, which, as we shall detail, gives the individual the power to adapt to vital and social circumstances. (Worms, p. 165) To a large extent this thesis has so far concentrated on what Bergson might refer to as humour relating to character, but for Bergson inattention equally applies to the man who falls over in the street. Falling over in the street is failing to adapt to the prevailing circumstances, or, if someone sticks their foot out to trip someone, it is made to look as if that individual has failed to adapt to the prevailing circumstances.²¹ (AoL, p. 130) Bergson's account thus does not shrink from examples of humour involving small misfortunes unlike, most incongruity or absurdity theorists,²² who usually either fail to discuss small misfortunes or struggle in attempting to discuss them. A recent example of this would be Clark who claims:

²¹ This kind of example, which includes pratfalls and the like, is commonly referred to as a 'small misfortune.' (AoL, p. 103)

²² One of the first incongruity theorists was Schopenhauer who saw humour as a 'mismatch' between perception and conceptualisation, although a full account is beyond the scope of this work. Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On the Theory of the Ludicrous' The World and Will as Representation, trans. E. F. J. Payne, vol. II (New York: Dover, 1966) pp. 91-101.

... to be amused at the man we see slipping on a banana skin is to enjoy watching him slip because we see this as incongruous (H&I, p. 31)

Clark makes no effort in his 'explanation' to specify what is actually incongruous about slipping on a banana skin. Monro on the other hand honestly admits that the incongruity theory he is advocating is unable to give an account of small misfortunes, yet remains undeterred in his recommendation of it. (AoL, p. 254) To be fair to Monro, he does, as opposed to Clark, argue that ignorance and lack of skill must be absurd (AoL, pp. 50-51), if they are to cause humorous, as opposed to malicious laughter. An example of a humorous lack of skill would be a lock picker who was incapable of unlocking his own tool box (as in the film Up the Chastity Belt), or in the case of humorous ignorance someone who thought Nelson Mandela must be a well known student union leader as his name seemed to be on a large number of Student Union buildings. The problem is that slipping on a banana skin does not appear to be amusing due to this kind of "absurdity."

Bergson, on the other hand, is quite at home with small misfortunes and can fend off most lines of criticism. Monro asks, for example, whether someone suddenly deciding to sit on the floor for no apparent reason would be amusing, and not an example of being maladapted. The obvious answer from Bergson is that behaviour might not be maladapted, but when it resembles cases of behaviour which are maladapted it is amusing. Again, if falling in Tom and Jerry cartoons is often not the fault of the characters but is still funny, then the fact that it is not a question of Tom not being able to adapt, or to avoid his fate, (Lacey, p. 192) does not

matter as it resembles cases where he could have done so. This is one of the ways in which laughter can, overall, show justice, despite it being 'imprecise' in specific cases. This means that humour, for Bergson, is general, as it works on the level of outward resemblance, failing to make fine distinctions between situations, for example whether an individual falls over accidentally or on purpose.

The argument from resemblance which seemingly saves Bergson's position, however, also creates problems for him as it is unclear why, sitting down on the floor for no reason could not be considered humorous. Certainly Bergson could argue that pretending to fall over which is perceived as pretence is funny as it is a masquerade (Bergson's theories on masquerade being subsequently discussed by the thesis). This however could then mean that accidentally falling on to the floor could be seen to be amusing through its resemblance to pretending to fall to the floor. The question would then be which case was the central one and which the peripheral in any given instance. It is of course pointless to claim that most cases are laughed at because they are accidental, as this is exactly what is in question. Bergson however is committed to saying that falling over on purpose, if it is perceived as such, is not amusing, as it would then not be ill adapted behaviour due to inattention.

In addition to small misfortunes Bergson's account of inattention also relates to the eccentric character. But in order to assess the merits of this

position it will be necessary to explore the account of attention given in Matter and Memory, written some four years prior to Laughter.²³

Man, according to Bergson, functions between two extreme planes - dream on the one hand where there is no sense of reality and the individual is placed totally in the past, and action on the other which is totally in the present and inflexibly (Worms, p. 168, Mullarkey, p. 54, MM, p. 153) responds to stimuli with immediate reactions, like a lower animal. (MM, p. 153) Between these two extreme planes there are multiple levels of comportment which are vertically organised, (i.e. each plane exists virtually and awaits its actualisation) each being differentiated by the degree of freedom and mechanism present. (Mourélos, p. 44) This account of attention is opposed to the one ascribed to Bergson by Bachelard, that of following each moment without taking in the whole.²⁴ (Bachelard, p. 88) For Bergson the opposite is true of attention, it is the very length of attention, the durational compass of events which are grasped together, not merely moving from moment to moment which defines attention. The compass of the attention span of any individual will determine, in one manner at least, how much of the

²³ Worms has noted the importance of Matter and Memory in the understanding, of Laughter. (Worms, p. 13) Bergson additionally, continued to argue for many positions outlined in Matter and Memory for many years after its publication - six years later in the case of intellectual effort. (Mourélos, p. 103)

²⁴ Gaston, Bachelard, The Dialectic of Duration. trans. Mary McAllester Jones, intro. Cristina Chimisso (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000) (Henceforth Bachelard and Chimisso respectively)

'past' is still in the present, and additionally the efficacy of our action in the world, i.e. how far action is removed from the automatic.²⁵

It is the automatism of the regular routines of motor schemes which have prevented life as creativity finding expression. There is no novelty in motor schemes, the past is merely repeated as the past, an indefinite repetition. (Delhomme, p. 55) Whereas matter *appears* to have no gap between its past and future, only a continuous repetition, (MM, p. 223 & Delhomme, p. 32) of equivalent moments, (Robinet, p. 87) even the simplest living bodies are capable of spontaneous unforeseen movements, it is the greater complexity of the human nervous system which has increased the capacity for hesitation, (MM, p. 248 & Delhomme, p. 57) the gap which Bachelard praises Dupréel for placing between cause and effect which can allow the disruption of the mechanical, (Bachelard, p. 97) in short, increased choice in the individual between multiple actions thus allowing life expression through liberty. This liberty thus gives a means by which life can find a means of expression and gain a non-conceptual knowledge of life by life. (Delhomme, p. 11) Thus inattention is in a quite literal sense anti-life. It is a becoming mechanical; (e.g. Laughter, p. 10, pp. 31-2) and the simpler the action is - the more mechanical it is, and also the more imitable it is, (Laughter, p. 33) having less novelty and hence life.

²⁵ Jean Hyppolite "Aspects Diverses de la Mémoire" Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique, vol. 1 (First published 1949; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991) p. 470 (Henceforth, ADM)

This gap which prevents action being merely an immediate reaction, the span of attention, allows memories from the past to overlay current images in order that the present can be understood - memory images coming to fill perception spontaneously, (MM, p. 99) projecting interior images outwards. In order to outline this process in more depth we shall look to the three stage account given by Worms. Firstly there is pure perception which is the individual moving as close as possible to the immediate instant without memory, this is followed by a habit response which is an invariable bodily response to the world, followed finally by profound variable memories being inserted into the space of the image. (Worms, p. 122) It is the effort of conscious existence as a constant attempt to adjust the past to the present which represents this final stage. (Delhomme, p. 35) If too much of the past becomes present then recollections will be without utility to that which is being attended (MM, p. 153) and the relation to action will be weakened, conversely too little of the past will result in an automatic unadaptive response to the present which will fail to draw on the past. A man who is adapted to life has thus summoned all relevant memories to the point of action whilst excluding those which are useless or indifferent. (MM, p. 153 & p. 85) So on the one hand there is no effective action without memory,²⁶ i.e. the past, as there is the need to appeal to analogous situations, (MM, p. 65 & 88) yet if too much of the past becomes present and barely relevant memories come to the fore as well as entirely relevant ones, then action will be inhibited.

²⁶ Milic Capek, Bergson and Modern Physics: A Reinterpretation and Re-evaluation (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1971) (Capek, p. 290)

Attention to life then consists in keeping the mind fixed on action and the world, (MM, p. 14) ensuring that analogous situations from the past are used to direct current action. Pure memory thus acts to retain the past in its completeness, but also to recreate the present by its insertion into the present. (Delhomme, p. 35) There are thus multiple qualitatively different levels on which mental life operates depending on the closeness to action. (MM, p. 14) Ultimately, for Bergson, involvement in the world is defined as material, versus the withdrawal from the world, which is spirit.²⁷ Hence Bachelard's demand for a withdrawal from the world is possible according to Bergson's position, despite Bachelard thinking this is not the case - however the point of total withdrawal is never actually reached. Instead the attention of pure contemplation, the abyss of the past (ADM, p. 480) is increasingly moved towards where past memories, relevant, or otherwise crowd in to overcome the present perception. The point of total withdrawal is never reached because it is always the sensory motor apparatus which allows true memory to become present by appealing to the past. (MM, p. 153) There is always a reliance on the machinery of ordinary perception, (MM, p. 238) the nascent movement, which marks out the field of choice. (MM, p. 95) This nascent movement of recognition is utilitarian, to recognise an object is to know how to use it, (Mullarkey, p. 49) to sketch out motor movements in advance. (MM, p. 93) When one's body recognises a city it is automatic and inattentive

²⁷ Eric Matthews, "Bergson's Concept of a Person", *Bergson and Philosophy* ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 129 (Henceforth Matthews)

(Worms, p. 115), one does not need to think about where one is going, (MM, p. 93) it is the playing out of a motor accompaniment, (Mullarkey, p. 49) as opposed to having to stop at every junction. (MM, p. 93)

The immediate response is characterised by a motor response, a bodily memory storing the past in terms of motor contrivances, (MM, p. 77) 'habits' which can be destroyed by lesions, as opposed to pure memory. (Delhomme, p. 55) Pure memory consists of specific events in an individual's life which cannot be repeated, (Mullarkey, p. 49) everything is remembered in its place and detail with no regard for utility. (MM, p. 81) It is an unalterable and incorruptible presence (Delhomme, p. 31) and so cannot be forgotten. This means all forgetting must be superficial, an inability to access pure memory for some reason.²⁸ (Capek, p. 164, Cariou, p. 103, ADM, p. 483) Bachelard refers to pure memory as "... a totally arbitrary supposition" (Bachelard, p. 61) However this seems unfair. For Bergson the constant preservation of memory, is a hypothesis, an extension of a line of facts, which can never be asserted as absolutely true, only as highly probable. (Capek, p. 165) It is because his conception of pure memory is based on a line of facts that Bergson can make the claims he does without them being merely arbitrary. Although a discussion of all the reasons Bergson gives for the existence of pure memory would take us to far from our current discussion, the most important will be briefly outlined. Bergson argues that as brain lesions

²⁸ Marie Cariou, "Bergson and the Keyboards of Forgetting", *Bergson and Philosophy* ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 103. (Henceforth Cariou)

cause the loss of whole categories of memories, rather than the loss of specific memories, (MM, p. 238) forgetting is a destruction of the means of access, rather than a destruction of the memories which cannot be recalled. From this he also concludes that pure memory is not physical, as in this case memory could potentially be destroyed, by brain damage say, so memory, although accessed by the brain, is not contained in it. (MM, p. 237 & Mullarkey, p. 37) Indeed memories are not stored anywhere as this spatial metaphor does not apply to them.²⁹ (MM, p. 149, Cariou, p. 108, Mourélos, p. 132, Capek, p. 173, Worms, p. 154, Matthews, p. 130 & Delhomme, p. 28) Pure memory constantly changes as new memories become part of it, but not in a quantitative manner, like a series of separate memories, (Mourélos, p. 37) but instead in a qualitative change of the whole. (Delhomme, p. 166) To manifest itself memory must become an image, but this does not mean it is an image, (Mullarkey, p. 51 & Mourélos, p. 127) it is instead a virtuality which is actualised as an image, via a bodily movement which selects it. (Mullarkey, p. 52)

Pure memory uses the past to adapt to present circumstances as part of a constantly changing creative equilibrium between memory and perception (Delhomme, p. 173) requiring constant effort (Mullarkey, p. 55, Delhomme, p. 37), as opposed to the rigid mechanisms of habit memory which merely repeat what has gone before. In short it introduces

²⁹ P. A. Y. Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and the Evolution of Science." Bergson and the Evolution of Physics, ed. P. A. Y. Gunter (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969) University Press, Bloomington, 1984) p. 92 (Henceforth Gunter)

difference into the present allowing us to turn away from repetition.³⁰ (BCD, p. 56) Motor mechanisms remain identical to themselves, always unrolling in the same order (Delhomme, p. 35) they are invariable. (Worms, p. 123) An attentive reaction, on the contrary, will oscillate between the habitual motor response which is identical in diverse situations and acts to inhibit memory (MM, p. 85) and the discrimination of the individual situation via memory. (ADM, p. 475)

Attentive recognition is then between true and motor memory - it is an impure state. (MM, p. 90) It is knowing which perceptions to ignore and which to utilise which will determine attention. So attention acts to break the immediate response movement of habit bringing us back to the detail by drawing in complimentary images from pure memory, (Mullarkey, pp. 49-50) to produce subtler movements. (MM, p. 101) This means that there are two process involved in the attentive interaction with the world, the movement relating to the object, and representation coming from the subject, (MM, p. 78) hence in perception there are two currents the objective movement and the subjective representation. (Worms, p. 118) This means that recognition is always between a motor scheme and a dynamic scheme in which memory images are organised at various virtual levels. (Worms, p. 114)

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson's Concept of Difference" *Bergson and Philosophy*. ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 56. (Henceforth, BCD)

To summarise attention to life is dictated by how much of pure memory becomes effective in a bodily habit. (ADM, p. 477) There are thus a multiplicity of qualitatively different levels of attention to the world, absolute immediate habit at one extreme and absolute disconnected dream at the other. However in Laughter this attention to life is extended from the biological to the social, laughter always involving the group. (Worms, p. 178) It will be seen as the thesis progresses how this idea attention, or more specifically the lack of attention, functions in various amusing situations.

We are now in a position to assess a more complex case of inattention, the case of the television detective, Lieutenant Columbo.

Lieutenant Columbo would appear to be the archetype of the rigid eccentric failing to fit into his surroundings and seemingly an ideal exemplification of Bergson's account. Columbo's humorous quality appears to depend, at least in part, on an apparent ambiguity between attentiveness and inattentiveness. This apparent ambiguity between the inattentive and attentive is such that the viewer is often left wondering whether Columbo is aware that he is failing to fit into a particular context or not. Columbo is a man who can read an individual's character from the most subtle nuances of their behaviour, piece together events from the smallest fragments of evidence, and yet appears completely unaware of his own eccentricity: think of his very old, broken down and shabby car which he refers to in one episode, apparently without any irony, as a continental model whilst looking at a rich suspect's expensive imported car; or his old overcoat which allows him to be mistaken for someone

sleeping rough in one episode and often results in people failing to realise he is a detective with the Los Angeles Police Department. In one sense he is the epitome of attentiveness in his detective work, yet in another he seems the epitome of inattentiveness, and it is here in this ambiguity that most of the comedy lies. He is capable of standing in the middle of someone's lawn whilst saying "I didn't mean to bother you", where the ambiguity is exactly between the obviousness that he must know he is bothering them, whilst at the same time appearing completely unaware of this fact, despite the obvious acuity of his observational powers.

Seeing the humour relating to Columbo as a single type is a mistake, there are in fact a variety of types occurring within his character.

Firstly there is his dress sense. This relates to two types of humour. i) There is a habitual element to his coat wearing, it is in some sense a part of him. In one episode his ever absent wife tries to get him to wear another coat, yet by the end of the episode he has retreated to wearing his old coat again. The coat is something which has come to define him, like a habit he cannot get rid of. The same kind of argument applies to his car which is almost a part of him, it stands out from its surroundings, it is a case of inattention again, he fails to see how incongruous it is. Indeed when he fails to be recognised as a member of the police due to his appearance it is a case of inattention to his surroundings, in terms of the 'small society' he inhabits, i.e. he does not look like a policeman or realise that he is standing out with regards to his small society. As Bergson argues "[e]ach member must be ever attentive to his social surroundings; he must model himself on his environment; in short he must avoid

shutting himself up in his own peculiar character ..." (Laughter, p. 135)
His attentive detection skills and observation of others only acts to heighten his inattention in other fields via contrast.

Secondly standing in the middle of someone's lawn, saying 'I didn't mean to bother you', when it is clear that he is, appears to be amusing on two levels marked out by short and long term attentiveness. The suspect can only see Columbo's short term inattentiveness in bothering them as opposed to his long term attentiveness in lulling them into a false sense of security, which often leads to their unmasking. It is not so much the ambiguity between short term and long term attention which is amusing, but instead a combination of two different sources of amusement. Firstly there is the short term 'inattention' on Columbo's part which allows his behaviour to appear inattentive. This is amusing due to the failure to adapt to the particular situation, or appearing to do so. Secondly, Columbo's actions can be interpreted as a masquerade, a pretence at inattention. This pretence can be interpreted as immediately amusing, but also as long term attentiveness. In the later case it is not Columbo who is the source of amusement, but instead the suspect who is lacking attention in not seeing Columbo's long term attentiveness. The length of attention, i.e. the level worked on, will decide the source of the humour in this case. Bergson seems to suggest that it is necessarily the immediate mechanism which does not proceed from an act of reflection, (Laughter, p. 198) which identifies the source of humour, so for Bergson it must in this case be the short term inattention or the feigned inattention on Columbo's part, as opposed to the long term inattention on behalf of the suspect which is the primary source of amusement.

The above examples of inattention are not the only ones however as inattention is also manifested when things are moulded on ideas, (Laughter, p. 184) rather than ideas being moulded on things. The figure whom Bergson most tellingly invokes to exemplify this aspect of his account is Don Quixote de la Mancha. According to Bergson Quixote appears unable to adapt his ideas - to choose the correct memory from the recollections at his disposal (Laughter, p. 183) to fit the world: he tilts at windmills, for example, which he believes to be monstrous giants. When there is attention the mind is continually mobile adapting itself to the mobility of things - the moving continuity of life (Laughter, p. 183) This is not the case with Quixote. Certain recollections have become privileged, the giant from the romance he has been reading - and these wait the opportunity to push their way into consciousness at the slightest resemblance, so Quixote sees giants instead of windmills. (Laughter, p. 183) It is a case of Quixote functioning on a particular level or set of levels. Levels of memory are differentiated according to how spread they are, i.e. how many discrete memories are present - the more expanded memory is the more points are present. (MM, p. 171) Each level has dominant points on which the others lean for support. (MM, p. 170) To fully actualise a memory, it is necessary to move to the appropriate level, although these levels do not pre-exist their realisation.³¹ It is because Quixote is functioning with certain dominant memories that these are manifested as dominant on certain levels and thus summoned to every

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 64 (Henceforth *Bergsonism*)

situation in order to interpret it. (Laughter, p. 184) This can lead to a rigid obstinacy which follows its own path - refusing to listen, in spite of interruptions. (Laughter, p. 185) Bergson describes this lack of adaptation as like someone walking in their sleep. (Laughter, pp. 183-4)

In Part I, Chapter VIII, of the eponymous book, Don Quixote charges a plain of windmills in the belief that they are in fact monstrous giants, despite the warnings of his squire Sancho. Afterwards the following exchange occurs:

'O my goodness!' cried Sancho. 'Didn't I tell your worship to look what you were doing, for they were only windmills? Nobody could mistake them, unless he had windmills on the brain.'

'Silence, friend Sancho,' replied Don Quixote. 'Matters of war are more subject than most to continual change.'³²

Don Quixote then proceeds to explain how the giants had by black magic been turned into windmills "... to cheat me of the glory of conquering them." (Cervantes, p. 69) What is clearly evident in this section is that Quixote perceives via a set of privileged recollections seeing what he wants to see as opposed to examining the thing in question. Additionally it is also apparent that even when Quixote sees that his interpretation of the situation is not fitting the world, the giants are in fact really windmills, he does not accept that his conceptualisation was mistaken. Instead of accepting that the giants were in fact windmills all along,

³² Miguel de Cervantes Saaverdra, The Adventures of Don Quixote, trans. J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1950) p. 69 (Henceforth, Cervantes)

Quixote reinterprets the situation, black magic having turned the giants into windmills so he cannot conquer them. Rather than adjust his incorrect recognition to fit reality, Quixote adjusts reality to fit his incorrect recognition. As Foucault³³ points out, the dominant scheme which Quixote places on the world is based on chivalric romances to the extent that, when something fails to resemble the chivalric romance, enchantment, which is derived from the chivalric romance, is used to explain the fact it does not resemble a chivalric romance. Quixote then appears to be a clear exemplification of Bergson's account of humour as related to the fixed interpretation. The notion of inattention introduced earlier is important at this junction again as Quixote is clearly functioning with a particular set of memories and is inattentive to his surroundings. It is because the memory is spread out in a dream like state that "[t]he mind, enamoured of itself, now seeks in the outer world nothing more than a pretext for its imaginations." (Laughter, p. 186)

In this section of the thesis it has become clear that a general account of humour as directed at inattention, and specifically at 'the eccentric'. Having given such a positive appraisal of the fixed idea in comedy, the thesis must now highlight one possible problem: the role of madness.

³³ Michel Foucault, The Order of Things - An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. trans. unspecified (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970) pp. 46-50. There are potentially interesting links between Foucault's account of madness and resemblance in The Order of Things and Bergson's account of resemblance and madness. Bergson's account will be developed further in the thesis, but further exploration of the link between his views and Foucault is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present work.

The comic antics of Don Quixote in particular seem to be almost mad, possessed of a night-dream-like insanity. Exodor from Mork and Mindy is actually portrayed as someone who *is* mad, yet also a comic figure. The question which seems most pressing is the exact nature of the relation between comedy and madness. Are the two separable, and if so, is the distinction between them one of degree or kind? The thesis will briefly introduce a borderline example between madness and comedy, that of the Texan Linus Roote. The example of Mr. Roote will be used in the following section to examine Bergson's claim that the difference between humour and madness, in terms, for example, of the fixed idea is the lack of sympathy in humour, as opposed to the standard response to madness. The tenability of such a claim will be examined below.

Humour and Madness

In the previous section it was noted that there might be a potential problem distinguishing between humorous examples like those of Don Quixote, on the one hand, and madness on the other, if such a distinction is tenable, or indeed desirable. In any case, this distinction is important for Bergson as much of his account of humour looks to madness for a model of operation: as he puts it, humour is about acting as if mad without being so. To assess the merits of the distinction between madness and humour the thesis shall now introduce a potential borderline example between madness and humour:

Texan Linus Roote, in a nearly fatal act, shot himself, after he mistook students on their way to a 'Come as your favourite fish party' for invading extra-terrestrials - "I thought they wanted to do experiments on me," explained Mr. Roote.³⁴

Such privileged recollections as those of Mr. Roote, interpreting seemingly innocuous events (individuals in fancy dress) in terms of aliens, having, presumably, watched too many science fiction B-movies, seems close to madness, yet there also does seem to be something humorous about the example.

Madness, as has already been commented on is seen, by Bergson, as an imbalance in attention (Worms, p. 96), an excess of mental power,

³⁴ Paul Sussman, "Unbelievable - The Mad World of Paul Sussman," The Big Issue - In the North August 21-27: pp. 44.

(Mullarkey, pp. 101-2) the question is what differentiates a comic imbalance from a mental imbalance.

For Bergson the behaviour of Mr. Roote would be amusing if it were like insanity, but also failed to arouse pity, since according to Bergson, if there was even a hint of sympathy, laughter could not occur, (Laughter, p. 185) this being linked to the contrast between superficiality and tragedy. The comic individual represents a distraction from liberty, but only a distraction, a partial or regional incident, as opposed to the seriousness of liberty (Laughter, p. 79) which involves the whole individual, (Jankélévitch, p. 78) in short life. If the automatic or otherwise inattentive behaviour were related to the centre of a person's being, it would not be comic, but tragic (Jankélévitch, pp. 169-70) as the individual's deeper problems would elicit our sympathy, as in the case of madness. This is why Bergson emphasises humour's concentration on the *automatic gesture*, as a surface phenomenon, as opposed to the *intentional action* relating to the whole individual. (Laughter, p. 143)

Bergson's position on madness and humour immediately ring true, and the fact that the mad used to be objects of ridicule is not a sufficient argument against this position, as it is the very understanding of madness in the modern period as it relates to the total individual which prevents them from being the object of laughter. So if the insane were viewed as having superficial problems then there would be no sympathy, which might explain the less piteous attitude of past ages. Additionally if madness is not viewed as superficial, then the imbalance they suffer would be something which affected the liberty of the mad individual and

would no longer be comic, but instead a matter of moral concern and thus tragic. (Jankélévitch, pp. 169-70)

The kind of analysis outlined in the previous paragraph allows for the possibility that individuals might behave as if mad, yet unlike the mad be regarded as amusing due to the lack of sympathy felt for them - their madness would be superficial. Figures like Exodor who are pretending to be mad are laughed at with a clear knowledge that they are in reality sane. Spike Milligan is funny as long as he is perceived to be mentally stable; the laughter could not continue if he were perceived to be really mad. Likewise, reading Nietzsche's Ecce Homo in some cases leaves the reader uncertain as to whether amusement is or is not the correct response, most obviously in relation to the apparent egotism of his chapter titles. In some sense if one pretends to be mad, and draws attention to the pretence, like Exodor, the very 'visibility' of the pretence might allow individuals to laugh at that which they generally would not, as sympathy is thereby removed. The very fact Exodor's behaviour is a masquerade might show that it is this, not the inflexibility of the type, their inattention, which is being laughed at in Exodor's case, a position which was previously criticised, but instead the rigidity accruing to a disguise. Bergson might then analogously argue that much fictional comedy works by presenting humorous types in a safe environment where the spectator can laugh without feeling they are directly attacking the individual. In a less piteous society, when the mad were a spectacle for laughter, there would be no need for this distance as sympathy would not be felt for them. Don Quixote in this sense is paradoxical. Cervantes goes to great pains to ensure that Quixote is perceived as mad, not merely

someone pretending to be mad, and yet the reader is not supposed to feel sympathy for him. Cervantes was writing in a less piteous age so in this sense laughing at the mad was not, at the time he was writing, a problem. Yet Quixote is still amusing today, are individuals laughing at Quixote's madness nowadays?³⁵ Whether being fictional acts as a means of distancing Quixote and his acts from us seems, at best, ambiguous.

In light of the above considerations how should the behaviour of Linus Roote, a modern Quixote of sorts be judged? If Mr. Roote is viewed with sympathy as being mad then his actions would seemingly not be amusing, on the other hand his behaviour would be amusing if it was judged sane, but perhaps, stupid. An example which perhaps moves us into full madness would be that of Roseanne Greco, who ran over her husband Felix repeatedly with her car in the driveway of their home in West Islip, New York, after becoming convinced that Felix had become possessed by the cartoon character Mickey Mouse.³⁶ Ms. Greco's behaviour is bizarre and almost humorous, reality appears to have been supplanted by a specific idea, though perhaps not as clearly a fixed idea as some of the others highlighted earlier, but there is something mad here which prevents us laughing. It is surely not the case that serious injury to others separates Ms. Greco from Mr. Roote, as conceivably Mr. Roote might have shot at

³⁵ It is notable that Romantic critics often played down Quixote's madness in their interpretations of his work as madness was, at that time, no longer considered a fit subject for laughter. See Anthony Close, The Romantic Approach to 'Don Quixote' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

³⁶ Victoria Times-Colonist, 25th of February, 1989.

the students dressed as fish, instead of himself. It seems there is something about madness which does prevent it being humorous and that the sympathy felt for the mad could be a plausible explanation for the lack of humour with regard to madness. This, then, means that Bergson can continue to distinguish between actions which are humorous, and those which would be humorous if the acting agent were not considered mad.

The next section of this thesis will turn to another form of behaviour which is close to madness and related to the notion of humour rather like a fixed idea, previously exemplified by Don Quixote: the repeating machine. After outlining this form of humour, a possible objection to Bergson's explanation made by Swabey will be examined and dismissed. The thesis then progresses in the following sections to further unpack the notion of fixity and inflexibility with regard to attention which it has already begun to outline.

The Repeating Machine

The set of dominant memories which tyrannises perception in a Don Quixote like fashion is closely linked to another phenomenon which Bergson describes, mental inelasticity. Mental inelasticity is a moulding of the world on concepts, as is the dominant memory, but the difference in this case is that the individual does not attempt to reinterpret the world according to their wishes and expectations, but instead acts the same regardless of any prevailing circumstances. Such a state, as Monro points out, is somewhere between superiority and absurdity. (AoL, p. 55) Mental inelasticity is an absolute fixity - an example being the individual who says the same thing no matter what the circumstance: in short, a mechanical repeating machine. (Laughter, p. 74) Instead of the attention which was previously outlined there is an habitual response which means that perception is not reflected on - there is no zone of indetermination. (MM, p. 45) This results in the repetition of the actual movement (Delhomme, p. 28) and the elimination of memory. (Delhomme, p. 33) It is a mistake, according to Bergson to deal with memory purely in terms of learnt habits and the ability to repeat. (MM, p. 83) Memory should instead be linked to creation. (ADM, p. 469) This is because of the clear distinction drawn, by Bergson, between habit memory and pure memory, in fact Bergson claims that habit memory is only called 'memory' because we remember having acquired it. (MM, p. 84) Habit is foreign to our personal selves, it ceases to have the mark of history, a specific place in time where it was acquired, unlike pure memory which records everything in its individual place. (MM, p. 83) Instead habit reduces us to the bodily (Worms, p. 101), a "... revenge offensive of matter ..." (Jankélévitch, p. 170) or what Gunter refers to as the "materiality of the

conscious mind." (Gunter, p. 32) It is a move towards the equivalence of moments, as opposed to the unique, (MM, p. 247) relying on repetition and quasi-identity, (Worms, p. 279) it ceaselessly repeats the past, each moment being causally deducible from the previous. (ADM, p. 478 & Mourélos, p. 108) Habit memory is a mechanism which has been acquired by the accumulation of the past, (ADM, p. 476) rather than the independent souvenirs of pure memory which are each unique and not acquired by habit. (Worms, p. 99) Thus habit acts the past rather than calling up an image, (MM, p. 151) it is the prolongation of useful effects. (MM, p. 88) Because habit memory merely acts the past it is ultimately closed, (Cariou, p. 105) its acquired movement being invariant (Worms, p. 102), any apparent variation of a habit being a change caused by forces external to habit memory: (Worms, p. 104) the external forces in this case being pure memory coming in to disrupt the habitual response, to subvert linear causality. (Delhomme, p. 167) The attention given by the habit response is thus automated, functioning without pure memory, which, as we have commented, has the power to adapt to vital and social circumstances. (Worms, p. 165) It is exactly this machine-like inflexibility which is occurring in the case of humorous repetition. In its denial of creativity the mechanical fixed order interrupts life, being the opposite movement to creation, (Delhomme, p. 179) an indefinite repetition. (Delhomme, p. 125) So discouraging habit through laughter *encourages* the creativity of life - what in Matter and Memory was seen as the task of inserting liberty into the material world.³⁷ (ADM, p. 472)

³⁷ Although Bergson does treat matter as deterministic, (Robinet, p.66) a neutralised consciousness without memory (Jankélévitch, p. 21, (Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson and Creative Evolution/Involution: Exposing the Transcendental Illusion of

The commonness of habit shows the rarity of free will, (Mullarkey, p. 26) and this fall into habitual patterns can be seen, ultimately, as the denial of liberty and moral responsibility (Jankélévitch, p. 159) and as such an ethical demand, rather than merely being a lack of authenticity in denying the basic conditions of life, (Mullarkey, p. 106) i.e. liberty and creativity i.e. difference as opposed to spatial repetition.

It is this notion of the machine like habit, as opposed to free will, which renders the comic individual's apparently automatic gestures amusing - they are inattentive as regards the world. This automatic humorous repetition gives the impression that something has somehow been wedged into an individual's psyche which every so often is triggered, for example a catch phrase, which somehow seems to inevitably end up

Organismic Life", Bergson and Philosophy ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 158 (Henceforth KAP), Delhomme, p. 40, p. 6, Cariou, p. 100, (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, In Praise of Philosophy, trans. John Wild & James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963) p. 10 (Henceforth In Praise), Robinet, p. 64) he also acknowledges that this is an assumption made because the distance between the rhythm of matter and that of ourselves is so great. (MM, p. 248 & Capek2, p. 236) It is this temporal difference (Worms, p. 279) which has diluted the 'memory' of matter to the extent where it is almost quantitative, (Worms, p. 278) which is referred to when Whitehead comments that the universe is material in proportion to the restriction of its memory.

Additionally Capek makes much of the relationship between physical micro-indetermination and Bergson's thought. (Capek, p. xii, p. 283) Additionally Milic Capek, "Bergson's Theory of Matter and Modern Physics," Bergson and the Evolution of Physics, ed. Pete Gunter (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969) p. 297, p. 299, p. 303, p. 320, p. 322, p. 327. (Henceforth Capek 2)

being said by the individual, whatever the situation. The best example of such a repeating machine is the aptly named Trigger from the television series Only Fools and Horses, who constantly calls Rodney Trotter by the name Dave, insisting it is his name no matter what is said. The individual thus acts as a 'repeating machine', since they are in some sense out of touch with 'life', finding it impossible to adjust to the correct plane of action. This plausible description, is not without its critics, for example Swabey.

Swabey claims that jokes based on repetition, presumably including Trigger's Dave, do not involve genuine laughter, as they are only laughed at through habit. (Swabey, p. 147) The laughter which a repeated action causes for Swabey is conditioned (in the behaviourist sense), though it seems unclear what reinforcement would be present in this case. Presumably because something is amusing in the first instance, when the thing which is amusing is repeated, the first amusement is remembered and 'applied' to the second instance. This kind of account appears to fly in the face of the irritation caused by telling an initially amusing joke repeatedly. The constant telling of a joke does not reinforce the initial humour, but acts instead to negate its humour. The negation of that which is humorous through repetition would seem to point to a different kind of explanation: the one, in fact, which Bergson gives. It is the repetition *itself* which is the source of the humour, the habit of the individual provoking laughter, rather than any habituation on the part of the audience.

It would thus seem that the concepts of mental inelasticity and the fixed response can explain a certain set of examples very well, in terms of the habit as a fixed repetition of a word or gesture (Trigger), an acting on a single plane, or the fixed viewpoint based on a dominant memory which is applied without correct discrimination, failing to move to the correct plane, on the one hand, and on the other mental inelasticity (Don Quixote's adventure with the wind mills.) The next section will link the notion of inflexibility and lack of attention on the small scale, which we have so far been discussing, to a positive account of social flexibility. The link to a positive account of large scale social flexibility will be made via a consideration of conversational rigidity and lack of attentive adaptation.

Humour and Habit

The above analysis can be extended so as not only to cover inattention to life in the 'Quixote' (dominant memories) or 'Trigger' (repeating machine) sense, but the break down of communication due to the failure of the communicating parties to adjust to each other's utterances. Individual's actions being dominated by certain habits which they fail to adjust. An example of this kind of behaviour might be Proust's characters who often act with a parrot-like obstinacy.³⁸ Instead of conversation being a process of mutual adaptation, there is an absolute failure to adjust by either party, so in effect communication breaks down. (Pilkington, p. 170) It is a lack of the ability to adjust to find the same plane or rhythm as the individual who is being communicated with which is here at stake. Extending this model, it is also clear how the individual conversation can act as a model for the flexibility of society's interactions on the larger scale. On such a social model each individual would be attempting to act flexibly in response to others' actions in order to create a fluid and tolerant whole. Constantly adjusting their planes of action to ensure understanding.

However Bergson wishes to go further claiming that one cannot help but see society as a living being, so any fixity in societal structures can be perceived as a habit or something inert on the surface of a living society like a masquerade and can thus be laughable - examples of masquerades include ceremonies, which are like clothes on the social body. (Laughter, p. 45) Bergson thinks that all clothing is like "something mechanical

³⁸ A. E. Pilkington, *Bergson and his Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). p. 168 (Henceforth, Pilkington)

encrusted on the *living*" (Laughter, p. 37) and it is only when fashions are outdated that this becomes obvious. (Laughter, p. 38) Clothing on this model is a social habit, like ceremonies which only become amusing when they are in some way removed from the social fabric, e.g. become outdated. What Bergson seems to say is that a ceremony is amusing when it is looked at on a level which neglects its function. A ruling by a university that graduands at graduation ceremonies should not wear fancy dress brings out the absurdity of wearing a large black cape and mortar board hat (academic fancy dress) and the ludicrous nature of the ceremony. The implications of this are that those wearing outdated clothing are eccentric not because they have failed to move with society's fashions, but instead because all clothes are intrinsically funny when viewed on a certain level, the same being true of ceremonies, it is only that the viewing of the form without the function allows them to be regarded on a certain level on which they are laughable. This is especially the case where formal procedures act to make the living behave in formulaic manners. (Laughter, p. 45) It might appear difficult to explain the amusement gained when watching old television adverts, which on the cusp of fashion date very quickly. However if these, like modish furniture, are seen as a part of a society, their laughable quality will not be present, as opposed to being seen on a level where only their 'form,' not their 'matter' are attended to (Laughter, p. 45) at which point they will be regarded as laughable. Bergson uses this question of levels to explain why many things are comic *de jure* - but not *de facto*. (Laughter, p. 37) This is because on the level of custom we have become "... deadened to their comic quality." (Laughter, p. 39)

Before continuing, a summary of the moves made so far. The thesis has argued that humour, for Bergson, was, in the first instance, portrayed as a force for social normalisation. This role of social normalisation was said to consist in removing inflexibility, particularly that which involved inattention to life. The thesis then went on to examine the various forms of inattention outlined by Bergson, and latterly concentrated on those involved in habit. Bergson's extension of habit into the societal realm was then discussed.

Masquerade and Disguise

In addition to describing clothing as the rigid non-living encrusted upon the flexible, Bergson claims that clothing is a disguise. Clothes in this manner are analogous to ceremony which Bergson, as the thesis detailed above, saw as an extraneous fixity on the social body. So, to give a non-clothing related example, Bergson claims that individuals, when seeing Blacks for the first time, mistake them for Whites in disguise, and this is why individuals laugh at Blacks. This interpretative position was suggested to Bergson when "... an ordinary cabby ... applied the expression "unwashed" to the Negro fare he was driving" (Laughter, p. 40), taxi drivers of course being well known for their liberal and racially tolerant attitudes. Before assessing the overall merits of Bergson's account of disguise, an examination of the implications of the 'Black disguise' is desirable, as this is an extremely telling example. On the one hand, there is an inflexible attitude on the part of the taxi driver, seeing Blacks as merely Whites in disguise,³⁹ due to a fixed idea he has of all people being White. On the other hand, the taxi driver is laughing at the Black individual in question for his blackness, this being seen as rigid clothing on the White body. Thus it is a habitual level of dealing with individuals which means the individual is laughable because they fail to fit into the habitual level at which the taxi driver is functioning. Rigidity thus attaches to both the amused individual and the object of amusement, depending on which perspective is taken. So an individual observing this

³⁹ A discussion of the full racial implications of this line of thought is beyond the remit of this work. See Frantz Fanon, Black Skin. White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967)

scene could either laugh with or at the taxi driver. The normative power of laughter here appears to be questionable. Bergson could possibly be defended if one said that humour was often unjust, and this work has already quoted Bergson making such a statement, so gratuitous racism might be one of the examples of the injustice of humour, where humour's targets are overall just. Such a statement, obviously, does not tell us if the humour is just, or give us any criteria for discovering the justice of humour or otherwise in any particular case, indeed it might be argued that Bergson's point is actually more subtle than has been suggested. Whilst 'Blacks as Whites' appears to be treated as an example of a disguise Bergson seems to suggest that it is not a central example but rather one on the periphery and as such is amusing only in that it bears a resemblance to the central or source cases of disguise, so it can be seen as 1. unjust and 2. due to the taxi driver's lack of attention in allowing his plane of thought to be such that the level worked on is too close to that of dream meaning associations which are not entirely relevant have been allowed to enter into perception.

Sully seems to be much in tune with Bergson's thought when he claims, according to Monro, that "[i]t can probably be laid down as a general principle that anything which masquerades as another thing is *ipso facto* laughable." (AoL, p. 47) There do, however, appear to be unfunny disguises - the cold blooded killer who is disguised as an old woman for example. It could be argued that although this example does not initially appear humorous, under certain circumstances it could have the potential for laughter. What this suggests, however, is that it is not *merely* the disguise which is important. So Bergson's account would seemingly be

unable to explain why a disguise which was recognised as a disguise might not be funny. Seemingly, the only possibility would be to maintain that sympathy was present in some manner in this example, though exactly how is uncertain.

In the next section several themes from the previous discussions of Bergson's thought will be brought together. The notion of the conversational society whose members react flexibly to each other will be contrasted with institutions which do not act flexibly towards individuals outside them. This notion will be linked to both the worry which society has about separatist tendencies swerving from the common centre, and the Don Quixote like memories which dominate action. This line of enquiry will finally be tied into the notion of extreme automatic rule following, another form of rigidity.

The Jobsworth

Bergson thinks, as has already been indicated, that a society, if divided into sections, worries about individual groups swerving from the common centre and that laughter acts as a potential cure for these separatist tendencies and encourages an embracing of the whole. (Laughter, p. 176) In Laughter Bergson sees these separatist tendencies in the vanities of particular professions who place themselves above all others. (Laughter, p. 177) The amusement in this case again revolves around the notion of habit being trapped on a particular plane: individuals being so jammed into their own world that they cannot see beyond it, or in some cases cannot talk outside their own mode of discourse. (Laughter, p. 178) This is a case of misapplication of jargon, using one set of habits in circumstances where they do not apply and thus inattentively failing to adapt, to move to the correct level. This behaviour, as this thesis has already commented in regard to Don Quixote's outlook, protects the individual, but also stops them being creative, adapting to the particular needs in question. It is from this logic that the 'jobsworth' arises, the official who works like a law of nature (Laughter, p. 46), a becoming-mechanical which is itself laughable, (Laughter, p. 53):

The assassin, after despatching his victim, must have got out the wrong side of the train, thereby infringing the Company's rules. (Laughter, p. 46)

Humour in this case attacks the rigid habit which means the individual follows the Company's rules without flexibility, resulting in the 'job's worth' being unable to adjust to life, (Laughter, p. 14) the company's rules being the major concern, not the murder committed by the assassin.

Monro makes a general attack on Bergson which it is appropriate to consider here, claiming that his theory leaves humour unable to question the inadequacy of conventions and thus incapable of carrying out a critique of society as a whole. (AoL, pp. 132-3) The first part of this criticism appears ill founded, yet it is not. The thesis has already described Bergson's account of amusement at ceremonies, but inadequate conventions are not being questioned through humour in this example. In this example instead, the ceremony is only amusing when viewed at a non-functional level. This means that the function and the adequacy of conventions is irrelevant to the laughter. The second half of Monro's attack presupposes that humour *can* criticise society as a whole, as opposed to merely criticising various parts of a particular society. Whether such an attack is possible will depend on humour is a purely social phenomenon: if so, any criticism humour is capable of will also be from a societal position and Monro's criticism will be irrelevant and Bergson does appear to take this view. (Laughter, pp. 176-7) In both cases humour's inability is just a feature of what humour is.

Extending Bergson's thought with regard to the jobsworth gives a plausible explanation of another type of humour best exemplified by the "Australian Laura McKenzie [who] stopped her car at a red light - and waited two days for it to change. 'How was I to know it was broken? It was red, so I just behaved properly,' she said from hospital where she was being treated for dehydration."⁴⁰ McKenzie sacrificed herself to the good by preserving a particular system and not trying to make an

⁴⁰ Anon., Fortean Times February/March 1994: p. 8.

exception for herself. In the same way as the jobsworth acts inflexibly with regard to his professional bodies rules, so the 'McKenzie' acts inflexibly with regard to the larger social sphere's rules. Flexible behaviour involves a tension, an ability to function on the correct plane, knowing when to move away from the habitual and mechanical, when to adapt. This of course does not then mean that stopping at traffic lights shows amusing automatism, only not knowing when an exception should be made, flexibility in short. This possibly suggests that although humour might not be able to criticise the adequacy of conventions per se, it could criticise the level at which an individual is working, i.e. the relevance of the habit and conventions to a particular instance. However Bergson does want to claim that the more self-justifying a profession, the less its habitual rules can be seen to be useful. (Laughter, p. 177) This results in the public being treated as if it had been made for the profession rather than the other way round. (Laughter, p. 178) So there is a limited sense in which Bergson does think humour can question the adequacy of conventions.

Morality and Humour

Although the thesis has looked at the social aspect of humour in relation to ceremonies, it has not yet examined the link between the social and the moral in humour. This section will consider this larger scale concern and its implications for the depth of humour's insight. Can humour be linked to specific moral ideas or will its values always be at the mercy of social fashion?

Previously Bergson has often seemed to take a clear line with regard to the issues at stake, even if subsequent probing has shown the line taken to be less clear than it initially seemed. However, this is not the case with regard to the social/moral distinction; for example, within the same paragraph Bergson says:

It must be acknowledged, however, to the credit of mankind, that there is no essential difference between the social ideal and the moral. We may therefore admit, as a general rule, that it is the faults of others that make us laugh by reason of their *unsociability* rather than of their *immorality*. (Laughter, pp. 138-9)

Laughter acts with regard to the social ideal, but only because there is no essential difference between the social and moral ideal. This means that any moral force laughter has is a product of it acting in lieu of the social ideal, as opposed to it acting with a moral purpose. Thus matters of humour are distinguished from issues of morality. Falstaff is laughed at in virtue of the incorrigibility of his actions, as has already been argued, and it is this incorrigibility which *suspends* moral judgement, spectators know his actions are wrong, yet fail to condemn them. This is the opposite of

the position argued by Bergson where it is the lack of arousal of sympathy which allows laughter at the immoral. (Laughter, p. 139)

This lack of moral judgement can of course be opposed to the situation where the supposedly moral is rendered amusing by exposing it as immoral, which appears to be what Bergson means by dissecting to disgust. (Laughter, p. 128) Humour, in this sense is narrowly defined in opposition to irony. Irony is the pretence to believe that what should be done is being done, while humour is describing what is being done and believing that it is what should be done - humour is the counterpoint to irony. (Laughter, p. 127) Again Bergson seems to think that irony, like humour involves the very idea of the good:

Irony is emphasised the higher we allow ourselves to be uplifted by the idea of the good that ought to be: thus irony may grow so hot within us that it becomes a kind of high-pressure eloquence. (Laughter, p. 127)

This whole account of irony, however, is part of a larger account of the process of transposition in which it is the process itself which is amusing. This means that the good is only used as a given which is processed, the humour being in the transposition rather than in any criticism or moral position. In irony there may be an attempt to give moral guidance, but if there is this will necessarily be secondary to the humour itself.

Flexibility and 'Self-Negation'

Having already seen how humour is unable to criticise ceremonies in terms of their usefulness it is necessary to look at cases where humour does seem to be aimed at a systems usefulness. To do this it will be necessary to examine jokes made at the expense of systems which do the opposite of their prescribed function. These jokes do not appear to be aimed at the prescribed function of the system in question, but at the tension between what they should be doing and what they are doing. A good example would be the robots in General Motor's fully automated plant in Detroit which began painting and welding themselves to other robots and ripping the doors off cars on the assembly line: "Not an equivalence any longer between rationalisation and automation, but hypermodern corporations as real Bataille scenes of cancellation, catastrophe, and exterminism."⁴¹

The point here is not necessarily that one does not want systems producing cars, the laughter is instead at the failure of this particular plant to fulfil its function. There would obviously be little plausibility in thinking that the purpose of the laughter in this case was to assist in the production of correctly working car plants - if laughter was aiming to steer designers towards such a goal, it would hardly seem an effective manner of achieving this end. The laughter, if it is a corrective, is indicating that car plants which effectively produce cars are what is

⁴¹Arthur Kroker "The Possessed Individual - technology and the french postmodern" (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1992) p. 131

needed.⁴² The problem is that car plants effectively producing cars in an automated manner would be highly inflexible as regards their ability to adjust to their environment. So the very automation of tasks could lead to the robots being viewed anthropomorphically with amusement at their stereotypical behaviour. Thus the system aimed at would not be one suited to adaptability but a correctly functioning fixed system. In the case of the self destructive car plant, its rigidity does not appear to be the source of amusement - unless one is laughing at the rigid non-adaptive behaviour of the robots, but instead the self-negation would be *revealing* the fixity and non-adaptability which was already present in the automated factory, but not seen as such. It is important to note that in this case, it would not, as in the case of ceremony, be a question of viewing the system devoid of its function, as it is the very disparity between its intended function and its actual manifestation which is amusing. So Bergson could provide a plausible explanation of why self-destructive car plants are amusing. In doing so, however, another example of humour functioning to criticise a system, although in a limited sense, would be given.

Bergson can not only explain the humour in the case of the 'self-negating' car plant, but also the amusement relating to the verification principle. The verification principle stated, roughly speaking, that propositions were either tautological, verifiable in principle by observation, or meaningless.

⁴² Tinguely's self-destroying mechanical sculptures which inevitably fail to destroy themselves fully are in some senses not amusing, because their self destruction is intrinsic to them, as is their failure to destroy themselves (e.g. *Homage À New York* (1960)).

Unfortunately when these criteria were applied to the principle itself, it was found to *fall under* the category of meaninglessness. It would appear that the system in this case is amusing because it is being rigid. As in the case of the car plant it is the fixed inadapative nature of the system which is exposed by the systems own failures in attempting to interpret too much of the world on one particular level.

Must Jokes have Points?

Up to this point the notion that humour can have a distinct function has been taken for granted while the thesis has outlined and examined the account Bergson gives of this function. Underlying Bergson's notion of function is a corresponding notion that jokes necessarily have a butt. If, however, it is not necessary for a joke to have a definitive butt, or point, then it would seem less plausible for Bergson to hold that humour does have a distinct function, attempting to remove rigidity and inattention to life.

The thesis will now examine this line of argument and question whether there 1. must be a single point to a joke, and 2. understanding this point is necessary if an individual is to know what they are laughing at. The thesis will now take an example to see if there can be multiple points to a joke.

Consider the story of an American business man who offered the Pope a million dollars if he would substitute the phrase 'Shell Oil' for 'Amen' in all Catholic services ...if anyone is criticised in the story, it is the business man who is unable to see the difference between his sordid sphere of activity and the rarefied atmosphere in which the church operates. (AoL, p. 243)

Who is the butt of this joke? Monro thinks it is the business man because he is trying to apply the logic of his sphere of activity to another one where it does not fit. So it is the businessman who is being criticised, shown to "have no values." It could of course be "Americans" who are being criticised, as they have such a crass way of dealing with the world, thinking that they can just buy anything, as opposed to, perhaps, other businessmen. Alternatively, the same kind of accusation could be being

levelled at oil companies, American oil companies, or Shell Oil. All these might be the butt of the joke, but what about the church? Perhaps the joke is a critique of the church, the Catholic church specifically, the current Pope of the Catholic church, or the current Catholic service as in each case it could be an attack on that aspect of the church, or the church as a whole, for its commercialism. *Monro* makes this point more forcibly with regard to *Mr. Pickwick*, (although he does not seem to realise it applies to this example) when he asks if individuals are laughing at the incongruity of the individual (*Mr. Pickwick*) or what the individual is part of. (*AoL*, p. 99) The point is that even if there was the possibility of picking out an individual who is apparently being criticised, it is in no way certain that the individual in question is the butt of the joke as he may be being criticised only as a representative of a particular system. There is thus a question of the level of generality at which a joke is working, narrowing from the church to the individual Pope each being an engagement on a particular level with qualitatively different attention. The question though is which of these levels should the joke be engaged upon.

Perhaps, although there can be multiple possible butts to a joke, the intention of the teller, or the circumstance in which the joke occurs defines the specific butt from several possible ones. Turning to the question of intention first, it can be asked whether it would be wrong to laugh at someone reporting the story to us if they did not intend it to be amusing. Whether someone intended a story to be amusing or not would seem irrelevant to its actual amusingness. Granted there might be circumstances where it was wrong to laugh, for social or cultural reasons,

but this would be a mere suppression of amusement. What if the intention of an individual when telling the 'Pope Joke' was to criticise the Pope and the individual being told the joke took the butt instead to be American business men? Would the laughter then be incorrect? What would 'incorrect' mean in this situation? The intention appears irrelevant. But surely there must be a notion of missing the point of a joke. The thesis does not deny this as a possibility. What is important to note here is that missing the point of a joke is to misinterpret the basic information which the joke provides - which would include not noticing a double meaning or pun, which would be seen on one level but not another. In the case of the 'Pope joke' the information can be understood perfectly and yet yield, as has been shown, several interpretations. Thus on the one hand there are several interpretations relating to several levels which are all equally appropriate from the information which is given by the joke, and on the other, there is the possibility of misunderstanding the basic information given by the joke.

Having dealt with the intention of the teller, would the context necessarily limit the meaning of a joke? Certainly, if the 'Pope joke' was told in an environment which was anti-American, the joke's butt might well be interpreted as Americans. It might even be said that in such an environment taking the butt to be anything other than Americans would be a mistake. This thesis can quite happily accept this conclusion, because it would not prevent the other meanings being present. The environment might change the interpretation, but not the possible butts of the joke, although this might suggest the butts were virtually present as tendencies. However not only can other environments give different

butts, which would be correct for that environment, the individual corresponding to the correct level, but also that there are environments or contexts which do not necessarily identify any particular butt to a joke. From this argument it follows that there is no necessary point to a joke, if, as is the case with the 'Pope joke' there are multiple butts, each of which in turn has a different point connected to it and a different level of possible attention.

In reply to the above, Bergson might have argued that the very fact one cannot give a definitive butt to the 'Pope joke' does not detract from the fact that there is rigidity in trying to impose the categories appropriate to one sphere of activity onto another i.e. the inattention is a question of operating on the wrong level. However this Bergsonian line of argument would have to, if it were to be effective, decide who was being criticised if laughter was to indicate the inattention to be removed, yet the possibility of multiple butts would prevent this in certain environments. Bergson also cannot maintain that it is rigid thought which is being criticised as it is uncertain whose thought would be the object of such a critique - which sphere placed in which.

- There is a more general point which is sometimes made with regard to humour. If jokes do, of necessity, communicate something, why are jokes left unamusing when they are analysed to explain their communicative point, if the point is in fact the amusing element? It could be argued that the presentation of a point is as important as the point itself, so merely explaining or directly presenting the point would not be amusing. The other alternative is that in some jokes it is the very ambiguity which *is* the

point and an explanation which resolves this ambiguity also destroys the joke.

Expanding the logic of the latter position further. Swabey thinks that individuals must know what they are laughing at for that laughter to be comic (as opposed to merely mad, say). (Swabey, p. 3) This thesis, on the other hand, wishes to extend the current argument and maintain that amusement at something does not necessarily guarantee knowledge of a reason for laughter. If an individual senses that there is something incongruous in a situation, this can be enough without the necessity of further explanation to provide a reason for this laughter. 'G. E. Moore doing philosophy is like a man dancing in treacle' (H&I, p. 26) seems amusing without any need to move beyond the incongruity of the statement itself: to say exactly what is incongruous about it.⁴³ It is not always necessary for an individual to know why they are laughing in order for that laughter to be comic.

Certainly in talk about the comic there is the presumption that there is often a point to particular jokes, that something is being communicated. Swabey, as has already been detailed, claims that jokes must always have direction, import, gist etc. (Swabey, p. 16) This process of 'getting a joke' presumes that in laughter individuals must know what they are laughing at, must know what is incongruous, say, in the joke. If "... you do not know what you are laughing at your laughter fails to be comic. Without

⁴³ Clark interestingly thinks this example points to a deeper congruity, (HLST, p. 243) but fails to spell out exactly what this congruity might be.

penetration of a confused state of affairs and its transcendence, there is no relish of the ludicrous." (Swabey, p. 3) What the thesis wishes to claim, however, is not that individuals are laughing at nothing, the claim is instead that amusement at something does not necessarily guarantee knowledge of the reason for laughter, that is what makes something, for example incongruous. But in each of the cases it is still the inattention, the placing of things on the wrong level, which is at stake, so in this sense Bergson's account is still tenable - it is just that the corrective function appears to have been lost.

Summing Up

The first section has detailed how Bergson's account is reliant on the incompatibility of humour and sympathy. This position was initially explored in terms of humour relating to animals and also of the laughter elicited by the loveable rogue, for example Falstaff. In the case of animals, sympathy was found to be lacking and such humour to be capable of redescription as anthropomorphism. On the other hand, humour at the exploits of the loveable rogue appeared to actively require sympathy if they were to be humorous at all. The whole question of sympathy was linked to the purpose of humour - to remove inattention and rigidity in society via humiliation.

This led the thesis to address the phenomenon of self-mockery, as it was clear that if an individual could laugh at themselves without necessarily wanting to change themselves, then humour in this case would be ineffective. The thesis then suggested, after examination, that Bergson's denial of self-mockery was untenable. Bergson described social stability in terms of flexible relations between individuals and claimed that the rigid eccentric threatened social relations by his inflexibility, typically caused by an inattention to life.

Bergson's account of the identification of the rigid eccentric in humour was then explored and seen to involve the notion of 'types'. This method of working via type identification was also seen to involve a level of generality in its dealing with others.

Bergson's account of inattention (Don Quixote) and repetition (Trigger) were seen to provide good explanations of the humour involved in these

kind of examples. It was found, in addition, that Bergson account could distinguish between humour and madness in a plausible manner. The whole notion of repetition and inattention in Bergson's account was then pursued further in terms of its relation to social rigidity.

Social rigidity was then shown to be applied by Bergson to humour at ceremonies, fixities on the living body of society. Fixity in this case was described as disguise, which for Bergson is always necessarily humorous when viewed on a certain level. A second line of argument on Bergson's part was then elucidated. This line of argument attempted to show how individuals who are part of a particular profession can become embedded into their professions to such a degree that they act as if the rules of that profession were sacred, in short the 'jobsworth'.

After looking at the specific types of social humour Bergson describes, the thesis then went on to look at more general questions about the role of the relation between humour and morality. Was humour merely concerned with social mores, or was it capable of providing moral guidance? This was answered in the negative.

The section then finished with two possible larger scale criticisms of Bergson's explanation of humour. The first, whether humour relating to 'self-negating' systems could be explained by Bergson. The second and more sweeping criticism which finished this section tried to show that conceiving humour in terms of an essential social function was mistaken. For there to be such a social function there must, in turn, be a clear identification of the object of ridicule. This thesis argued that jokes did not, of necessity, have to have a clear object of ridicule, and thus did thus

not need to have a point. Hence, it was suggested that any account proposing a necessary social function for humour would be flawed from the outset.

Section II

Introduction - Commonness, Art and Repetition

This thesis has so far looked closely at Bergson's account of laughter and has found that the conception of rigidity and inattention has yielded a number of insights into various types of laughter. The discussion of these issues will necessitate an examination of Bergson's thoughts on language, repetition, duration and art, and the relation of these to the comic. The discussion of language will centre on Bergson's position on concepts, as they are narrowly defined and the notion of the fluid concept which he proposes as an alternative. The role of intuition, as a non-utilitarian mode of access to things, will be subsequently examined to discover what Bergson understands by the term, and how effective his account of this mode of access to things is.

Intuition is important as it is linked, by Bergson to the very possibility of art, whilst distancing it from philosophy. This examination will be of particular importance for both art and philosophy as metaphor is one example of a fluid concept. The task will then be to distinguish artistic intuition, as Bergson explains it, from philosophical intuition which is directly linked to the notion of 'duration'. One important question for Bergson in his examination of the relations between art, philosophy and humour is, what constitutes the correct 'unit' for duration, the answer being: the moving part as opposed to the immobile element, that which can be repeated. The apparent characteristics of life will then be used to introduce several new types of humour which are based around the repetition of elements, repetition *appearing* inimical to life. Repetition as

a process, in humour, will be compared to artistic techniques and their relations to creativity.

The account will finally conclude with an assessment of the tenability of Bergson's account of humour and his account of aesthetics. It will also assess whether he proposes a tenable alternative to concepts as they are narrowly defined.

The starting point for our examinations, will be Bergson's own account of the methodology and strategies to be found in his work in general, and specifically, the structure of his thought in Laughter. This will begin with an examination of Moore's⁴⁴ account of Bergson's methodology.

⁴⁴ F. C. T. Moore, Bergson - Thinking Backwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.) (Henceforth Moore)

Chapter 2 - 'Concepts' and their Alternatives

Motif vs. Formula

This section will concentrate on Bergson's own characterisation of his philosophical practice in Laughter. The starting point will be Bergson's claim that his account of laughter does not consist of a formula, but instead presents a motif to be found in humour. Monro dismisses Bergson's comment as mere rhetoric, yet this seems an inadequate response. (AoL, p. 112) F. C. T. Moore, in contrast to Monro, does take this distinction seriously, however it will be suggested that despite this there are problems with the account he gives, both exegetically and in terms of the position he outlines.

Moore attempts to describe Bergson's method in Laughter in terms of productive knowledge, a view apparently requiring that humour always be deliberately produced. Instead of attempting to explain counter-examples, Moore claims that Bergson's account cannot be argued against by counter-examples, as Bergson is simply not giving an account in terms of necessary conditions.

The denial of the relevance of counter-examples results, it will be argued, in a trivialising of Bergson's aims in Laughter. Another more positive line is then extracted from Bergson - the 'central' / 'peripheral' effects model, which does allow counter-examples. The thesis then departs from Moore in order to explain what he fails to: the connections between the various central cases of humour.

Without Moore(ing)

Bergson, according to Moore, is *not* interested in offering a *definition* of humour, such as for example: humour is the enjoyment of incongruity for its own sake. For Moore, such definitions would presumably be regarded as 'formulas'. Instead of offering a definition (formula), Moore thinks Bergson is giving us the procedures for making something funny. (Moore, p. 67) Moore, gives a description of how an approach in terms of necessary conditions might work in the case of humour, and then opposes this to the notion of fabrication which he finds in Bergson's account.

Something is seen, on the necessary condition model, to be amusing because individuals possess certain criteria (which the particular model has defined as the relevant criteria) for judging something to be amusing, and when the thing in question satisfies these criteria it is judged to be amusing. (Moore, p. 68) Instead of the necessary condition model he has described, Moore thinks that Bergson's is interested in describing how a joke is produced. (Moore, p. 69) Moore describes this in terms of outlining *recipes* for the production of humour which are to act as general guides. (Moore, p. 69) Taking his own account of recipes literally, Moore describes how two cooks might be given the same recipe but produce a different result. Moore claims that these different results do not show that the recipe lacks precision as it is the very nature of the recipe to be imprecise. (Moore, p. 69) The instructions for recipes capture the *essentials* of the fabrication procedures, whilst there are multiple ways that these instructions can be implemented. This kind of productive knowledge grasps the procedures by which an effect is produced, but does not thereby mean those with this knowledge will be able to correctly

implement it. Thus productive knowledge is not the same as learning how to write jokes, or a comedy. (Moore, p. 70)

After giving the above outline of what he considers to be Bergson's position, Moore puts forward a potential objection: there appear to be examples of humour which are not "... deliberately *fabricated to be funny*", (Moore, p. 70) falling over in the street to use Bergson's example. Fabrication, to extrapolate from Moore's position, appears to entail that humour is produced deliberately,⁴⁵ i.e. thought out in advance, and with a definite aim or purpose to amuse and a consciousness of this aim. On the other hand fabrication would *not* necessitate that the joker, say, was conscious of all the productive processes they were using to create amusement, but that amusement was the intended result.

Instead of trying to argue that this apparent counter-example is not in fact a counter-example, Moore argues that there can be a multitude of apparent counter-examples to Bergson's account of productive knowledge, all of which are however irrelevant, as Bergson is simply not giving necessary and sufficient conditions. (Moore, p. 71) This is an odd response, for two reasons. Firstly, many of Bergson's examples do not appear to assume that there is any deliberate production of humour, so it seems odd that Moore should attempt an exegesis which portrays Bergson primary argument as based on these tenets. Secondly, as Moore himself points out, productive knowledge is not about how to write, say,

⁴⁵ J. L. Austin, "Three Ways of Spilling Ink." *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson & G. J. Warnock, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) pp. 272-87.

a tragedy, but about the recipes which *would* be required to do so; this means there can be non-fabricated situations which can be treated *as if* they had been fabricated.

At times Moore seems to trivialise Bergson's account by making it sound like general advice to the aspiring comic, (Moore, p. 75) and hardly philosophical at all. If this stance is assumed with regard to *Laughter*, then Bergson's account is indeed impregnable to assault by counter-examples, as it fails to give a positive account of humour in the first instance to criticise.

In addition to the 'trivialising' move, Moore extends the model of 'recipes' in line with Bergson's account of central and peripheral cases. On the central / peripheral case model a central recipe is examined which can produce most cases of a certain type, then from this other peripheral cases which have "... similar or related modes of production ... " (Moore, p. 72) are traced. So, to take the analogy to recipes seriously, a central case might claim that in order to make an omelette, eggs are required. Such a claim would not then be refuted by the existence of vegan omelettes made without eggs. Vegan omelettes are so called by virtue of the resemblance they bear to non-vegan omelettes. (Moore, p. 72) As Lacey puts it "... we laugh at cases which bear a superficial resemblance or accidental relation to the central case or to cases themselves so related to it." (Lacey, p. 195)

Further textual support for the central case-with-peripheral-effects-model can be found in *Laughter*, when Bergson claims that several "...

witticisms are constructed on the same model. We might make up any number of them, when once we are in possession of the recipe." (Laughter, p. 64) From this quote it might seem reasonable to suppose that Bergson is indeed producing recipes, accounts giving productive knowledge. Bergson additionally says that there is something beyond mere 'mechanism' in the creation of a joke, that although there may be a model to be copied, there also has to be something which allows the joke to be acceptable and it is the making acceptable which constitutes the art of the comic.⁴⁶ Acceptable in this context has two basic meanings. Firstly to take something which is potentially funny, say a ceremony, and make it actually amusing. Secondly to make a false logic seem as if it could almost be true. We follow such logic, for a moment, before withdrawing into laughter. (Laughter, pp. 196-7) More will be said about the notion of acceptability in the next chapter. Bergson's description as it has been outlined so far seems perfectly in keeping with Moore's exegesis of his position in terms of productive knowledge. One might know all the productive processes involved in writing a comedy, but still not be able to write one. The problem with Moore's account is that he then proceeds to outline various central cases and there attendant peripheral cases without outlining what links these central cases.

⁴⁶ Bergson is *not* here referring to what Walton refers to as "... *causes* but not *objects* of my amusement ..." examples of causes being comic timing, canned laughter and so forth which act to promote or heighten laughter. (Kendall Walton, "Understanding Humour and Music," The Interpretation of Music: Philosophical Essays, ed. Michael Krausz. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) p. 261 This point will become clearer when acceptability is dealt with in the next chapter. It is more a case of the joke appearing 'natural.' (Laughter, p. 64)

In contrast to Moore, it shall be maintained that it is not merely a case of finding the recipe behind each central case of humour, as Moore seems to think, and then finding how these relate to peripheral examples, but instead of starting with central cases of humour which are produced from the basic tendency behind humour - inattention - and *then* tracing resemblances to peripheral cases from the central cases so produced. From these central cases peripheral cases can then be traced which resemble some central case.

So, to be clear: according to Moore, there are recipes behind each central type of humour and around these are peripheral cases which are funny due to their resemblance to the central case. This thesis differs from Moore's exegesis in two ways. Firstly in maintaining that Bergson thinks there is a basic tendency from which central examples are produced. This is because in each type of comedy there is a variation on the theme of the particular central example, and also the general theme. (Appendix, p. 156) Secondly in maintaining that counter-examples are *not* theoretically irrelevant to Bergson's account, though they might turn out to be in practice if his account is 'correct'. Bergson argues against giving necessary and sufficient conditions because such conditions trace a circle which is too wide, (Appendix, p. 156) so general as to be of no real value. He does not want to enclose laughter in a formula which is very large and very simple,⁴⁷ as this would annul "... the degrees of whose high touch on the finest cultural works, all of which must keep a social

⁴⁷ Henri Bergson, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959) p. 383.

function - the correction of "moeurs" [morals, customs, habits, manners]" (Worms, p. 179) Bergson instead claims that although his definition might be considered too narrow, the importance of peripheral examples should not be underestimated. (Appendix, p. 156) As peripheral examples bear an outward resemblance to central cases they can still be amusing, whilst not conforming to the narrow 'definition' given. A counter-example would, given the above, be a humorous example which was neither a central case of humour on the one hand, nor a peripheral case related to a central example on the other. Ultimately, an example will be explicable in Bergsonian terms if it can be traced back to humour's original productive tendency. Either directly in the case of central examples, or indirectly in the case of peripheral examples.

In order to examine how faithful to Bergson this interpretation is, the following passage will be considered:

It would be chimerical to try to derive all humour from a single simple formula. In a certain sense, there is a formula; but it does not unfold uniformly. In other words, we must stop at occasional dominant effects here and there which are derived from it. These act as models, each surrounded by a circle of new effects resembling the model. The new effects are not derived from the formula, but are funny by virtue of their relation to the models which are derived from it.⁴⁸
(Moore, p. 72)

Bergson's position can be summarised as follows. There is a formula, but this formula cannot be simply understood, instead there can only be

⁴⁸ This is quoted from *Le Rire*, p. 28, by Moore although I have modified Moore's translation of the French slightly.

dominant effects derived from it, that is, central cases which are then 'surrounded' by other cases which resemble these. The circle of effects which resemble the central cases, their model, are not directly related to the initial formula, but are instead funny by virtue of their resemblance to those central cases which are related to the initial formula.

Two types of connection can now be distinguished:

- (i) That between the central formula and the various central cases of humour which are produced from it.
- (ii) The outward resemblances which link peripheral and central cases of humour.

(i) It is possible to trace back a tendency, to find an image which is the interpenetration of several ideas or theses. Bergson demonstrates this process with regard to Berkeley's philosophy identifying four theses⁴⁹ which he then proceeds to show are interdependent. Bergson then progresses a stage further showing how it is not merely a case of interdependence but instead of a mutual source for these theses, an image which allows it self to be seen, being almost matter, yet cannot be touched, being almost mind. In the case of Laughter the image is of something encrusted on the living. This image is the nearest it is possible to get to an intuition in expression as the only other mode of expression, the concept, is a spreading out of the image - a developing into a system.

⁴⁹ Henri Bergson, The Creative Mind, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield Adams & Co., 1965) pp. 115-8) (Henceforth CM)

The intuition is itself inexpressible and above the image - a motif which diversifies little by little to form the precise images and concepts - fixed and discontinuous. (Mourélos, p. 218) It is this process of development which 'connects' the various central examples of humour. In a sense each of the central examples functions analogously to a 'stopping point' in the indivisible movement of thought's development which goes beyond numerical categories, (Delhomme, p. 64) yet even though the central examples are 'stopping points', in one sense, they are never as such still elements which can be rearranged at will, but like parts, lines from a poem, which although not giving the whole meaning, cannot be merely juxtaposed and rearranged at will and which are meaningful in themselves. Moving from the intuition to the image and then to concepts requires an increasing subdivision, like the multiplication of cells dividing into a complete organism, becoming more and more spread out as it moves through successive planes, creating sentences, to express itself which, although diverse, can each express the same meaning. (CM, p. 121) The structure of the intuition and the image near to it, is the opposite of a numerical (quantitative multiplicity) where everything is actual - existing in discrete juxtaposition, it is instead a qualitative multiplicity which cannot be divided without changing in kind. In the case of a qualitative multiplicity there is a move from the virtual to the actual - the lines of development and the parts do not pre-exist their creation, i.e. a qualitative multiplicity actualises itself by producing its own lines of differentiation. (Bergsonism, pp. 42-3) It is not a question, as it would be in a numerical multiplicity of rearranging a series of juxtaposable pre-existing elements, but instead of creating new ideas. The present does not contain the future in disguise (Delhomme, p. 95, Capek, p. 100, Capek 2,

p. 310) ready to be assembled, it is thus impossible to say what a philosophical theory will be until it is complete. (Jankélévitch, p. 28 & Mullarkey, p. 4) So in this sense truth only appears retrospectively, (Mullarkey, p. 7, In Praise, p. 29) develops not by fitting an external existing frame on to each thought in a reductive manner,⁵⁰ but instead through the change of thought itself, as well as its matter, there is thus no separation between the idea and its expression. (Delhomme, pp. 63-4)

So on the one hand there is a geometric plan which works by assembling juxtaposed spatialised elements, and on the other there is a model of organic growth which is without arrest and gradually appears in greater and greater clarity - termed a vertical rather than a horizontal movement, (Delhomme, p. 50) a creation. (Mourélos, p. 93) The organic has an internal vertical causality where the structure is always a product of differences internal to the multiplicity, whereas the horizontal has differences which are always external and develops across a plane. In the vertical organic development planes are traversed, not as separate pre-existing entities which can be visited, like various simultaneously existing juxtaposed rooms in an homogeneous space, (MM, p. 145) but are instead created in the very act of traversal. (Mourélos, p. 106) This is what it means to think in time. (Paradis, p. 12) Each change in level changes the whole. As each move is due to an internal actualisation whose lines do not pre-exist their creation, neither the result, nor the scheme for its production is predictable. It is not a case of spatialised

⁵⁰ This includes deduction, a global structure which is supposed to represent thought. (Paradis, p. 16)

cause and effect relationships, but instead of durational, free and creative becoming, (Delhomme, p. 35 & Mourélos, p. 109) each plane being both a repetition of other planes, but also different from them, (Mullarkey, p. 136) which is what Merleau-Ponty means when he describes duration as "the continual birth which makes it always new and, precisely in this respect, always the same."⁵¹ In this sense Bergson cannot be precise (Mourélos, p. 111) as no law can explain the move between planes because of its very creativity. (Delhomme, p. 52) So there is a formula or a motif, but it does not unfold uniformly, or predictably, it is repeated on each level, but at the same time it is different on each level it is repeated on. This is why there are the various ways in which humour functions in Laughter each of which is unfolded from the basic intuition and which functions differently on each particular plane it is actualised on.

With respect to (ii) the connections are very close to the structure, according to Bergson, of dreams. Dreams give "... an illustration of the law with which we are well acquainted: given one form of the laughable, other forms that are lacking in the same comic essence become laughable from their outward resemblance to the first." (Laughter, p. 187) So what kind of links are created in dreams which are analogous to those between various jokes? In order to answer this question it will be necessary briefly to look at dreams and the form of resemblance which Bergson thinks is

⁵¹ Making Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Bergson in the Making". Signs (1960), trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) p. 184. (Henceforth Making)

operative in them. This examination will then allow us to clarify the relation between dreams and humour.

Reason and Dreams

This section is concerned to articulate how resemblance functions within dreams and to relate this to the connection between central and peripheral jokes. Bergson however also cites dreams themselves as a source of humour, so the method by which peripheral jokes are linked to central examples is also a means for the production of jokes. These two facets will then inevitably run through the following account.

Bergson claims that dreams are related to humour as they allow a play of ideas where the rules of reason are relaxed. (Laughter, p. 187)

When the comic character automatically follows up his idea, he ultimately thinks, speaks and acts as if he were dreaming. Now, a dream is a relaxation ... To break away from logic and yet continue to string together ideas is to indulge in play ... So comic absurdity gives us the impression of playing with ideas. Our first impulse is to join in the game. This relieves us of the strain of thinking. (Laughter, pp. 195-6, AoL, p. 117)

The comic has its own logic, a method in madness, (Laughter, p. 2) and for Bergson dreams are somewhat like madness, a loosening of the individual's attention to life which keeps the mind fixed on the part of the material world concerning action.

The thesis has already detailed how attention to life is poised between the realm of dream and action, attention being characterised by the bringing of the correct level of memory into the present situation, and how dreams and madness are a loss of equilibrium between motor mechanisms and pure memory: (MM, p. 174 & Matthews, p. 130) which is why Bergson

maintains that all the psychological symptoms of madness can be found in dreams. (MM, p. 174) Instead of memories relating directly to the situation in question overlaying perception, in dreams other memories which bear a superficial relation come forward to overlay perception. (MM, p. 154) All the 'forgotten' details, those images on the fringe come back to the foreground, (MM, p. 85) indeed in one sense dreams are a privileged state in that they present the total self without limitation. (Mourélos, p. 129) However care must be taken as memory images are *not* pure memory, (Mourélos, p. 126) the totality of our past experience which constitutes our personality. (Mourélos, pp. 126-7) This is simply because pure memory has already moved to another level to become a series of images, (Mourélos, p. 127) and dreams are already images. (Mourélos, p. 129) Dreams move away from limiting habit and automation (MM, p. 155) towards personal recollections, a wider conscious plane (MM, p. 241) defined by a slower rhythm. (MM, p. 207) However the cohesion between the mass of accumulated memories and motor schemas is lost in dreams, (MM, p. 173) the attention to life is dispersed. (Delhomme, p. 37) In a dream everything on the plane of memory is particular, nothing resembles anything else, (MM, p. 155 & BCD, p. 56) whereas automation is the exact opposite seeing only resemblance. (MM, p. 155) So in the atomisation of individual moments spirit rejoins matter as spirit moves towards the equivalence of moments which define matter (Delhomme, p. 36) and leaves dreams indifferent and disinterested. (BCD, p. 58) All of the past is equally present no matter its relevance.

The reference Deleuze uses to support his exegesis at this point is interestingly from Creative Evolution. In this text Bergson characterises the move towards the plane of dreams in terms of the understanding of a poet reading his verse.⁵² At the highest level of tension understanding is of the poem as a whole, but gradually as tension decreases there is a move to the material realm, firstly in terms of hearing each word as a sound,⁵³ followed by a move to individual phrases, sentences, words and finally letters. Each level seemingly leads to an increase in complexity, but actually shows merely a deficiency of the will. Here the atomisation of speech into individual letters robs the text of its meaning, there is no attention to what is being communicated. This point will be returned to in the subsequent. What is important again is the notion of memory and its preservation of the past to allow an understanding of a whole, and its absence in totally atomised states.

⁵² Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983) pp. 209-10) (Henceforth CE)

⁵³ The work of Berio seems a case in point here. Thema - Omaggio a James Joyce (1958) for instance, moves between intelligible speech and broken phonemes. The piece plays with notions of timbre and meaning within an initial recording of a short section from Joyce's Ulysses which undergoes editing and electronic processing. Peter Manning, Electronic and Computer Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) p. 80. Circles (1960) for Female Singer, Harp and Percussion by Berio "...transcribes a musical circle from understandable language to disconnected vocal sound and back again. The singer physically circles on stage, joining different instrumentalists and blending her voice with that particular sound." Mark Morris, The Pimlico Dictionary of Twentieth Century Composers (London: Pimlico, 1999) p. 250.

Despite this atomisation of memory the intellect must try to give a semblance of meaning to perception,⁵⁴ resulting in the production of connections which are apparently senseless. Dream-logic, in trying to bind the incoherent memories together forms a counterfeit of normal reasoning. (M-E, p. 123) This is exactly what the quotation which the thesis started with described as a relaxation of reason. The logic of madness is one of exuberance (Jankélévitch, p. 206), rather than the concept of disorder which Bergson criticises, it is a different type of order, (Jankélévitch, p. 214) an order where any perception brings memory into the present without limit.

Thus in dreams, according to Bergson, the external is fitted by the intellect to what it wishes to receive, there is, as detailed above, the sensori-motor equilibrium is lost. The dream example for this kind of behaviour which Bergson gives is the sound of wind in a chimney which, when heard asleep, becomes either a howling beast or a tuneful melody. Whatever outside event is heard when an individual is dreaming is interpreted in the dream's own terms. (Laughter, p. 187) This is why dreams are described as a random processing of the external, (Laughter, p. 188) external sensory data are connected to memory in a way which allows the two to diverge (M-E, p. 127). In this state there is no longer any question of attentiveness, wakefulness, (M-E, p. 155) of the careful fitting of the external to the internal (which requires attention and thus the

⁵⁴ Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy : Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975) p. 115 (Henceforth, M-E)

movement between planes), the occurrence of exclusion in the realm of recollection, in short: adaptation. (M-E, p. 125) Dreams are instead characterised by disinterest, detachment and disregard for life. (M-E, p. 126, p. 155 & p. 96)

In waking life, the rhythm of interpretative memory would be matched to perception, (M-E, p. 130) the appropriate levels of memory would be moved between. There is a need to "Bring the interpretative memory to a state of tension, let it pay attention to life, let it, in short, get out of its dream: immediately the outside events will beat the measure for its walking and slacken its pace..." (M-E, p. 130) As humour is characterised as an inattention to life, and dreams are an example of inattention to life, it is of little surprise that Bergson should see dreams as a good source for humour.

Bergson's account particularly emphasises the role of vision in dreams. If hearing has a certain openness to interpretation, then what about vision? In the case of visual perception, the free interpretation of data received during sleep is explained in terms of the individual's perception of their eyelids and the light coming through them which produces coloured blotches. The coloured blotches are of an indeterminate nature which reason tries to fit to memory, instead of accepting them as coloured blotches. The example Bergson gives is the absurdity of an image changing from a daisy lawn to a billiard table in a dream. (M-E, p. 128) In this case it is the mind trying to get a fix on vague green blotches which the dreamer is seeing through their eyelids. This is why "... in dream the interpretative memory of the visual sensation regains its

freedom; the fluidity of the visual sensation prevents the memory adhering to it ..." (M-E, p. 130) The very vagueness of sensation allows multiple interpretation. Memory takes the chance to insert itself into perception. The past which no longer acts inserts itself into the present to become actual and in doing so ceases to be memory, and instead becomes perception. (MM, p. 240)

As has already been stated, there is something potentially humorous about the logic of dreams, the loss of attention to life - the break down of the sensori-motor equilibrium allowing inappropriate memories to be linked to perception. This form of outward resemblance, as has already been pointed out, is linked to potentially humorous things / situations, yet it appears unclear from the exegesis so far given why the mixed up images of dreams should be humorous and not just surreal. Not that surrealism cannot be humorous, but that quite often it fails to be. Indeed, if the resemblance described as working in dreams immediately corresponds to anything, it is surrealism, e.g. the Paranoiac Face.⁵⁵ This photograph of native Africans in front of a hemispherical structure, when rotated clockwise by ninety degrees, resembles a Picasso style face.⁵⁶ There is no connection between the two images in terms of symbolism,

⁵⁵ First Published in *La Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*. December 1931. Reproduced in Jessica Hodge, *Salvador Dali* (London: Park Lane, 1994) p. 25.

⁵⁶ It seems somewhat unfair to chastise Bergson for missing this point as surrealism (at least the artistic movement) had not yet been born. However, it will be shown that Bergson's account does try to distinguish humour from what might now be termed surrealism.

function, logic or design. Instead there is only an outward resemblance between the Picasso style face and the African's and their structure which allows the one to be transformed into the other by moving our attention to a different plane, however it initially appears unclear how Bergson will be able to distinguish the surreal from the humorous. It is being maintained here that, for Bergson, a link exists between the outward resemblance which connects central and peripheral jokes and that which creates superficial and potentially humorous links (e.g. puns). What is important in the case of humorous outward resemblance, and presumably also in the case of the connections between central and peripheral jokes, is that the resemblance is one which might be truthful or realistic, that is that it does not move too far from the correct level, the connection does not become too faint. (Laughter, p. 42 & p. 187)

The notion of apparent truth or realism is what allows dream logic, to counterfeit reason. Extreme dream like states obviously lack any veneer of truth or realism. If they do counterfeit anything, it is most likely to be madness, which, as has already been commented, is sharply distinguished by Bergson from humour - madness evoking sympathy which humour must not have. This is why, although dreams can be a source of humour, displaying many absurdities (Laughter, p. 186), they usually, like madness, involve a loss of actuality by reason (M-E, p. 59) and are thus to be pitied, not laughed at, if occurring in waking life. Humour, for Bergson, is, more like a case of reasonings which might be taken to be true in a dream, but are actually false. Thus Bergson side-steps the criticism that dreams appear more surreal than humorous via his criterion of apparent truthfulness.

An example of a joke which exemplifies this dream logic would be believing Blacks to be whites in disguise. (Laughter, p. 41) Presumably the logical chain would be something like this: people are white skinned, individuals who are dirty have dark colouring. Black people have dark colouring, so this means they must be whites who are dirty. What is crucial in this whole discussion is the role of resemblance. There is an outward resemblance between a dirty white individual and a black-skinned person. (The racist implications of the taxi driver's 'joke' will again be ignored.) It is again a case of the attention to life being relaxed and the individual moving towards the plane of dreams.

The 'logic' in the example of the 'Black disguise' is not a counterfeit of logic as it is understood in terms of syllogisms, sorites and so forth. Bergson says that the counterfeit logic in dreams is a logic which is dreamt by a whole society, (Laughter, p. 41) an enlargement on the societal level which mimics that on the mental level. (Worms, p. 179) Bergson is saying that part of what makes the outward resemblance acceptable in dreams which are potentially humorous and the connections between peripheral and central examples of humour is that there is a general appearance of truth of realism about them. They are not individual or singular but instead, there are laws of the 'imagination', or habits (Laughter, p. 42) by which outward resemblance can be understood. These 'laws' often go against the logic of reason (i.e. what would conventionally be referred to as logic), but in humour still have to be reckoned with. (Laughter, p. 41). Bergson sees this logic of the imagination, when it works in establishing connections between central

and peripheral jokes, operating on a level not far removed from behaviourist 'generalisation'.

Watson and Rayner, whilst 'Little Albert' was visiting hospital for wet-nursing, hit two metal bars behind the infant's head whilst presenting white rats to him. This procedure induced a fear of white rats in the child, which then generalised to similar objects, rabbits, cotton wool, a white beard etc.⁵⁷ These associations would be examples of 'outward' resemblances caused by the generalisation to be found at a certain mental level. Bergson claims jokes based on disguises are generalised in a similar manner:

A man in disguise is comic. A man we regard as disguised is also comic. So, by analogy, any disguise is seen to become comic, not only that of a man, but that of society also, and even the disguise of nature. (Laughter, p. 42)

In both cases, the outward resemblance ties together individual elements which have no underlying really significant connection in nature.

So, jokes involving 'outward' resemblance, and the connections between central and peripheral jokes, are both based on the 'laws of the imagination'.

⁵⁷ J. B. Watson, *Behaviourism*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and Phoenix PB, 1930).

Motif vs. Concept

The previous section has outlined two forms of connection - the first vertical, the second outward horizontal. In the case of humour, this means that there are central examples of rigidity and inattention, and peripheral examples which bear an outward resemblance to some one of the relevant central cases and multiple central cases which are linked by a vertical movement.

Bergson claimed that he was not trying to produce a formula for humour, but instead a 'motif'. Moore maintained that this distinction between a motif and a formula corresponded to a distinction between productive knowledge and an account of necessary conditions. This thesis, on the contrary, maintained that there were two notions of connectivity in Bergson's account which complicated the distinction. It was not merely a case of finding central recipes and *then* extending these, as Moore argued, but instead a matter of finding the initial tendency which was productive in each of the various central examples, and then looking at the outward resemblance between central and peripheral examples once this has been found. So it will be a case of a tendency moving through different planes creating qualitatively different central examples on each plane. In the above discussion it was suggested that the vertical relationship between central examples was linked to a notion of creative change. It will be argued below that formulas, in contrast give predictable results and necessarily fail, according to Bergson, to capture the object of their study. It will only be through understanding exactly why a formula cannot capture its object that the account can in the next section begin to

outline how an image might function, and why Bergson is not totally against linguistic expression.

In order to understand the more positive account of linguistic expression which Bergson gives the negative side of his account will also be examined. The capacity of certain concepts to 'kill' duration, and also to 'kill' thought by attempting to halt its authentic movement by negating difference and novelty through homogenisation will lead to Bergson's attack on the notion that 'thought' can be seen as a mere rearranging of pre-existing components. It will then be the task of the next section to try and understand what alternatives Bergson has to offer to the concept (narrowly defined) which merely functions as an element to be rearranged.

Concepts

In the Introduction to Metaphysics Bergson's critique of space is joined by a critique of symbols, space being both their condition and effect. (Worms, p. 210) Concepts act to remove difference, they solidify qualities into objects and allow the manipulation of the real, (Delhomme, pp. 131-2) i.e. their function is not based around comprehension, but is instead pragmatic. (Gunter, p. 29) Such solidification leaves becoming regarded as a series of discontinuous states or things which can be juxtaposed and all exist simultaneously distinct and clear (Delhomme, p. 65) in an imaginary space - this is the ideal limit of the intellect. (Delhomme, p. 57) Concepts thus end up with the same stability as objects in space. (Mullarkey, p. 167) Indeed logic, as traditionally understood, is spatial, leading to permanent immobility, an eternity of death. (Delhomme, p. 96) Language can thus be seen, in one sense, as the origin or Zeno's paradoxes, (Cariou, p. 111) in its failure to capture becoming, instead relying on the stability of objects, occurring one after another and infinitely divisible. Because of this juxtaposition language spatialises duration to allow it to be divided, which is against its nature - (Delhomme, p. 147 & Capek, p. 129) language fails to grasp continuity,⁵⁸ yet conversely, as Mullarkey points out time appears to kill any attempt

⁵⁸ It must be carefully noted that whilst Bergson has been accused of looking to continuity rather than separation in duration, by Bachelard, amongst others (Bachelard, p. 67 & Chimisso, p. 7), his concern is always with a heterogeneous continuity which encompasses difference in its continuity being neither a series of disconnected instants, nor a single undifferentiated continuity. As Mullarkey puts it there is never a simple continuity, but always one in change. (Mullarkey, p. 136)

at its theorisation, (Mullarkey, p. 151) if only because of its constant invention. This seems to be a view found in several of Bergson's works: Mullarkey, for example, finds reference to this position in Time and Free Will, Duration and Simultaneity, The Creative Mind and Creative Evolution. This killing of theorisation is linked to the logic of solids and the symbolic world which can ultimately replace the real world. (Delhomme, p. 132) This logic of solids is best characterised as the production of immobilities from mobile reality, and whilst such a process is useful when dealing with geometric solids (Jankélèvitch, p. 164) its wider application to all circumstances produces serious problems. (Delhomme, p. 79)

This process is ascribed to the intellect which marks off the boundaries of bodies⁵⁹ and acts to solidify and divide reality⁶⁰ - the ensuing spatialisation allowing elements to be juxtaposed and time to be mechanised, and placed in homogeneous space. Having been spatialised time can be reversed, as if the past could be repeated, (Delhomme, pp. 95-6) or elements of it taken and rearranged at will. Concepts are also responsible for the bivalent logic, or logic of clean-cut oppositions (MM, p. 245) where it is a case of choosing between mutually exclusive

⁵⁹ Paul Douglass, "Bergson and Cinema: Friends or Foes?", Bergson and Philosophy ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 210 (Henceforth Douglass 2)

⁶⁰ Mark Antliff, "The Rhythms of Duration: Bergson and the Art of Matisse", Bergson and Philosophy ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) p. 187 (Henceforth, Antliff 2)

oppositions, like the mutually impenetrable bodies of classical physics which cannot simultaneously occupy the same location. (Mullarkey, p. 5) Because concepts can be juxtaposed and are impenetrable to each other their rearrangement concerns only the relations between elements, (Capek, p. 66) law like relations of sameness and equivalence becoming primary, premises and consequences rather than a concern with becoming. (Mourélos, p. 158 & Delhomme, p. 106) Such an emphasis leaves the interior of the things themselves untouched. (Mourélos, p. 158) The intellect can thus form an infinite number of connections and combinations of concepts (Delhomme, p. 77) without any real creativity being present.

The spatialisation of elements, in this case the concepts of language, leads to a notion of novelty as a mere rearrangement of these elements, yet novelty is not reducible to such a notion. (CM, p. 82, Pilkington, p. 116, Mourélos, p. 69 & Delhomme, p. 52) In this sense Bergson can be seen to be opposing both atomism and associationism and the whole conception of linear sorites as a means of producing novelty. (Laughter, p. 152 & Jankélévitch, p. 111) Indeed association can be characterised as a failure to recognise difference, understanding becomes the same coming from the same, as opposed to a genuine emergence, (Mullarkey, p. 39) or what Jankélévitch refers to as a radical renewal, (Jankélévitch, p. 288) it is as if everything had happened before. (Delhomme, p. 96) This means that a purely conceptual thought leaves the result predictable, (Robinet, p. 174) and is ultimately a geometry of the mind opposing novelty and failing to correspond to reality. (Delhomme, p. 4) This conceptual thought is derived from the necessities of action which require

spatialisation, (Delhomme, p. 49) rather than the need to recognise difference, to correspond to actuality.

This geometric tendency of the mind is linked to matter which has a tendency to produce closed systems which can be treated as geometric, (KAP, p. 152) but ultimately it is only science which moves to complete closure. (Mullarkey, p. 74) Science allows perfect repetition, bidirectionality and quantification, (Mullarkey, p. 74) but it is an abstraction, (Capek, p. 332) a partial view of practical intelligence. (Robinet, p. 112) Partial as Bachelard said with more positivity than Bergson, because different parts of an experiment are treated as either essential or detail. (Bachelard, p. 74) It is also partial because it is concerned only with the material relations between bodies which have been fragmented and the causal relations so accruing.⁶¹ (Worms, p. 22) So science works on immobilities and permanent forms and laws which *deny time* and have fixed points. (Delhomme, p. 91) Such a study of relations is, for Bergson incapable of replacing intuition - the metaphysical investigation of the object. (Delhomme, p. 84) Science, on this view, is essentially concerned with looking at 'matter' and as such misses 'life'⁶²

⁶¹ The extent to which such an account applies to non-classical physics is debatable. certainly Einstein believed that the world was governed by laws and comprehensible to us, but at the same time the science which has evolved is not one which can construct reality from laws, but is instead a highly speculative one "... whose ultimate meaning men have difficulty agreeing on." (Making, p. 193)

⁶² Leszek Kolakowski, Bergson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). p. 91 (Henceforth, Kolakowski)

... to be an immense mathematics, a single system of relations which imprisons the totality of the real in a mesh prepared for it, it becomes knowledge purely relative to the human understanding. (CM, p. 196)

Science is also always aimed at practical utility, (Mullarkey, p. 126 fn. 85) but the real world is always, as William James said, "... more intricately built than science would allow." (Quoted - In Praise, preface by John Wild & James M. Edie, p. xiii)

However this distinction between science and metaphysics is radicalised in the introduction to The Creative Mind where it is no longer a case of metaphysics getting to reality and science failing to do so, but instead of both science and metaphysics touching reality, but in different ways. Science can touch reality, not relatively, but absolutely.⁶³ (CM, p. 37) Science deals with matter and spatial time, whereas metaphysics deals with l'espirit and concrete duration, metaphysics using intuition⁶⁴ and science using analysis. Thus science and metaphysics come to be considered of equal importance. (Robinet, p. 149)

⁶³ "For it is the essence of science to handle *signs*, which it substitutes for the objects themselves. These signs undoubtedly differ from those of language by their greater precision and their higher efficacy; they are none the less tied down to the general condition of the sign, which is to denote a fixed aspect of the reality under an arrested form." (CE, p. 329)

⁶⁴ Intuition will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter, but it is enough to note for the moment to note that "... to think intuitively is to think in duration." (CM, p. 34)

The question might then be of whether there are not two principles at work in science, one a mathematicising quantitative and conceptual understanding, which is reliant on the other intuition, to get to the mobile which is then spatialised. (Gunter, p. 35) This process might not, however be constant but instead there might be the genius who changes the paradigms of scientific thought through intuition (Mourélos, p. 66) in-between periods of spatialising consolidation, as science is of essence located in a domain of conceptual symbols and analysis. (Mourélos, p. 67) This movement which can quite easily be seen as a movement between the openness of intuition and the closure of geometric analysis.

Indeed Bergson does attempt to show that science and discovery is based on intuition at its heart, and the attempt to get to the mobile, even arguably in the Introduction to Metaphysics. (CM, pp. 190-1) Because science is practical it needs symbols, but this is not the case with metaphysics, which can be enlarged, as opposed to the specific usefulness of symbols. Infinitesimal calculus, which is an attempt to grasp mobile becoming from within, despite needing symbols for its practical application (CM, p. 190) This, however, is a highly unusual way to interpret infinitesimal calculus, even for Bergson.

Bergson often criticises the division of movement into small sections, as opposed to the grasping of a whole movement, (for example CE, p. 22) so it seems odd that he should wish to praise a method which seems to do exactly this. Deleuze has no explanation for Bergson's seeming ambiguity over the issue of calculus, (Bergsonism, p. 121 fn. 23) claiming the

account is intended as an analogy. Perhaps the major concern here is that infinitesimal calculus involves the rate of change, albeit by infinitesimally small amounts, as opposed to a constant change, like that which traces a movement by referring only to its start and end points. Thus, for Bergson infinitesimal calculus in this instance is an attempt to capture change itself, (Gunter, p. 34) despite differential calculus being reliant on the stability of change at certain points. (Robinet, pp. 20-1) However, this attempt to capture change is framed in terms of the ability "... to calculate the state of the system at any given moment ... a static moment." (CE, p. 22) This will become more important when discussing Bergson's attitude towards change and movement. Metaphysics, he claims, does not aim at application, hence according to Bergson, it needs no symbol. (CM, p. 191) A symbol would be required if metaphysics were, to enter into discourse, but this is not its purpose. There might be another way to read Bergson's reference to infinitesimal calculus in terms of a distinction between a true and a false infinite, but any attempt to develop such a reading will have to wait until this thesis has dealt with the element / part distinction, which will in turn lead to the two notions of the infinite, the true infinite being found in art. This would be couched in terms of infinitesimal calculus trying to get to the mobile part rather than the still element, but in dividing up into an infinite number of parts, infinitesimal calculus is not going to get to the mobile, and thinking it can is a delusion, based on homogeneous space.

An alternative to the spatialisation wrote by concepts would be to insist upon Bergson's account of intuition as a series of particular coincidences which are of necessity non-linguistically expressible, (Matthews, p. 121)

on the basis that language can only identify particulars by general terms making the metaphysical incommunicable. (Matthews, p. 121) Additionally Rescher's exegesis of Bergson maintains that, if reality as we experience it is always unstable and concepts are always something fixed and stable, then they will not be able to adequately characterise such instability. This would again push the argument back towards an ineffable intuition. (Rescher, p. 18)

These views have led to Bergson being interpreted as having a minor role for language in his philosophy,⁶⁵ and leads Deleuze, influenced by Bergson, to a theory of film which eschews literary criticism in favour of a theory of images according to Lecerle. (Lecerle, p. 201) The pure movement images which are at the heart of such a theory are reified by language, so there is thus an attempt to get back to the pre-linguistic, to the matter which forms signs, rather than the signs themselves. (Lecerle, p. 202)

However this position, as regards concepts means that in Time and Free Will, as Mullarkey comments, "Bergson seems to be in an embarrassed state as regards his own language of time: how can he express a philosophy of genuine *durée* if such a thing is inexpressible in virtue of the spatialisation wrought by language?" (Mullarkey, p. 22) Indeed if language cannot represent time without spatialising it, how is philosophy

⁶⁵ Jean-Jacques Lecerle, "Berkeley: Bishop or Busby? Deleuze in Cinema," Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics, ed. Benjamin, Andrew & Osborne, Peter (London: Philosophical Forum / Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991) p. 197 (Henceforth Lecerle)

possible? (Mullarkey, p. 150) Furthermore if it is impossible to linguistically express duration, as Mullarkey reminds us, philosophers will have to rely on an immediate grasping of duration through intuition, yet this " ... would hardly seem to be a good place to begin one's philosophy." (Mullarkey, p. 150) There is, however, an alternative which could remove Bergson from this embarrassed state. Even though duration might be "repugnant to the very essence of language", it might still be possible to suggest duration using linguistic means. (Capek, p. 129 quoting Bergson's letter written to Lovejoy) One of these linguistic means would be the use of metaphor.

Muldoon interestingly takes Bergson's position in the second introduction to A Study in Metaphysics: The Creative Mind (CM, p. 42-3) as an attack on the usage of metaphor which "... leads into confusion and deception",⁶⁶ a view which he modified in Two Sources of Morality and Religion (1932). Bergson's actual position is that metaphor is often a more literal expression than abstract concepts. (CM, pp. 42-3) His wider position, expressed in his earlier essay Introduction to Metaphysics is that intuition cannot "... be enclosed in a conceptual representation" (CM, p. 168), but that images (including metaphor) can direct consciousness to an intuition. (CM, p. 166) Bergson, according to De Man, sees poetic images coming closer "... to what perception and sensation are actually like, much closer than the purely intellectual representation of reality

⁶⁶ Mark S. Muldoon, "Henri Bergson and Postmodernism," Philosophy Today (Summer 1990) p. 185. (Henceforth HBP)

found in the scientific concept." (De Man, p. 154) This closeness is due to the subjective nature of experience, the constant presence of memory, intuition and the imagination which have become, for Bergson, an integral part of perception, and which are also an essential part of metaphorical expression. Hence contact with the 'outside world' will be similar to the experience found in works of art in terms of its subjective vagueness. It is true that Bergson does claim that the 'inner life' which "... is all at once, variety of qualities, continuity of progress, unity of direction ... cannot be represented by images" and (CM, p. 165) again Bergson claims that in the case of duration a metaphor can only express unity or multiplicity, whereas duration is in fact both simultaneously, (CM, p. 165) yet these statements by themselves are misleading (Robinet making a similar point with regard to indivisible continuity and radical creation. (Robinet, p. 91)) What is important in the first instance is that images do not *replace* intuition, but instead give a direction and a disposition towards an intuition, from which they have been produced and secondly that as a metaphor cannot express both unity and multiplicity at the same time more than one metaphor will be required to point to an intuition. (CM, p. 166 & Mourélos, p. 62)

So although it might be impossible for a concept to represent indivisible continuity and radical creation at the same time it might still be possible to suggest these facets with more than one metaphor:

No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a

certain intuition to seize on. (Antliff, p. 345, CM, p. 195
quoted in RM, p. 131 fn.)

As one metaphor does not give sense without another (Robinet, p. 91) their combined effect cancels out their individual inadequacies to make a "... dynamic imageless awareness of *durée réelle*" (Capek, p. 328) possible. (Mourélos, p. 75) So life is like the unrolling of a coil and also a rolling up - but is in fact neither (Douglass 2, p. 219) to use Bergson's example.

These metaphors are best selected to be as different as possible so "... anyone of them will be prevented from usurping the place of the intuition it is instructed to call forth, since it would then be driven out immediately by its rivals." (CM, p. 166) What is important is that despite their differences they all demand the same attention as they all have the same degree of tension. Metaphor in bringing in subjective components of experience attempts to move the individual to the correct plane so as to be able to grasp the intuition which the metaphors are pointing to, although consciousness must acquiesce to this effort. (CM, p. 166) Opposed to the effort required to get to the level of images are simple concepts which merely replace the object they symbolise without effort. These concepts in their generality erase difference. Whereas images, as we saw with regard to vertical movement previously, are poised between a symbolic conceptual expression, on the one side and a direct consciousness of reality on the other. (Mourélos, p. 76) In a sense any expression will be a deformation and not fully adequate to the initial intuition of duration, but at the same time language is, as Jankélévitch

puts it, both an obstacle and a necessity, in the same way as an eye is the organ of vision and an obstacle to it (Jankélévitch, p. 247) in its necessary limitation. Language is thus necessary to point us to an original intuition via suggestion, but at the same time the multiple metaphors must be used to prevent us lazily becoming fixed on a particular image as if it were a simple concept which could replace the intuition.

So an intuition once gained may "... return to symbols, to language, to abstract representations in order to express itself." (Gunter, p. 34) An intuition is not after all inexpressible, despite what are, according to Matthews, Bergson's misleading statements to the contrary,⁶⁷ (Matthews, p. 121) an original philosophical intuition is introducible into language. (ADM, p. 468) It is not a case of doing without concepts but instead a case of using fluid concepts (metaphor being an example of one of these). (Matthews, p. 121) Given that Matthews interprets Bergsonian intuition as necessarily personal, qualitative and perspectival (Matthews, p. 125), he distinguishes between two sorts of language - the first expressive, unique and personal, the second scientific, general and socially expressible. (Matthews, p. 122) However we must be careful here to understand that it is not two different types of concepts which are at stake, but instead two different uses of language. So, for example, in Two

⁶⁷ "... metaphysics is a break with symbols ..." (CM, p. 194) Lacey connects this line of thought, via Lindsay's analysis, to Plato's comments in the Seventh Letter on words. (Lacey, p. 160) Plato, Phaedrus and Letters VII and VIII, trans. Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1973) p. 137 (342 marginal number). To examine this connection further would take us too far from the present task.

Sources of Morality and Religion, it is a case of doing violence to language, avoiding the simple concept, finding words which express something which they were not intended to, (TSMR, p. 254) which is what the creation of a metaphor, simile or comparison does - the former being one example of a fluid concept, its "... boundaries as yet unfixed."⁶⁸ (Mullarkey, pp. 152-3)

⁶⁸ Hausman also directly links Bergson's account of fluid concepts to metaphor. Carl R. Hausman, A Discourse on Novelty and Creation (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975) p. 82.

Fluid Concepts

Bergson makes a distinction between two kinds of concepts.⁶⁹ The first kind of concept is the one which has so far been discussed: it is stable and fixed. This type of concept is opposed to "... fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things." (CM, 190) (Lacey, p. 163) General concepts are fixed. They negate difference and homogenise, unlike the perceptions they ultimately refer to - the concept and perception do not coalesce. Fluid concepts, according to Bergson, are opposed to such fixity in that they involve a constant recasting of the categories of thought in order that reality, that is, perception, may be followed as closely as possible. If the mind continually recasts its categories then "[i]n so doing it will arrive at fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things." (CM, p. 190) For Mullarkey, as we have already indicated, one example of a fluid concept would be a metaphor. He argues that a metaphor is capable of "... adopting the very movement of the inner life of things" and can actually be a part of reality, not in terms of a solid object, but as a movement.

A metaphor, according to Mullarkey, shares something in common with its two sides, that there is, for example, something in common between

⁶⁹ In representing Bergson's position such that language acts merely to linguistically grid the fluid 'real', Battersby over-simplifies his position. (Christine Battersby, The Phenomenal Woman - Feminist Metaphysics and Patterns of Identity (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998.) p. 34.

an immense wave and life. This is not to say that there is one or more common features which can be found in both, but instead that a metaphor imitates the movement animating the lines of both life and a wave. By this Mullarkey suggests not that the specificity and difference between waves and life be reduced, that things always be generalised and seen in terms of other things and never for themselves, an accusation which Mandelshtam made against the symbolists (RM, p. 70), but instead that the movement which each instantiates and individuates be given without being abstract. (Mullarkey, pp. 152-3) This in effect means that a metaphor identifies the same generative process on both its sides and additionally, Mullarkey argues, the metaphor is itself part of a generative movement, so its boundaries are as yet unfixed. (Mullarkey, p. 154) This means that a concept can coincide with a movement because it is part of a reality and an instantiation of this movement as opposed to being a relationship of signifier to signified, in this sense expression is creative of what is expressed. (Mullarkey, pp. 154-5) Mullarkey refers to Delhomme in this regard, and some of her other comments are relevant to the current discussion.

Firstly words are independent of thought, according to Delhomme, as a thought can be phrased in multiple ways, (Delhomme, p. 23) this is because there is a tendency which is realised in the very act of writing, whose meaning is not pre-existent, as Jankélévitch argues. (Jankélévitch, p. 233) So it is not a pre-existing idea which finds expression but instead the continuity of a certain direction of attention, a movement towards, or an intentionality. (Delhomme, p. 144) So it is a case of actualising the virtual, (Delhomme, p. 145) rather than revealing the hidden already pre-existing possible. So in the case of metaphor the actual creation of a

metaphor is a realisation of a tendency which already existed but whose individuation creates something genuinely new.

The impression might have been given in the above that metaphor was superior to scientific concepts, and indeed Mullarkey does extol the fact that metaphors move away from a logic of rigid duality's. (Mullarkey, p. 154) However Mullarkey cautions us that in fact it is a case of two different types of concepts which function in different spheres. Scientific concepts apply to one sphere where they, according to Merleau-Ponty, form a mathematical and linguistic expression, rather than a direct notation,⁷⁰ whilst metaphor, which appears vague and indistinct applies in another realm. (Mullarkey, p. 154) Although metaphor is taken as an example at this point, there is no unique mode of expression for philosophical thought, as different levels of reality translate into emotion, images or concepts, for example. (Mourélos, p. 62) What is important is that the ease of rearranging fixed ready made concepts does not trick us into thinking that we are doing philosophy.

Given the importance of metaphor and the creative use of language the next section will focus on Bergson's account of poetry and examine the relation between intuition and art.

⁷⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Einstein and the Crisis of Reason". *Signs* (1960), trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) (Henceforth ECR) p. 197

Chapter 3 - Intuition and Poetry

Intuition before Symbols

The thesis, in attempting to explicate Bergson's position as regards concepts has suggested that there is a basic intuition to which several images point, and has suggested that philosophy does not have to rely on a non-symbolic mode of access to duration. However the issue of how individuals remove themselves from the utilitarian modes of access to things is still to be explored and will ultimately cast light on the artistic process as Bergson understands it and the relationship of art to philosophy. In describing intuition, the role of sympathy will be of primary importance. The deep knowledge intuition gives is in direct contrast to the superficiality which Bergson wishes to ascribe to humour. This discussion will eventually, in the following section, lead to a distinction between an element and a part, which has already been broached with regard to the rearrangement of concepts above. In order to outline Bergson's thinking as regards intuition, the thesis will firstly examine his distinction between absolute and relative knowledge. This examination will utilise Bergson's example of the photograph, which will then be contrasted briefly with Cubism and the cut-up technique of W. S. Burroughs. Photographs are seen by Bergson as rigidly cutting up the world using homogeneous space, thus giving incomplete relative knowledge, a knowledge linked, perhaps, to the visual in Bergson's later works. In opposition to this relative knowledge Bergson proposes absolute knowledge which is a perfect coincidence with the object of knowledge: this knowledge requiring 'sympathy'.

The difference between absolute and relative knowledge is expressed by Bergson in terms of a difference between the use of symbols and viewpoints employed, and an 'absolute knowledge' of a thing. (CM, p. 159) His point as regards the use of symbols is that the absolute may be understood symbolically, but knowledge should not be dependent upon them - symbols should not come first. This is doubly important when he talks about the axes of reference (CM, p. 159) for a movement where what is clearly at stake is not the denial of symbols per se, but instead the move away from a homogenising quantitative Cartesian understanding of movement. This is because concepts, as they are strictly understood, as simple properties, will never be able to get to reality as they are always an extraction from reality and the weight given to each will of necessity, never be able to be determined.

That is, symbols necessarily represent discrete sections or viewpoints on a thing, whereas an absolute knowledge has, in some senses, no viewpoint. To explain this distinction, Bergson takes the example of the knowledge an individual might have of a city. An individual can never truly know a city from photographs which have been taken of that city.

Using intuition, a near coincidence with the object, individuals can invert the ordinary direction of thought and move from reality to the concept rather than vice versa. (CM, p. 183) Instead of a surface (relative) relation involving perspectives, intuition attempts a 'deeper' relation, requiring flexibility to keep the self and object nearly coinciding - the object's qualitative movements being nearly corresponded with.

The photographs might give every possible view or angle which could be taken of the city, but this is not the same as being *in* the city in question.⁷¹ (CM, p. 160) This example is telling in several ways. On the one hand photographs are representations and thus present the individual with secondary and hence mediated experience. Anthropologists have found that certain peoples cannot interpret photographs.⁷² (Douglass 2, p. 217) Secondly, each of the photographs by their very nature are still, they do not give us movement, they freeze discrete moments. Photographs are thus symbols, fixed elements which inadequately signify a mobile actuality. Homogenised space has been stretched beneath them to allow their division. Thirdly, the photographs of the city are two dimensional pretending to give the three dimensional. Fourthly, photographs are visual. These four facts, for Bergson, mean that an individual who had photographs of a city from every possible angle would not have a true knowledge of the city. Instead the knowledge would at best be partial, at

⁷¹ Just as David Hockney's Pearblossom Hwy 11 - 18th April 1986 (1986) made using hundreds of overlapping photographs can never give us absolute knowledge of Pearblossom highway at its intersection.

⁷²

"... we *regard* the photograph ... as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there.

This need not have been so. We could easily imagine a people who did not have this relation to such pictures. Who, for example, would be repelled by photographs, because a face without colour and even perhaps a face reduced in scale struck them as inhuman."

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) p. 205e.

worst confusing. The attempt to connect the individual photographs into a whole, for Bergson, would be fruitless. The whole mobile reality cannot be reduced to a fixed series of homogeneous elements, however comprehensive. This view may be contrasted with that of the author W. S. Burroughs.

According to W. S. Burroughs in The Adding Machine.⁷³ the individual's experience of reality is never of wholes. One sees part of a head and a bit of a leg from which a whole is created. His cut-up method, an artistic embodiment of this observation, works in an analogous manner to the presentation of 'simultaneous' separate views in the cubist works of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. In Burroughs, the cut-up technique cuts text up, written by Burroughs then systematically rearranges these fragments into new and often startling sentences. For Bergson, Cubism acted precisely as a demonstration of the problem of not grasping wholes, not a graphic demonstration of the basic condition of our perception.⁷⁴ Extrapolating from his position would hypothetically yield the same response to Burroughs and to the following statement from J. Calder's introduction to The Ticket that Exploded:

⁷³ W. S. Burroughs, The Adding Machine: Collected Essays (London: John Calder, 1985).

⁷⁴ Bergson criticised Cubist works for attempting to move from analysis to the work of art. Because the cubists took this path they failed to grasp wholes. Despite his disapproval, aspects of Bergsonian philosophy continued to exert their influence on the Cubists. (Mark Antliff, Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993) p. 3.)

Words and clichés inhibit and imprison the mind in familiar associations and patterns. To cut up these clichés is to free the words and as *The Ticket* tells us, the mind as well: "the more you run the tapes through and cut them up the less power they will have."⁷⁵

The problem with such a position for Bergson is that words cut up and rearranged in random associations might free individuals from patterns of thought which they have become trapped in, but on the other hand the random association of words just gives the *appearance* of new paths but the random connections are in many ways close to the absurd, and thus could at most, provide a source for potential jokes, and little else. This process just seems to emphasise the homogeneity of language, or rather treats them as elements as opposed to taking them as a whole. Instead there are a series of fixed and immobile segments which can be shuffled and rearranged at will.

So Burroughs' cut-up, cubism, and photography⁷⁶ all give a rigid perspective on the world, one in opposition to the fluid perception of the continuity of life. Additionally, the very fact they are visual, as shall be detailed in the subsequent, is also a cause for concern as the visual can have difficulty grasping wholes, according to Bergson's post Matter and

⁷⁵ W. S. Burroughs, The Ticket that Exploded (London: Paladin, 1987). p. 7 (Henceforth Ticket)

⁷⁶ Deleuze is surely right when he comments that for Bergson it was as if there had always been cinema and hence photography. (Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1 The Movement-Image, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1992) p. 2) (Henceforth Cinema 1)

Memory position.⁷⁷ Visual discrete entities can be contrasted with sonic entities, which are always positioned between the continuous and the discrete. Burroughs, for Bergson, would merely be treating the verbal as discrete elements in the cut-up technique, as opposed to understanding it in terms of the sonic as a flow which is both continuous and heterogeneous. Bergson, as already mentioned, does think there is an alternative to the symbolic fixed mediation which cuts up the world, this being 'absolute knowledge'. The question, of course, is what an attempt to gain an absolute knowledge of a thing unmediated by symbols would consist in and how such knowledge could be achieved. To examine this question the thesis will initially look to the account given in An Introduction to Metaphysics, supplemented by Matter and Memory but will then look to the later Creative Evolution, in order to outline a maturer view on intuition.

There are 3 fundamental thesis with regard to our knowledge in Matter and Memory, according to Worms, firstly that habitual knowledge is relative and imperfect. Secondly that this habitual knowledge is not relative to the constitutive structure of our knowledge, but is instead contingent and caused by the necessities of living and acting. This means that "common" facts are an adaptation of the real to utilitarian interests. (MM, p. 183) The internal or external continuity is broken up into elements - distinct words or independent objects, which are then added

⁷⁷ Martin Jay interestingly sees Bergson's account of the body, primarily in Matter and Memory, as an attack on ocularcentrism. Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes - The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1994) pp. 192-209.

together with a superadded bond to form an empty diagram which is as empty as the parts it holds together. (MM, p. 183) It is taking this discontinuity as a starting point, which, according to Bergson, allows the possibility of several metaphysics, leading, eventually, to Kant's ding-an-sich and the inaccessibility of things. (MM, p. 184) Thirdly that we can move beyond this habitual knowledge, but not by going beyond immediate sensible experience. (MM, p. 187 & Worms, p. 201) It is not that empiricism sets too high a value on experience, but that its experience is not immediate contact between mind and object, but instead arranged for the greater facility of action and language. (MM, p. 183) As contact is mediated by practical considerations the internal structure of things are not followed. (MM, p. 184) Perception is a limitation of what is not of interest, (Mullarkey, p. 48) a simplification of reality. (Capek, p. 282) It is thus necessary to disengage from the exigencies of life to rejoin concrete matter. (MM, p. 185, Worms, p. 212) To get to knowledge before it takes a turn towards utility and becomes properly human - (MM, p. 184) to perceive the singularity of the individual. (Mullarkey, p. 158) Thus Kant, according to Bergson, demonstrates only the impotence of the intellect when it is enslaved to bodily necessities and the satisfaction of his wants. (MM, p. 184)

These theses are developed in Bergson's later work and come to represent two types of knowledge, one where there is no distance between the true and the real, and another which by division and spatialisation, has attempted to understand through sameness - indeed the intellect can become almost totally disengaged from things. (Delhomme, p. 93) Intuition is a reality given immediately as an undivided continuity,

as opposed to being tied to the exigencies of social life, and practical adaptation. (Matthews, p. 122) This attempt to get away from the exigencies of social life resembles the Epoché in as much as it attempts to cast off the everyday prejudices and let phenomena speak for themselves, (Gunter, p. 28) rather than relying on scientific and logical significations. (SE, p. 732) It is thus an attempt to understand things in themselves without translation. Indeed Matthews claims that the need to get to a description of our actual experience of the world, as opposed to the construction of explanatory theories brings Bergson's position close to that of phenomenology. (Matthews, pp. 118-9 & p. 123) Indeed certain phenomenologists, particularly Levinas, have expressed a similar need to get to a living concrete reality as opposed to the abstract. (Trotington, p. 290)

As we have already suggested, practical needs mean things are immobilised, cut and shaped to utilitarian needs (Jankélévitch, pp. 128-9) which means perception is usually closed to what is going on in the environment, but this does not mean that "... there is nothing there." (Mullarkey, p. 141) But in order to perceive what is there it is necessary to break habitual patterns of thought (Capek, p. 59), indeed it is these according to Capek which have lead to much of the opposition to the new physics, (Capek 2, p. 324) particularly in the tendency to deal with the subatomic in terms of solid immutable particles. This move beyond habit in intuition will always require an effort. (Worms, p. 260) If intuition were passive and habitual it would fail to act flexibly, would not adapt itself to the world, would be a mere watching "... 'as a dozing shepherd watches the running water'", (CM, p. 184) or what Bachelard calls

reverie. However as intuition always moves beyond habits of thought in each philosophical exploration, intuition will, of necessity, always have an element of self-critique of its own methods. (Worms, p. 260) Intuition and will always attempt to be open, be in sympathy with reality, to perceive what is usually not perceived, as opposed to closing down and attempting the mastery and control of reality. (Mullarkey, p. 122) This has two major consequences. Firstly that intuition as an attempt to move beyond habits will provide a different solution on each occasion to counter whatever habit is in question.⁷⁸ Secondly, as Mullarkey points out, the constant adaptation to reality required by sympathy, will be different for each intuition, if for no other reason than reality is itself in flux. (Mullarkey, p. 159) So although intuition is not "... a mathematical essence which could be summed up in a formula," (CM, p. 34) it does have a fundamental meaning: "... to think intuitively is to think in duration." (CM, p. 34)

So it is not a question of mere affectivity or sentiment, nor mere sympathy according to Mourélos, but also reflection. (Mourélos, p. 64) The identification of 'mere sympathy' here identifies only the possibility that sympathy can give intuition by itself, not that sympathy plays no part, as without a sympathetic connection to reality the openness which intuition requires will be impossible. This openness, if understood *only* in terms of empathy would leave intuition able to relate only to other conscious beings, and would thus be limited in scope, and could not

⁷⁸ Alain de Latre, Bergson: Une Ontologie de la Perplexité (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) p. 282 (Henceforth De Latre)

provide a "... basis for a general method of metaphysics." (Matthews, p. 120) The necessity for reflection, as well as sympathy, underlines the active nature of intuition as opposed to the passive intuition of Schelling, for example. (RM, p. 23) It is a question of an intellectual sympathy. (Delhomme, p. 162) Intuition then is a naive fresh vision which does not interpret in terms of associations and souvenirs, (Jankélévitch, p. 239 & Delhomme, p. 162) nor in terms of measurement, relation or comparison, looking instead at the object for itself, (Mullarkey, p. 122) but it is also one which has to be worked at. It is a knowing from the inside rather than a translation into terms other than itself, the living reality, rather than a discursive knowledge: (Mourélos, p. 71) it is a return to the individual and unique. (Mullarkey, p. 158 & HBP, p. 74)

In An Introduction to Metaphysics, Bergson presents the description of intuition as a conclusive distinction between external analysis and internal entering, (CM, p. 161) the former making a distinction between agent and things acted on (Matthews, p. 121), the later making barely any distinction between the subject and object. (Worms, p. 209 & Matthews, p. 120)

Intuition first of all signifies consciousness, but immediate consciousness, vision which is hardly distinguished from the object viewed, knowledge which is contact and also coincidence.⁷⁹ An attempt to coincide, to gain absolute knowledge (CM, p. 161) in this sense, would seemingly necessitate, as in Schopenhauer, a despatialisation of the object and

⁷⁹ Henri Bergson, La Pensée et le Mouvant - Essais et Conférences. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) p. 1273

viewer for such a coincidence to occur. Yet this is *not* what Bergson argues. Bergson deliberately takes the example of movement in space to show that even space "... the variability nearest to homogeneity ..." (CM, p. 181) can be understood in terms of intuition, without there being a variety of views or perspectives on an object. This notion of being without perspective is an attempt to remove ourselves from the frame of human necessities which see space as a homogeneous medium over which movement traverses and instead correspond to the movement itself in its qualitative specificity. It is a case of being part of a movement rather than a spectator on that movement, but coincidence, does *not* imply a despatialisation, but instead a movement with the processional inner change of the object. This is what is meant by a 'coincidence', the attempt to place oneself within the object through 'intuition.' (CM, p. 178)

This kind of approach has led to intuition being regarded as a semi-divine state, a direct non-symbolic access without a point of view, but this is only the 'negative side' of Bergson's approach. (In Praise, p. 12) As Worms comments it is only in An Introduction to Metaphysics that this distinction between external analysis and internal penetration is so conclusively drawn. (Worms, p. 209) It is the distinction between the sympathy of instinct, which is incapable of modification and progression (Delhomme, p. 135) and the geometry of intelligence which is drawn in Creative Evolution which gives a more advanced account of intuition.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that Duration and Simultaneity returns to the account of intuition given in Introduction to Metaphysics whilst Two Sources of Morality and Religion looks to the account given in Creative Evolution.

These two tendencies⁸¹ which are enshrined in man, are, in a sense moving in opposite directions. (Delhomme, p. 57) Intuition is like instinct in that it requires a sympathy, an immediate consciousness, yet it also requires an effort, so it is more than mere immediacy. (Mullarkey, p. 158)

In Creative Evolution intuition is given as an alternative to the instinct / intellect (Jankélévitch, p. 165) and rationalism / irrationalism dichotomies, (Mourélos, p. 60) which are, in one sense, moving in opposite directions. Intuition is instead a higher union of the two tendencies from which both instinct and intelligence originate. (CE, p. 178) Bergson defines instinct as an unconscious (CE, p. 145) unlearned awareness of living things, (Gunter2, p. 174) which results from a felt, rather than thought sympathetic relationship, an ability to suffer with, (Mullarkey, p. 79) to detect the other's feeling of vulnerability. There is, for example, an instinctual sympathy between a wasp and the caterpillar it paralyzes but does not kill, (CE, p. 174) it is this sympathy which allows the wasp to know where the caterpillar should be stung. To sense the caterpillar from within, rather than externally. (CE, p. 174) This sensing is part of a developing relationship between the two creatures, one which is only puzzling if seen in terms of two separate things which must somehow be joined together. Instead it is a case of a continuity, a relationship which has developed over time. (Mullarkey, p. 79) This is why instinct can understand life because it is part of a continuous process. (Mullarkey, p. 79) Each living thing has the same origin and

⁸¹ It should be carefully noted that for Bergson instinct and intelligence are never pure states. (CE, p. 135)

retains something of that origin, this is the basis of sympathy. (Gunter, p. 174) The instinctive knowledge the wasp has of the caterpillar is derived from the unity of all life, (CE, p. 167) the original origin of life abiding, according to Bergson, in all its parts. (CE, p. 54)

To be more precise each organism is the development from a virtual whole which creates its lines of development in its realisation, so meaning the whole does not resemble the lines it produces, and is thus creative of difference. On the other hand there are multiple planes in virtual coexistence in the whole which means that although each line is differentiated from the others it also carries the whole with it, virtually. Each of the individual lines, as a species, is the realisation of a virtual level each of which are virtual repetitions over an infinity of other levels. So in each the actualisation of a particular level does not negate the other levels which are carried, virtually within each level.⁸² So the instinctive knowledge each insect has for its prey, can be divined or foreseen. (Robinet, p. 123) It is however not a prediction of the future or a case of induction, but a remembering. (Jankélévitch, p. 157) This is to be understood in terms of the whole of life functioning like a memory, a series of virtual planes which are actualised but still carry, virtually that which is yet to be actualised.

Despite the power of instinct and the ability it gives to know the thing from inside, there is a downside. Instinct is narrow "blindly lucid" [aveuglement lucide] and fixed. (Jankélévitch, p. 158) It resembles habit

⁸² This account mirrors that to be found in Chapter 5 of Deleuze's Bergsonism.

in its fixity, (Jankélévitch, p. 159) if not in its method of acquisition. It is an unvarying mechanism, (Robinet, p. 124) which is linked to the structure of each species - indeed if the structure changes so does the species. (Mourélos, p. 155) This adherence in instinct is a content without form, whereas the intellect is based on a mobile sign which is flexible, but has no content. (Mullarkey, p. 80) There is a fusion in instinct between the object and subject, (Delhomme, p. 59) if such terms even make sense, whereas in the case of the intellect there is an absolute separation between subject and object. The intellect, because of this separation, is turned away from immediate action, (Mourélos, p. 157) allowing reflection on possible actions, which can replace real action, consciousness can exist. (Delhomme, p. 57) One of the reasons that there are, as Bergson comments, objects which intelligence searches for but cannot find and intuition finds but cannot search for (Jankélévitch, p. 158 & Delhomme, p. 57) is the self-consciousness of the intellect:

"... the intellect alone ... troubles itself with theory ..." (CE, p. 160)

The second reason is the non-adherent relation of the mobile sign to its referent, which leaves the intellect concerned with relations, rather than individual objects, (CE, pp. 150-1) whereas intuition is concerned with individual objects, and so is not concerned with relations. (CE, p. 151) So despite intellect and instinct having a common origin and hence being carried in both plants and animals, (Mullarkey, p. 80 & Mourélos, p. 152) they remain different in kind, even though they are to some extent complementary. (Mourélos, p. 153) However intuition and intellect never exist in their pure states. (Mullarkey, p. 79) Although the intellect

dominates over instinct in humans it always has a fringe of intuition, and conversely instinct moves in a conceptual atmosphere. (Mullarkey, p. 78)

The above clearly shows why intuition cannot be reduced to mere instinct; it is an instinct which has become self-conscious and capable of adaptation, in short it has become disinterested. (Gunter2, p. 175) Whilst intuition can go to intellect, the opposite movement is not possible. (Mourélos, p. 236) Intuition is the origin of both the intellect and instinct (Mullarkey, p. 160) and thus has the qualities of both of these tendencies, produced by its bifurcation. Intuition is possessed of sympathy and the openness to the other, from instinct, whilst also being disinterested (intellect) and open to several life forms. (Mullarkey, p. 159) This openness, as it is not attached to one particular life form, allows us to understand the universal, life in general, without it being a theoretical abstraction. (Mullarkey, p. 159) Intuition thus connects our individual understanding of life to total life. (Delhomme, p. 177) In this sense our understanding of life is based on our carrying of its intention which is never fully realised, (In Praise, p. 23) i.e. it is because the individual is a partial realisation of life that they can gain access to life as a whole. This point mirrors Capek's understanding of intuition with regard to duration. Drawing on Ingarden, Capek proposes that although the individual content of duration might be unique in each case there is some underlying structure to duration which is always the same.⁸³ (Capek, p. 168) This

⁸³ Because of this singular notion of duration, Merleau-Ponty maintains, it is possible not only are we implicated in duration as a whole, but can also access other durations, although such access of necessity changes duration as a whole. (In Praise, p. 15) This seems to be the point being made by Bergson's example of the sugar

structure seems to be perceived in a non-sensual manner, (Capek, p. 168) which can, be understood, as the grasping of a tendency. It is what these tendencies all possess which allows their origin to be traced. Thus it is necessary, to move against the natural associative tendencies of the intellect, towards dissociation. (Mullarkey, p. 39) This dissociation acts to find the initial processes which lead to the bifurcation of the original unity. (Mullarkey, p. 161)

... it is by taking opposites in their extreme difference that intuition perceives their reunion. (Making, p. 185)

Indeed Deleuze describes two distinct sorts of intuition in Bergson. Firstly that which gives the difference between things, and the second which traces divergent lines of fact to a probability. (BCD, pp. 43-4) In Bergson's account of science, for example it is a case of taking all the facts and combining them to locate a primordial unity. (Mourélos, p. 65) But intuition is more than this in that there has to be the initial dissociation into instinct and intellect, for example, in order that the virtual point at which they converge, intuition, can be discovered behind them, or the creativity of the *élan vital* separated from matter which is then rejoined at a virtual level "... confusingly also called life or *élan vital*." (Mullarkey, p. 81)

Once the particular intuition is found as a virtual point it is possible to develop it into a scheme via reflection and analysis. (Mourélos, p. 72) Because an intuition is traced from a series of lines which point to the

dissolving in water, which is dealt with in the subsequent.

original source of production intuition can be seen as a means of reliving the lines of production through fluid concepts, which translate / express tendencies. (Robinet, p. 149) In this sense Mullarkey's description of fluid concepts as being a part of the process of reality means that they can be part of the process of intuition as they are not merely an attempt to grasp intuition after the fact, but are instead a part of the grasping itself. This would mean it was not a case of an indirect presentation of the direct level of intuitive knowledge (Mourélos, p. 72) as Bergson seems to suggest. (CM, p. 168) Instead the two movements, that of the fluid concept, and that of reality would in some way coincide, intuition even being defined as a coincidence of two movements by Delhomme. (Delhomme, p. 165)

This kind of argument is suggestive of the need to get into the same, or rather the analogous rhythm as the object of contemplation in Matter and Memory, as opposed to the ego-ism of laughter which withdraws rather than attempts to get into an analogous rhythm to the thing in question.

The notion of sympathy which has been discussed above, is in clear contrast to humour, which was characterised by its denial of the sympathetic relationship. It is clear from the above analysis of intuition, that if humour did involve sympathy, it would have the possibility of gaining more than an outward relation to the object of humour, and this is what Bergson wishes to deny. This distinction is important as humour, for Bergson must be distinguished from 'serious' providers of knowledge - mysticism, art and philosophy, all of which rely on intuition and are not 'superficial'.

More Photographs

The thesis above has begun to explore what exactly Bergson means by 'intuition'. It has been seen that intuition is an absolute knowledge which is gained through a coincidence between the knower and the known. The question of how intuition might relate to Bergson's distinction between the part and the element will now be discussed, elements being allied to 'concepts' (as narrowly understood) and parts, the account will suggest, to motifs. This exploration will start by examining Bergson's well known criticisms of cinematographical movement. These criticisms hinge on the element / part distinction, a distinction which will be seen to function in a similar way with regard to language.

Bergson's description of poetry will then be examined to see how the element / part distinction works in a practical situation. This will in turn lead to a distinction between two kinds of infinite, one true, and one false. The true infinite is linked to the part which is necessarily the subject of intuition. The false infinite, on the other hand, is linked to the element which is analysed not intuited. The account of poetry also importantly gives another description of language which attempts to circumvent the problems associated with homogeneous concepts cutting up the world, only giving shadows of their referents and so forth. The attempt to circumvent the problems Bergson associates with language will be seen to involve a rhythmicisation of language. In order to understand Bergson's exact approach to poetry and its rhythmicisation of language, the thesis will compare Bergson to the early Russian Formalist

literary critics,⁸⁴ who appear to be forwarding a superficially similar account of poetry.

In order to understand the role intuition plays in Bergson's philosophy, the thesis will now examine Bergson's account of movement. One manner of understanding movement is exemplified by the photographs of Etienne-Jules Marey. Marey used a series of photographs taken in very quick succession to capture a movement - most famously a horse galloping. This picture series (chronophotography) demonstrated that when a horse gallops there is one point when all its feet do leave the ground. Here a number of individual 'poses' (to use Deleuze's term) are used to indicate the movement, details of which are not visible to the naked eye - all the legs of a galloping horse leaving the ground at once. This however is not, for Bergson, an understanding of movement, even though it would seem to give greater *information* about the movement than would otherwise be available. Marey's photography is the perfect example of a process of 'analysis' for Bergson, it is the attempt to *recompose* a movement from pre-given segments, as opposed to grasping a whole.

This division of movement is a product of the homogenisation of space, which has already been briefly mentioned. Homogeneous space is

⁸⁴ Early Russian Formalist literary critics will hereafter be shortened to Formalists. This designates critics including Shklovsky, Tomashevsky, Eichenbaum et al, as opposed to Jakobson, Bakhtin, Tynyanov et al.

amorphous, inert and can be divided into an infinity of instant positions. Each of these instant positions pre-exists its realisation and results in a notion of movement being over a pre-existing space, with each point of the movement born 'anew' with no coherence between its past and present, (MM, p. 187 & p. 218) and without futural novelty. (Capek, p. 131) These instant positions are still identical units which give a quantitative understanding of movement, via a series of immobilities. (Delhomme, p. 111)

This homogenisation of movement is itself the product of the practical bent of the mind dividing extension into absolutely separate objects. (MM, p. 245 & Cariou, p. 106) This requirement for the absolute separability of objects results in the production of a relationship of container to contained (Delhomme, p. 93) and a series of objects which can be juxtaposed and given simultaneously, (Delhomme, p. 96) what might be termed a geometric order. (Cariou, p. 107) Instead of a changing series of qualities, there are a series of fixed quantities which remain unchanged over time in absolutely independent bodies. (Delhomme, p. 85 & p. 90) It is homogeneous space which allows the idea of a permanent object with stable qualities over time (Delhomme, p. 93) as its infinite divisibility can be stretched beneath moving bodies which are seen to be separable from the medium they are travelling in. (MM, pp. 209-10) Yet homogeneous space is an empty scheme (Worms, p. 236) produced by the imagination (Worms, p. 238) a diagram or symbol - it has no other reality. (MM, p. 219) This diagram is the product of a biological operation which attains perfection in human's whose aim is the reduction of information (Worms, p. 238) which is not immediately

useful. This is why the cutting of matter is relative, that is, it is not a property of the matter itself, but of the space stretched underneath it, and prey to practical concerns and the exigencies of action. (MM, p. 219 & HB, p. 39)

It is important to note, however, that although homogeneous space and the divisibility it engenders is artificial and not a feature of either matter or movement: there is something in matter which lends itself to such subdivision, (CE, p. 219) despite it being possible to see matter in terms other than those of homogeneous space. (Capek, p. 261) In matter there is a reduction of heterogeneity, a move towards the homogeneous, matter never attaining total homogeneity. (Capek, p. 218, Worms, p. 198) So homogeneity is only fully realised in homogeneous space, as matter is constituted by qualitative change. (Worms, pp. 232-3) The divisibility which homogeneous space allows is not only practically useful but is also behind the success of science as classically conceived,⁸⁵ (Delhomme, p. 73) which allows the Laplacean conception of stable corpuscles where there is change only in the relations between rather than of corpuscles. (Capek 2, p. 306) But then if there is a continuity of identity in movement over time, there needs to be a bond between the different instant states,

⁸⁵ In Creative Evolution Bergson maintains that science always has practical utility in mind. (Mullarkey, p. 126 fn 85) as previously noted, however with regard to the current debate it is important to note that according to Matter and Memory. immediate data and science in its remotest aspirations are in agreement on the notion of continuity. (MM, p. 197) Bergson goes on to suggest that the new physics moves against the habits of thought and the notions of solidity and absolutely separate bodies, which are created by the practical needs of humans. (MM, pp. 199-201)

(Capek 2, p. 307) which homogeneity has produced. Whilst there can never actually be totally atomised individuals without duration, (MM, p. 190 & Capek, p. 302, p. 318) in the move towards such a state the bond between the quasi-instantaneous states is effectively given by homogeneous space (MM, p. 211) which acts to make each position in space exactly the same except for its co-ordinates. (MM, p. 330 & Mullarkey, p. 13) The geometric figure, cut out from homogeneous space, is identical wherever it is. (Delhomme, p. 77) This means that qualitative difference is effectively lost (MM, p. 217, Delhomme, p. 77 & BDC, p. 44) in a space which is prior to its occupant. (MM, p. 231 & Cariou, p. 113) Yet no entity can change place without changing itself, i.e. qualitative change is basic to movement. (BCD, p. 48, Antliff 2, p. 187, Worms, p. 220) So there must be an alternative way of thinking about space.

The alternative to the static and empty homogeneous space is concrete extension. (Capek 2, p. 303) Extension does not already pre-exist its occupation, and is thus inseparable from the 'objects' which are part of it. Any movement is not 'in space' but creative of space (Antliff 2, p. 187) and a part of duration as it takes time, meaning movement is qualitative. (Lecerle, p. 198) What is produced is a transference of state as opposed to the transference of a thing (MM, p. 201 & Capek, p. 275) because there is no absolute distinction between an object and the space which it is creating. Thus it is a question of the whole changing, rather than a series of relations between fixed objects and points, the latter being a mathematical understanding of relative motion. (MM, p. 193 & 196, Delhomme, p. 118 & Worms, p. 225) But as it is a movement of the

whole real change and movement are not relative: (Worms, p. 220) there is no such thing as movement in general, each movement being necessarily different. (Mullarkey, p. 26 & Worms, p. 219) Opposed to the simple extended / unextended dichotomy Bergson argues there are multiple degrees between the extended and the unextended (Cariou, p. 114) - extensity being between divided extension and pure inextension. (MM, p. 245 & Mullarkey, p. 13) Homogeneous space is conceived, (symbolic) whereas perception before it is subjected to the practical diagram imposed by our needs is of extension (real). (MM, p. 187 & MM, p. 189, Jankélévitch, p. 32 & Worms, p. 219) Extension, the alternative to homogeneous space, is thus qualitative and indivisible (Cariou, p. 106) yet also diverse (Worms, p. 247) - it is a continuity which is not made up of homogeneous repeating units. (Worms, p. 207) So extensity possess the general structure of duration, without losing its extensive quality. (Capek 2, p. 305)

Marey's photography in splitting up a movement into sections, creates an homogeneous as opposed to an extensive space where the individual pictures which make up the chronophotograph, are elements, not parts of the movement. (CM, p. 180) Elements, as Bergson defines them, are symbols. In Marey's case elements are 'still points of a movement', a phrase which sums up the oxymoronic character of the element, as there is no point at which a movement is still. (Lecerle, p. 198) To describe movement in terms of still points is to describe movement in terms which are other to it, and which ultimately destroys it, (Cariou, p. 110) whereas an intuition describes something in its own terms, according to Bergson.

The distinction may then be made between the *element* which is *abstracted* and the *part* which is *intuited*. An element in a machine is fully separable, and autonomous, yet this is not the case for an emotion, for example, (Jankélévitch, p. 12) nor a movement. Whereas elements pre-exist their separability, parts are created in their act of division. (Jankélévitch, p. 12) Thus, to take another example of a qualitative movement,⁸⁶ in evolution the move is not from pre-existing elements to a whole, but instead the division of a whole into newly created parts. (Jankélévitch, p. 139) Elements, on the contrary can be arranged and disarranged as a numeric multiplicity because they are immobile (Delhomme, p. 70) producing nothing new. (Delhomme, p. 87) But a part is a creation of something which is meaningful, a division which is internal to that which is being divided, rather than external and arbitrary as regards the thing in question.

Dividing a text into its individual elements, say letters, for example, allows anagrams, 'I'm an evil Tory bigot' being the fortunate, or unfortunate anagram of Virginia Bottomely's name.⁸⁷ Whilst an anagram is not always immediately obvious this does not mean that it is created rather than found. The anagram pre-exists its finding, it is in no way new - it is merely a question of juxtaposition and rearrangement. The part, on

⁸⁶ As Mullarkey notes Bergson's understanding of movement is very broad and encompasses "... many other notions of change ..." in addition to what would usually be thought of, i.e. a movement in space. (Mullarkey, p. 13)

⁸⁷ Craig Charles & Russell Bell, The Craig Charles Almanac of Total Knowledge (London: Boxtree, 1993) p. 14.

the contrary is produced from a whole which changes every time it is divided creating novelty. The contrast then is between the indivisible simplicity of the element, versus the complex part which is indivisible by any fixed number of pre-existing elements - the letters of the alphabet in the case of a text. As the part is not divisible by a fixed number of pre-existing elements it can be the subject of inexhaustible comprehension, it is "... flickering, fluttering and scintillating with virtual qualities" (Jankélévitch, p. 230) and thus in a sense infinite. (CM, p. 161) It is the part which is gained by intuition as opposed to the intellect which gains the element. (Mourélos, p. 61) The part is extensity, the element homogeneity.

A photograph of a particular part of a city is an element, it is still, whereas our knowledge of the city as a whole might be made up of a number of parts, each one individual and related to another, not necessarily entirely separate, but distinguishable and essentially mobile. (CM, p. 180) If this distinction is, as the thesis suggested above, linked to the notion of a motif as opposed to a concept, then there might be a way to link Bergson's notion of the motif back to language without succumbing to the problems which he sees with concepts narrowly understood as elements abstracted from a whole. To do this, the thesis will now turn to Bergson's account of poetry.

A poem consists of letters, which are *elements* of the poem, they are not carriers of meaning. To analyse a poem by reducing it to its letters does not bring the meaning any closer, letters are partial *expressions* of a poem, not component parts, (CM, p. 171) they are elements. (CM, p.

182) The question of which is the simplest element is an illformulated question as the simplest is relative to the level which the question is aimed at. In one sense the question of the simplest could refer to the molecules of a chair, or the subatomic structure and this would be perfectly reasonable in a scientific discourse. On the other hand, when looking for somewhere to sit down the simplest element is the chair. The level of analysis is a level of appropriateness, and this is also the case for Bergson. Breaking a text down into its component letters might be useful for spelling practice or in gaining a knowledge of the material level of the text, however such an analysis appears alien to the level of semantic meaning. It is not that the level is not necessary, or that it is a supplement of some description, it is instead that it is not primary in this context. The material level, whilst still being present, has to be necessarily closed to the semantic realm to at least some degree.

The other way to understand this distinction is in terms of the recognition of wholes in Matter and Memory. Here it is a case that the meaning of a text is taken as a whole rather than being split up into separate letters which are then analysed to give the meaning of the text.

The finding of the correct approach and definition of the part is essential in achieving the correct understanding of a poem. The thesis will assume although Bergson does not make it explicit at this point, that a part of a poem would be the meaning of a line, or a stanza, or a section in a longer poem - different subdivisions can thus occur, but only at certain levels, and there can be parts within parts, though each one should be *meaningful* to some extent in itself. This is in no way a question of

finding the total meaning in one of the individual parts, or even more so in an element, instead one is dividing difficulties. This means that once understood the whole can be recomposed to produce the original complex indecomposable signification. (Delhomme, p. 155)

It is always necessary to take the whole poem, to understand a work's full meaning as each individual stanza not only adds to the meaning of the whole, as an addition of something new to the pre-existing, but also because each new addition changes the meaning of the stanzas of the poem which have already been given. Meaning, as will become apparent in the subsequent, in a poem, if not elsewhere, is essentially carried by rhythm. This might be in terms of taking the individual to the correct level via rhythm. This means that the element / part distinction will be defined in terms of movement again, where individual elements are still and not carriers of meaning, whereas parts are rhythmic (moving) and do carry meaning. In this sense, the mobile *part* will be a *rhythmic unit*. This point will be elucidated further in the subsequent.

The element / part distinction is also definitive of two sorts of infinity, the one related to an intuition of the part, giving an absolute (true infinite) knowledge, the other, the element, giving an incomplete knowledge (false infinite). The two sorts of infinity are defined in terms of the explanations which result from taking an element or a part from a poem. If, Bergson claims, he attempts to translate the simple impression a line of Homer makes on him to someone who knows no Greek he will do several things. Firstly, in attempting to explain the impression, Bergson will translate the line, then comment on his translation, additional translations into other

languages might give additional nuances which bring the impression closer, but ultimately they will never capture the original impression, they fail to translate every nuance. (CM, p. 161) In short, a translation will never give an absolute knowledge of a thing, as a translation is always in terms other than the original.

This failure to capture every nuance links to Bergson's claim, that we have already touched on that there are things which are infinite. By this he means there are things which are 'indivisible', that is, not things which have no elements, but things whose very division changes the whole which they are. As there can be no elemental division these things can be the subject of "... inexhaustible enumeration ...". Anything which can be the subject of inexhaustible enumeration is defined as infinite, as one can never get to the end of it. (CM, p. 161) In this sense, an intuition is infinite. An intuition is never fully expressible, it is always made more complex by explanation. (CM, p. 109) The distinction here has to be between the false infinite produced with the aid of homogeneous space, all explanations aiming to give the movement back to that which has been stilled, and the true infinite, that of intuition whose parts are mobile. Elements which are still are infinite due to their *incompleteness* which cannot recreate the whole from which they have been taken. One does not reach the original through the elements. The infinite in this case is false, as it is merely a failure to grasp the original mobile whole or part. It can now be seen why a fluid concept might be considered analogous to infinitesimal calculus. If infinitesimal calculus attempts (unsuccessfully) to give the part, rather than the element, it is aiming at giving an intuitive mobility rather than a 'still', analysed, section. However, calculus still

relies on breaking change into an infinite number of points, as opposed to grasping a motion whole, and this seems central to its initial conception and hence to it ultimately only being able to give elements, not parts. Space still remains essentially homogenised.

The intuition of a part, as opposed to its analysis, is whole, as it only corresponds to itself, it is taken in its own terms. The singular is not reduced to equivalence. The intuition an individual has of a line of Homer in Greek is 'infinite' because it can never be captured in analysis. Intuition is thus concerned to find those units which are mobile, to which individuals can correspond, like a line of Homer. Here the correspondence with the mobile inner being of the thing is again uppermost in Bergson's mind.

The mobile units in poetry which are being corresponded to, are defined by rhythm and movement within the line. The fact that Bergson's description of poetry should involve rhythm and movement should be of no surprise. Nor, in fact is Bergson's account on one level surprising. Poetry works by subverting the usual linguistic system, bringing intuition into language and hence making words into art goes against their essentially utilitarian nature. (CM, p. 80) Such making is partly concerned with rhythm and movement which are introduced into the words. Both the terms 'making' and 'introduction' are somewhat odd, as it sounds almost as if Bergson sees poeticisation as a device,⁸⁸ and his

⁸⁸ Formalist critics like Viktor Shklovsky "... aimed ... to outline models and hypotheses (in a scientific spirit) to explain how aesthetic effects are produced by literary devices ..." (Raman Selden, A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory, 2nd ed. (Hemel Hemstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989) p. 10. (Henceforth

explanation as an attempt to show how literary effects are produced. Poetry, on this account, might be seen as the defamiliarisation of ordinary language via particular processes into something artistic. Certainly this kind of account would appear parallel to Moore's attempt to explain Bergson's approach to humour in terms of recipes and productive knowledge which the thesis has previously examined. It has already been suggested that, in the form Moore presents it, such an account gives an inadequate description of Bergson's system with regard to humour. Is Moore's description of Bergson's method, with regard to humour, more appropriately applied to Bergson's description of poetry? If not, is there something more than mere instrumentalism at stake in Bergson's account of poetry, something more than a delineation of a set of applied techniques? Instead of extrapolating from Moore's account, the thesis will look at a fully fledged critical account of this sort, which the Formalists, particularly Shklovsky, carried out and compare it to Bergson's own account. Such an account is of particular interest as Bergson is often associated with the Symbolist⁸⁹ movement which the Russian Formalists were reacting against.

Selden))

⁸⁹ Bergson notes that although the symbolist movement effectively started the year before the publication of *l'Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience* there was mutual ignorance on the part of the poets and himself. However his comments as regards their work are positive. Henri Bergson, *Mélanges*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972) pp. 843-4 (Henceforth M)

Is Bergson a Formalist?

In the last section the thesis examined the notion of intuition in light of the element / part distinction. Intuition was seen to grasp the mobile part, as opposed to the still element, leading to the distinction between a true and a false infinite. An intuition of the poem was capable of infinite analysis, being rich in content, this being opposed to a false infinite which attempted to explain the poem without having grasped it, and was therefore doomed to infinitely try to explain what had not been grasped in the first place. Poetry is described by Bergson as subverting the utilitarian, superficial nature of concepts, as narrowly defined. This notion of subversion appears to bear similarity to a position put forward by the Formalists.

The present section of this thesis is concerned to examine whether a connection exists between Bergson and the Formalists. To this end it will briefly outline the formalist position suggesting from the outset that Bergson is somewhat distanced from its theoretical concerns. Although poetry might not be analysable in Formalist terms, for Bergson, the possibility might still exist that humour is. The thesis to this end briefly reminds the reader of why this is not the case. Returning to poetry it will be seen that Bergson's account relies on the notion of rhythm to subvert language and to make intuition real in a non-intuited medium by transporting the reader to a particular plane. Such an account would then avoid the problems which Bergson sees associated with utilitarian language, whilst expressing the intuited. Intuition, which is not fully communicable, can thus, through poetry, receive a fuller expression which gets closer to its referent. The next section then asks if despite the

differences already noted between Bergson and Russian Formalism, *defamiliarisation*, a term introduced by Shklovsky, can help explain how Bergson thinks poetic language attempts to make the intuited real.

The first question to be asked in assessing Bergson's relation to Formalism is whether it is possible for Bergson to think that the production of poetry is what Shklovsky (Selden, p. 10) refers to as a controlled violence upon ordinary, non-artistic language. If it were the case that the poem were no more than a heap of devices, then Bergson's emphasis on grasping parts would be rather difficult to comprehend. As a series of devices, the poem would be capable of analysis in terms of elements which had undergone a rigidifying process, rather than constituting a series of moving parts. Some of Shklovsky's thoughts are in this sense not in line with Bergson's own. An example of this lack of correspondence between the two thinkers would be Shklovsky's definition of literature as "... the sum total of all stylistic devices employed in it ..." (Selden, p. 9), that is, the mechanisms which create certain effects within a text are seen as defining the artistic nature of a text. The Formalists' practice, furthermore, was interested not in the production of absolutes, but in the more pragmatic outlining of models and hypotheses, so mechanisms are here a means of understanding how a poem is achieving its effects - they are an explanatory tool rather than an attempt to *present* any existing actuality.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Boris Eichenbaum, 'The Theory of the Formal Method', Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 102. (Henceforth Eichenbaum)

To be clear - the task of a Formalist critic is to find the features in a text that cause it to be viewed as specifically literary. (Selden, p. 7) This entailed an attempt to discover what made the text deviate from ordinary language. In one manner the deviation of the artistic text from the ordinary seems quite Bergsonian. The principal difference between the two positions lies in the relation Formalists regard as obtaining between an artistic text and reality. The Formalists make no attempt to find some sort of reality which the text reflects or presents in some truthful manner. Instead, 'reality', certainly for the first Formalists, would be merely an occasion for the use of literary devices. (Selden, p. 7 & Intro, p. xiv) Because reality was, as it were, merely an excuse for the use of literary technique, that which created aesthetic effects, the Formalists tended to give no moral or cultural significance to the aesthetic form. (Selden, p. 7)

On this model, examining literature would not be concerned with how literature was embedded within a particular time, say, an analysis of what historical conditions were like when Jonathan Swift wrote Gulliver's Travels, as even though this might be important this would not be relevant for the specifically *aesthetic* literary content. The aesthetic literary content would be produced by the processes used within the text, and although this might allow a particular literary work to criticise the current state of society, the primary aim of a critical appraisal would be to understand how the material had been processed. The process itself, for the Formalists, was ideologically neutral, although the obvious undercurrent is that change from the 'normal' to the revolutionised poetic

is good. Again morality as such is left out of this account, as it is obvious that inverting the values of a particular system can either

- (1.) act to criticise that system, by showing the opposite values to be correct.
- (2.) Show the system in question was correct in the first place, by demonstrating the evils of its inverted opposite.
- (3.) Leave it ambiguous whether the original systems values are, or are not correct - the inversion merely acting to drawing attention to the system.

The emphasis in Bergson's account on the primary intuition of the poem seems far removed from this kind of analysis. The subversion of language by rhythm, according to Bergson, brings the language closer to intuition, an existing actuality truly known, whereas for the Formalists the existing reality was not known better through poetry, only differently. Formalist analysis outlined techniques acting on reality, which was already assumed as given, to make it *different* and to draw attention to certain of its features. Would a Formalist analysis better fit Bergson's account of the comic, even if it fails to fit his account of poetry? Is it the case that the comic is susceptible to this kind of analysis as it does not (for Bergson) concern truth, whereas art, concerning the truth as revealed by intuition, is not? This also does not seem to be the case.

The thesis has argued that in the case of laughter and the comic, it is not a question of mere technique, a productive process. Humour is not merely a matter of a set of stylistic devices, for even if one interprets Bergson as providing an account of the devices used in humour, these always only

make sense within the framework of his account of rigidity and inattention, the individual who has failed to adapt to the *current circumstances*, thus humour is not merely self absorbed for Bergson, referring solely to its self.

The nearest Bergson might be seen to come to an account of humour as a mere technique is in his description of three processes which can give rise to humour - inversion, repetition and reciprocal interference (which will be further detailed in the subsequent). Such processes acting on material to produce amusement bear a strong resemblance in their method of operation to many of the techniques that the Formalists describe. In both cases the material is irrelevant to the process being performed on it. But what prevents humour being a question of technique in the case of inversion, repetition and reciprocal interference in the same sense as in Formalism, is the necessity that the process be visible. For the Formalists, showing a technique was the 'most literary' thing a text could do, but not necessary for something to be literature. In the case of humour it is the technique and its *visibility* which cause amusement, *not* aesthetic contemplation. Each technical process is an example of the mechanical encrusted on the living, and it is the rigidity of technique which is the subject of laughter, and only through this rigidity can effects be seen to be amusing. The three processes are the very homogenisation and juxtaposition of sections of time as a mechanical operation. This idea will be returned to, though it is already clear even from the sections in Bergson which most support the view that humour could be a mere technique, that he is still failing to give recipes, as the technical processes do not create humorous products, but instead are themselves humorous. If

the analogy to cookery held, the recipe itself would have to be tasty, as opposed to the meal it could produce when followed. So, to be clear, the visibility of the technique in the three processes is necessary if something is to be humorous, whereas for Formalism aesthetic effect is not reliant on the technique being visible, but literariness is increased if this is the case. Bearing the above points in mind it is doubtful that Bergson is thinking in an analogous manner to the Formalists in his account of humour, and certainly not when he is examining art.

Returning to poetry, the distance between Formalism and Bergson's position might additionally be suggested by the references his descriptions of art make to organic wholes whose parts are inseparable. Such references which shall shortly be analysed in more depth suggest that, rather than the notion of a specific process or technique being carried out on material,⁹¹ Bergson has something else in mind. The artist can make the intuited real in the non-intuited, language, by attempting to subvert its ordinary system of representation:

... by rhythmical arrangement of words, which thus become organised and animated with a life of their own, they tell us - or rather suggest - things that speech was not calculated to express. (Laughter, p. 156 & Kolakowski, p. 19)

⁹¹ To an extent, even at quite an early stage of the Formalist movement, Brik, (Eichenbaum, p. 126) analysed rhythm in terms of whole phrases, and in the case of Tomashevsky rhythm became the distribution of energy within a whole line which was implicit in the whole fabric of the poem, as opposed to a structure imposed upon language after the fact. (Eichenbaum, p. 126)

Instead of poetry, on the Formalists' analysis, exercising a controlled violence on practical language to draw individuals' attention to its constructed quality, (Selden, p. 10) the poet, according to Bergson, attempts to *evoke* in the reader an intuitive perception that is not fully communicable, but still closer to full communicability than an analytic description could get. (Kolakowski, p. 32) This notion of evocation deals, in Laughter with the expression of an inward state. The distinction might then be between expressive and scientific language, where scientific language attempted to communicate via shared and commonly recognised rules, as opposed to expressive language which relied on the finding of appropriate expressions and the responsiveness of the hearer. (Matthews, p. 122) This expressiveness of the language, would, the account suggests, attempt to promote the amount of memory entering into the communication, making language more personal and less scientific. How this expressive language functions will of necessity be different for every occasion of its use as any regularity of usage would develop into a conventional series of signs and/or rules for usage and be incorporated into a motor schema and so cease to promote additional memory entering into communication. In this sense Bergson's use of language could be seen as a call for the continuous invention of usage, a constant pushing at the bounds of language.

Matthews appears to think that individual expressions are invented to represent pre-existing mental states, rather than being inventive of those states, so unlike Mullarkey, with regard to concepts, (Mullarkey, p. 185) he does not argue for a metaphilosophy, with a need to constantly reinvent concepts, or analogously expression. For Matthews it does at

times seem like it is merely the case of giving something a name, rather than inventing a new concept. (Mullarkey, p. 185) Indeed it could be argued with regard to poetry that there is no conception of metapoetics (analogous to metaphilosophy) because of Bergson's anti-modernism with regard to art, i.e. poetry lacks the ability for a perpetual reflection on itself, but such arguments will be presented later. Despite the necessary imprecision involved in expression and its creation of concepts one thing is clear, that rhythm has a specific role to play in evocation, and we shall be discussing this in greater depth in the subsequent.

For the Formalists, art was not seen in terms of an attempt to express inner states, nor was it defined by any specific revelation which it produced. Despite art allowing us to 'see differently' it did not reveal reality, and there was no moral or cultural message specifically present in the aesthetic. So what value did art have for the Formalists? Art acted to shake individuals from the everyday perceptions they had, which brings this thesis to the now famous concept of defamiliarisation. Can this concept help us understand how Bergson thinks poetry acts to move us closer to intuitions through expressive language?

Defamiliarisation

In the previous section it was argued that Bergson's account of poetry is not simply concerned with a series of techniques, but instead has deeper concerns. Poetry makes the intuited real via rhythm and the expressive use of language. The possibility that defamiliarisation could be a means of understanding this process was suggested in the previous section and will now be explored.

The thesis will firstly outline defamiliarisation and its role in allowing fresh perception unhindered by habitual patterns of thought. This will be seen to be initially compatible with Bergson's understanding of poetry.

The thesis will then highlight potential problems for the truthfulness of communication, arising from Bergson's desire to hide the techniques of communication. This position is then contrasted with that of Longinus.

This section will begin by examining whether a better understanding of Bergson can be achieved through an examination of the concept of 'defamiliarisation', a term coined by Shklovsky. Defamiliarisation, as it is usually translated, or more literally to 'make strange' (*ostranenie*), became one of the hallmarks of the Russian Formalists, and according to Shklovsky, was a process by means of which the familiar became unfamiliar. In the general course of life, perception becomes automatic,

things are not truly perceived, as they have been replaced by symbols.⁹² Their difference has been erased, things are perceived in terms of the general rather than in their specific uniqueness. This thought could almost have been plagiarised from Bergson.

Defamiliarisation aims to de-automatise perception by making individuals attend to things which have become stale and commonplace in a fresh way. (Shklovsky, p. 4 & Selden, p. 11) A good literary example of defamiliarisation would be Tolstoy's choice of a horse as narrator in *Kholstomer*. (AAT, p. 14) Here the unusualness of the narrator draws specific attention to the narration and the odd viewpoint allows events to be seen from a fresh perspective. Defamiliarisation, by making strange, prolongs perception, making it more difficult so that it is no longer effortless and automatic. In Bergsonian terms the less easy it is for a motor response to operate, the more chance there is of memory images taking their chance to come flooding in to perception as they are no longer repressed by utilitarian habits. It must be carefully noted, however, that it is the 'artfulness' of the object, which is regarded as important, which the formalists regard as important not the object itself. (AAT, p. 12 & Selden, p. 11)

In defamiliarisation it is a question of slowing down and drawing out actions, interrupting them, delaying them, in order to force attention to

⁹² Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' *Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 11 (Henceforth AAT)

focus on those actions, in short, to de-automatise. (AAT, p. 22 & Selden, p. 11) Such an altering of the initial material of necessity highlights aesthetic technique,⁹³ and such revealing of technique in turn increases the literariness of the text. (Selden, p. 12)⁹⁴ The revelation of technique ultimately militates against realism, as it might be narrowly conceived. As techniques no longer serve realism, they instead act 'without motive', that is, without a satisfactory *realist* reason for their presence.⁹⁵

Here the relation the Formalist doctrines bear to Bergson in terms of the problem of practically orientated perception is quite obvious.⁹⁶ Both Bergson and the Formalists identify the same problem, and indeed propose similar solutions. The unique rhythmic pattern and the making musical of language which is present in poetry, allowing it to say more than ordinary language according to Bergson, (Pilkington, p. 14) could easily be seen as an instance of defamiliarisation, a making uncommon of language by rhythmicising it. Despite these similarities, Bergson's

⁹³ Victor Shklovsky, 'Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary' Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 56

⁹⁴ Also Boris Tomashevsky, Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 84

⁹⁵ Victor Shklovsky, 'Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*: Stylistic Commentary' Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) p. 26. (Henceforth STS)

⁹⁶ The question of the laying bare of technique in relation to Bergson will be explored in the subsequent.

position is different to that of the Formalists on the question of defamiliarisation at its most basic level.

The difference between Bergson and the Formalists on the issue of rhythm relates to Bergson's account of attentive recognition. For Bergson reactions to words where the motor schema is dominant, are immediate and habitual, no attention is paid to the specificity of the thing. The more basic the language, the closer it is to the motor scheme. Secondly there is the language which attempts to get as close as possible to the thought of the individual. This language gives more of the flow of thought and relies less on the immediate motor response and more on the memories evoked, in addition to the motor response - it allows a specific difference to be introduced into perception. The amount of memory coming into perception is reliant on the rhythm, or level of memory's operation, which suggests that the rhythm of poetry in some way moves the reader, through suggestibility, to a specific level, to a specific rhythm. This means there is something analogous in the rhythm of thought and in the rhythm of the poetry, rather than something disruptive.

These moves find a kindred spirit in Symbolism where, to take a musical example, it is not a case of giving a programmatic depiction of a sunken cathedral in the usual sense. The music does not attempt to produce the literal sound of being underwater, but instead to try to recreate the emotional state which would have been experienced by the listener had they been viewing such a scene.⁹⁷ It is the creation of a space where

⁹⁷ Jarocinski is very insistent on this point. Stefan Jarocinski, Debussy - Impressionism and Symbolism trans. Rollo Myers, introduction by Vladimir

imagination can roam as opposed to an attempt to paint a particular scene in music, (Jankélévitch², p. ix) which Symbolist poetry, in particular, aspired to. This attempt to move the viewer to a deeper level means a work of art cannot be reduced to its merely superficial effects, i.e. the immediate motor response. Language is always rhythmic to some extent, it is thus a question of how much memory is present, how material the response is which is important.

But in moving away from the immediate response Bergson also closes the material level from conscious communication. Indeed for Bergson, as opposed to the Formalists, the techniques used by the communicator must be hidden, a distinctly non-modernist view if one takes modernism to be an exploration and revealing of the basic conditions of possibility of a practice. This means that the sonic materiality of the utterance, if this is interpreted as rhythm, must be hidden, not revealed. This position would be in opposition to the method of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.⁹⁸ for example, where Joyce's musicalisation of language brings the actual textuality into the foreground, moving away from any idea of a transparent communication medium. This move away from transparency results in a problematisation of the very act of communication, if only because Joyce's invented words question the basis of language, and the

Jankélévitch (Henceforth Jankélévitch 2) (London: Ernst Eulenburg, 1976) pp. 66-96. It should be noted that post-*Time and Free Will*, the emotion it would be a case of the emotion being created in its expression from the movement of an original tendency. This point will be considered in more detail in the subsequent.

⁹⁸ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Minerva, 1992).

way words are understood. As Shklovsky comments, a nonsense word forces the reader to go through it in order to get to the actual word. (AAT, p. 20) When reading the Joyce inspired A Clockwork Orange,⁹⁹ for example, words like 'tolchock' have to be read through in order to understand their meaning (in this case something like hit or punch), that is, read in the context of words already understood. Does this mean that there is merely a reinterpretation of the new in terms of the old? Certainly Shklovsky's arguments seem to suggest this reduction of difference to a repeated same. The question for a Bergsonian interpretation is whether (i) there can be a lack of exactitude which would allow a nonsense word a greater evocative power via its vagueness, or (ii) whether it is merely understood in terms of a pre-existing word, in which case it will lose its evocative power, or (iii) whether it works merely on the level of a superficial effect. Either one of the two later options would appear to be the most likely, both, at best, closing themselves to the material sphere.

Bergson, in opposition to the Formalists, seems to see rhythm not as a 'making strange', but on the contrary allowing the possibility of greater understanding through a lulling rather than a confrontation. For the Formalists, the idea that poetry exemplified an economy of expression and transparency, the greatest amount of information being expressed in the least words, (AAT, p. 10) was mistaken. Poetry is more difficult to understand than prose, the classic example being the Haiku. (AAT, p. 10) The important point to note is that the Haiku extends the time taken for perception not by either rearrangement or the slowing down of actions, to

⁹⁹ Anthony Burgess, A Clockwork Orange (London: Penguin, 1972).

describe every nuance of, say, a movement, but instead by the compacting of language into a formal system - a language which by its very brevity forces the reader to try to fill the gaps. In this sense Bergson could easily be interpreted as moving against the artifice of certain forms of expression which draw attention to themselves, yet this is not necessarily the case. What is important is the evocative power of the words to transport us to a certain level, and if the very brevity of the haiku does not detract from this operation, then no problem arises. Shklovsky, on the contrary, emphasises the use of rough rhythms, the deliberate showing of technique, as an essential part of the communication. For Bergson, the *ease* of communication is essential and rhythm is the means by which this end is promoted the suggestibility is less shock than lulling evocation.

The poet can "... lull the imagination ... rock it to and fro between like and like with a regular see-saw motion, and thus prepare it submissively to accept the vision suggested"; (Laughter, p. 61) it is as if the descriptions which are given in words can make the image almost appear before the individual listener,¹⁰⁰ because they have been moved to the correct level where memory can push itself into consciousness.

However it could well be argued that poetry, as it relies on rhythm is not attempting to make the meaning of a communicative utterance clearer, but instead to make it more affecting. If this were true then Benda's

¹⁰⁰ Longinus, "On the Sublime," *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. T. S. Dorsch (London: Penguin, 1965) pp. 99-158. (Henceforth Longinus) p. 121.

accusation that poetry was more concerned with effects than the expression of ideas would be true.¹⁰¹ Bergson's whole conception, however is different.

For Bergson it is not a question of the addition of ornamentation to language, or a process undergone by language. Artistic language is created by a vertical process so no specific processes can be given for making art as this would suggest that the work was predictable and in some sense pre-existed its realisation. Though specific techniques might be necessary for the realisation of the work itself, the work cannot merely be a sum of such techniques.

So far the exegesis of Bergson's position has been in non-musical terms, Bergson does, however, give a more 'musical' account of language in a later text - here, in addition to the above position he describes what is almost a heterogeneous continuity in speech. Diction has to be present at the very beginning in understanding a text. Diction is not an artistic accomplishment or "ornament", but instead essential. (CM, p. 87) Reading acts to reinvent the text and get back to the communicating individual's original movement of thought, to adopt "... his gestures, his attitude, his gait ..." (CM, p. 86)

There seem to be two basic points being made in this, passage. The first is to see Bergson's concern being to temporalise a text through speech,

¹⁰¹ Robert L. Niess, Julien Benda: The Poet's Function, Yale French Studies vol. II, no. 2 (1949) p. 67.

such temporalisation giving the argument of the philosopher as a whole which cannot be broken up into independent homogenised sections. There is a constant interpenetration of the past into the present like a melodic heterogeneous continuity. Indeed, children should be taught to read out loud so they get to the rhythm and structure of a text, and learn to follow thought as they would a musical crescendo (CM, p. 87) "... following uninterruptedly the *crescendo* of thought and feeling to the point musically indicated as the culminating point ..." (CM, p. 87) Bergson thus prioritises the temporal spoken over the homogeneous space of the written word. The second is the need to understand the rhythm of the text, "... his gestures, his attitude, his gait ..." (CM, p. 86) and thus be on the correct level to follow the development of the thinker's thought.

It is important to note that both the model of speech and its understanding, with its conceptualisation of the movement of thought in terms of climaxes and the following of a thread, and indeed music as well, seem to be described by Bergson in a very teleological, and perhaps gendered manner.¹⁰² On the one hand movement itself is being valorised,

¹⁰² The feminist music critic Susan McClary makes much of the common use of this type of language claiming it is indicative of an inherently phallogocentric way of conceiving time. (Susan McClary, "Getting Down off the Beanstalk: The Presence of a Woman's Voice in Janika Vandervelde's Genesis II," *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) (Henceforth, McClary) Citron additionally tries to show that musical argument has often been described in highly gendered terms. (Marcia J. Citron, "Music as Gendered Discourse," *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 120-64.)

but on the other hand in phrases like 'climax' and so forth there seems a valorisation of the opposite, the teleological, a concern with fixed ends as opposed to the process itself, which is interesting as this seems to be exactly the opposite of Bergson's usual position.

On a more positive note the specifically musical nature of communication given via his account of diction, in attempting to recover the movement of the communicator's original thought - a grasping of the whole before parts, results in what Bachelard might have termed a plan. (Bachelard, p. 88) It is not a question of merely moving from moment to moment, a position Bachelard believes Bergson holds, (Bachelard, p. 88) but instead of taking the whole of the past into the future in order to understand the plan of the work. Unlike the attempt to understand a thinker's work like a mosaic of separate ideas there is an attempt to grasp the progression of the idea, that is its temporal dimension.

One possible way to understand an idea temporally will be to abandon the idea of 'unpacking', resulting in an infinite explanation (as in the line from Homer which can allegedly never fully be explained) and instead think in terms of an *unfolding* occurring in a manner analogous to a melodic progression. This will result in a temporalisation of the concept of argumentation where it is not a question of a thinker being understood by the discovery of pre-existing elements, but instead by the following of the movement of thought, the impulsion, as it is realised on various planes.

Chapter 4 Aesthetics

Music and Art

Having looked at poetry, in the previous section and defined the role a 'musical' understanding might have when understanding a text, it is now necessary to examine Bergson's conception of music in more detail. Although concentrating on music the chapter will, however, like the rest of the arts, be discussed for a second reason, namely to explore the relation between the aesthetic in general and intuition on the one hand, and the sharp division Bergson makes between humour and art on the other. Additionally the discussion of intuition and art will be dealt with at the end of the thesis when art and philosophy are distinguished.

The discussion will begin by detailing Bergson's claim in Time and Freewill that music is an attempt by the composer to communicate inner emotions to others.¹⁰³ This is done by trying to recreate these emotions in the listener, a position which Bergson later modified. There is a problem in the case of music as regards the apparent repetition of the music's rhythm within the listener as an almost mechanical response, with its references to hypnotism. The various levels of self-loss involved in music will then be seen to be qualitatively, *not* quantitatively different. It will

¹⁰³ Bergson in Time and Free Will does not think emotions are something inner and separate from their expression. Emotions are instead always a mixture of inner and outer states. (Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1916) pp. 31-2) (Henceforth, TFW) This is tied to the notion of an inner state being given by a physical movement caused by a sign.

then be asked whether the distinction between poetry and prose can be made in terms of a qualitative difference in rhythm between the two. This is rejected, primarily because of Bergson's account of aesthetic states. The following section will then examine rhythm in more depth as it is of such central importance for Bergson's account of linguistic communication and poetry, as well as his account of music.

Bergson's starting point for his discussion of music in Time and Free Will is that of the artist trying to communicate inner emotions which are rich and personal and cannot be understood by the individual who is being communicated to, only experienced. (TFW, p. 18) It is not that the emotions found in a piece of music are in some way generalised, they do not express a general feeling, one which might be amorphous and non-specific (anger in general), or indeed a Platonic idea, but instead they express a specific feeling which is unique to *that* individual and could not be experienced by another. To try to communicate such emotions, the artist needs external signs of emotions to create a similar state in the listener as was originally present in the artist.¹⁰⁴ (TFW, p. 18) It is a question of causing the body to imitate an outward sign, even if only slightly, which will transport us into the psychological state which called them forth. (TFW, p. 18) In one sense such a position is unsurprising as

¹⁰⁴ Tolstoy is close to this position - "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them." (Quoted by Herbert Read, The Meaning of Art (London: Pelican Books, 1949) pp. 185-6.)

Bergson maintains that emotions are "... a system of muscular contractions co-ordinated by an idea." (TFW, p. 28) An emotion cannot be only an idea, as it would then have no intensity, nor can it be defined as only a set of muscular contractions, as then the number of contractions would determine the emotions intensity, but not its direction. (TFW, p. 29) In effect this means there are multiple different emotions which are situated between the pure internal where "... our ideas, our memories, our states of consciousness of every description, ... will turn in larger or smaller number in a definite direction" (TFW, p. 31) and pure muscular contraction. So in trying to communicate an inner emotion the external sign tries to create a movement in the individual which will, hopefully, trigger a certain inner state.

There appears to be a major difference between the account of music in Time and Free-Will detailed above and that of Two Sources of Morality and Religion.¹⁰⁵ In the case of the first text the emotion, although novel, pre-exists and it is this which is to be communicated, whereas in the later text it is only through the music that the emotion, which is virtual, can be actualised. (TSMR, pp. 40-1) So the artist can create new sensations, and in doing so is also a visionary in bringing out the true self purified by art. (Mourélos, p. 219) The emotions, which art invents, may be linked to particular objects, and indeed specific reasons may be given why they are linked to one particular object as opposed to another, but such objects only act as harmonics, rather than the fundamental, (TSMR, p. 42) and in

¹⁰⁵ In this respect Mourélos sees a kinship between Laughter and Two Sources of Morality and Religion. (Mourélos, p. 219)

the case of music the emotion is objectless. Indeed the description of music as sad is merely a generality which is used to express the new emotion experienced as the emotion of love in two pieces of music will necessarily be different, according to the later text, because the emotion is inseparable and particular to each piece of music. It is not a case of their being a pre-existing feeling which we have experienced which is then triggered, but instead of new feelings "Created by that music and within that music" (TSMR, p. 41) which are not tied to a physical basis or social convention. (Mullarkey, p. 91) Because the emotions in music are not aimed at any particular individual or thing they will not be what Bergson terms 'superficial', but instead be 'self-sufficient'. By self-sufficient Bergson means that they have no specific 'thing' or 'individual' beyond themselves at which they are aimed. (TSMR, p. 254) The general love of mankind would be an example of a 'self-sufficient' emotion, something which passes through rather than aims at. (Mullarkey, p. 95)

Another example of a self-sufficient, or creative emotion, would be the emotion which virtually contains the image produced from it. This is the source of the great poet who is inspired by creative emotion that is unique and which the poet keeps referring back to. This emotion is specific to that poem alone, unless another was created which bore an inward resemblance to it, like two renderings of the same melody, which are both equally satisfactory. (TSMR, p. 47) So there is a diffuse tendency which is made concrete in the work of art and is different from the effect, (Mourélos, pp. 217-8) i.e. the realisation of the artwork is itself creative, and does not pre-exist its realisation.

Returning to Time and Free Will we find that there is again some kind of 'sympathy' established between composer and listener which allows communication. It could also be thought that there would have to be, in the case of the artist, a shared public code to which his 'external signs' would belong. Such a code could, of course, be quite easily described in terms of common and habitual expression, and would thus be potentially humorous. In order to avoid this, Bergson claims that the external signs which the artist uses to try to create the same state in the listener as is in themselves are *not* conventional, as conventional signs would hide as much as they convey. (Laughter, pp. 155-6) Conventional signs are platitudes, the meaning they may have had has long since been eroded. This is why language needs to be used 'artistically', to express things it was not calculated to express. That is, artistic language acts to authentically communicate specific thoughts, using non-platitudinous signs.

Bergson claims that aesthetic feelings are 'suggested' and not caused, (TFW, p. 17) using hypnotism as an analogy to explain aesthetic states. This indicates that he is not thinking in terms of the way someone might suggest an idea for you to follow, or hint at something, external signs trying to 'suggest' an inner emotion, but is instead thinking of 'suggestion' in terms of being entranced:¹⁰⁶

To put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realise the idea that is

¹⁰⁶ Pilkington has noted that the views of Valéry are highly similar to those of Bergson with regard to art. (Pilkington, p. 139)

suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling expressed.
(TFW, p. 14)

The mechanical imitation here appears to limit free will, the listener being taken in by the music's 'suggestion', seemingly indicating an understanding of the music which is not bound up with any activity on the part of the listener, but rather with an acquiescence to external control.¹⁰⁷ Indeed one might even say that this position is symptomatic of the ambiguity between freely acting and being acted, (Douglass 2, p. 222) the motor response, versus the memories which come to meet it. Indeed the above considerations might suggest an analogy between Bergson's account of music in terms of control over another individual and self-loss, on the one hand, and the elevated language of Longinus on the other. However what is important in both poetry and music in Time and Freewill is the conception that it is not a thing or object which is being communicated as such, but an emotion. In as much as there is an image it is being created in the mind of the reader or listener in order that certain

¹⁰⁷ It is this kind of position which Levinas is thinking about when he claims "Rhythm represents a unique situation where we cannot speak of consent, assumption, initiative or freedom, because the subject is caught up and carried away by it." (Emmanuel Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," The Levinas Reader, ed. Seán Hand / trans. Alphonso Lingis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p. 132. [Emmanuel Levinas, "La Réalité et son Ombre," Les Temps Modernes 38 (1948): p. 775.]) (Henceforth Levinas) A full examination of the relation between Levinas and Bergson's aesthetics is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis and would require an examination of, amongst other texts, Otherwise than Being. (Francoise Armengaud, "Éthique et Esthétique: De l'Ombre à l'Obliteration," Emmanuel Lévinas, ed. Catherine Chalié & Michael Abensour (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1991) pp. 499-500)

emotions which have been developed in the poet into images and thence into words can be communicated. (TFW, p. 15) It is the rhythm in each case which allows the soul to be lulled, so the reader or listener "... thinks and sees with the poet." (TFW, p. 15) But what is important is the perception of images still has a freedom to it, in that the image given already possess our memories, not as an addition, but as an intrinsic part. (TFW, p. 162) So although an image is suggested, what that image is to each person, due to their different memories and their character will vary between individuals. (TFW, p. 162) So there is always of necessity an element of the individual character and hence freedom in the suggestion of an image.

This suggestion is explained by our repeating the sounds heard to ourselves so as to carry us "... back into the psychic state out of which they emerged, an original state, which nothing will express, but which something may suggest, viz., the very motion and attitude of which the sound imparts to our body ..." (TFW, p. 44) This seems to be a precursor of the moves in Matter and Memory the initial motor schema meeting memories on a particular level. But what is at stake here is the production of a particular state, or in Matter and Memory. creation of a particular level of engagement which is not automatic but brings in memories allowing a greater depth of perception. In respect of the move away from automatic perception Bergson's position resembles that of the formalists already discussed. But in terms of the need to introduce us, not to the thing, but the state which makes us receptive to the thing, Bergson is closer to symbolism.

The degree of depth in aesthetic states outlined above, is directly related to aesthetic value, which is assessed by the number of feelings and ideas which pervade those states. So a very simple rhythmic piece of music might monopolise our soul in a similar way to a complex work by Beethoven, but the number of feelings and ideas the later creates in us would be far less. So the more automatic the response, the less aesthetic the result - more and less here not signifying quantitative, but qualitative differences.

Indeed the notion of suggestion, as it relates to depth in Bergson's account of music allows him to differentiate between nature and art. The sounds of nature merely *express* feelings - presumably one could think about something like the howling of a dog expressing its discontent. These feelings might monopolise our soul in pity for the animal, this is an immediate response. Whereas musical sounds *suggest* feelings (TFW, p. 15) - that is, music tries to *cause* an effect in the listener, whereas nature merely *presents* a response. This suggestion is primarily linked to the different qualitative intensities of experience induced in the perceiver. The qualitative differences of intensity in these cases is again compared to hypnosis and degrees of self-loss or depth. (TFW, p. 17) This notion of depth concerns the qualitative intensity with which the aesthetic emotion affects the individual. It is only when the aesthetic is at its most powerful that the soul is completely "...monopolised...", at lower levels of aesthetic feeling the soul is hardly moved at all. By 'loss of the soul' Bergson is apparently trying to describe a state where the individual 'loses' themselves, and is taken in by the music. Each state of the aesthetic self-loss is, however, qualitatively different from every other state of aesthetic

loss. Differences in beauty are often used to illustrate the meaning of an intensive magnitude,¹⁰⁸ so Bergson's move to make each state of aesthetic loss qualitatively different is not per se unusual or controversial: although it is unusual to see the distinction framed in terms of the *subject* rather than the *object* of aesthetic appreciation. The suggestion which results in this state of aesthetic loss is primarily linked to the use of rhythm in art, and it is to an account of rhythm which the thesis will now turn.

¹⁰⁸ For example the Pan Dictionary of Philosophy uses Beauty as an example of an intensive magnitude. Simon Blackburn et al. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Anthony Flew (London: Pan, 1984) p. 217.

Rhythm, Music and Dance

In the previous section the aesthetic was seen to involve a loss of self which was dependent, in the first instance, on suggestion was linked to rhythm. This section will further explore the notion of rhythm by detailing Bergson's account of dance and its relation to temporality. It is the predictability of dance which gives the viewer pleasure, according to Bergson. The predictability in question is seen to suggest a dichotomy, on the one hand between rhythm which is seen as repetitive and closed and on the other melody, which Bergson frequently takes as a metaphor for duration and openness in this, and in his later works.

In order to examine the notion of rhythm, the account will turn to Bergson's concurrent discussion of architecture and the rhythm involved therein. The notion of rhythm as a static spatialised repetition given in Bergson's discussion of architecture will be seen as essentially habitual. In opposition to habitual repetition, another account of rhythm given by Bergson will be introduced.

This second account of rhythm is based on an understanding of a rhythm as a whole, as a qualitative multiplicity, as opposed to a repetition of a static element. This position still, however, seems to leave rhythm, despite it having to be grasped whole, as a habitual repetition, as opposed to producing creative change, as a melody might. The thesis then considers what would constitute a *creative* rhythm for Bergson. Having thus established a basic model for a creative rhythm, the thesis attempts to find concrete manifestations of such rhythms in music, or at least

rhythms which appear to have creative tendencies. Several possible candidates are considered, and two found, Debussy, as described by Stockhausen in terms of large-scale timbral change, and Carter's metric modulation. Given the extremely limited number of musical rhythms which can act as a positive model for creative change, and the fact that such rhythms would seem to occur in very few poems, means the question of large and small scale rhythms will become increasingly important for Bergson.

Ultimately, it will be suggested that *melodic* rather than *rhythmic* change actually provides a model for creative change in Bergson, and it is melody which must be examined to understand the unfolding of an intuition.

Watching dance, for Bergson, is pleasurable because of its predictability. When movement is submitted to rhythm and music, the spectator can predict the movements¹⁰⁹ of the dancer:

As we guess almost the exact attitude which the dancer is going to take, he seems to obey us when he really takes it.
(TFW, p. 12)

¹⁰⁹ Newell argues this point in terms of music in general rather than dance, and claims this predictability is necessary for a listener's orientation. Robert Newell, "Music and the Temporal Dilemma," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 18 (Fall 1978): p. 360.

Bergson claims that the rhythm thus takes "... complete possession of our thought and will." (TFW, pp. 12-3) As both the dancer and the spectator in this case have the same rhythm, between them a kind of communication is established.¹¹⁰ (TFW, p. 12) This spatialisation of the music in dance is a sketching out of its movement, which leaves the understanding of the music poorer. (Delhomme, p. 48) Indeed Bergson emphasises the relation of the quantitative more or less to the body when he describes the way an intensity of a sound is judged by the amount of muscular effort required to produce it. (Robinet, p. 46) But even before an external rhythm is applied to dance there can be predictability. Bergson claims that the notion of grace is linked to a perception of ease in movement (TFW, pp. 11-2) and this ease is a product of the curve which, changing its direction at every moment, holds the future moments in each present moment.

Before progressing further, we should note two points. Firstly that the description of the spectator with their attention firmly fixed on the dancer is highly ethnocentric. In Bali, for example, dance is always implicated in larger structures - as de Zoete and Spies note, dance is attended in the same manner as "... the sound of trees and streams in the wood."¹¹¹ It is

¹¹⁰ This kind of description could, however, equally apply to a military march. (Francis Sparshott, "Some Dimensions of Dance Meaning." British Journal of Aesthetics Vol. 25 / No. 2 (Spring 1985): p. 103.) if it were not associated with Bergson's description of grace which will be touched on in the subsequent.

¹¹¹ Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies - *Dance and Drama in Bali* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 16 (Henceforth, Z&S)

not that the dancers are not being paid attention to, it is that dance is part of a multiplicity of concurrent activities, and attention in this context is something quite different to its European counterpart. So Bergson's description of attention, when it comes to dance at least, is not one which would be universally applicable.

This is not, however, the only account of attention Bergson gives. In Duration and Simultaneity "... it is of the very essence of our attention to be able to be divided without being split up."¹¹² Elucidating his thought he claims that being "... seated on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the ceaseless murmur in our life's deeps are for us three separate things or only one, as we choose." (D&S, p. 52 & Bergsonism, p. 80) The ability to encompass events as different whilst simultaneously one within our own duration would seem to echo the Balinese model of attention already outlined. However within Time and Free Will, rhythm, in general, acts like a homogenising spatialisation of the basic temporal qualitative heterogeneity - a regularity which stills the progress of time and suggests a particular plane of attention to us. We should, however, note that this model of rhythm is not the only one proposed in Bergson, as the above references to Duration and Simultaneity might suggest.

This notion of a fixed rhythm in Time and Free Will is opposed to the plurality of levels of the past and matter in Matter and Memory each of

¹¹² Henri Bergson, Duration and Simultaneity, with Reference to Einstein's Theory trans. Leon Jacobsen (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965) p. 52 (Henceforth D&S)

these levels having a different rhythm. (Worms, p. 231) These levels of the past, when treated rhythmically, are modelled on interference patterns, which is why perception is not stroboscopic (what we would now think of as digital), as Bachelard thinks. It is not a case of rhythmically detaching instants to form a new continuity with all the attributes of the old. (Bachelard, p. 77) Instead of their being a fixed rate at which the senses sample, like the 44100 samples per second of a compact disc, there is a fixed oscillation whose frequency forms patterns of interference with the rhythms of things, continually changing yet determining the dominant and non-dominant frequencies (to use non-technical terms). This means that for any polyrhythmic system there is always one or a series of lines which dominate, leaving the others as lesser, or non-dominant.¹¹³

In Creative Evolution there is a significant shift of this position as now in addition to the multiple rhythms of things which were accessed in Matter and Memory, there is an overall duration. So in Creative Evolution each rhythm is individual only in as much as it has a tendency to closure and exists only in terms of its participation in the whole of the universe. However it is important to note that the duration in which all the other rhythms participate does not have a role analogous to an orchestral conductor, as it is described by Bachelard. It is not a case of bringing several different temporal fluxes together so they can be superimposed, become overlaid but independent. (Bachelard, p. 129) Instead the only 'harmony' is in the tendencies, not the result produced, (Robinet, p. 104,

¹¹³ Daphne Oram, An Individual Note (London: Galliard, 1972). pp. 27-49.

Mourélos, p. 151 & KAP, p. 155) as there is no plan waiting to be realised. (Robinet, p. 167) So the system is polyrhythmic, but only in as much as those rhythms are derived from a basic rhythm.

There is then another shift of position in Duration and Simultaneity where each of the individual times exists as an independent rhythm, but only in as much as it is contained in the whole of duration. Thus it is possible for consciousness to simultaneously unite several temporal fluxes, gain a rhythm for the whole, on the one hand, whilst, on the other, grasping each flux individually. Each flux is not reduced to a participation in a whole, having no real duration in itself, nor is it a radical plurality, but one which can only be perceived in terms of main and subsidiary rhythms, but instead as a rhythmic system where the whole is grasped without destroying the individual.

Secondly, Bergson leaves several important questions unanswered. Does the whole body of the dancer have to move as a single unit, or may the body have a multiple of rhythms, arms and legs, say, moving differently?¹¹⁴ The notion that a dancer is just a slave to *the* rhythm might be appropriate in the case of a dance with a singular rhythm, but music is often polyrhythmic, (Z&S, p. 26) for example much, if not all, Balinese music, and there is a very well established dance tradition in Bali. As de

¹¹⁴ Although Zanner links Bergson to phenomenological accounts of the body, grace being a co-ordination of several body parts. However such a reading of grace in this instance appears too strong as the exegesis in the main text shows. Zanner, Richard, The Problem of Embodiment: Some Contributions to a Phenomenology of the Body (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) p. 166.

Zoete and Spies point out, Balinese dancers often move in at least two temporal dimensions each limb acting as a separate rhythmic instrument, (Z&S, p. 119) as does the music.

Additionally, if dance is a model for what might be termed 'rhythmic communication,' then there appears to be the possibility that there can be multiple coincidences with multiple rhythms in a piece of music, as opposed to one absolute coincidence. It would seem that following more than one rhythm as opposed to a single rhythm would involve a different kind of attention, perhaps one more akin to a field in which to orient oneself, rather than a directional arrow to follow.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Wim Mertens, American Minimal Music, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn and Averill, 1983) p. 100. (Henceforth Mertens) This conception of a field is analogous to Tom Johnson's notion of non-manipulative music. Tom Johnson, 'Shredding the Climax Carrot' The Voice of New Music - New York City 1972-82: A Collection of Articles Originally Published in the Village Voice (The Netherlands: Het Apollohuis Eindhoven, 1989) pp. 85-9.

This idea of the musical work as a field can be seen in the work of several sound sculptors whose works are both played by and form part of an environment e.g. Peter Appleton's Rain Microphones (1981) "... an amplified skeletal dome of tensioned steel wires - is played by the wind and rain." Roger Sutherland, "Sound Sculptures," Audion Issue 22 (July 1992): p.23. Alternatively whole 'sonic-fields' have been created where movement within the field actually changes the sound heard, for example Rolf Gehlhaar's "STEP BY STEP" Music for Ears in Motion (1981) used a 16 channel sound system to produce this effect with the speakers positioned in a circle around the listeners (Roger Sutherland, "Imaginary Orchestras," Resonance Vol. 1 Issue 2 (Summer 1993): p. 25) In a bolder vein it is increasingly popular to regard the whole 'soundscape' as a composition, and thus a field in which individuals are able to orient themselves. See R. Murray Schafer, The Tuning of the World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977). The question which stems from both Gehlhaar's piece

This notion that dance can be more akin to an orientation within a field than to following a particular rhythm is important when the question is whether an individual is dancing *with* or *to*¹¹⁶ a rhythm. One can easily dance between beats, on the off beat or shift between these modes - this would be dancing *with* a rhythm. Bergson, on the other hand, just seems to think of dancing *to* a rhythm, constantly on the beat and being led by the music, which seems a very limited conception of dance. Indeed, there seem to be various ways of dealing with the whole idea of bodily following a piece of music which Bergson simply fails to consider in Time and Freewill. However it should be noted that for the Bergson of Matter and Memory it would be quite easy to understand the notion of dancing *to* a rhythm in terms of a motor schema and the subversion of

and Schafer's writings is whether music can be followed in both temporal and spatial terms, if a musical field can be understood in terms of extension, i.e. every move in that space changing the whole. If this were the case it would then be possible to have a physical relation to music which was not reliant on bodily habits coming to the fore through music in the case of Gehlhaar, or in terms of the whole soundscape as a piece of music in the case of Schafer.

¹¹⁶ Adorno talks witheringly with regard to the dancers involved in popular music, especially Jazz, "... who strive to imitate the music" (Theodore W. Adorno, Prisms, trans. Samuel & Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981) p. 131) (Henceforth Adorno). Adorno's dislike of the bodily emphasis in popular music in general can be contrasted with Sandau who maintains that "Rock's distinction as physical occurs not because other kinds of music are not physical, but because rock is so simple and emphatic about it." (Jerry Sandau, 'Rock 'N Roll Reflections on Kierkegaard: Here Comes the Knight', Phil Today, 30, Fall 86, p. 267.)

this rhythm, dancing *with* being given by the modification of habit by memory to provide a non-automatised response.

Already it can be seen that Bergson's account of dance in Time and Free Will is not without its problems. In addition to the above problems, the notion that music allows predictability with regard to dance appears to present a tension with other accounts of music which Bergson gives. Bergson frequently invokes music as a model for time in his writings because it is possessed of a constant flow, which encompasses both continuity and change, but also more importantly because of the essentially *unpredictable* nature of the subsequent events in the piece. (CM, p. 19) This suggests a tension in Bergson's thinking between rhythm on the one hand, which gives predictability as illustrated by the dancer, and melody on the other which does not.

This opposition between melody and rhythm is reflected in Bergson's claim that [rhythmic] music suspends the normal flow of ideas and sensations and instead "... swing[s] to and fro between fixed points ..." (TFW, p. 14) This claim comes in the pages immediately following the current considerations on dance. The 'swinging between fixed points' suggests that rhythm might be based on the difference between various "levels", rhythmic movement being constituted between those "levels", whether it be volume levels, pitch levels or timbral levels, and the individual is moved by the rhythm in some analogous manner. However, some of Bergson's other comments seem to suggest a different interpretation. The comments in question concern the rhythm of architecture which he links to the rhythm found in music.

Bergson uses the term "architectural" (CM, p. 196) in one of his later works to refer to fixed systems, where elements form distinct building blocks.¹¹⁷ It is this notion of the element as a unit to be repeated which is present in his analogy between music and architecture in Time and Freewill. The description is of an homogenised space which allows repetition, and also reversibility. This is because there are a series of elements envisaged like a line which can be moved over in different orders as opposed to an organic whole where the past is always part of the present. (TFW, pp. 99-100) The same element can be indefinitely repeated, like repeating a space and juxtaposed, yet this is only apparent (Delhomme, p. 66 & 96) as it is in fact impossible to superimpose sections of time, as we shall see in the following.

This is why Bergson turns to the space of architecture, claiming it has features which are analogous to rhythm in their symmetry and indefinite repetition of an architectural motif. (TFW, p. 15) This suggests that rhythm is seen as a fixed repetition of a cell or unit,¹¹⁸ ostinato rhythm to

¹¹⁷ Wishart, in a similar spirit, contrasts the 'architectural' manner of musical composition, arranging pre-existing elements, with the 'chemical' manner of musical composition which aims at a continuity of qualitative movement via the evolution and change of the initial starting material. (Trevor Wishart, Audible Design - A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Sound Composition (York: Orpheus the Pantomime, 1994) pp. 12-13.)

¹¹⁸ The rhythmic symmetry mentioned by Bergson with regard to architecture is in the musical case not a property of the rhythmic unit, which is probably the bar, but instead of the arrangement of those bars. It is necessary to make such a distinction to avoid confusion with Messiaen's non-retrogradable rhythms which are horizontally

give it its correct title. This repetition removes the incessant change of life: a single item fills the whole mind. (TFW, p. 16) The apparently unchanging unit filling the mind fails to produce the changes "... which in ordinary life bring us back without ceasing to the consciousness of our personality..." (TFW, p. 16) As McClary has commented, "we are continually made aware of the present moment ... the completion of each cycle yields a sense of satisfaction and security, and we experience the possibility that the pattern might be replicated indefinitely, infinitely. It sets up no expectation for change." (McClary, p. 119) Rhythm thus becomes a 'movement' which has attained stasis as it goes nowhere. The pre-existing future is alongside the present in space which are mutually external and "... devoid of succession." (Capek, p. 305) The mind is moved between the start and end point of a repeated unit. It opens up on to nothing new but only to what has gone before. Thus architecture truly is frozen music for Bergson.¹¹⁹ It is as if time were irrelevant to the system. Indeed Adorno describes the rhythms of Stravinsky in just such terms as bringing about "... the end of musical Bergsonianism" (Adorno, p. 193)

To an extent there seems to be an obvious discrepancy between Bergson's claims about rhythm in the early part of Time and Free Will (as

symmetrical. Otto Karolyi, Introducing Modern Music (London: Penguin, 1995) p. 106. (Henceforth Karolyi)

¹¹⁹ Souriau makes a similar connection between architecture and cyclical rhythms. (Etienne Souriau, "Time in the Plastic Arts," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 7 (June, 1949): p. 303) (Henceforth Souriau)

detailed above) and comments made later in the same work where he talks about the difference between *counting* a series of bell strikes versus the *hearing* of an air or rhythm "... the qualitative impression produced by the whole series." (TFW, p. 86) Here the mobile part, as opposed to the still element, is again at the forefront of Bergson's mind. To grasp a rhythm is to grasp a part, not an element, to use his later terminology. Bergson thus contends that it is only the splitting up of the bell ringing into separate notes (elements) which allows the ringing to be seen as repetition. Such separation requires a homogeneous medium so the sounds can be "... stripped of their qualities." (TFW, p. 87) Analysis into elements treats the rhythm as a *quantitative* countable multiplicity consisting of a series of elements stripped of individual difference and placed in an homogeneous space, (Capek, p. 176 & Robinet, p. 19) a repetition of the same, (Mullarkey, p. 18) as opposed to a *qualitative* multiplicity with interpenetrating parts. The whole series would remain a pure quality if it were grasped whole and not analysed into a series of countable elements, the latter leaving each element the same and equal. (TFW, p. 46) This gathering (which would in Matter and Memory develop into the conception of contraction) retains each of the successive sensations in order to combine them to form a group. (TFW, p. 86) To hear notes making up a rhythm as separate requires an abstraction, as opposed to hearing the rhythm whole, where the parts, like those of a living organism, interpenetrate.¹²⁰ (TFW, p. 100) If the rhythm is grasped

¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that Boulez takes exactly the opposite point of view, in that he sees the striated time of notes as basic, and necessary for the production of secondary smooth time. This is important for Boulez's attack on graphic notation in scores, which often use lines of movement rather than individual notes. Boulez sees

as a qualitative multiplicity any change in the 'parts' will change the whole. So if one note is lengthened the whole rhythm will correspondingly change (TFW, p. 101) as the parts are inseparable from the whole. When counted, each bell ring is stripped of its individuality and rendered identical. Differences in quality are missed as these are inexpressible in terms of differences of quantity.¹²¹ (TFW, p. 72) When the rhythm is grasped whole the past is part of the present, surviving and making the present richer. This is because time is a heterogeneous continuity (both indivisible and differentiated (Capek, p. 159)) which, because it is creative, relies on there being a difference between the past and the present, whilst they remain indivisible, although Capek notes that this was "... not clearly evident ... before the publication of Creative Evolution and An Introduction to Metaphysics." (Capek 2, p. 300) This survival of the past is important as it is this which prevents repetition, and ensures that the most which can be said about any experienced state is that it is superficially similar to a previous state. This is because the superficially similar state can always be understood in terms of the previous state, but also because the individual experiencing, superficially,

the lack of specificity in graphic scores as a denial of the historical evolution of music towards greater and greater precision of notation. Pierre Boulez, "Time, Notation and Coding," Orientations - Collected Writings, ed. Jean-Jacques Nattiez and trans. Martin Cooper (London: Faber and Faber, 1986) pp. 84-9.

¹²¹ Kant interestingly argues the opposite line to Bergson. Kant claims that music is perceived as music because it is taken to be qualitative, whilst in actual fact it is the basis in mathematics, that is the quantitative, which allows it to have the effects it does. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (First Published in German 1790; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) p. 199 (Ak. 329).

the same state is different from the individual who experienced the first state because their personality is in a constant process of change as they accumulate new experience. (Capek, p. 164) What this means is that memory prevents us going through the same state twice, each moment is novel as the whole of the past is stored in our memory. (Capek, pp. 164-6) Events which differ temporally thus, of necessity, differ qualitatively. (Capek, p. 166) Memory is thus essential for the understanding of becoming, as opposed to a series of successive disconnected instants - (ADM, p. 469) that is a homogenised space. Memory is thus essential for duration, (Delhomme, p. 154) even in matter. (Capek, p. 303)

As memory constantly adds the past to the present a rhythm can be grasped which will not form a single repeated item filling the mind as in architecture. The rhythm will no longer be understood as a repeated *element*, but instead as a continuously changing mobile *part*. The difference between these two accounts of rhythm is the same as that between a mathematical and a melodic continuity, with the mathematical continuity being made from a repeated discontinuity, is reliant for its division on a homogeneous time which is equivalent to space. (Capek 2, pp. 300-1) The numerical breaks movement down, (Delhomme, p. 110) whereas the melodic continuity grasps the growing qualitative multiplicity as a whole movement, no elements being isolable as singular notes.

To grasp a whole, what Bergson refers to in Matter and Memory as 'contracting' the present requires memory in order that the past notes can be brought into the present to produce the grasped whole. To grasp the whole movement also requires individuals to stop thinking in terms of any

external cause for a rhythm, for example the playing musicians or bell ringers. (TFW, p. 47) With this notion of grasping a qualitative multiplicity Bergson is attempting to move away from spatial images of juxtaposed distinct notes and get to pure change. Duration is something other than a multiplicity of external states. (Capek, p. 127) Indeed Capek sees the move away from spatial images and indeed tactile ones as essential when it comes to music as this is a confusion of two heterogeneous strata. (Capek, pp. 86-7) One should be interpreting music in auditory terms.

So, to summarise, Bergson proposes two models for understanding rhythm. The first is related to dance and is based on the ability to anticipate the rhythm's future course as it is habitually repetitive. The future appears to be contained in the present. The second is a rhythm grasped whole which is not anticipated. In the second case each future beat, even if it was superficially the same as the last, would qualitatively change the whole of the rhythm which had already been heard. Yet as a mechanical repetition of the 'same' such a rhythm could hardly be said to be creative. This lack of creativity is important as it appears to be a move towards a form of homogeneity and an attempt to spatialise time, an architectural repetition of the 'same'.

There is, however, another criterion which must be met. A *changing* rhythm, if it is to be followed, as when reading poetry, understanding a speech, or in a piece of music, must be changing *slowly*. This is important if qualitative change is to be *grasped* and *followed*, as opposed to being registered merely as a series of atomised states. Each qualitative change

in rhythm must in some way be prefigured by the previous rhythm: though this in no way means that it must be predictable from it. Indeed the distinction between the graceful curve, where each event is immediately referring only to that previous to it, as opposed to taking in the whole of its past is of vital importance, as will become increasingly evident. This is why Chattelun's interesting comparison between Classical and Romantic music is flawed.¹²² He claims that whereas the rhythms of Classical music are *necessarily* founded and created within the bar [*mesure*] structure, the capricious rhythms [*rythmes capricieux*] of Romantic music are instead merely imprisoned by the bar. The example of romantic music Chattelun uses is the main theme of Beethoven's Ode an die Freude, yet the rhythm, in this section of the Ninth Symphony in particular, is for the most part steady and unchanging. Yet even if Chattelun's distinction is right, the very fact the rhythms in Romantic music are capricious would militate against them being creative and prefiguring the rhythms to come. Wagner, another Romantic composer might provide an alternative model when he attempts to break down the dominance of the bar line by concentrating on the accenting and intensification of spoken rhythms, rather than meter.¹²³ However

¹²² Maurice Chatterlun, "De L'Experience Musicale a L'Essentialisme Bergsonien," Actes du Xe Congres des Societes de Philosophie de Langue Francaise (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1959) p. 64.

¹²³ Richard Wagner, "Rhythm Determined not by Artificial Metrics but by the Natural Liftings and Lowerings of the Speaking Accent," Wagner On Music and Drama - A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Works, ed. Albert Goldman & Evert Sprinchorn / trans. H. Ashton Ellis (New York: Da Capo, 1964) pp. 199-203.

Wagner's rhythms, in this instance, will again not be creative, each rhythm heralding the next, as the rhythms are instead tied to a textual argument or the rhythms of a simple cyclical rhyme scheme, if anything, and it would be this which was followed rather than the any continuous creative rhythmic change.

So if Romantic and Classical models of music cannot provide a model for understanding rhythms in terms of creative change, then perhaps a Twentieth Century piece of music can act as a suitable model. To this end several Twentieth Century pieces and techniques will be examined, the first being phase shifting as used in the works of Steve Reich.

Reich's Piano Phase (1967), for example, makes the process¹²⁴ which structures the music audible. The piece consists of two pianos initially playing the same repeated material in unison, but then one of the piano players gradually moves forward out of phase with the other player who is keeping constant time. The second pianist, as he is playing at a slightly faster tempo with respect to the first thus moves through a series of out of phase positions until the two pianists reach unison again.¹²⁵ In this piece the listener is able to follow the rhythm not merely because it is

¹²⁴ Process in Reich's music, as Ligeti points out is of a different order to the thematic development found particularly in the 19th Century, especially Beethoven. Simon Trask, "The Pioneer," Music Technology Vol. 4 / Issue 6 (May 1990) (Henceforth Trask)

¹²⁵ Roger Sutherland, "Steve Reich," Electric Shock Treatment Issue 3 (Summer 1992) p. 12 (Henceforth Sutherland)

repetitious in terms of the material, but instead because the process which structures the piece and gives creative change is itself being repeated.

However there are three problems for Bergson with this example. Firstly as the process is treating the material as a fixed element to be repeated, the process is itself rigid and mechanical, and cannot produce true creative change. That is it relies on a homogenisation and separation of an initial element and forms an indefinite architectural repetition of that element. Secondly, as each unit fails to open onto the next in its repetition it is closed. Thirdly, the anonymity of the actual process¹²⁶ is also, for Bergson, a problem, as will shortly be shown with regard to the distinction between photography and painting. Reich's phase shifting works can thus not be a model for a continuously changing rhythm where each rhythm prefigures the next.

Two alternative approaches to creative rhythmic change would be music which relied on acceleration and deceleration of rhythmic pulse to gradually change rhythms on the one hand, or alternatively, looking at musical rhythm in terms of large scale timbral change. Can either of these

¹²⁶ To a certain extent the anonymity of process in Reich is different to that in someone like Roland Kayn. Whereas Kayn is quite happy to set an electronic system up and leave it to produce the music without interference, Reich moved away from the use of electronic devices "... largely because of their mechanical sounding rhythms and pitches and the lack of bodily involvement in making music with them." (Reich, quoted by Sutherland, p. 13) For him there was a need in his music for the tiny nuances and variations which human performers give. The difference between Reich and Kayn would not, however, affect the argument presented and the anonymous nature of the process which produced the original score.

produce the Bergsonian model of creative rhythmic change which is required?

The first alternative, changing the speed of a composition, has been a frequent manner of adding expressiveness to performances in the Western art music tradition. Indeed the change in speed of a performance could be argued to result in a qualitative rather than a quantitative change in the rhythm of a piece. Performance variations might seemingly remove the regularity of rhythm as an absolute notatable value, (Bachelard, p. 126) but this does not entail 1. creative rhythmic change with, the past interpenetrating the present, or 2. that these performance variations are essential to the music: the rhythm of a work is perfectly preserved when it is performed on a player piano. The second point becomes all the more important when regarding the work of Conlon Nancarrow's work, for example using two canoning lines, one of which speeds up from an initially slow tempo, the other slowing down from a faster tempo. It is the very lack of performer variation which makes this piece possible. Performer variation, however, is not a particularly astounding way to change a rhythm continuously, nor one which changes any of the actual relations between elements within a rhythmic unit. It is a question of nuance - nothing new is really added.¹²⁷ The rhythm remains essentially the same. So this music cannot provide a model for a creative change. But even if a whole piece consisted of the gradual slowing down of a

¹²⁷ An exception to this would be the constant interplay between more than one rhythmic line, say in Reich, but even here, as we have noted, rhythm is created from an unchanging basic principle.

rhythm,¹²⁸ each moment would merely refer to the one previous, not the whole evolution of the piece, very little of the past would need to be part of the present.

There is another more radical notion of acceleration which might provide an alternative model for creative change. Stockhausen pointed out that if a rhythm is recorded on tape and played back at a high enough speed it will coalesce into a single sound, a particular timbre. Here the speed of a rhythm causes qualitative change in the sound.¹²⁹ However, it is not a qualitative change *in* rhythm, but instead a change *from* rhythm to timbre, in Matter and Memory's terms a change in extension. However as in the previous examples it is only the rhythm previous to the current which is required, the whole past could be totally absent, so this too would not provide a model for a creative rhythmic change. It must be emphasised at this point that this account is not trying to produce the conditions for something to be a creative rhythm, just to find an example of a creative rhythm.

¹²⁸ It is important to note that we have not referred to Reich's piece Four Organs (1970) where a single chord is repeatedly played being held for a slightly longer duration on each occasion. This is because maracas are used to form a steady pulse over which this change occurs, so the musicians can keep a steady time. So although the duration of the chord is increased, the music does not in one sense rhythmically slow down.

¹²⁹ Karl Heinz Stockhausen, Stockhausen on Music, ed. Robin Maconie (London: Marion Boyars, 1989), p. 47. (Henceforth Stockhausen)

Although the change from rhythm to timbre might not be compatible with creative rhythmic change it is still possible that larger scale changes in timbre itself might allow rhythm to be thought of in a different sense. Such an attempt to define rhythm on a larger scale in terms of timbre can be seen in Stockhausen's highly colouristic analysis of Debussy¹³⁰:

I was thinking about trends in registers of certain textures, about increasing and decreasing trends in density and in the character of density overall, of gradual shifts in predominating colours, from dark to bright, or from metallic to muted colours, and so on ... I spoke of textures being perforated - I used the word textures as opposed to structures - and of rising or drifting shapes, sawtooth shapes of masses. (Stockhausen, p. 44)

Here rhythm as timbre gives continuous variation.¹³¹ Indeed Isao Tomita's Snow Flakes are Dancing emphasises exactly these qualities in Debussy's piano music, chords, scales, dynamics and harmonic pitch moving towards a notion of pitch as the property of a spectrum, a 'tone

¹³⁰ Bergson notes that Debussy's music, "... employs the continuous melody which accompanies and expresses the unique movement and unbroken dramatic emotion" (M, p. 844) of Maeterlinck's work (*Péleas and Mélisande* presumably). Here it is the melodic rather than timbral progression which is of primary concern, and we shall have more to say about Bergson's relation to melody in the subsequent. Bergson also notes that he has an "... instinctive predilection for the work of Debussy." (M, p. 844)

¹³¹ In this respect Gyorgy Ligeti's Atmospheres (1961) (prominently used in Stanley Kubrick's film 2001: A Space Odyssey) with its slowly shifting timbres produced by multiple instrumental parts, up to 56, might be another model for rhythm, however, as Ligeti notes, the rhythm in this piece has in fact been "neutralised". (Trask, p. 56.) The sense of timelessness which this results in is also present in the similarly constructed works of Aldo Clementi whose 'idées fixes' was the death of time.

colour melody', of sorts. Indeed Jankélévitch comments on Debussy's feeling for timbre. (Jankélévitch², p. viii) This piece clearly demonstrates how Debussy can be understood as a continuous process of 'colouristic' change where each timbre relates not only to the prior but to all those which have gone before.¹³² This would then be one model for creative rhythmic change. It is also interesting to note how viewing chords in colouristic terms means that any change of pitches or individual note dynamics within a chord will lead to a qualitative change in the whole colour, i.e. the whole chord can be viewed as a qualitative multiplicity.

Are there any other models, apart from the large scale rhythmic change just discussed, which might also illustrate Bergson's notion of creative rhythmic change?

An alternative model might be the modulation of time signature referred to as metric modulation and first used by Elliott Carter in his Cello Sonata (1948). An example of metric modulation would be the change from a time signature of four-four to six-four made by changing two crochets to a triplet, followed by exactly the same change for the remaining two crochets, the time signature then being easily changed to six-four by replacing the triplets with six crotchets. (Károlyi, p. 104)

¹³² Tomita's early work can be contrasted with that of Walter Carlos (laterly Wendy) who, although using very similar equipmental resources, in particular the Moog modular, concentrated, in his early work, at least, on Bach. Instead of concentrating on timbral movement and colouristic effects, Carlos produced work which, more often than not, made the Moog sound not unlike a conventional keyboard instrument with a somewhat unusual timbre.

Here each of the qualitative rhythmic changes prefigures the next to produce genuine newness. Carter himself claims:

... every individual momentary tableau is something ... that has interestingly evolved, yet is also only a stage of a process that is going on to another point; and, while every moment is a fascinating and beautiful thing in itself, still what's much more fascinating is the continuity, the way each moment is being led up to and led away from.¹³³

So each change in Carter is prefigured by the previous which in turn is prefigured by a previous one, each change referring back to the whole process of continuous evolution. It would be quite possible to use the technique of metric modulation without creativity, but in the Bergson influenced Carter this technique is used to create a truly creative rhythm. The past is continually part of the present in Carter, each rhythmic change taking in the whole of the past in its development.

There are, then, at least two possible models for creative changes in rhythm. Firstly, the account of rhythm in terms of large scale timbral change and, secondly, Carter's metric modulation as described above. In Bergson's terms the models of movement presented are vertical as the whole of the past can be found at each moment - virtually, if not actually, as there is no way of knowing how any part of the melody's past will act to impregnate the future at any particular point.

¹³³ Allen Edwards, Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter (New York: Norton, 1971) p. 92.

But the difficulties encountered in finding a suitable model for creative change in rhythm suggests that (i) Bergson's account of creative rhythmic change applies at best to a very limited set of examples and (ii) that Bergson's account of creative change is primarily based on *melody*, where continuous variation is somewhat easier to understand, as shall be argued shortly. The second conclusion is not at all surprising given that both Debussy's 'tone colour melody' and Carter's metric modulation are attempts to produce a rhythm which takes melody as its model for change. Indeed in the case of Schoenberg's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, it was the desire to make a melody out of tone colour in the same way one would make a melody out of pitch relationships which was at stake.¹³⁴

In addition to the limited set of examples of creative rhythmic change outlined above the rhythms in poetry might be seen to be problematic for Bergson. As poetic rhythms tend to be repetitive, ostinato almost they will be unable to give creative qualitative change. Indeed Bergson does link poetic and ostinato rhythm together, claiming that poetic rhythms lull the soul into "... self-forgetfulness ..." (TFW, p. 15) This suggests the architectural repetition of the distinct unit which fills the mind with one idea. It is also interesting to note that the power of poetry in *Laughter*, like that in *Time and Free Will*, is linked to hypnotism, and again it is the ability of the poet to place the listener / reader in a state where they are suggestible to an idea which can form an image. by rocking the imagination "... to and fro between like and like with a regular see-saw motion ..." (Laughter, p. 61). This technique is used to make the

¹³⁴ Michael Hall, *Leaving Home* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996) p. 99.

indefinite by stages into a vision which can be accepted by the reader / listener. (Laughter, p. 61) It is a question of getting the reader / listener to the right level, the right rhythm to allow the poet's communication. So in this way it is not the instantiation of a creative rhythm which is important in poetry.

Whilst poetry generally might not be possessed of metric modulation or an analogous equivalent, it would still appear quite possible for most poems to be interpreted in terms analogous to those of large scale timbral change. Although timbral change appears to be the easiest way to think about large scale change, Benjamin Boretz provides an alternative when he maintains that "... the *rhythmic* structure of a piece is ... simply all of its *musical* structure ... The theory of rhythm, then, is nothing more or less than the theory of *musical* structure in its most comprehensive form ... ".¹³⁵ Given Boretz's position, it would still be possible to view large scale changes in rhythm in terms of creative qualitative change. So many poems could be viewed in terms of large scale rhythmic change, the obvious exceptions being extremely short poems, especially Haiku. If this were the case, however, non-creative rhythmic change on the small scale could be taken as a model for creative qualitative change on the large scale. This is not because there is an 'artificial' analysis of creative qualitative change which fails to grasp the whole part, and instead gains the element - as would be the case in analysing a melody into individual notes. Instead the analogy would be with cinema, where a 'lower' level

¹³⁵ Benjamin Boretz, "In Quest of the Rhythmic Genius," Perspectives of New Music 9, no. 2, and 10, no. 1 (1971): p. 154.

non-creative rhythmic change fails to give a higher level creative qualitative change and real movement.

In contrast to rhythm, melody acts, as already mentioned, as a model for non-homogenised change in that the melody is never in any of its tones but merely passes through them, i.e. a melody cannot be reduced to the set of individual tones which it uses. (Capek, p. 145 & Delhomme, p. 147) A melody can never be treated as an aggregate, of individual tones as these tones are inseparable from one another and also from the silences in the piece. (Capek, p. 327) In this sense there is always a contraction of the past into the present in the case of melody. (MM, p. 242) This example demonstrates clearly why transition cannot, as Lovejoy thinks, be reduced to discrete states. (Capek, p. 121) Melody is constantly coming into existence, this is its specific way of enduring (Making, p. 184) it is the purest impression of succession (Mullarkey notes the following references to support this position - CM, p. 149, p. 19, TFW, pp. 100-1 & p. 111) yet as Mullarkey points out Lacey is wrong when he thinks that the existence of things which change in a manner unlike that of melody provides a counter-example to Bergson's conception of change. (Mullarkey, p. 140) The fact is that melody is a paradigm of change which does not need to be tied to a measurable space and cannot be assimilated to quantitative relations, certainly in Time and Free Will according to Losev, (RM, p. 135) melody provided a pure movement in pure time. (Briusov quoted in RM, p. 125n)

But if melody was purely temporal then the question of how it existed in space would be immediately raised, but as, all sensations of necessity

participate in extension in Matter and Memory the problem does not occur. (Capek, p. 323) Indeed melody, when polyphonic, is an example of the simultaneous existence of sounds in spatial configurations, whose only difference from the usual spatial relations entered into is in the degree of their stability. (Capek, p. 323) Indeed Capek thinks spatio-temporal relations are easier to think about in terms of musical polyphony than the usual models employed. (Capek, p. 326) Sounds are clearly spatialised being beside or alongside one another. (Capek, p. 325) Each polyphonic line, by the time of Duration and Simultaneity is becoming in the whole of becoming, a simultaneity of fluxes (Capek, p. 326) each at a different tension. There can be the transversal overlap of lines without loss of individuality. (Capek, p. 324) So whilst there is an analogy to be made with space, the polyphonic lines being alongside each other and in parallel movement, they are without "... complete mutual externality..." of static spatial elements and so not homogenised: (Capek, p. 325) a position quite different from clean cut atomised images placed side by side. There are several points which must be stressed at this juncture.

Firstly although one could argue, as Bachelard does that melody is never monodic but always tied to harmony, (Bachelard, p. 130) for Bergson harmony is ultimately in the tendencies rather than the product, as already mentioned, whilst rhythms and levels can synchronise, even if they are at different speeds.

Secondly as pieces of music are often constructed with a theme and variations, it might seem that their principle for construction was a recurrence of the same, i.e. the theme, in various 'disguises', this in turn

giving continuity to the work. The model of theme and variations also means that any of the various recurrences of the 'group' of notes can be an origin, an original theme, there is no need for what is taken to be the principle theme to be initially stated then developed. This argumentation is used by Bachelard to suggest that it is the ability to start again which is important, not continuity - any point can be a beginning. It also, according to Bachelard, suggests that the origin is itself a construction.¹³⁶ (Bachelard, p. 123)

This position is interesting as it ties into Bergson's description of the three processes of comedy, which are described in very musical terms, where it is a case of disguising the initial material to give variations. The problem might be solved if treating a piece of music as a theme and variations was seen essentially as a spatialised understanding, yet to follow a piece fully this kind of understanding would seemingly need to be present. Bachelard, interestingly, quotes Landry in this regard. Landry thinks that as time cannot reverse, the reversal of a theme is the result of a spatialisation which is "artificial, and only perceptible on paper". (Bachelard, p. 126) What this suggests is that certain processes are not spatialising as they are not reliant on notation, whereas others are reliant on notation, and almost cannot be understood without notation.¹³⁷ We

¹³⁶ It is interesting to note that Webern's Variations for Piano Solo, Op. 27 (1936) is regarded by Petrassi as pure variation with no theme or original basis, for variation, on this reading the piece would be absolutely non-hierarchical. (Sleeve notes to Maurizio Pollini (Piano) - Anton Von Webern - Variations for Piano, Op. 27 / Pierre Boulez, Second Sonata for Piano - Deutsche Grammophon 1978 (Stereo 2530 803))

¹³⁷ Whether a reversal of a theme or even structuring a piece as a palindrome is

have already seen how Bergson has criticised the understanding of melody in spatial terms which sees it as a series of elements without continuity, i.e. not as a melody: indeed the ability of time to appear reversible is a hallmark of such spatialisation and mechanism. Whereas Bachelard could argue that it is only the audibility of structures which is important in terms of their status as spatialised copies, it is uncertain whether Bergson can. Indeed if the complex structures, in at least some cases, only make sense when a theme eventually emerges, (a theme which was already in some sense present), the continuity between the theme and the development of the piece would only be recognised retrospectively. (Bachelard, p. 123) A particular case of this would be the second movement of Schnittke's Concerto Grosso No. 4 / Symphony No. 5 (1988) where it is only in the final bars that we arrive at the few unfinished bars from the second movement of Mahler's unfinished piano quartet from 1786 from which the rest of the movement has developed. This is even more the case for a refrain which is not recognised as such until it has been repeated. (Bachelard, p. 124) Indeed as Stephen points out in the case of a tune, when notes are heard for a second time "... the

essentially perceived as artificial is debatable, it certainly does not appear so in say the first movement of Giacinto Scelsi's Chukrum (1963). Perhaps a more clear cut example of something "artificial and only perceptible on paper" would be Mauricio Kagel's use of notes on a score to form two dimensional figures which are then rotated about various axes, mirrored, increased in size, stretched etc. (Karolyi, pp. 115-8) Here there seems to be a clearcut divide between the sound and the result where the musical material is quite literally spatialised to produce the variations, however the results, in say Transcion I (1958-60) and Transcion II (1959) do not seem contrived or merely academic, which one would think they would and indeed should.

actual effect produced is different and that, indeed, is the whole point of a refrain."¹³⁸

Throughout this discussion Bachelard has been implicitly relying on memory, and the past coming in to the present, the returning refrain which is not fully separable from the current refrain, for example. Indeed it is Bachelard's bizarre insistence that the future is inseparable *only* from its *immediate past*, for Bergson, which makes him fail to see how Bergsonian his account, in one sense is. It is only because the past can come into the present that there can be novelty, and also that there can be 'repetition'.

There is a non-spatial way to understand a theme and variations which is not reliant on the notion of a disguised repetition. This would rely on the notion of a virtual repetition. For each theme there are an infinity of other themes which virtually exist on higher and lower planes behind the current theme, and which can only be realised by moving to those planes. Every move to a new plane, as was the case with memory earlier in this work, changes the whole, it is an internal change in bringing out certain tendencies which existed in the initial thematic material but which were not actualised at any particular moment in the melody's progression. There could then, on this reading, be a distinction made between a spatialised purely technical processing of thematic material which was without creative and artistic merit, and a vertical creative movement of

¹³⁸ Karin Stephen, *The Misuse of Mind* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1922) p. 64

the material, whose results would be creative. What this then means is that any theme can be an initial starting point for a series of variations, as each of these themes carries with it, virtually, all of the other themes and variations which may or may not be actualised in its vertical creative movement. It is not a question of multiple origins, but instead what is actual and what virtual in any particular expression of an original creative emotion, which was discussed in the above.

In much of the previous debate the thesis has been concentrating on how music can act as an example of a heterogeneous continuity by looking at the various structures present, but there is another account of heterogeneous continuity given by Bergson which suggests that it is not so much the structure of the music which is important in defining heterogeneous continuity, but something more fundamental.

In Duration and Simultaneity Bergson claims that a melody comes close to a heterogeneous continuity, but that "... it still has too many qualities, too much definition, and we must first efface the difference among the sounds, then do away with the distinctive features of sound itself, retaining of it only the continuation of what precedes into what follows and the uninterrupted transition, multiplicity without divisibility and succession without separation, in order finally to rediscover basic time. Such is immediately perceived duration, without which we would have no idea of time." (D&S, pp. 44-5) This passage might be taken to mean that there is an absence of qualitative difference in pure duration which results in a homogeneous continuity, as Lovejoy and Ushenko do, according to Capek, however this would be a mistake. Bergson in this

passage, as elsewhere, emphasises the notion of a multiplicity without division, i.e. terms which interpenetrate, yet are still different. (Capek, p. 120) If, as has already been pointed out individuals focus on the individual tones, there will merely be a multiplicity of external elements.

Given the above Capek, influenced by Ingarden claims that there is a difference between becoming as non-contingent and a contingent manifestation of becoming. There is a universal character of becoming, (Capek, p. 171) which is exemplified in melody but which is at the same time inseparable from it. Yet it would seem that by trying to efface the differences in the melody Bergson is moving towards a homogeneous undifferentiated continuum. However Capek cleverly side-steps this problem by pointing to the way even a single thing can be one yet multiple. (Capek, p. 127) The same tone or chord held for a prolonged time, say electronically generated, does not continue to be the same even if apparently unchanging.¹³⁹ Our memory contracts the past into the present, the new 'phase' is different from the old precisely because it has the past in addition to the present. This means the present is inevitably new. It is important to note that the 'abstracting' involved in the example of melody is *not* a tracing of lines of facts, an extrapolation, but instead perceptible to the individual who is prepared to remove themselves from the habits of perception.

¹³⁹ A musical example of this phenomenon would be Francois Bayle's L'Épreuve par le Son, part four of L'Expérience Acoustique.

Returning to the question of theme and variations, and given the above, it could be argued that it is the tendency present in becoming which is important and not the individual theme and variations which are a product of this movement which is not separable from it. It is the constant clash of two movements in opposite directions, one towards a quasi-repetition of the past, a circling, and the other towards pure creativity. These two tendencies corresponding to the two movements to be found in the *élan vital*, (Mullarkey, p. 66) the '*élan createur*' (ADM, p. 485) as opposed to the repetition and identity, characteristic of matter, a circling, but not an immobile repose. (Jankélévitch, p. 221) So whilst this 'geometric matter' appears as an obstacle or inertia against life's forward progression, (Delhomme, p. 56, p. 71 & p. 180) it is instead just a question of two movements in opposite directions. (Delhomme, p. 72) The circling 'geometric' tendency is not a nothing, merely a negation of gesture and invention, (Delhomme, p. 56 & Jankélévitch, p. 221) a counter current. (Delhomme, p. 5) Indeed "[i]n certain animal species ... or vegetable (fungus) life is ... hypnotised or paralysed by matter ... the *élan* succumbs to an invading torpor", (Jankélévitch, p. 169) yet even here it is not a simple immobilisation but a formation of active territories, but ones which are circling rather than progressing. (Jankélévitch, p. 175) In musical terms the recurrence of a theme. However, this immobilisation is a risk which is always present,¹⁴⁰ (Delhomme, p. 5 & p. 179) but also necessary as without this material tendency life would be unable to create. (Delhomme, p. 5 & Jankélévitch, p. 270 & p. 170)

¹⁴⁰ Bruno Paradis, "Indétermination et Mouvements de bifurcation chez Bergson". *Philosophie*. No. 32 (1991), p. 30 (Henceforth Paradis)

It is this material opposition which allows the dissociation of life (which Mullarkey thinks contains both matter and life at a virtual level) (Mullarkey, p. 82) and its progression by the accumulation of potential energy in its circlings. (Jankélévitch, p. 171) These tendencies are in conflict, each species being a negation, and each form an invention - yet both are necessary for expression, the internalisation of this conflict. (Delhomme, p. 180)

If we take this analogy further we find that the propulsive force (i.e. life (Delhomme, pp. 176-7)) which unfolds does so unpredictably and creatively¹⁴¹ without the teleology (Mullarkey, p. 63) found in Schopenhauer, for example. (Jankélévitch, p. 223) There is no pre-existing plan (KAP, p. 155 & Robinet, p. 123) as evolution is durational in that its elements do not pre-exist their realisation. Instead evolution is defined by its own expression which moves from the virtual to the real, which is life itself. (Delhomme, p. 176) Indeed Mullarkey sees the *élan vital* as a type of organisation (Mullarkey, p. 63) acting by division of the virtual into the real, (Delhomme, p. 64) the very action of time itself. The actualisations of the virtual do not resemble the virtual (KAP, p. 150) as this would presuppose they already existed waiting to be realised, but are instead genuinely creative, though partial, expressions of the virtual. (Gunter, pp. 12-3)) This genuine creativity, as we have already noted, is

¹⁴¹ Cohen, Richard A., "Philo, Spinoza, Bergson," The New Bergson, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) pp. 26-7.

always reliant on "... *all* the past of the organism ... its heredity - in fact, the whole of a very long history." (CE, p. 20 & Capek 2, p. 300fn.)

Without this tendency towards creation, the actualisation of the virtual, the structure of music would be like that perceived by Adorno in Jazz; a series of processes which can be arranged in any order and which would fail to form a coherent whole:

... no piece of jazz can, in a musical sense, be said to have a history, just as all its components can be moved about at will, just as no single measure follows from the logic of the musical progression ... (Adorno, pp. 124-5)

History requires a thread, the memory of the past coming into the future as opposed to being a spatialised series of atomised states. Yet it is this lack of the past, a living in the moment which characterises Stravinsky, according to Adorno. In taking its inspiration from painting music has taken on spatialisation, and lost its essential feature, becoming.¹⁴² There is a stasis achieved by rhythmic repetition, there are "'static blocks' of sound juxtaposed without motivic-thematic development." (Witkin, p. 172) So Stravinsky, like Jazz, according to Adorno, works by juxtaposing and arranging a collection of spatial elements without any creative tendency organising them through time. There is a tension between the creative and the material, the two sources of artistic production.

¹⁴² Theodore W. Adorno, Philosophy of Modern Music, trans. Anne G. Mitchell & Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed and Ward Limited, 1987) pp. 191-3. "... an undermining of temporality, he abhorred." Robert W. Witkin, Adorno on Music (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 197. (Henceforth Witkin)

Painting, Perception and Truth

The starting point for the last section was the role of 'suggestion' with regard to dance and aesthetic appreciation. Suggestion was seen to involve an almost hypnotic process which transported the viewer / listener / reader to the correct level to experience what the poet was communicating. This response was not to the large scale rhythmic organisation of the poem, but instead to the small scale ostinato rhythm. Ostinato rhythms in general whether in architecture, poetry, dance, or music were then contrasted with creative rhythms, the first failing to give *creative* change, the later producing creative change. Several rhythms were then explored to see if any of these were examples of creative rhythms.

This section will take up these themes again, examining Bergson's claim that the notion of suggestion achieves *truth*. It is this notion of truth which allows a distinction to be made between art and humour, art attaining a specific truth, humour relating to the general. How this specific truth is communicated is then examined with regard to Bergson's wider account of art, which tends to be couched in terms of painting.

An attempt is then made to explicate the difference between photography and painting in terms of the inscription of time in an artwork which, according to Bergson, is truthful and thus unique, as opposed to that depicted in photography. This second attempt, however, will also be seen to be problematic, as the actual inscription of time would involve the material level and this is what art, according to Bergson, must hide. An

alternative would be to look at the notion of inscription in terms of following the lines traced within a picture, yet this account ultimately also appears to apply to long exposure photographs, as well as suggesting a succession which could be stopped at any moment. Bergson's relation to cinema is then explored to see if the criticisms he makes can shed further light on the differences between painting and photography.

Aesthetic feelings 'suggest' because they are contagious, and they are contagious because they are sincere and manifestly reveal truth, and manifest truth has the power of conversion. (Laughter, p. 162) This power of conversion allows Bergson to make a distinction crucial for his account of art. The feeling art communicates might be generally agreed to be 'true', but this does not mean according to Bergson, that the feeling is general. Everyone, for example can have a *pain*, but the pain of Hamlet is unique and true. It is true by virtue of Hamlet being recognised in his pain or suffering as a living individual. (Laughter, p. 162) Here the distinction is between art which gives the living, moving, adaptable and thus 'true' individual, versus humour which gives the individual as imitating the mechanical and automatic, thus distorting the unique, living reality.

Specifically how does the artist gain the truth which is then communicated? As the basis of all knowledge, according to Bergson, is perception the initial truth will need to come through this route. A perfect artist "... would perceive all things in their native purity: the forms, colours, sounds of the physical world as well as the subtlest movements of the inner life." (Laughter, p. 155) Such an artist cannot, however exist

as an artist's perception is only ever expanded in one direction, each of these directions corresponding to a sense, this is why the arts are divided as they are, each art corresponding to a particular sense.¹⁴³ (Laughter, p. 155) Artists, on this model, move other individuals beyond their ordinary range of perception, which is conditioned by the exigencies of everyday life, to perceive things which did not previously explicitly strike their senses, (CM, p. 135) but which are potentially available to everyone. Artists thus bring out that which already exists unnoticed, like developing a photographic plate. (CM, p. 135) However care must be taken in understanding what 'exists' means at this juncture. It is not that the detail is potentially available, in that it exists waiting and ready to be discovered, but instead that in bringing out detail is also creative of that detail. The virtual knowledge we have made actual has narrowed our engagement with the world. (CM, p. 137) It is a case of enlarging perception by moving away from the exigencies of everyday life. There is thus a qualitative change in what is perceived. More memory enters into perception enriching it and moving the individual away from their utilitarian response. More details are projected out onto the object, the circuit of perception becomes wider. This qualitative change is best exemplified by painting.

¹⁴³ Bergson's review of a (then) recent work on Wagner interestingly emphasises the change of text into sound which avoids having to describe the work of Wagner in terms of a synthesis of various artforms, which would obviously cause problems if an artist's perception is only ever expanded in one direction. (M, pp. 818-20)

Painting is always tied to perception, but is not merely the *reproduction* of the pre-existing, it makes explicit that which is perceived without being noticed, the virtual. But why is the content of the original perception not noticed? Bergson claims that in ordinary perception, because there are a variety of views presented simultaneously by reality which are equally 'brilliant', they are cancelled out by each other, and it is the artist who reveals these singular brilliant vanishing visions, by isolating and fixing them so spectators will be unable, henceforth, to avoid seeing reality in the same way the painter did when he painted it. (CM, p. 136) By this he means that the artist instead of focusing on the general attains the specific instead of the utilitarian reduction of difference to sameness. This then means that the artist in attempting to suggest something to the viewer is attempting to move them to a certain level so that every time they see the object of a painting they will be forced to view it on that level, moved away from their utilitarian preoccupations. Given that art attains the specific it might seem odd that Bergson should not see photography as an art form also attaining the specific.

In a later work Bergson attempts to distinguish between painting and photography not primarily in terms of the 'finished product', but instead in terms of the actual process of production. He remarks, for example (CE, pp. 340-1) that there is a crucial difference between putting together a jigsaw and painting a picture. The assembling of a jigsaw is not theoretically tied to time, practice can make the final assemblage emerge at greater and greater speed, the end result remaining unchanged. So on this basis neither quilts nor mosaics (CE, pp. 89-90) are art as they can

both easily be made to a fixed plan. The painting of a picture, on the other hand, cannot be slowed down or speeded up and remain qualitatively unchanged. The actual act of painting, according to Bergson, has a close affinity to time. It is this affinity to time that Bergson wants to claim leads to the unpredictability of the result, (CE, pp. 155-6) - even though one might know the style of the painter in question and actually have seen the subject he is working from. In fact the artists themselves do not know what the result of their work will be prior to its completion (Rescher, p. 19) It is not a question of assembling pre-existing elements, the work does not pre-exist its realisation. (CE, pp. 6-7) It is not a plan where the time is irrelevant where the lengthening or shortening of duration will have no effect on behaviour (Bachelard, p. 54) but an evolving process and one which is close to the melodic development already discussed. Antliff does not make the explicit link to melody,¹⁴⁴ but he could have done so, he claims that each state in the painter is transformed by the previous, and indeed the whole history of the work's creation, so by this reason alone the painting will not be predictable, (CE, p. 7 & Antliff 2, p. 197)

But more than this is at stake as the movement of actualisation itself is a movement between planes with nothing behind it - music and paintings are expressions of themselves, not of a hidden psychological world or

¹⁴⁴ Antliff does however link the process of change to the artists personality, and if an internal state is being expressed by the artist it is not unreasonable that the states changing throughout the process of painting will be in a dynamic relation with the picture painted.

ontology. (Delhomme, p. 172) As with the case of intuition previously examined the actualisation of the artist's intuition is itself creative as it is the differentiation of a virtuality whose result is not predictable. In this sense the tendency behind a work which is made concrete, will inevitably be different from its effect (Mourélos, pp. 217-8) as its realisation, the movement between planes, always involves effort and change.

Photography, for Bergson, does not bear the same relation to time as painting, it gives the illusion of seizing the world 'instantaneously'.¹⁴⁵ A possible counter-example, long photographic exposures, will be dealt with presently. As opposed to the essentially unpredictable nature of painting as creation, photography's fixed time, the time of exposure, makes its results predictable given the equipment, lighting conditions etc. Photography has no circuit of modification between the subject and its lens, each moment does not modify the next. The stillness of the photograph captures time as an instant, whereas the painting captures time as a process, one which is inscribed in paint. So painting grasps a moment of 'psychological' time, as opposed to the photograph's impersonal abstract motionless time.

This distinction additionally relates to the difference between a time which is not concerned with the unit, any moment whatever will do, as

¹⁴⁵ As will quickly be apparent the notion of automatism which Bergson links to photography is quite different to that usually ascribed it in aesthetic theories where automatism is responsible for photography's access to things which have, at the very least, once existed, for example K. Jones, "The Metaphysics of the Photograph," *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 25 / No. 4 (Autumn 1985): pp. 372-9.

opposed to an artistic description, which emphasises the privileged section of duration. Duration is often most keenly felt when waiting is involved, "An hour of joy is infinitely shorter than an hour of expectation."¹⁴⁶ In Bergson's famous example waiting for sugar to dissolve in water, the very experience an individual has of duration, as opposed to a unit as an hour (CE, p. 10 & 339) seems to make a similar point, yet there is more to this example than simply the need to wait. As Deleuze comments, one waits for the sugar because it has a different rhythm of being to our own, of which we become aware in our waiting. So a relationship with the sugar is entered into by the individual who waits, but also with duration as a whole, as in Creative Evolution there are multiple durations but each of these being individual only to the extent that it participates in duration as a whole. (Bergsonism, pp. 31-2 & 77) So there is a certain correspondence between the rhythm of the sugar dissolving and the internal rhythm of the viewer / participant. (Capek, p. 190, Robinet, p. 18 & Worms, p. 223) There is thus, for Bergson, a truthfulness about painting as it always inscribes an individual unique psychological time, as opposed to the general impersonal moment of the camera,¹⁴⁷ not only because one has to wait but because the individual is in a relation with the subject's duration, and duration as a whole. "... for

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Solomon, Bergson (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1911) p. 19; and William Shakespeare, As You Like It (Act III, scene 2) Quoted in Solomon, p. 23.

¹⁴⁷ The time taken to view a painting and the fact that it cannot be taken in in a single glance (Souriau, p. 294) is irrelevant to the current considerations as such an argument could equally apply to a photograph.

us, conscious beings, it is the units that matter, for we do not count extremities of intervals, we feel and live the intervals as of *definite* intervals. " (CE, p. 339)

The actual inscription of the time taken to paint a picture, however, would appear to be *visible*, if at all, only through the material basis of a painting becoming noticeable, for example the speed of the brush strokes - yet art is supposed to *hide* its material basis. Rembrandt is famous for pushing viewers back from his paintings, and the abstract expressionist Barnett Newman for insisting his paintings were viewed close to, the one denying the material basis, the other emphasising it. According to Douglas all art can be self-reflexive, can do violence to itself. (Douglas 2, pp. 220-1) This self-reflexivity has two facets, the first is the deliberate attempt to subvert the mechanisms of the camera by drawing attention to those techniques which cinema relies on. Douglas concentrates on the means by which cinema depicts space, but his argument could equally apply to other techniques. (Douglas 2, p. 220) The second facet of self-reflexivity is the employment of films within films, news footage, grainy television pictures, i.e. that which draws attention to the medium through comparison with other media. (Douglas 2, p. 221) Thirdly the use of symbols, ticking clocks for example to be a symbol of mechanised time. (Douglas 2, p. 221) Symbols can of course equally be used to show an affinity with non-mechanised time when the artist so desires, for example Matisse removing the hands from the clock in *The Red Studio* (1911). (Antliff 2, p. 192) The arguments presented by Douglas seem to suggest that if an art form can be self-reflexive, by the above described techniques it can be self-conscious and in this way progress. (Douglas 2,

p. 219) Indeed Douglas goes even further stating that great art always exposes its own artificiality. (Douglas 2, p. 224) However it has already been suggested that Bergson is anti-modernist in not seeing the exposure of the medium's conditions of possibility as artistic. This anti-modernism would certainly directly apply to the Douglas' first type of self-reflexivity drawing attention to the techniques which cinema relies on and arguably the second which is reliant on comparison with other media, as much the same point could be made with regard to a film of people watching a film in a cinema. The reason the first two examples are problematic for Bergson is due to a larger metaphysical point. Each plane or level which is worked on, with the contraction of perception must regard the other planes as inert in order to support itself. So life treats matter as inert, and vice versa. Each level denudes the one below of duration, i.e. treats it as repetition. (Mullarkey, p. 146) A similar relation seems to exist between the artist and his material, the material realm being excluded from the aesthetic appreciation. Even in the case of the artist the process of creating an art work is divided into two tendencies, that which is creative and that which is technique. (CM, p. 94) In terms of technique Bergson, apart from the more obvious meanings of the term also highlights the relation of the artists works to other works as well as "... the demands of the material upon which he operates and which is imposed upon him as upon all artists; it concerns in art what is repetition or fabrication and has nothing to do with creation itself." (CM, p. 94)

So if the technique must be hidden then perhaps time can be inscribed in the picture in terms of a symbol, but why should a clock ticking in a film say anything about the mechanism of the film, to use Douglas' example?

(Douglas 2, p. 224) If a painting shows the life cycle of a plant from seed to death, it is giving a symbol of time, but there is no clear reason why that should relate to the time the painting took to paint.

Another possible way to allow the inscription of time to be self-reflexive would be to look not at the painting in terms of its material basis, but in terms of a following of the movement a line inscribed within the work. One could, perhaps, see the tracing of mobile lines within a picture as being a *representation* of movement, an 'active line' unlimited by fixed points as the much-quoted Klee would say.¹⁴⁸

Bergson in Time and Free Will had already, as we have seen, distinguished between a jerky, disjointed movement where each movement fails to prefigure the next, each movement being seemingly separate and not opening out onto its successor, and the graceful movement of curves, each 'moment' on a curve prefiguring the next. Every moment here is a non-arbitrary change in direction. (TFW, p. 12) This allows the clear prefiguring of the subsequent movement at each stage.¹⁴⁹ however each 'moment' does not contain the whole. Indeed even

¹⁴⁸ Paul Klee, Pedagogical Sketchbook, ed. Walter Gropius and L. Maholy-Nagy and trans. Sibyl Maholy-Nagy (London: Faber and Faber, 1953) pp. 16-8.

¹⁴⁹ Artaud gives an alternative account of movement which he finds in Balinese theatre which is close to dance. He describes the 'actors' as "... mechanised beings ..." giving "[a]n impression of inhumanity ..." (Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theatre," The Theatre and its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958) p. 58)

when Bergson talks about the graceful form as a recording of a movement and the living being's sinuous line moving out throughout the whole - spreading as a basic principle in little waves, this line may not itself be visible, (CM, p. 229) despite it being the original intention behind the figure which is seized by the artist. (CM, p. 230) This is why artists cannot be trained by teaching them to draw geometric curves and figures. (CM, p. 241) The eye of the artist should instead be seeing the graceful creative movement of which the form is a recording. (CM, p. 243) This should hardly come as a surprise as the very use of a line to depict movement is frowned upon by Bergson as it suggests that the movement could have stopped at any point on its journey along that line, i.e. that the line is underpinned by homogeneous space. (MM, p. 217) A line cannot symbolise duration which has already ceased, it cannot represent duration in its flow. (MM, p. 191) The same applies to a photograph, which although it can also trace lines of movement; the car headlights recording lines through the city in the clichéd long exposure merely gives an homogeneous time, rather than a true inscription of duration.

Even though a line cannot act as an inscription of duration in a picture, there might be another way in which the time which it takes for a work to be created to become visible in an art work. Colours are used in Matisse's work, according to Antliff, to create a rhythmic duration, an extensive field of operation. (Antliff 2, pp. 188-9) This field of colour fluctuates due to the ambiguity between volumetric depth and the unmodulated decorative surface, leading to a rhythmic pulse being introduced into the reading of the picture (Antliff 2, p. 191) this pulse originally being

introduced into the very act of its creation. (Antliff 2, p. 197) This rhythm has the power to place the individual on a certain level through rhythm, as did poetry, and indeed Antliff refers to the section of Time and Free Will already examined in this thesis on poetry. (Antliff 2, p. 197) Emphasising colour in his description of Bergson's aesthetics might seem perverse considering his lack of colouristic description, however it is not as perverse as it seems. The two visual artists most prominently mentioned by Bergson in his comments on aesthetics are Corot and Turner, both of whom were very concerned with colour and the effects of light.¹⁵⁰ And indeed it is this concern with colour which informs Matisse's work on Antliff's account creating a space which is closer to the intuitive extensity, than the academic intellectual renaissance space. (Antliff 2, p. 187) The homogeneous cutting of space by perspectival grids, which make the change in scale of a picture appear merely quantitative, were dispensed with, (Antliff, p. 189) leaving the picture as a heterogeneous space for exploration. It is interesting to note that this extensive field created by rhythm and the fluctuation of colour is without direction. In the same way an ostinato rhythm in poetry sets up static pulse without any necessary direction, or relation to the past in the present, so the picture gives a static rhythm, one which is not creative or melodic. So even though a certain rhythm might be inscribed in the

¹⁵⁰ Having said this the clear relation of these painters to impressionism, particularly Corot whose dicta "always be true to your first impression" encouraged both Monet and Pissarro which might be considered problematic as "... the attack on impressionism in the name of Bergsonian *durée* was common currency among the Parisian avant-garde by 1909." (Antliff 2, p. 203n)

colour rhythms of a piece, there is no progression. The rhythm of a duration might be inscribed, but not its evolution.

Duration, then, can seemingly not be inscribed in a picture, yet what is at stake is not some item which can be separately identified in the picture. There is *no* separation between content and duration in an evolution, as each change in speed is a change in being, (Paradis, p. 20) an internal modification. (CM, p. 20) The evolution in time cannot be separated from what the thing is, it is not that it bears the mark of time as something separate. Indeed the lack of internal modification in a physical system, is one of the major features which Bergson ascribes to cinema and it is to this, his most famous account of the relation between an art form and time, that this thesis will now turn.

Cinema and Music

The first chapter of Deleuze's *Cinema 1* is directly concerned with the notion of the mobile part, versus the divided still time of the 'photographs' which make up a film. Bergson thinks that the motion in a projected film is super-added to a series of immobilities (Douglass 2, p. 212 & Cariou, p. 111) as it is only possible to grasp the individual 'photographs' which make up a film as separate entities, as opposed to grasping them as a movement. (Douglass 2, p. 213 & Lecerle, p. 195) For Bergson the fact that time is fixed in 'separate' 'photographs' means time is essentially frozen in the moment by the camera it is not a question of a contraction of moments in memory within a certain thickness of time, or the privileged section of psychical duration we have waiting for the sugar to dissolve in the water, (CE, p. 339) but is instead a series of separate anonymous moments. Movement thus becomes homogenised, there can be a movement of an immutable object across an inert pre-existing space, as opposed to movement being a qualitative change in the whole.

Deleuze, in contradistinction to Bergson, insists that cinema does not give stills but instead gives movement. At a fast enough projection speed, contra-Bergson, movement is given, as opposed to a series of snapshots. (Douglass 2, p. 215) The lower level striation of time into immobile sections, 'photographs', is rectified in its projection to give immediate movement in a cinematic projection. (Cinema 1, p. 2) This movement is an illusion, but if something is an illusion then, according to Deleuze, the very reproduction of that illusion is, to some extent, its correction. This seems an odd argument against Bergson's position, as Deleuze is suspended between two positions.

Firstly, that spectators are given movement by cinema, *not* stills, that is there is no *noticeable* illusion, and the converse, that the presentation of something *as illusion* is in some sense its rectification. The two positions appear incompatible. Either spectators are subject to a *noticeable* illusion or they are not. Secondly, Deleuze says that even if the means are 'artificial', this does not imply that the results are. (Cinema 1, p. 2) This suggests that the basis or condition of something does not necessarily affect the thing based or conditioned by it, accusing Bergson of a fallacy of composition (for example, if all the parts of a machine are light, this does not mean that the machine built from the light parts will itself be light.)

Bergson's objection, however, seems more fundamental than this, namely that the very model of time which is presented by cinema, the anonymous mechanical time being given as the foundation for real movement, is wrong. According to Bergson cinema does not place us in reality, (Douglass 2, p. 212) as reality can never be understood cinematographically. (Douglass 2, p. 210) What we are given is a spatial illusion; (Lecerle, p. 196) a stroboscopic time where instants have been taken from the whole of becoming allowing time to be slowed, accelerated, or immobilised. (Bachelard, p. 77) Yet time, for Bergson, if it is anything must be creation (CE, p. 341) so the idea that sections of time could be taken out of becoming and juxtaposed with each other appals him as it suggests that the present also contains the future in a hidden form. Additionally when watching a film all events are always the same, time unfolding like the "unfurling of a fan" (Douglass 2, p. 213) with no modification being made to what is shown no matter how fast the

film was projected; (Douglass 2, p. 212) this is one of the reasons why time lapse films will have very limited insights for Bergson. (Douglass 2, p. 211) There is no internal modification, as there is with painting. When a painting is made the speed of its execution is an essential part of what it is, as we have noted, yet this is not the case for film according to Bergson as the time is mechanical, impersonal and homogenised. However Douglass in claiming that Bergson's arguments address only projection speed as opposed to shooting speed (Douglass 2, p. 215) suggests that insights can be gained from time-lapse photography. The projection speed does appear to qualitatively alter what is projected. But the point is that this alteration is mechanical and does not affect the whole, no matter how fast a film is played the same events will happen - all the pre-existing elements will be juxtaposed next to each other in an homogeneous space waiting to unrolling. So whilst time-lapse photography may give insights, Bergson's more pressing concern is the spatialisation of time by film resulting in the removal of its creativity.

There is however more to Bergson's claim that time-lapse films, for example, have limited insights. The cinema camera, like any tool, extends the realm of interaction with the material realm and prolongs the natural organs. (CE, p. 141) Tools are what Bergson calls artificial organs, (CE, p. 141) and what Brion Gysin might call "... externalised sections of the human nervous system." (Ticket, p. 156) The problem Bergson sees with these artificial organs is they do not extend the 'soul'.¹⁵¹ Tools are

¹⁵¹ Henri Bergson, *The Meaning of the War - Life and Matter in Conflict*. trans. unspecified (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1915) p. 34.

inflexible, being inattentive and having no intuition. The time of the tool is impersonal, the tool cannot access different 'rhythms' of duration. It might be agreed that there are 'rhythms' of duration which in principle cannot be accessed by human's, (M&M, p. 206) ultrasonic bat calls for example, and that a tool in shifting these frequencies into the audible range so they can be heard does appear to extend perception. Indeed there is an analogy between contraction and the bat detector, the individual contracting rapid vibrations into slower ones, however it is only an analogy as it is only a change in the material speed, not a change allowing a correspondence between an external and internal rhythm i.e. perceptual adaptation, which is at stake. The detector does not constantly move between different planes in order to adapt: it is not attentive. A tool forms no circuit with its perceived object, it may extend our reach, but not our grasp. (Douglass 2, p. 225)

In the case of cinema 'perception' refers to vision specifically and, as Deleuze comments, it is for Bergson as if there had always been cinema. (Cinema, p. 2) That perception is of necessity cinematographic. What Deleuze fails to mention is that Bergson has a generally negative opinion of vision in his post Matter and Memory writings. In Matter and Memory Bergson argues that the temporal gaps between sounds, smells and tastes leads to a notion of their being accidental and contrasts this with the continuity given by vision. (MM, p. 197) However this position becomes untenable for the later Bergson, particularly with regard to sound. Bergson has argued that the concept of nothing, as both a relative and an absolute were false, and thus that all negative existential judgements are in turn false. (Mullarkey, p. 129) This idea functions analogously in the

case of sound. Cage, in Harvard University's anechoic chamber, "... as soundproof and reverberation-free as was technologically possible ... [heard] a constant singing high tone, and a throbbing low pulse" his nervous system and blood circulating respectively. "I had honestly and naively thought that some actual silence existed ... I had not really put silence to the test. ... Try as we may to make a silence we cannot ... no silence exists ..." ¹⁵² His most famous piece, 4'33" (1952) in which no notes are played emphasised 'ambient' sound and its continuity. Silence is merely an absence of the particular which was being looked for, and any attempt to repress external sound only leads to an awareness of the sound of the self. Analogously, for Bergson, being is always before nothingness, hence being, like sound is only suppressed, but never erased. (Mullarkey, p. 128 & Delhomme, p. 178) Indeed it is a case of not finding what is being looked for, (Delhomme, p. 70) just like not hearing what one expected to hear, leading to the consternation of the audience at the first performance of 4'33" (1952). There is no escape from sound, like there is no escape from being. ¹⁵³ (Delhomme, p. 180) Even when all sound is removed, just like after all beings have been suppressed there is still a remainder, in the case of being it is a pre-constituted being, always presupposed on the horizon of our speculations (Making, p. 187); and the

¹⁵² David Reville, The Roaring Silence: John Cage - A Life (London: Bloomsbury, 1992) pp. 162-3.

¹⁵³ This point is to the forefront of Levinas' mind in the account he gives of the Il ya, although a fuller account is beyond the scope of this thesis. Emmanuel Levinas, "There is: Existence without Existents," The Levinas Reader, ed. Sean Hand / trans. Alphonso Lingis (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) pp. 33-4.

audible manifestations of our own living functions in the case of sound.

The later comparisons between sight and hearing, given the above considerations, reverse the terms of the earlier distinction. Bergson describes vision as the "... sense par excellence ..." (CM, p. 147) before condemning it for preventing individuals from grasping change in itself. Vision tends to extract invariable figures and then supposes them to change *place* without intrinsic qualitative change, the movement being super-added [surajouterait]. Bergson does recognise that vision need not be this way, if it realises that the visible mobile coloured patch is actually constituted at another level of 'mobile vibrations', a movement of movements. The problem is that Bergson fails to say how vision can be of change in itself, pointing instead to the claims of scientific knowledge about this movement of movements. (CM, p. 148) This, despite Bergson's intention, serves only to reinforce his initial criticism of vision. This point is particularly telling as Bergson sees the disruption of the continuity of hearing resulting from the absorption of visual images into auditory perception, again linking vision to a lack of continuity, an homogenous spatialisation of pure movement. (CM, p. 148)

Instead of vision, *hearing* is taken as the ideal kind of perception to cope with change. According to Bergson, it is easier to think about change and perception without fixity in terms of hearing than in terms of vision, (CM, p. 147) as in the case of sound there is no necessary tie to something 'underlying' vehicle, (Capek, p. 325) and there is no illusion of any mathematical 'still' instants. (Capek, p. 325) Sound gives a continuity to

perception, as opposed to the cutting and fixing of vision - there is thus no need for a correction supervening on perception in hearing. Vision might be necessarily cinematographical for Bergson as Deleuze notes, but this does not necessitate that hearing is also.

The artistic form associated with hearing is, naturally, music, and it is worth briefly reiterating Bergson's position on music at this point as, curiously enough, such a discussion has a significant contribution to make with regard to Bergson's criticisms of cinematographical movement. Bergson, the reader may recall, claims that melodies are indivisible. (CM, p. 147 & CM, p. 71)) By this he means that melodies have no elements, only parts. If a melody is broken down into a sequence of notes it is lost. Each note is in one sense inseparable from its whole past, the totality of its past is virtually present and pushing into the future. The notion of the grasping of a melody as a whole, as opposed to individual notes is a *qualitative* as opposed to a *quantitative* understanding based on homogeneous space.

The separation of a melody into individual notes causes it to be spatialised, reduced to a succession, whereas a melody in order to be perceived *as* a melody, has to have a constant interpenetration of its parts. (CM, p. 149) In this sense, a melody forms the model of the understanding of time as duration - a series of qualitative changes which permeate one another without definite outlines, in short a heterogeneous continuity. The reason this account is of interest to the foregoing talk of cinematographical movement is that it could be argued that a melody, if heard as a whole would be a transformation of what on one level, was separate note elements into a whole on a non-analytical level, i.e. as it is

actually heard. The notes, 'fixed' elements, would apparently become movement through an 'illusion', that is in exactly the same way that cinema works. This kind of argument though is the exact opposite of the argument Bergson puts forward against individual notes (that is elements) being taken as parts of a melody, which sees them as an abstraction away from the continuity of the melody, yet analogously this is exactly what Deleuze correctly argues would be the case for cinema.

There is no cinematic still, cinema gives an immediate image of movement and to think of the cinematic still is to think a non-existent abstraction. So it would seem on this basis at least that music was on a level with cinema. The reason Bergson does not take up this argument is linked to his view of rhythm. When dealing with music Bergson's positive account of creative change is linked, as has been described, to *melody*, so a steady unchanging rhythm can underlie creative melodic change. In the case of cinema, the steady unchanging rhythm of, for example 24 frames per second, is not seen by him as a basis for 'higher' level creative change which might be analogous to a melodic change.

But, one may ask, why should painting or cinema have to be 'true' on all levels? As a model, an art form might fail at the lowest level to give a creative change, but at a higher level it might clearly indicate the nature of movement and time. This is much the same point as was made in the case of music where an unchanging rhythm on one level could seemingly produce creative rhythmic change on another. The question is one of contraction, or its impossibility in film, where Bergson is denying that it is possible for the viewer to contract the movement 'captured' by the

cinema camera without seeing the individual frames. Yet there seems to be no reason why the mobile part should not be ascribed to cinema *apart* from or on another level than the psychological inscription of time, and, in any case, this idea, it was previously suggested, is itself questionable. Even if Bergson were right and film did give false movement on the one hand, and on the other his account of painting was also unproblematic, that the photograph did give, as opposed to the painting, a mobile part there would still appear to be some problematic examples.

In Len Lye's film Particles in Space 'images' were scratched directly onto the film rather than there being a number of photographs making up the mobile image. Here the individual image, as artistic creation has taken time to create, duration being involved in the very process of its creation. There would still, however, remain Bergson's idea that the motion given by the film was false, even though at its 'lowest' level duration was involved in the creation of each frame. Perhaps Lye's film could be regarded as animation, rather than as cinema proper, but what would Bergson's attitude to animation be? Certainly if each scratching making up the animation takes time it will give a mobile part, according to Bergson. If Bergson wanted to continue to argue against the motion given by animation he would have to argue that the motion produced was an attempt to fix the mobile parts by treating them as elements on a level which closed off the perception of their individual creation, but if this were the case then contraction would be possible as the individual frames would no longer be being seen.

Looking back to Bergson's description of aesthetic feeling highlights a larger problem with his whole attack on cinema. In the case of art it is the *effect* produced which matters, rather than the *means* used to gain that effect. So aesthetic status, for Bergson, is not based on the thing (as understood by common sense or science) but on the effect it has. (Laughter, p. 163) Art can thus rely on what at the 'objective' (scientific) level is illusion, as only the *effect* is important. If cinema *appears* to give movement, this is all that should matter. Analogously, if a painting, for example Canadian Club (1974) by Richard Estes, is indistinguishable from a photograph, then both will be equally 'valid'. The process of production is irrelevant as only the effect matters (even if Este's skill might elicit greater admiration than the photographer's).

This then means that art is 'truthful' only in terms of what is being communicated, not in terms of *how* it is being communicated. Whilst Douglass notes that Bergson does not talk about the 'artificial' effects of cinema, wheels going backwards etc. or its link to a renaissance space which is gridded and related to the camera obscura (Douglass 2, p. 215) he fails to understand the implication of this absence. Douglass alters Bergson's prescriptive appeal for thought to do violence to itself by taking reality as a starting point not the concept, inverting the usual direction of thought, and instead uses it as an invocation to cinema to do violence to itself by showing its own mechanisms, Gehr's pulsing corridor in Serene Velocity, the general use of zoom lenses, Brakhage's cameraless film Mothlight (1963) with its moth wings stuck to the celluloid or indeed (Douglass 2, p. 220) Markham's La Jeteé (1964) which is made up almost entirely of stills. As has already been noted with

regard to artistic language, Bergson is profoundly anti-modernist so the whole notion of cinema doing violence to itself would at best only serve to show its inadequacy and failure to be a true art form.

Before progressing onwards there is one other question which remains as regards cinema and this concerns the question of recording. Regardless of whether a recording is digital (the constant sampling rhythm) or analogue, a recording allows a form of repeatability which allows sections to be cut rearranged, reversed, repeated - in short placed in homogeneous space. From this point of view cinema would fail by the very fact of being a recording, not because montage has occurred, but by the very fact it is possible, as opposed to impossible.

Cavell in arguing against a movie being a recording is in some senses making a similar point to Bergson, but without this seeing this as a criticism. Cavell, in his argument, makes a comparison between a movie and a recording of a piece of music. Firstly to be a recording there must be an event which one can be present at separately from the recording. Secondly to be a recording there is a question of fidelity or transparency, the recording should attempt to be indistinguishable from the original.

This position is problematic as it is uncertain what would be meant by being present at a recording as a separate event. Does this suggest a recording must take place in a single take, and if so could a film in a single take be considered a recording e.g. Pascal Aubier's ten-minute film consisting of only one shot?¹⁵⁴ This brings us to the second point Cavell

¹⁵⁴ Tarkovsky, Andrey, *Sculpting in Time - Reflections on Cinema*, trans. Kitty

is making, namely why should musical recordings be seen to be concerned with fidelity? In many pop recordings, for example, the snare drum is placed through a gated reverb in order to give it a particular sound, is this still a recording? It is certainly less concerned with fidelity than the production of a certain 'unnatural' effect. Again the use of multitracking suggests that a recording can be multiple events, i.e. there is no question of fidelity to an actually occurring event, as the whole never occurred simultaneously in 'real time'. This might appear unfair to Cavell as he might be thinking of a classical concert, and he does compare a movie to a stage play, however classical recordings are often assembled from many different takes, and the most prized recordings used both compression and valve microphones, which introduce 'warm' harmonic distortion. Even on the most 'pure' uncompressed recordings of Siegbert Ernst there are still issues. Firstly the use of large diaphragm microphones which tend to flatter the sound, despite his tendency to use transformerless models. Secondly, as with any stereo recording there is the question of space, how this is depicted, whether through phase differences or volume level in the case of most techniques. The problem is that in one sense there seems to be nothing which will fill the criteria of being a recording.

Ultimately what Cavell seems to be arguing is that cinema is, of necessity, a modernist art form in that it is to be read in terms of the devices (what he terms automatisms) employed by the film maker. This position would seemingly mean that the primary difference between a

Hunter-Blair (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1986) p. 114.

recording and a film was the visibility of its devices, as it would be for the formalists, and that the skill of the film maker would be understood in terms of the mastery of those techniques, everything is meant. The problem though seems to be that everything is 'secretly' modern, there is no purity of recording, and no benchmark for fidelity.¹⁵⁵

The next section will examine how artists are supposed to access the truth. Bergson claims this access to truth is linked, as previously mentioned, to the different perception which (genuine) artists' have, but what constitutes this difference?

¹⁵⁵ Stanley Cavell, The World Viewed - Reflections on the Ontology of Cinema, Enlarged Edition ed. (London: Harvard University Press, 1979) pp. 183-9.

Deeper Perception

If art does go 'deeper' in perception, there is still the question of *how* the artist manages to do this. Firstly, art overcomes the pragmatic utilitarian to gain access to individuality. (Laughter, p. 157) As in intuition, art represents a move away from the utilitarian, it involves perception for its own sake, not for the sake of action. (Lacey, p. 188, CM, p. 138) Art is thus not instrumental, nor does its account lessen the universe - instead it enriches it. (Jankélévitch, p. 163) This enrichment is a product of art's naive perception which, because it occurs without the interference of habit memory (Jankélévitch, p. 128) is a more direct vision of reality. (RM, p. 23) Indeed, Bergson links philosophy to art in this respect, (CM, p. 138) claiming philosophy should renounce the utilitarian habits of mind which are always aiming at action.

Valéry is of great relevance in this regard as, although he talks about individuals seeing a thing's significance before seeing the thing, he also claims that art represents a move away from seeing things as signs. (Pilkington, p. 135) On one level Bergson can wholly agree with Valéry when he claims that the individuality of things escapes human knowers unless it is to their advantage to perceive it (Laughter, p. 152) - things are often merely identified by labels, or by one or two features, (Laughter, p. 153) which means, they are scarcely known at all. (CM, p. 138) The individual is working at a level of generality which has totally erased the individual in favour of the homogeneous same.

On the other hand, Bergson disagrees with Valéry on one important point. For Bergson the mobile continuity accessed by art only acts as a

sign for duration and so has no value in itself, whereas for Valéry this is not the case. For Bergson, a picture is not a movement, it is a symbol, a symbol which moves away from generality, and one which gains its force from being an isolation of what has previously been seen in a crowd of equally 'brilliant' perceptions, but it remains merely a symbol none-the-less.

An artist's vision, as opposed to the utilitarian, is independent of the requirements of action to mediate the immediate, solidify movement and spatialise. (Delhomme, p. 42) The artist is thus disinterested, (Pilkington, p. 13) surpassing ordinary perception in aesthetic contemplation and perceiving things in their 'purity'. (Laughter, p. 155) This congenital distraction is something the rest of humanity is not allowed, and if complete would produce the perfect artist. (Laughter, p. 154) This distraction is a product of nature, according to Bergson, which works only in one direction, a sense. (Laughter, p. 155) Each art relates to a particular sense (Laughter, p. 155, Antliff 2, p. 202) which perceives the data from that sense for its own sake. Yet the enhancement of one set of faculties which in madness puts the individual out of equilibrium with the world (Mullarkey, p. 55), seems close to the position of the artist, establishing the common link between artistic genius and madness.

Artistic Truth

Bergson attributes a deeper perception to the artist, as the previous section commented, but what is it that the artist is perceiving and subsequently expressing in the art work? In the case of poetry it is thought, although as an art form it does not appear to be attached to any particular sense. In the case of painting it is deeper perception of the moment which is it at stake and in music emotion. What about tragedy and other fictional narrative? The thesis has already commented that the difference between art and humour is between the specificity of art's subjects and the generality of humour. Whilst comedy relates to the type, a generalised individual, the artistic, for example tragedy, relates to singular individuals.¹⁵⁶ (Lacey, p. 189) So comedy of necessity cannot be "... more than skin-deep" (Laughter, p. 168) as art would remove individual's resemblances to other individuals, i.e. their generality. Tragedy, on the other hand, must be deep to move away from generality and resemblance. If tragedy does relate to individuals and art communicates some kind of truth it is incumbent upon Bergson to explain how this truth, is given in the case of a fictional character. The invention

¹⁵⁶ This line of thought is carried through to the later account in Creative Evolution, although the account does differ in that intuition is not only linked directly to perception but also to the intention of life which is gained via sympathy. Here it is still the individual which is perceived by the artist, but perception is specifically in terms of the lines which bind and give an organism significance, which allows the organism to be mutually organised, rather than merely assembled. (CE, pp. 176-7) This kind of position is close to that expressed in Bergson's essay on Ravaisson. (CM, pp. 229-30)

of a fictional character does not merely appear to give an object of perception with additional detail, so what 'truth' does a narrative give?

In order to understand what kind of truth might be at stake in drama it is necessary to understand what Bergson considers to be required of the dramatist or novelist.

Instead of dwelling on surfaces the dramatist must look into his self. (Laughter, p. 166) In the case of humour we saw that, for Bergson, it was impossible to see ourselves as amusing, as self-insight would give a depth and require a sympathetic relation which would negate the possibility of humour. Additionally, individuals only become thoroughly acquainted with their "... own heart ..." (Laughter, p. 166) and the outer signs of another can only ever be interpreted defectively via analogy to ourselves. (Laughter, p. 166) If this is accepted, then it follows that the fictional individual, if artistic, can only be produced or extrapolated from the individual *author* and, as Bergson points out, Shakespeare thus must have created Lear, Hamlet and so forth wholly from his knowledge of himself, from his own experiences. However "... the biographies of poets would seem to contradict such a supposition. How indeed, could the same man have been Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and others?" (Laughter, p. 166) What kind of explanation does Bergson give to solve this 'apparent' problem? Bergson says that a dramatist creates a character by following a branch of their life which *could* have resulted in them being, for example, Lear. (Laughter, p. 167)

There are points - at all events there seem to be - all along the way, where we may branch off, and we perceive many possible directions though we are unable to take more than

one. To retrace one's steps, and follow to the end the faintly distinguishable directions, appears to be the essential element in poetic imagination. (Laughter, p. 167)

In this instance, the notion of the *sketch* might give a suitable model for such 'rough' explanation or imagination. If a dramatist attempted to work from external observations, according to Bergson, they would inevitably compose characters from fragments, and such a character could not be living. So, instead of taking fragments "... filched from right and left, as though it were patching together a harlequin's motley ..." (Laughter, 167) instead it finds "... the potential in the real, and takes up what nature has left as a mere outline or sketch in his soul in order to make of it a finished work of art."¹⁵⁷ (Laughter, p. 168) So the artist through their imaginative capacities gets to the truth by looking into himself to create living singular and thus truthful individuals, as opposed to the generalised abstracted types of comedy.

¹⁵⁷ 10 years later Bergson says that all the great creators of living, acting human types (like Shakespeare) have the embryo's of diverse personalities virtually existing within them because their "... personality is rich and multiple; in contrast to that of most men which is one sided, that is to say destitute." (M, p. 844)

Repetition

There is, however an apparent problem for Bergson's account of fictional characters. The thesis has already detailed how repetition functions with regard to habits, where instead of moving with attention in unison with the flowing continuity of life, there is an inattentiveness and a lack of responsiveness to life on the part of the potentially amusing individual. There is another characteristic of life which has already been mentioned which is important at this juncture, the constant flow and qualitative change which cannot be grasped by a series of homogeneous elements. This constant change and constant creation of qualitatively different states shows life to be a negation of repetition. (Laughter, p. 32) To view life, falsely, as repeating, is to see it as a mechanism, a negation of life. (Laughter, p. 34) An individual recreates themselves constantly by the very fact of existing, (HBP, p. 183)¹⁵⁸ and it is this constant recreation through time, which Bergson maintains is necessary for the dramatist to trace when they create a living character, as has been previously described.

If, however, life is characterised by the constant creation of novelty (CE, p. 23) and cannot be a simple unfolding of a preordained structure, how can a drama be, in some sense at least, true to life if the author has pre-determined what will happen? This criticism works in two ways.

¹⁵⁸ Also Mark Muldoon, "Time, Self and Meaning in the Works of Henri Bergson, Maruice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricouer," *Philosophy Today* (Fall, 1991) p. 256.

Firstly, Bergson talks, with some derision, about the notion that time could be like a reel of film unwinding, already set out, but this seems to be equally the case when a book is being read, or a play is being watched. It seems as if time exists in the play as a series of events and characters whose future is unknown, but in fact this is only an appearance (unless the play is totally improvised). The future is known, the actors play to a predetermined script, Cordelia dying at the end of every performance of King Lear. It could be argued that there is a change of pace possible in a play, as there is in reading a book, but this does not seem to obviate the apparent determinism. Indeed in a book this is even more the case as it is possible to turn to the last page and see what happens. The play's fixed and rigidly predictable time becomes something rigid attached to the living flexible time of the actors whose fate is not fixed and pre-ordained. A play could, no matter how serious, be seen as potentially amusing as humour is a rigid counterfeit following life's suppleness, (Laughter, p. 38) although the fact it is not seen as such might be due to convention, if nothing else. The fictional character as part of the play would then seem not to be a living being, but a repeatable unliving one as Levinas claims:

The characters in a book are committed to the infinite repetition of the same acts and the same thoughts ...
(Levinas, p. 139)

The second reason is that the fixing of the play in words in producing the written text in some sense takes it away from the constant evolution of life in time and space, suggesting it has been or could be split into sections and repeated i.e. placed in homogeneous space. Bergson might argue that this is the wrong way to treat the play - it is understanding it in

terms of the fixed rather than in terms of duration, as a whole with inter-penetrating parts, and his account of diction has already argued for something similar.

Indeed it would even be possible for Bergson to argue against this notion of spatialisation if a play, to some extent, always involved a processing of the initial material for its realisation, although such a position is a simplification of the one he holds, as we have seen. By distinguishing between the creative act and the material realisation of that act, with reference to the work of the sculptor, Bergson can claim that creativity is bound by the materials in which it is expressed:

... it concerns in art what is repetition or fabrication, and has *nothing to do with creation itself*. (CM, p. 94) (my italics)

Analogously it could then be argued that the basic raw story material has to be *arranged* to produce the plot, but that this has nothing to do with the initial 'story' intuition, only with its material expression.

This kind of idea suggests the anti-modernist requirement to hide the techniques used by the artist in the creation of his work, which Bergson espouses. Matter for Bergson is treated, at a certain level, as pure repetition and the creative impulse works against this matter, attempting to efface the material characteristics of a thing. Matter, as it inhibits life,¹⁵⁹ (Laughter, pp. 28-9) unsurprisingly, becomes another source for

¹⁵⁹ It should be noted, however, that life requires matter as an obstacle in order to create, just as the eye is both necessary for vision and an obstacle to vision. (Jankélévitch, p. 247)

humour. At this point it is clear why, as discussed previously, art must hide its material basis on Bergson's account. If matter was brought to the fore it could be potentially amusing and thus remove sympathy. How exactly does Bergson think that matter is comical?

Matter

One of the primary modes in which matter inhibits life is by making language amusing. This is particularly relevant to the difference between serious art and comedy because it involves the notion of repetition which was at stake in the story / plot distinction mentioned above. Here a joke *about* language is distinguished from one which is *in* language by the inability to translate the joke in the former case. (Laughter, p. 103) A joke *about* language brings the material basis to attention in its inflexibility. We are taken to a lower level of association which is not the correct level at which semantic meaning is operating.

Bergson maintains that it is language which becomes comic in word play. Lacey pinpoints the apparent problem with such an account when he asks who the object of humour is in this case. This 'who' is important because, Bergson maintains, as already pointed out, that humour is always aimed at humans. Bergson might argue it is those who put their trust in language, but if it is language itself, as Bergson says, which is becoming amusing in word play, (Laughter, p. 104) this explanation would not appear plausible. Bergson does, however, offer another explanation.

It has often been claimed that superiority theories of humour cannot account for word play, (AoL, p. 89, Swabey, p. 213, H&I, p. 21) despite Leacock lamely trying to counter such arguments by claiming that puns were a triumph over words. Bergson's account, which is often seen as a variation on the theme of superiority theories, still needs to see humour as being against someone, as we have seen, but does try to circumvent this

apparent problem. The clever move Bergson makes here is to link the notion of word play to that of thought.

The process of thought which is in some sense seen as a living flow is disrupted in word play and directed to the material basis, so instead of having a flow of thought, there is instead a lack of attentiveness to it, which allows the material aspect to dominate and form mistaken associations. Instead of taking language on an expressive level, word play brings us back to the physical level as the *word* (as opposed to its signification) becomes the object of attention. The clearest example of this is taking the figurative literally, where "... attention is fixed on the material aspect of a metaphor..." (Laughter, p. 115 & AoL, p. 125)

Word play, in terms of puns and double meanings is referred to by Bergson, as reciprocal interference which is one of three processes he outlines which can create jokes.

These three processes are repetition, inversion and reciprocal interference, which act as the material antitheses to the "outward characteristics"¹⁶⁰ of life - which are constant qualitative change in time and the self-containment and individuality of each series in space. (AoL, p. 121) Life appears as a constant change which never reverses or repeats, (Laughter, p. 88) yet humour can portray it *as if* it were a repeating mechanism with reversible action and interchangeable parts.

¹⁶⁰ "Such are the outward characteristics - whether real or apparent is of little moment - which distinguish the living from the merely mechanical." (Laughter, p. 89)

(Laughter, p. 101, AoL, p. 122) So although repetition is not actually possible in 'life', it is possible in an abstract intellectual conception which cannot grasp life. (CE, p. 46 & KAP, p. 150) That is it is possible to place life in a homogeneous space. These three processes apply to both actions and situations and additionally language. This is because thought is treated as a living thing, and thus its translation, language when processed can appear mechanical and lifeless. (Laughter, p. 119) This is especially important as language feels as if it "... contains some element of our own life." (Laughter, p. 129) It makes our thought appear mechanical and illadapted to a situation.

In order to flesh out what Bergson means here, it will be useful to examine some examples. Puns are the most common example of reciprocal interference. Here the material aspect of the word, in this case its sound, links the word to another one in a separate series. This suggests that the systems in question are not self-contained and individual but are in some sense interconnected. What is at work here is again the dream-like associationist logic which treats words as fragments taken from their context to form a new web of relations which is inattentive to the level of the word's operation. So one word can function independently in two totally separate series. This isolation of words which allows them to function in the two series only occurs because they are treated as elements, rather than component parts of whole meanings. Puns and word play, then, form a counterfeit of thought. Some puns can obviously be disguised insults and so be amusing for two reasons, both of which are explainable by Bergson's account. Although Bergson's account does not deal with 'slips of the tongue', (accidental word play) such examples

produce no real problems for his account. Slips of the tongue can either be laughed at because they are treated as if they are in fact deliberate, or alternatively, in the case of a 'repressed' or apparently repressed meaning which finds expression in an accidental slip of the tongue, the 'disguised' or apparently disguised nature of the utterer's meaning can cause amusement.

An example of the second of the processes, repetition, would be a tragic hero being imitated in a play which would, Bergson thinks, immediately turn the work into a comedy. (Laughter, p. 164) Yet, as Lacey points out, tragedy quite often does involve repetition and is not thus rendered funny (Lacey, p. 194) - for example the son repeating the mistakes of the father. A distinction might be made between self-conscious imitation as opposed to mere repetition, in order to deal with Lacey's point. The tragic hero, on this view, would lack *knowledge* of his repetition, whereas the comic type would not. There are two problems with this reply. Firstly, although the comic character can have knowledge of a repetition which is happening (Monty Python's classic 'Do you Ever Get that Sense of Déjà Vu?' sketch) this does not necessarily seem to be the case - quite often the repetition will be hidden from the character in question. The second objection is simply that repetition is amusing because it appears to militate against life, so it would not seem to matter whether there was or was not knowledge on the character's part of the repetition in question as long as repetition was seen to be occurring. Perhaps the reason that repetition in the case of the tragedy is not funny is because it evokes sympathy in us and, as the reader will recall, humour has of necessity to be without sympathy. It might then be plausible to see self-conscious

imitation as removing sympathy. However, actors playing Shakespeare in modern dress (Lacey, p. 194) imitate a more 'traditional production' self-consciously, yet they fail to amuse.

Bergson can be defended against these criticisms of his account of repetition by making his notion of repetition clearer. It is repetition *within* a play, not of a play, which concerns Bergson. The repetition of the tragic hero's actions and so forth creates comedy, (Laughter, p. 164) a part of what he earlier refers to as clockwork relations. (Laughter, pp. 35-6) The repetition within a play as imitation does not give an exact copy, or attempt to do so. The minor characters repeating the main characters become "... several different copies of the same model, that is just what the naturalist does in order to define a species. He enumerates and describes its main varieties." (Laughter, p. 165) The process here is exactly the same as that linking central and peripheral examples, the peripheral being merely exaggerated copies of the central examples.

A technique related to repetition, what Bergson refers to as translation, is the basis for parody (Laughter, p. 123 & AoL, p. 122) - to take a series of events into a different key than their own. (Laughter, p. 118 & 119) To take the serious as minor, the black knight in Monty Python's Holy Grail who refers to his arm being severed as 'merely a flesh wound', or conversely to make mountains out of mole hills - the hysteria caused by the mucky fork, to use another example from Monty Python - in both these cases it is behaviour which is inappropriate to the level of operation, in short an inattention to life. This behaviour on the wrong level always leaves a reference to the original, even if the original is not

actually present, as often we are acquainted with the natural expression which is parodied. (Laughter, p. 122)

In the third process, as the name 'inversion' would suggest, something is repeated, but in inverted form. For example, a man who empties his pipe on the terrace below is the subject of complaints from the terrace owner: "What are you doing emptying your pipe on my terrace? What are you doing putting your terrace under my pipe?" is the witty reply (Laughter, p. 120, AoL, p. 127). Such inversion obviously refers to the initial starting point which is inverted, and that is why it is amusing. (Swabey, p. 41 & p. 42) As Kant says of Stern, it is the turning of things upside down which allows us the pleasure of putting them the right way up again.¹⁶¹

Monro thinks that Bergson's explanation of inversion is unable to adequately explain all relevant examples. The prisoner lecturing the magistrate (Laughter, p. 94) does not seem amusing merely because there is an inversion here, but because there is an additional infringement of society's rules and indeed individuals' roles. (AoL, p. 123) Bergson claims that the examples used are pure, so it cannot be argued that the example is a composite of different types of humour. There is no doubt that society's rules are being infringed, and Bergson could readily acknowledge this, the question is *how* this is occurring. It is not a question, as it was in ceremony of bringing out the intrinsically humorous

¹⁶¹ Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. trans. Mary J. Gregor (First edition in German 1798, but based on much earlier lectures; The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). p. 104 (Ak. 235)

quality by viewing it on an essentially non-functional level. Nor is it a case of comparing the real with the ideal. What is humorous is that society's rules have been infringed by inverting them, and it is this inversion which is important, in Bergson's example, not the infringement of the rules per se, as Monro seems to think.

In each of the three processes described, it is the process which is mechanical and inflexible, and hence amusing. What is the reasoning behind Bergson's view that the three processes must be mechanical? Firstly the very fact that the processes can be applied as mere techniques without attention to their matter suggests that the process is not vertical and creative. Secondly the isolation of the individual 'item' which is to be repeated, which is reliant on homogeneous space for its extraction is 'anti-life'. It is the very taking of sections from a qualitatively changing whole ('life'), and treating it as a series of separable items which can be arbitrarily changed and processed, which causes the three processes to be laughed at. In short it is the homogeneous spatialisation of life.

An artistic act, on the contrary, is integrated into a whole and has a history, it draws from the whole of its past, as opposed to a comic process which is atomic, does not call its whole past into the act. The whole development cannot be understood in terms of a process or series of processes, these are merely techniques of manufacture which do not concern the novelty of creation itself. Technique as an art can thus be contrasted to technique as a knack,¹⁶² which is purely a material process.

¹⁶² Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1960) p. 43 (462).

What is most interesting and also most puzzling about the above account of humorous repetition is the role which music plays in it. Bergson talks about the three processes as taking a "... series of events and repeat[ing] them in another key ..." (Laughter, p. 118) and claims that "... the *École des femmes* does nothing more than reproduce and repeat a single incident in three *tempi*." (Laughter, p. 91) The thesis has already shown what a positive role music has in Bergson's philosophy, in particular, how it helps us understand duration in terms of continuous qualitative change, how sound can be a better medium for understanding becoming than the visual, and so forth, yet here these processes are being described in *musical* terms and not being treated positively.

Additionally, as was shown earlier, there is an ambiguity between the large scale architectural structure which music often has and the results of that structure which have positive 'fluid' characteristics. Why, then, does he not think that repetition in this case can produce a 'fluid' result? The answer may be that, whereas musical technique provides a *development*, a process which progresses through stages, it presents the partial appearance of qualitatively different newness, whereas in fact all it produces is caricature - the *same* repeated after being processed. There is no initial tendency being expressed, all the processes merely act on the surface.

We do not generally laugh at music, though there are of course musical jokes, which appear to conform to the main models proposed by Bergson. Les Dawson's 'wrong notes' appear to be small misfortunes. Playing tunes on 'inappropriate instruments', for example the musical saw,

bring the material level to the fore. Incongruous eclecticism, for example the Naked City track Speed Freaks which cuts between contemporary country and western, adult orientated rock, light jazz, dub Reggae, 1930's country and western, funk, 1970's heavy metal and thrash metal in under two minutes appears to deliberately cut between fixed elements. John Zorn's String Quartet - Cat O' Nine Tails (Tex Avery Directs the Marquis De Sade), which appropriates the gestures of cartoon music for sadistic ends, places together two spheres which do not 'truly' connect, sadism and cartoon violence. Parody, which takes an established style and exaggerates it, fits in with the account of repetition which Bergson gives. In each of these cases it is a 'non-musical' process which is involved, or at least a process which draws attention to itself.

The account Bergson has given of a melody's qualitative change and progression has so far remained unquestioned, yet the three processes used by humour are actually analogous to those of the twelve tone technique which uses inversion, retrograde, retrograde inversion and transposition to provide melodic progression. These techniques might be seen as modern inventions, but similar techniques can be found in the significant French composer Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377) and of course in Bach's The Art of the Fugue (1749-50). Bergson could deny that such examples were properly musical, or properly artistic, however such a denial would appear overly prescriptive, the vast majority of people surely agreeing that the works of these composers are unquestionably music, and artistic.¹⁶³ Indeed the whole notion of music

¹⁶³ There are philosophers who would disagree with this position, the most prominent being Cavell, who, for example, asks:

as "an order no less admirable in a symphony of Beethoven, which is genius, originality, and therefore unforeseeability itself" (CE, p. 224) does not seem to apply to Fugues, for example, which Iannis Xenakis interestingly refers to as "... abstract automaton conceived two centuries before automated science."¹⁶⁴ However Xenakis also says that the syntax of the fugue is not always stable, so even within the set structure there is the possibility of liberty. Indeed in this sense even a canon is between freedom and liberty, the *dux* is free whilst the *comes* is enslaved to its repetition. But if a musical structure was strict, if there were no changes in syntax possible, would it still be music? According to Bergson not, and this is a position which is widely held, that a work has to be something beyond its technical means, which are necessary parts of an expression, but not sufficient for that expression. This is made clearer in a later work:

How can fraudulent art be exposed? Not, as in the case of a forgery or counterfeit, by comparing it with the genuine article, for there *is* no genuine article of the right kind. (Stanley Cavell, "Music Discomposed," Must we Mean What we Say? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 189.)

Even if this position was tenable with regard to 'modern' art, although this is in itself highly debatable, it certainly does not apply to Bach's Art of the Fugue. and it would be right to regard anyone who doubted this work was in fact music was ignorant as to the meaning of the term 'music'. See also A Matter of Meaning pp. 213-37 in the same volume.

¹⁶⁴ Art/Sciences: Alloys, The Thesis Defence of Iannis Xenakis, 1976 quoted in C.D. booklet to Kraanerg released on Sombient Records. This kind of position is supported by Fleming who claims that the simple theme of The Art of the Fugue deliberately draws attention to the mechanical and formal element of the musical production. William Flemming, "The Element of Motion in Baroque Art and Music," Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism 5 (December, 1946): p. 124

What is there more systematically architectonic, more reflectively elaborate, than a Beethoven symphony? But all through the labour of arranging, rearranging, selecting, carried out on the intellectual plane, the composer was turning back to a point situated outside that plane, in search of acceptance or refusal, of a lead, an inspiration; at that point lurked an indivisible emotion which intelligence doubtless helped to unfold into music, but which was in itself something more than music and more than intelligence ... to refer to this emotion the artist had to make a constantly repeated effort, such as the eye makes to rediscover a dark star which, as soon as it is found vanishes into the dark sky. (TSMR, pp. 252-3)

Music is thus always balanced between the freedom of its creative impulse and the determinism of its material means. Yet there appears to be a tension between the Creative Evolution and Two Sources of Morality and Religion, as in the first work Beethoven is used as an example of a vital order "unforeseeability itself" as opposed to a predictable geometric order, whilst in the later work Beethoven is "systematically architectonic." Has Bergson shifted his position between the two works on this matter? We will suggest not.

A vital order, like that found in a work of art can only be expressed approximately and after the event. (CE, p. 223) The patterns such works form, especially in the case of music, are not static but under a constant process of development through time. The architectonic structure of a Beethoven symphony can only be experienced after the whole has been heard, that is in retrospect, as its structure is constantly evolving through time as we listen - new at every moment and unforeseeable. It is, like all

art works, an invention, not a mechanism.¹⁶⁵ Given Bergson's position on art the question arises as to the relation art bears to philosophy, how these two modes of creative understanding differ.

¹⁶⁵ Henri Bergson, *La Pensee et le Mouvant - Essais et Conférences*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) p. 247fn.

Philosophy versus Art

We have already seen how art and philosophy can be seen to be moving in the same direction, (M, p. 1148) i.e. away from ordinary perception and the habits of thought, and indeed intuition, the very ability to perceive differently, is proved possible by the existence of the artist: (CE, pp. 176-7 & RM, p. 19) that a viewing of the world does not have to be reliant on a "... practical, narrowed and impoverished perception." (Mullarkey, p. 160) It is the artist, who attempts, through their work, to make us perceive the world as they already have, to induce us "... to make the same effort ourselves ... to make us see something of what they have seen" (Laughter, p. 156) this is why philosophy has an artist like intuition. It is in this sense that the artist is not qualitatively different from the non-artist, each individual being able to create de novo by altering our vision. Thus intuition is a resource which can lead to "... new inventions, art forms, theories and emotions." (Mullarkey, p. 160)

The non-utilitarian vision of art can be contrasted with that of science, art grasping the intention and mutual organisation of a living being:

The intention of life, the simple movement which runs through the lines, that binds them together and gives them significance ... (CE, p. 177 & Antliff², p. 197)

whereas science sees a mere assemblage of parts. However Bergson also claims that the scope of art is limited, in a manner analogous to "... external perception ..." (CE, p. 177), in only relating to the individual. Art cannot go beyond what is visible in objects, towards some sort of essence, it does not grasp the universal because it does not generalise, it

instead gains the unique individual. (Jankélévitch, p. 162) This limitation, however, does not apply to philosophy as it is capable of instituting an enquiry of the same sort as art, but instead of dealing with the specific it can instead deal with life in general, (CE, p. 177) yet without reducing individual difference.

The reason art cannot get to life in general as opposed to the specific living being is directly connected to the notion of self-reflexivity. An artist does not need to analyse their creative ability, they can be content to just sculpt, paint etc. - indeed to analyse their creative ability, would require them to turn thought on itself. This self-reflexive quality is to be distinguished from thought about the techniques an artist uses and the relation their art has to other works, which Bergson describes as the "intellectuality" of the artist. (CM, p. 94) These techniques, as we have previously noted, have nothing to do with creativity itself and it is to creativity itself that this notion of self-reflexivity refers. This lack of self-reflexivity, the inability to analyse the creative ability of the artist is a direct product of the methods employed by art as opposed to philosophy, which is modernist in as much as it places the techniques it uses at its heart. (Paradis, p. 27) Art is a product of one direction of attention, which relates to one of the senses, being freed from its wedding to practical needs, as we have already seen, but this is not the case for philosophy. Whereas art's detachment from practical needs is almost accidental, philosophy's is "... intentional, logical and systematic." (Laughter, p. 154) Philosophy appeals to both intelligence and intuition because it is concerned with both matter and spirit. (M, 1148) It is this systematic detachment which allows philosophy to turn thought on itself and allows

it to turn the object of its enquiry away from art's specificity, to life in general. (CM, p. 94)

Instead of merely getting to the individual, philosophical intuition, in a process analogous to that of science, not only sees the individual lines which animate living beings, but also "... prolongs the individual facts which it perceives into general laws." (CE, p. 177) The individual facts, in themselves can never be merely raw data, but in addition, always indicate probable conclusions, although these do not by themselves guarantee certainty. It is only when these probabilities accumulate that the equivalence of certainty can be reached. Each line of facts indicates a direction for truth, but it is only the convergence of lines when they are prolonged "to the point where they intersect," (TSMR, p. 248 & M-E, p. 6) which will allow the probable conclusion as regards an accumulation to be found. There is thus an ability to extrapolate from individual facts towards a point of convergence, i.e. life itself.

There is an additional difference between art and philosophy, and this interestingly relates to duration. Whilst we have seen that the very rhythm of life can be perceived by art which allows the mutual organisation of its parts, as opposed to the mere assemblage of elements, what art cannot do, according to Bergson is move beyond the present. Although it allows us "... to discover in things more qualities and more shades than we naturally perceive ..." (CM, p. 157) it only acts on the surface. Unlike philosophy, art cannot extrapolate out from the present, it cuts away the relation to the past, despite enriching the present. Philosophy on the contrary, can prevent the past being isolated from the present, permitting

"... anterior perceptions to remain bound up with present perceptions, and the immediate future itself to become partly outlined in the present." (CM, p. 157) Philosophy, unlike art, takes the vital before it is scattered into images; ((M, p. 1148) Quoted by Lacey, p. 160 & p. 189)) removes the static character placed upon reality by utilitarian needs, and allows us to perceive the constant movement which constitutes reality. When Bergson is talking about art in The Perception of Change he is obviously referring to visual art as opposed to music as he makes extensive use of melody as an example of the heterogeneous continuity of the past with the present earlier in the same essay. This of course does not mean that music becomes philosophy, as it has no means of reflecting on its own heterogeneous continuity. Indeed in another lecture given in the same year Bergson claims that art can only give the same satisfactions as philosophy on rare occasions to "... those favoured by nature and fortune." (CM, p. 129) This suggests that even when listening to a melody it is often not heard in terms of a pure heterogeneous continuity but instead as a series of fixed atomised states, it is spatialised. Spatialisation in this instance can be the product of thinking about the notation of the music, the intervallic values present, or indeed trying to talk about music in terms of painting, substituting spatial juxtaposition for the auditive temporal order. (Jankélévitch 2, p. viii) Philosophy on the other hand allows us to gain a direct perception of change without spatialisation. It is the self-reflexive ability which allows us to see how the melodic structure can lead us to a different perception of both individual examples like melody and ultimately to reality as a whole:

Reality then no longer appears then in the static state, in its manner of being; it affirms itself dynamically, in the continuity and variability of its tendency." (CM, p. 157)

Everything, even space, (Making, p. 184) becomes a subspecies of duration, (CM, p. 129 & p. 158) and loses its stillness "... by breathing life once again into the phantoms which surround us and by revivifying us." (CM, p. 129)

Conclusion

We shall now summarise the most important points from the above chapters, at the same time drawing out the important conclusions from the analysis.

Humour, for Bergson was seen to be directly related to a practical view of reality, working with general concepts and without sympathy. This method of working ensured that humour only concerned that which was external to the self (thus there could be no self-mockery) and was not concerned with the whole individual. Madness, in contradistinction was something which did affect the whole individual, and was thus not a subject of amusement.

The artist, in contrast to this position, was characterised by their naive perception which had moved beyond practical and habitual responses due to one of their senses being detached from utilitarian demands. This meant that the artist gained the individual rather than the general, and worked not from outward appearances, but instead from an inside knowledge revealed through a sympathetic relationship. It was thus not a question for the artist of finding and assembling elements but instead of grasping the intention of life in its organisation of a living being.

This sympathetic relationship was linked to the distinction between suggestion and expression. Suggestion, in art, was a product of rhythm, and understood as a material response which attempted to suggest, to the receptive subject, a certain level on which to perceive, as opposed to the

immediate response of expression. This distinction, made in Time and Free Will seemed to prefigure the distinction between pure motor responses, and those responses which involved memory in Matter and Memory. This allowed a distinction to be made between a purely superficial motor response to an art work, and the deeper enriched response involving more of the individual. The presence of rhythm in art turned out to be part of a larger concern with time in art.

In looking at the question of rhythm in art there were two primary considerations. Firstly the difference between grasping a rhythm whole as opposed to understanding it in terms of a fixed repeated element and secondly the notion of what it would mean for a rhythm to be creative, open out onto novelty, and cease to be static and architectural: the need for the past in the present. As opposed to the notion of repetition and homogeneous spatialisation which lead to the death of time, a denial of the past coming into the present, melody provided an example of a heterogeneous continuity, in short a model for duration.

In contradistinction to the creativity of melody, only two types of rhythms, understood in musical terms, could be found which were creative: Carter's metric modulation and Stockhausen's colouristic description of Debussy, and in both these cases the rhythmic change had taken melody as its model. Indeed for art in general the static rhythm acted to suggest the correct level, rather than act as a model for evolution or progress, say in poetry. But what was found to be most original in Bergson was not the naive perception of the artist, nor the fact that both poetry and music were temporal, but that time was involved in art works

not traditionally regarded as temporal. So in visual art the very act of painting was unpredictable as it involved duration, a privileged experience of time in addition to a system of feedback where what was already painted effected what was going to be painted. Instead of art being an assemblage which could be created at varying speeds without changing the end product, there was the creation of novelty which depended on the speed of its creation. What was produced was dependent on the speed and the number of times the 'same' thing had been painted. Duration was not a separate mark made upon the work, a spatialised symbol of some description, but instead inseparable from what the work was. Photography, on the other hand, attempted to make duration irrelevant to its production. There was no feedback between the camera and its subject, only a physical, automatic, apparently repeatable process.

Cinema was taken, by Bergson as the epitome of a spatialised work. The time on film could be slowed, accelerated, immobilised or reversed without any change in what was viewed, there was no internal modification of the events as there was in painting. The time projected by the cinema camera appeared to be separate and irrelevant to the events portrayed. Movement had been homogenised by the cinema camera into a series of still elements which failed to give movement. However, as Deleuze pointed out, there was no cinematic still - cinema did give movement, contra-Bergson because individuals did not see individual photograms, but instead a whole movement. In this respect Bergson was seen to be mistaken.

There were also problems, as regards the relation of photography to photorealist works, if the difference between them could not be discerned by the viewer. This problem, in part, was seen to derive from Bergson's anti-modernism, modernism being understood as the work's showing of its own techniques of production. This position was explored via a contrast with early Russian Formalism showing how defamiliarisation, and the various techniques which made texts literary, were only possible through homogeneous spatialisation, like the three process of humour. These processes, despite drawing attention to perception itself merely resulted in an interpretation of the old, in supposedly new forms. Yet Bergson did not, as we saw, shy away from using the notion of technique in regard of artistic creation. Instead it became a case of art denuding the level below of duration, treating it as a material support, a tendency towards repetition, which had nothing itself to do with creation. These techniques then were opposed to creativity which had a whole history, in painting each technique used was a response to an impetus which was trying to find expression. It was the difference between the expression of internal difference and a series of externally imposed processes which was seen to be crucial. This clash of tendencies was most explicitly explored in music, which was unpredictable, and constantly balanced between freedom and constraint. On the one hand material techniques were necessary for expression, whilst on the other they actively hindered the continuity of expression. These moves led to Bergson being able to both deny that art was merely a rearrangement of the pre-existing, whilst at the same time ensuring that the notion of process remained intact in his conception. It also gave a potential position from which 'music' derived from a series of techniques, what might be termed formulaic, could be

criticised as non-artistic, as could 'music' based exclusively on notatable, rather than audible structures.

But the problem here, even more so than in the case of photorealist painting, is whether it is possible to produce an art work without true creativity, one which is indistinguishable from an art work which did require creativity. For example an infinite number of pictures can be generated sharing "... a common style [from] an underlying system for organising visual structure"¹⁶⁶ by the computer program AARON, without any Bergsonian notion of creativity being present and these can, according to Holtzman, be regarded as art. (Holtzman, p. 188) Bergson could argue that there is a notion of a fake art which appears creative, but in fact is merely an assemblage of pre-existing elements. But what is immediately interesting about AARON is how the the rules of the program exist only to recreate a particular style, there is no notion of anything new emerging, no vertical movement, so in a sense it is not unreasonable to see the work as non-artistic. The question is then whether a system could function as a technique, something which although needed for the creation of the artwork, was itself separate from the creative tendency (when viewed at a particular level).

The answer to this question, in part, will depend on the relation between freedom and constraint, how determinate the structure is and as such a definitive answer cannot be given, only individual instances considered. There is however another consideration, whether the system is

¹⁶⁶ Steven R. Holtzman, *Digital Mantras* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT, 1995) p. 188

appropriate for dealing with the artistic form in question or not. When Xenakis uses calculations pertaining to Brownian motion to create his piano piece *Mists* (1979), is he merely confusing two heterogeneous levels, a scientific expression being used on an artistic plane? If it is a confusion of levels, as suggested, it could be claimed that *Mists* is not a work of art as instead of dealing on a level close to that of an original intuition, it deals with the phenomena in terms of a quantitative understanding. This kind of move would leave Xenakis potentially humorous, as humour's inattention, as we saw, was a failure to adapt to circumstance, a failure to act on the correct level with regard to any particular situation.

The duration present in music, grasping a whole melody, all the notes of the past being part of the present was echoed in the temporalisation of language through diction. Instead of homogenising time making each word into a separate element, there was the possibility of grasping mobile parts, following a thinker's thought in a text - following its evolution. Duration, however, was also essential in the attempt to move beyond concepts as they were narrowly defined. Instead of these narrowly defined concepts which acted to homogenise duration by spatialising it, leaving the new as a mere rearrangement of the old, fluid concepts relied, in the case of metaphor, on possessing the same generative process as their adherents. It was no longer a case of producing a new concept to name a pre-existing thing, but instead of creating a concept, which also created a level of reality. This level of reality, created with multiple metaphors, pointed back to an original productive intuition which could only be understood through an image. It was a question of finding a

creative tendency, one imbued with duration which did not remain the same as it moved through different layers, but instead bifurcated to create those layers. This was a change, which like music had no underlying vehicle, no homogeneous space to allow it the stability of an object with fixed qualities, but instead gave a movement which was a change in the whole.

This operation was clearly visible in the structure of *Laughter*. The original intuition as regards comedy was expressed in a series of central examples actualised by the intuition's vertical movement - horizontal associations giving an outward resemblance similar to that found in dreams. This meant that the results of the intuition's vertical movement through planes was unpredictable, each actualisation on a plane also creative of that plane, and creative as regards new tendencies. So the initial tendency was bifurcated in the act of creation producing new tendencies which were virtually present in the initial tendency, but not actualised. That is, as Mullarkey argues, possibility is created retrospectively by itself, and so is not, on this account unreal. Whilst possibility can be an illusion, that the past contained the present before it had been created, that there was no novelty, (as has been previously noted) it is also the effect of the realisation of a virtuality such that the tendency, when realised, then also exists as a fact in the virtuality it emerged from. So if there were a world where only orange things existed at one point in time, it would only be the splitting of orange into yellow and red that would create the two colours in the present, and at the same time allow the two colours to come into existence retrospectively.

However the very fact the colours are placed in the past as a possibility does not mean they are unreal. (Mullarkey, pp. 171-4)

In the movements of bifurcation, in the need to move beyond practical perception, and in the use of fluid concepts (including metaphor), as opposed to scientific concepts, Bergson's philosophy appeared to aspire to the condition of art. However despite these apparent similarities philosophy and art were clearly differentiated by Bergson. Philosophy, Bergson maintained, dealt with life in general, as opposed to art which dealt only with the specific. This ability to deal with life in general was linked to philosophy's self-reflexivity which allowed it to analyse its own creative ability, which art could not. This was due to the systematic method of philosophy, as opposed to the luck relied upon by art. Additionally because art only dealt with the individual, as opposed to life it could only give the present, although in greater depth, rather than giving the past with the whole of its present. So philosophy was in this sense privileged over art, despite art showing that intuition understood as the ability to go beyond practical perception, was indeed possible.

What then is Bergson's original aesthetic contribution? The emphasis on going beyond ordinary perception does not appear in itself particularly original, indeed Schopenhauer argued for a similar position, as he does with regard to general concepts, the link between memory and music, madness and artistic creativity as the inability to adjust perception to utilitarian needs and the ultimate mobility of reality.¹⁶⁷ However in each

¹⁶⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World and Will as Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, vol. I & II (New York: Dover, 1966), especially Vol. I p. 186, Vol. II p. 137,

of these cases there is a difference, because each, for Bergson involves duration and novelty.

Whereas for Schopenhauer the visual artist saw and painted Platonic generalities stripped of time (grasped perceptually rather than intellectually), Bergson, as we have seen, insisted on the individuality of what was painted, its creation being durational at its very heart. Indeed although for Schopenhauer, the higher art of music more fully expressed the Will and movement [Bewegung], music being a non-spatialised understanding, it also simultaneously left it de-temporalised. In the subject's musical ecstasy (if a subject could still be identified) the representational structures of time breaking down leaving the 'subject' in a state which was ambiguously both with and without time. As we have seen Bergson's description of music is quite different being the very model for duration, the heterogeneous continuity. It is the duration at the heart of his aesthetics in each of the arts which distinguishes it from other philosophies.

Ultimately the durational creativity at the heart of his aesthetics means he can embrace an anti-modernist vision of art, one which wishes to hide its material conditions (or rather places them on a different level to that of aesthetic appreciation), whilst on the other hand not collapsing art into illusionistic paradigms through his emphasis on the movement and creativity and the presence of duration in each art form. This is a unique achievement and one which is as relevant today as when it was written.

Abbreviations

- AAT Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965)
- ADM Jean Hyppolite "Aspects Diverses de la Mémoire" Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique, vol. 1 (First published 1949; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991)
- Adorno Theodore W. Adorno, Prisms, trans. Samuel & Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981) p. 131)
- Antliff 2 Antliff, Mark, "The Rhythms of Duration: Bergson and the Art of Matisse", Bergson and Philosophy ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999)
- AoL D. H. Monro, Argument of Laughter (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963) p. 61.
- Bachelard Gaston, Bachelard, The Dialectic of Duration, trans. Mary McAllester Jones, intro. Cristina Chimisso (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000)

- B&E Jean Hyppolite, "Du Bergsonisme á l'Existentialisme," Jean Hyppolite: Figures de la Pensée Philosophique. vol. 1 (First published 1949; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991)
- BCD Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson's Concept of Difference" Bergson and Philosophy. ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) pp. 42-65.
- Bergsonism Gilles Deleuze, Bergsonism. trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
- Capek Milic Capek, Bergson and Modern Physics: A Reinterpretation and Re-evaluation (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1971)
- Capek2 Milic Capek, "Bergson's Theory of Matter and Modern Physics," Bergson and the Evolution of Physics. ed. Pete Gunter (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969) pp. 298-330.
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- CE Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983)
- Cinema 1 Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1 The Movement-Image, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: The Athlone Press, 1992) p. 2)
- D&S Henri Bergson, Duration and Simultaneity, with Reference to Einstein's Theory trans. Leon Jacobsen (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965)
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- Douglass2 Paul Douglass, "Bergson and Cinema: Friends or Foes?", Bergson and Philosophy ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) pp. 209-27.
- ECR Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Einstein and the Crisis of Reason", Signs (1960), trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964)
- Eichenbaum Boris Eichenbaum, 'The Theory of the Formal Method', Russian Formalist Criticism - Four Essays, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965)
- Gunter P. A. Y. Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and the Evolution of Science," Bergson and the Evolution of Physics, ed. P. A. Y. Gunter (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969) University Press, Bloomington, 1984)
- H&I Michael Clark, "Humour and Incongruity," Philosophy 45 (1970): p. 21.
- HBP Mark S. Muldoon, "Henri Bergson and Postmodernism," Philosophy Today (Summer 1990): pp. 179-90.

- HLST Michael Clark, "Humour, Laughter and the Structure of Thought," *British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 27 / No. 3 (Summer 1987)
- In Praise Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, trans. John Wild & James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963)
- Jankélévitch Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959) p. 122.
- KAP Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Bergson and Creative Evolution/Involution: Exposing the Transcendental Illusion of Organismic Life", *Bergson and Philosophy* ed. John Mullarkey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) pp. 146-67
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- M Henri Bergson, Mélanges. ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972)
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- M-E Henri Bergson, Mind-Energy : Lectures and Essays, trans. H. Wildon Carr (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975)
- Mertens Wim Mertens, American Minimal Music, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn and Averill, 1983)
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