

Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism

Edited by **Paul Ardoin**, **S. E. Gontarski**, and **Laci Mattison**

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Foreword

Suzanne Guerlac

"With *Creative Evolution* under my arm," Henry Miller wrote, "I board the elevated line at Brooklyn Bridge after work . . . my language, my world . . . under my arm."[1] Miller's casual remark conveys the excitement Bergson's thought inspired in thinkers, writers and artists on both sides of the Atlantic—and beyond—in the early twentieth century. Reading Bergson, or hearing his public lectures, changed people's lives.

Beyond inspiring individual artists and writers, however, Bergson also anticipated a number of the concepts that would prove essential to thinking modernity. In his essay *Laughter*, he has a lot to say about distraction, a term that becomes central to Walter Benjamin's analysis of modern experience. In *Time and Free Will,* he provides a theory of alienation that will subsequently be important to Gramsci, among others. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion,* he presents a distinction between closed and open societies that not only challenges nationalist political and economic models but also invites us to think ethically beyond the human realm. He presents an acute analysis of the practical limits of human rights discourse and calls our attention to environmental damage that occurs as an effect of capitalism.

It is perhaps only now, after the critical interventions of structuralism and post-structuralism, that we can fully appreciate the critical force of Bergson's thought. Before Heidegger and before Derrida, Bergson undertook a deconstruction of metaphysics. The unthought that he exposed was not Being, or writing, but time, time that was irreducible to space, that could not be measured, and that occurred as qualitative intensity: time as force.

Bergson was one of the first modern philosophers (along with Nietzsche) to call attention to the problems language poses for philosophical thought. Language requires iteration, whereas in Bergson's view, there is no such thing as repetition in lived experience; by the very fact of being repeated, the same moment or feeling becomes a different one. Before Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, then, Bergson practiced a new kind of philosophical writing, one that challenged the conventions of traditional discursive thought and was prepared to "break . . . the frames of language."[2]

The critique of the subject elaborated in the contexts of structuralism and deconstruction (supported by psychoanalysis) called into question the presuppositions of European discourses of humanism but made it difficult to think about agency. We could speak of the discontinuities of history, or evoke the *will have been* or the *always already*. What was missing was a way to talk about events in the making, as they arrive. When we return to Bergson after post-structuralism, we recognize that he offers us a

subject position that is not a subject of consciousness but a subject of action, centered upon the dynamic body. Bergson proposes a subject position that is not only not tied to traditions of humanism, it can be extended across species.

After Deleuze and Guattari's critique of psychoanalysis, we can appreciate in Bergson another way to think unconsciousness, one that does not depend on the structure of repression (or an instance or topography of the unconscious) that psychoanalysis has enmeshed with the Oedipal story and its normative gender positions. In Bergson, differences between consciousness and unconsciousness become subtle and fluid. A function of fluctuations of tension and attention in relation to action, the two registers become porous to one another. The two extremes of mental life—action and dream—inform one another interactively, as do action and memory.

In his analysis of memory, Bergson thinks virtuality in relation to dynamics of coming into image. His analyses, which take account of modern visual technologies such as photography, chrono-photography, and the cinematographic, are especially pertinent in today's visual culture.

Affirming that the real can no longer be considered in static, or mechanistic, terms, Bergson was a quintessentially modern thinker. To think time, he declared, means breaking a number of frames or frameworks. In response, Bertrand Russell condescendingly (and defensively) relegated Bergson's thought to the misty realms of poetry. But the untranslatable *élan vital* and the appeals to intuition, to free temporal flow, and to the forces of creativity and invention associated with it, were not mere poetic effusions. Bergson's thought emerged from reflections on mathematics. He elaborated it philosophically with a deep appreciation of the history of philosophy and a keen attunement to the revolutionary developments in modern science (in fields such as kinetic theory, thermodynamics, and atomic physics) that ushered in the twentieth century. Bergson's philosophy of duration, as one historian of science has put it, "lay in the direction in which physics would move sooner or later."[3]

Bergson wrote in a time of historical dislocation, when certainties that depended upon a mechanistic view of the world were breaking down under the pressure of scientific and economic transformation. In many ways this juncture parallels our own, as we seek our bearings in a globalized post-industrial world that depends on information technologies, and inhabit a world culture that anxiously yearns for yet more technological innovation in the face of fast changing, and increasingly unpredictable, global markets. As the speed of communication across physical and cultural distances approaches "real time," and the speed of calculating financial data accelerates beyond the capacity of markets to absorb the interventions based on these calculations, time has never been more central to our concerns.

But what sort of time? What was at stake for Bergson in revealing the obsession with space, and the correlative repression of time that he diagnosed within the metaphysical tradition, was the philosophical specificity of life and life processes, as distinct from the relatively static inanimate things that could be manipulated, quantified, and controlled, and whose behavior could be predicted. Today, as we consider not only various critiques of humanism but discourses of the "post human"—whether in relation to information networks, technology, the human/animal divide, or all of the above—time is "of the

essence," as the proverbial expression goes. The distinction between the living and the nonliving that Bergson placed at the center of his thought has become pressing, if also more and more uncertain. If Bergson defined the comic in terms of the superimposition of the mechanical upon the living, today the hybridization of the living and the artificial is no longer a laughing matter. It is tied to very practical concerns such as biodiversity, global warming, and the availability of clean water.

Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism invites us to reread Bergson and to reconsider modernism in relation to his thought. It also invites us to explore the limits of modernism—or modernisms. "[T]he (Bergsonian) duration of modernism's moment is bound neither by clock nor calendar," the editors of this volume write, "but . . . by time experienced." This is a question that travels through the force fields of modernism, in its complicated relations with post-modernism and the "unmodern," both intimately bound up with it.[4] It is both timely and important to consider modernism—in all its diversity and according to its various temporal phases or rhythms—in relation to Bergson's thought. This volume will give us new insight into modernisms past, as well as future.

Notes

1 Henry Miller, *The Tropic of Capricorn* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 217, qtd. in Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (University of Kentucky Press, 1986), 173.
2 Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 89 (translation mine).
3 Milič Čapek. *Bergson and Modern Physics: A Reinterpretation and Re-evaluation* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1971), xi.
4 For the notion of the unmodern, see Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Abbreviations

CE – Creative Evolution
CM – The Creative Mind
DS – Duration and Simultaneity
IM – An Introduction to Metaphysics
Laughter – Laughter
ME – Mind-Energy
MM – Matter and Memory
TFW – Time and Free Will
TSMR – The Two Sources of Morality and Religion

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Introduction

"About the year 1910": Bergson and Literary Modernism

Paul Ardoin, S. E. Gontarski, and Laci Mattison

In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," published by Hogarth Press in October 1924, Virginia Woolf boldly announced that "On or about December 1910, human character changed." Almost immediately, however, she hedged her certainty: "I am not saying that one went out, as one might into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg. The change was not sudden and definite like that. But a change there was, nevertheless; and since one must be arbitrary, let us date it about the year 1910." Her examples, she admits, are domestic, "homely," but they remain examples "In life," where:

> one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook. The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat . . . . All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910.[1]

Woolf's comments, delivered first as a talk to The Society of Heretics at Cambridge University in May 1924 under the title "Character in Fiction," were provoked by Arnold Bennett's unfavorable review of *Jacob's Room* (1922), in which he claimed that Woolf substituted cleverness for what should be the core of fiction, "character-creating." Woolf's talk pertained to more than the behavior of downstairs staff in the new Georgian era, of course. It suggested that Mr. Bennett and his ilk had missed this major shift in human character and so in our understanding of human character – a shift which has had a profound effect on "character creating" – and she went on to call for sweeping away "those sleek, smooth novels, those portentous and ridiculous biographies, that milk and watery criticism, those poems melodiously celebrating the innocence of roses and sheep which passes so plausibly for literature at the present time," Mr. Bennett's work, of course, among them.

A British tradition in the visual arts was likewise being swept away as this new way of seeing and understanding, this shift in consciousness that Woolf describes, was emerging. The First Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, organized by Bloomsbury art historian Roger Fry (whose biography Woolf would write), opened in London in November of 1910, and one could argue that such a show (and the shows that would follow)—despite or perhaps because of the opposition they generated—demarked and contributed to that shift in human perception, altered our ways of seeing, and hence of knowing, taught the public powerful alternatives to photographic realism in the visual arts which would carry over to the narrative arts; it offered an alternative, for example, to the tranquility of domesticated nature that dominated British genre watercolors. The 1910 Exhibition featured the likes of Cezanne, Manet, Van Gogh, and Picasso, and was important enough to lead to a Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1912 at which Wyndham Lewis exhibited his "cubist" paintings and his illustrations to *Timon of Athens*. But such rapid change often generates continued change. By 1914 even the revolutionary impetus of Fry's "Post-Impressionist Exhibition" was itself overshadowed as Lewis, who had joined Fry's Omega Workshops for a time in 1913 but soon quarreled with him, subsequently set out to blast away even more of the old order the following year, on the eve of the First World War. That break with Fry coincided with Lewis's association with Ezra Pound with whom he developed Vorticism. (Pound later introduced Lewis to T. S. Eliot.) The pink, typographically audacious, portentously titled magazine Lewis subsequently launched in July of 1914 was called simply *Blast*. The year before he began work on his Ph.D. at Harvard University, Eliot "spent the academic year of 1910–11 in Paris, where he attended Henri Bergson's celebrated lecture course at the Collège de France."[2] Some of the poems from this period, particularly the four "Preludes," would appear in July of 1915 in the second and final issue of *Blast*.

May of 1910 also saw the death of Edward VII, who, although he gave his name to the first decade of the twentieth century in Britain, is often seen as an extension of his mother's reign. Edward's son, George V, however, would rebrand his family; the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha suddenly became the House of Windsor, and the British royal family was freed, at least linguistically, from its Germanic roots. May 1910 saw then the dawning of the new Georgian era Woolf invokes in her critique.

The year of 1910 was thus a formative one for Eliot, and thereby for modern or modernist poetry. Eliot's association with Bergson in Paris coincided with the first appearance of the philosopher's work in English translation. His doctoral thesis, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), its follow up, *Matter and Memory* (1896), and his most famous book, *Creative Evolution* (1907), all appeared in English for the first time quite suddenly in or just after 1910 (*Matter and Memory* appearing in 1911, but as Woolf noted, "one must be arbitrary"), and our sense of consciousness, memory, and perception, our experience of time, our ways of seeing and knowing, all changed.

By the time of F. L. Pogson's 1910 translation of *Time and Free Will*, Bergson could boast an impressive bibliography, comprised not only of Bergson's own works but of a substantial list of interpretations and critiques written about it in the 21 years since the

book's original, French publication. T. E. Hulme would review it for the *Times Literary Supplement* on September 22, 1910 and remark on "the formidable list of articles in Mr. Pogson's bibliography,"[3] which roster would include the likes of William James, who lauded Bergson's complexity in "Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism," the sixth lecture of his Hibbert series ("On the Present Situation in Philosophy") delivered at Manchester College in 1908:

> I have to confess that Bergson's originality is so profuse that many of his ideas baffle me entirely. I doubt whether any one understands him all over, so to speak; and I am sure that he would himself be the first to see that this must be, and to confess that things which he himself has not yet thought out clearly had yet to be mentioned and have a tentative place assigned to them in his philosophy.[4]

In his lectures, published first in the *Hibbert Journal* in April 1909 and collected in and published as *A Pluralistic Universe* that same year, James went on to establish Bergson as a critical starting point for a revolution in human thought and for the analysis of consciousness: "Originality in men dates from nothing previous, other things date from it, rather. . . . Old fashioned professors, whom [Bergson's] ideas quite fail to satisfy, nevertheless speak of his talent almost with bated breath, while the youngsters flock to him as to a master" (59–60). Hulme may have borrowed from James's title as he features in his review Bergson's "pronounced attach on 'intellectualism,'" and further goes on to suggest a strong connection between Bergson and James: "The general line of argument is the same as that familiar to English readers in James's 'Principles of Psychology'" (336). Hulme went on to suggest the impact that the cluster of publications would have on the English speaking world: "three chief works will soon be all accessible in English" and the three books "form a continuous series, in which each new book presupposes and develops the conclusions of its predecessors" (336).

In the early years of the twentieth century, it appeared, then, that Bergson, not, say, Sigmund Freud, would lead the revolution in understanding memory, time, and more generally, human consciousness. Hulme summarizes Bergson's breakthrough in terms of time and qualitative multiplicity: "Persistence through time, growth in time, is the essential form of our conscious existence. . . . Our mental experience, therefore, presents a real multiplicity of successive states" (336).

In *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson* published in 1912, Edouard Le Roy, Bergson's chief French disciple and the man who took over Bergson's teaching duties as Chair of Modern Philosophy at the Collège de France, would also mark the shift in human consciousness with the emergence of Bergsonism:

> Beyond any doubt, and by common consent, Mr. Henri Bergson's work will appear to future eyes among the most characteristic, fertile, and glorious of our era. It marks a never-to-be-forgotten date in history; it opens up a phase of metaphysical thought; it lays down a principle of development the limits of which are indeterminable; and it is after cool consideration, with full consciousness of the exact value of words, that we are able to pronounce the revolution which it

> effects equal in importance to that effected by Kant, or even by Socrates. . . . The curtain drawn between ourselves and reality, enveloping everything including ourselves in its illusive folds, seems of a sudden to fall, dissipated by enchantment, and display to the mind depths of light till then undreamt, in which reality itself, contemplated face to face for the first time, stands fully revealed. The revelation is overpowering, and once vouchsafed will never afterwards be forgotten.[5]

Le Roy argues that with the advent of Bergson "the revolution . . . on a never-to-be-forgotten date in history" has occurred. That "never-to-be-forgotten date" when human character, when our understanding of consciousness changed is marked independently by Woolf as "on or about December 1910."

By returning Bergson to the center of this change, as the editors and contributors of this current volume endeavor to do, we do not declare a clean break that even Woolf finally avoids but suggest a way we might more effectively reevaluate, or rather, after Nietzsche, revalue an endlessly-debated moment like modernism. Contemporary critics have been less bold than Woolf, even with her qualifications, and have attempted to bracket the modernist moment, to pin it between two dates, and to plot its trajectory on an organized timeline. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, for instance, famously place it between 1890 and 1930, and others, simply between the wars. Such categorizations, however, inevitably and by their nature leave something out, and this is among the most important maxims Bergson repeats. This volume, *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, heeds that lesson while productively pointing toward a Bergsonian moment, which, by its very nature, has no localizable end. The result is a way to re-imagine temporal classifications of literary modernism, a moment which is not spatialized by the quantitative focus of a timeline but rather is qualitatively experienced in and through what a Bergsonian might describe as *durée*.

Bergson was, in fact, as both James and Le Roy suggest, widely popular during his lifetime, within and without literary circles. He attracted attention with the publication of his second dissertation, *Time and Free Will* (first published as *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* in 1889), and he grew in renown through a career that would culminate in the compilation of his ruminations on intuition, *The Creative Mind* (1934), and would include a Nobel prize for literature in 1927. By 1910, when his texts first appeared in English and he began lecturing in London and Oxford, Bergson's name was recognizable not only to academics at Cambridge and Oxford but also to a stunning percentage of the educated and aesthetically-minded public at large. After an October 28, 1911 meal with Bergson, the analytic philosopher Bertrand Russell reported, "all England has gone mad about him for some reason. It was an amusing dinner."[6] Bergson's was a philosophy, it seemed, not only relevant in the academy but also valuable for the everyday lives of the modern man and woman. All the "right people" read his work, and attending his packed lectures was akin to being seen at a society event. Yet, once the public at large became interested in Bergson, his reputation slipped among those in the arts and the academy. The exemplar for this reaction is perhaps Hulme, philosopher and imagist-poet, who was one of Bergson's most enthusiastic proponents in England (see his translation of the *Introduction to*

Metaphysics and his articles in the little magazine, *The New Age*). However, as Jesse Matz argues in "Hulme's Compromise and the New Psychologism," when Hulme realized how the public largely misread fundamental Bergsonian ideas, he began to think of Bergson as "nothing but the last disguise of romanticism."[7] Russell similarly viewed the masses congregated around Bergson at this highpoint of his popularity as naïve children. In his 1914 *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Russell questions the implications and assumptions of Bergsonian *durée*, the stream of lived experience in which the future and the moment of free will are creativity itself: "Somehow, without explicit statement, the assurance is slipped in that the future, though we cannot foresee it, will be better than the past or the present: the reader is like the child who expects a sweet because it has been told to open its mouth and shut its eyes."[8] Russell's criticism of the Bergson reader rests on his critique of a magical Bergsonism, which discounts what Russell understands to be the cornerstones of philosophy: "Logic, mathematics, physics, disappear in this philosophy, because they are too 'static'; what is real is an impulse and movement towards a goal which, like the rainbow, recedes as we advance, and makes every place different when we reach it from what it appeared to be at a distance" (25–6).[9] For Russell, Bergson's very popularity became part of the evidence against him; the more who follow him, the more sense the rebuttal makes.

Mary Ann Gillies makes a similar point about the paradox of Bergson's popularity in the introduction to her 1996 monograph, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, a book which examines the intersection between the philosophy of Bergson and the works of James Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Dorothy Richardson, and Joseph Conrad.[10] Not only did Bergson fall out of favor with those members of the academy like Russell, but by the time Freud's theories of consciousness had established themselves culturally, conversation about Bergson had begun to wane throughout wider literary and philosophical circles. Books such as Shiv Kumar's 1962 *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* were covered over by the psychoanalysis of literary works and authors—the search for unconscious impulses, the autobiographical trauma of texts.

Eventually, Gilles Deleuze's *Bergsonism* (English edition 1988) and his earlier *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* (1986 and 1989, English editions, respectively) once again potentialized Bergsonian theories of consciousness not only for philosophy but also for literary studies. The recent rush of interest in Bergson can arguably be traced almost wholly to Deleuze's reclamation project. Gillies's book, for example, can be seen as a product of the Bergsonism Deleuze ushered in for the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as can John Mullarkey's two 1999 works, *Bergson and Philosophy* and the edited collection *The New Bergson*, the latter of which includes Deleuze's essay from *Desert Islands*, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" (notably, one of the key ideas Deleuze takes up in his own philosophy).

Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism enters this fray as at once a return to the Bergson of the early twentieth century and an embrace of the post-Deleuzian Bergson, affirming Richard Cohen's bold claim that the "contemporary spirit—philosophical and otherwise—remains under the sign of Bergson. Such is his greatness."[11] *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* follows the trajectory of the connection between modernist works and Bergsonian philosophy, expanding on

the initiative of earlier works on Bergson and literary modernism by Gillies (on British authors) and Suzanne Guerlac (on French authors in *Literary Polemics: Bataille, Sartre, Valéry, Breton*). But we also join the call for continued research into the influence of Bergsonism on later twentieth and twenty-first century aesthetics. Instead of neatly bracketing Bergson and modernism between years on a timeline, *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* suggests that the (Bergsonian) duration of modernism's moment is bound neither by clock nor calendar, but by qualitative multiplicities, by time experienced. Perhaps the return to Bergson emphasizes what Bergson and, later, Deleuze, understood as the virtuality of time, the way in which the past can be potentialized and can also, in turn, be creatively experienced (or actualized) in the present, in a moment which unfolds toward a future not yet determined and certainly not closed.

As a result, *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* necessarily functions as a series of simultaneously overlapping and intersecting books—locating a renewed understanding of a literary movement alongside an introduction to a philosopher's key concepts and central importance, and serving as a compendium of important new work on Bergson's continuing relevance in re-reading older works and understanding the operations and inheritances of newer ones.

Bergsonians new and veteran will find in Part I, "Conceptualizing Bergson," a useful series of close readings and interrogations of six of Bergson's influential works: *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Laughter* (1900), *Creative Evolution* (1907), *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), and *The Creative Mind* (1934). Although each essay is dedicated to sustained exploration of a single text, this section also allows a discussion of Bergson's development and his revision of ideas across his works. These essays aim to elucidate Bergson's philosophy by highlighting the different conceptions each book confronts and works through, while also revealing the harmonies and/or dissonances (to use a Bergsonian metaphor for duration) of ideas across texts.

This section includes Mary Ann Gillies's discussion of *Time and Free Will* as an "exercise in thinking in a new way"; David Addyman's reading of *Matter and Memory* against the traditional view that Bergson is anti-space; Jan Walsh Hokenson's recovery of Bergson's *Laughter* from the misunderstandings that plagued early receptions and misinformed certain Bergson-isms; David Scott's quest for the understanding appropriate to real change in *Creative Evolution*; Michael Kelly's location of emotion and integrity in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*; and Paul Atkinson's revelation of the ways in which time informs method across Bergson's thought, as demonstrated by the collection of essays and lectures that make up *The Creative Mind*.

The largest part of *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism*, "Bergson and Aesthetics," is dedicated to new works on the various roles and instantiations of Bergson before, within, and beyond the period of literary work we typically describe as modernist. Readers of modernist works often miss the omnipresence of Bergson and his thought, whether on-stage as the focus of artistic and philosophical conversations in texts like Beckett's "A Wet Night" or Nathanael West's *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*; off-stage, as a profound influence on the way authors like Woolf, William Faulkner,

and Willa Cather think about time, memory, and being; or enacted philosophically in the language of the text itself, as in *Finnegans Wake*. In this section, our contributors not only return to the often-missed role of Bergson in these seminal moments, but they also map Bergson's continuing impact in areas as diverse (and perhaps unexpected) as cinema and the graphic novel.

This section includes large-scale views of modernist literature, such as Paul Douglass's survey of a Bergsonian poetics across numerous writers in "Bergson, Vitalism, and Modernist Literature" and Paul Ardoin's use of Bergson's work on dream and action as a new way to read familiar modernist tropes in "Perception Sickness: Bergsonian Sensitivity and Modernist Paralysis." Other contributors narrow the focus to specific relationships and lines of influence, as in Charlotte de Mille's examination of Lewis's annotations in "'Blast . . . Bergson?' Wyndham Lewis's 'Guilty Fire of Friction' "; Pete A. Y. Gunter's exhaustive chronology of connections between Bergson and Proust and his accompanying essay, "Bergson and Proust: A Question of Influence"; and Dustin Anderson's investigation of *Wake*an origin events in "Joyce's Matter and Memory: Perception and Memory-Events in *Finnegans Wake*." In "Minds Meeting: Bergson, Joyce, Nabokov, and the Aesthetics of the Subliminal," Leona Toker focuses on the narrative level of Joyce, alongside Nabokov, in order to identify points at which these two authors may have recognized their own ways of thinking in Bergson's work; and Sarah Posman works at the level of language to identify a decidedly modernist strain in Bergson's thought in "Modernist Energeia: Henri Bergson and the Romantic Idea of Language." Laci Mattison looks even more closely, reading the intuitional experience of sounds, syllables, and punctuation in "H.D.'s Intuitional Imagism: Memory, Desire, and the Image in Process."

The final essays of this section fruitfully extend consideration of Bergsonism beyond the traditional modernist period, with John Mullarkey's contribution on "Bergson and the Comedy of Horrors" and Eric Berlatsky's "Time and Free Will: Bergson, Modernism, Superheroes, and *Watchmen*," which use Bergsonian discussions of horror film and comic books, respectively, to revisit persistent modernist questions. Finally, Claire Colebrook uses Bergson to theorize a queer, inhuman modernism in "The Joys of Atavism."

Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism is designed, then, to take readers back to the beginning, reintroducing Bergsonian concepts as they evolved across his work before they were mistranslated, misread, mis-taken, and so misunderstood. To this end, we encourage readers of Bergson both new and veteran to treat the glossary that comprises the book's third section as essays in their own right, lengthy definitions that go beyond the traditional glossary in order not simply to define key Bergsonian terms (though the entries endeavor to do just that) but to trace those terms through evolutions and contradictions across the thinker's oeuvre. The best way, perhaps, to understand a concept like *durée* or *élan vital*, for instance, is to dive into its cross-textual development. This approach is ultimately the strategy of this volume as a whole, which lets Bergson's body of work struggle with and against itself, to evolve through its own paradoxes and perspectives before tracing the impact of the resulting philosophy through early students, adopters, and artistic contemporaries, as well as later adapters

like Gilles Deleuze and contemporary artists. The volume, then, has three distinct but interrelated points of entry, and readers should feel free to enter the discourse through the Bergsonian ideas in section three and the key Bergsonian texts of section one, or to submerge themselves immediately amid the various strains of thought at work in section two.

Notes

1 Woolf, "Character in Fiction," in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 3, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1988), 421–22.
2 Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19.
3 T. E. Hulme, "A Philosophy of Freedom," in *Times Literary Supplement* (September 22, 1910), 336.
4 William James, *A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College* (Harlow, UK: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 59.
5 Edouard Le Roy, *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson*, trans. V. Benson (1912).
6 Qtd. in Bertrand Russell, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, volume six: Logical and Philosophical Papers, 1909–1913*, ed. J. G. Slater and B. Frohmann (London: Routledge, 1994), 318.
7 Karen Csengeri, "Introduction," in *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), xix, as cited in Jesse Matz, "Hulme's Compromise and the New Psychologism," in *T.E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism,* eds E. P. Comentale and A. Gasiorek (Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 116.
8 Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961).
9 In *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), Suzanne Guerlac examines Russell's critique alongside other factors she suspects detracted from Bergson's reputation, such as the thinker's apparent dispute with Einstein and the introduction of Hegelian thought in France.
10 Mary Ann Gillies, *Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1996), 25–7.
11 Richard Cohen, "Philo, Spinoza, Bergson: The Rise of an Ecological Age," in *The New Bergson*, ed. Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 29.

Part One

Conceptualizing Bergson

1

(Re)Reading *Time and Free Will*: (Re)Discovering Bergson for the Twenty-First Century

Mary Ann Gillies

In *Time and Free Will* (*TFW*),[1] Henri Bergson sets the foundation for a philosophy that will help frame fundamental shifts in thought in not one, but two new centuries. In it, he launches a convincing attack on Kantian notions of free will, arguing that "[t]he problem of freedom has thus been sprung from a misunderstanding" of the very concepts which have been used to define the problem in the first place.[2] His examination of consciousness challenges how inner states were defined and understood.[3] Yet, the book is probably best known for its redefinition of the relations between time and space, particularly for the concept of *durée* which upends the privileged position that had been accorded to space in both philosophical and scientific renderings of reality.[4] *TFW* launched Bergson into the public eye, *durée* entered the vernacular of the day, and at the height of his popularity, some would say notoriety, his lectures were standing room only and his advice was sought by statesmen as well as scholars.[5] Concepts which were first articulated in *TFW* continue to resonate with readers well over 100 years after the text's initial publication, finding a place today in debates about issues as diverse as chaos theory or new media.[6]

How Bergson approached the problems he addressed and how he created his own nuanced arguments are as central to his body of thought as are the ideas with which he opted to engage. Indeed, as Frédéric Worms writes, "After having dealt with the problem of thought in order to solve *other* problems (freedom, matter, life, religion), Bergson faces thought itself in order to solve it, so to speak; 'method' is thus not a preliminary, but a final step, the highest point."[7] At its core, *TFW* is a both a challenge that takes aim at the heart of Western intellectual tradition and a model of how we might reshape that tradition. It is, in fact, an exercise in thinking in a new way, one which "neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol,"[8] because it requires the reader to exercise a "kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible" (*IM*, 6). Thinking is an extended act of intuition, in other words. The method and the concepts are thus inseparable; they are one and the same.

Intuition

Bergson does not define intuition in *TFW*, although it is the method he introduces and uses throughout. But we can get a sense of what intuition is and how it works from *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. He begins by identifying "two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing." The first is "the relative" which "implies that we move round the object" and which "depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves," and the second is "the absolute" which requires that "we enter into" the object and "neither depends on a point of view nor relies on any symbol" (*IM*, 1). He goes on to say that the absolute "could only be given in an *intuition*," a more effective approach than analysis, which he says "is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common to both it and other objects." "All analysis," according to Bergson, "is thus a translation, a development into symbols, a representation taken from successive points of view from which we note as many resemblances as possible between the new object which we are studying and others which we believe we know already" (*IM*, 6–7). To analyze, therefore, is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself. Intuition is the only method able to provide us with absolute knowledge of a thing, and as such it is the approach Bergson employed not only in *TFW* but throughout his writings.

Intuition was, and still is, seen as a mystifying concept, lacking in logic and relying not on scientific rigor but on some vague form of feeling or empathy. Bertrand Russell was particularly scornful, saying "Instinct at its best is called *intuition*" and "the division between intellect and instinct is fundamental in his philosophy, much of which is a kind of Sandford and Merton, with instinct as the good boy and intellect as the bad boy."[9] Russell's *ad hominem* attack aside, the chief accusation levied against Bergson's concept of intuition is that it did not satisfactorily account for how intuition could work apart from intellect. On the face of it, this charge may have some validity, given the language Bergson uses in his own definition. However, if we drill down into the actual workings of intuition we can identify two specific components that illustrate how it achieves the necessary rigor and precision: difference and multiplicity.

Elizabeth Grosz remarks in "Bergson, Deleuze, and the Becoming of Unbecoming" that Bergson's notion of difference proposes a way out of the usual approach to the term as a binary that "has tended to see it as a struggle of two terms, pairs; a struggle to equalize two terms in the one case, and a struggle to render the two terms reciprocal and interchangeable in the other."[10] As she illustrates, Bergsonian difference is not concerned solely with external comparisons between two objects, nor is it occupied with establishing the different components or parts within an object.[11] Rather, it is a generative process in which understanding or experience is created moment by moment as each difference unfolds into yet another difference which necessarily shifts our understanding of the object or experience. This becoming/unbecoming is not quite sufficient on its own for Bergson's purposes, since it does not fully account for the role played by the observer.

John Mullarkey provides us with an explanation of the necessary refinement in what he refers to as Bergson's "method of multiplicity."[12] Mullarkey, quoting from Bergson's later work *The Creative Mind* says, "This, finally, is the method of multiplicity in two short lines: 'an empiricism worthy of the name . . . sees itself obliged to make an absolutely new effort for each new object it studies. It cuts for the object a concept appropriate to the object alone' " (*CM*, 251). The "method of multiplicity" thus requires that as we track the differences in their unfolding over time, we need to remain flexible and open—allowing the shifts and changes of the unfolding to be reflected in both our approach to each and in our understanding of the object itself. If we combine difference with multiplicity, what we get is Bergson's intuition: a precise and rigorous method.

Intensity, duration, and freedom

In the "Author's Preface" to *TFW*, Bergson concedes that "we necessarily express ourselves by means of words and we usually think in terms of space" and that "this assimilation of thought to things is useful in practical life and necessary in most of the sciences." He nonetheless asks, "whether, by merely getting rid of the clumsy symbols round which we are fighting, we might not bring the fight to an end" (*TFW*, *xxiii*). However, he is not interested in "merely" clearing up symbolic or terminological confusion; rather, he is keenly interested in what lies beneath, and beyond, such confusion. He sees his task as a full-out challenge to the prevailing intellectual paradigm which has resulted in "an illegitimate translation of the unextended into the extended, of quality into quantity" (*TFW*, *xxiii*). In each of the book's three chapters, Bergson takes a central subject and carefully demonstrates the ways in which an "illegitimate translation" occurs which hinders our understanding of it. Consistent with the methods of intuition, Bergson approaches each subject from multiple perspectives, tracing the differences that unfold and adopting multiple vantage points from which to view each difference. The chapters function as an interlocking unit—building on each other and then circling back, requiring us to re-read earlier passages and chapters in light of subsequent material in order to capture the full weight of Bergson's arguments.

Intensity

In Chapter 1, Bergson starts from the premise that inner states are manifestly different than things that exist in the external world. He argues that the reason we do not distinguish correctly between feelings and objects, for example, is that our conventional way of thinking causes us to "transfer the cause to the effect" and to "replace our immediate impressions by what we learn from experience and science" (*TFW*, 54). To illustrate the manifest differences between the inner and outer worlds, Bergson introduces three central concepts, which not only support this premise, but which also work together to

re-orient our thinking. First, he argues that the main source of confusion arises from our customary practice of thinking about and representing inner states as we would external objects: we use quantity as our frame of reference when we ought to use quality. Second, he distinguishes between differences of degree and differences of kind; the former he associates with quantity, and the latter with quality. Finally, he articulates the crucial concept of qualitative multiplicity, which he employs to describe the nuances of constantly mobile inner states. By the end of the chapter, he not only has established a convincing case for his initial premise—the very real differences between inner states and outer objects—but he has also demonstrated the truth in his contention that we must let go of our habits of conventional thinking if we are to grasp the full reality of our experiences in the moment.

Bergson begins by acknowledging that it is possible to measure objects in the external world, saying that when "we assert that one number is greater than another number or one body greater than another body, we know very well what we mean. For in both cases we allude to unequal spaces . . . and we call that space the greater which contains the other" (2). He is describing the concept of quantity, which can tell us how much we have of something—how big, how many, what weight and so on. What we fail to grasp, Bergson asserts, is that inner states such as sensation or feeling cannot be measured in the same way as objects. We can distinguish between the qualities of sensations, for example—how they feel to us—but we cannot measure those sensations objectively in the way that we can with things external to us.

The slippage in language and thinking results in imposing quantity on inner states and often occurs without our awareness. The example of light and brightness is helpful here. Light is an object in the external world and as such it can be measured by a variety of methods. A 100-watt bulb should give off the same illumination independent of which lamp it is placed in, for example. Brightness, on the other hand, is an individual's sensory experience of light and can vary depending on a number of factors. The same 100-watt bulb might provide comfortable illumination for reading right now, but feel blindingly bright an hour from now when we are suffering from a headache. The intensity of the bulb has not changed, but the intensity of the experience of it has. What we do that causes confusion is to impose a quantitative magnitude on the different qualitative experiences of light, saying that *the light* is brighter in the second experience of it—implying that it has increased in magnitude when what has changed is our experience of the light, our sensation of brightness.

Bergson begins the second strand of his argument by suggesting, "Perhaps the difficulty of the problem lies chiefly in the fact that we call by the same name, and picture to ourselves in the same way, intensities which are very different in nature; for example, the intensity of a feeling and that of a sensation or an effort" (*TFW*, 7). He thus moves his focus to feelings—specifically to the feeling of joy—in order to explore this difference in nature. After exploring the ways one might experience joy, he draws this interesting conclusion: "We thus set up points of division in the interval which separates two successive forms of joy, and this gradual transition from one to the other makes them appear in their turn as different intensities of one and the same feeling, which is thus supposed to change in magnitude." What, in fact, happens as we experience deep

joy is not an increase in magnitude, but "progressive stepping in of new elements, which can be detected in the fundamental emotion and which seem to increase its magnitude, although in reality they do nothing more than alter its nature" (*TFW*, 11). When we fall in love, for instance, we experience joy; when this joy grows in intensity over time, we might be tempted to ascribe to it a magnitude. However, it is not a singular experience to which magnitude may be added, but rather a number of experiences which interact with each other that create in us a sensation of increasing joy.

He elaborates more fully on this point in his discussion of aesthetic feeling, specifically dance, noting that "the increasing intensities of aesthetic feeling are here resolved into as many different feelings, each one of which, already heralded by its predecessor, becomes perceptible in it and then completely eclipses it" (*TFW*, 13). When we watch a dancer leap effortlessly across the stage, we are filled with a sense of the gracefulness in the movement. We are drawn into the experience, anticipating each movement as if we knew exactly what path it would take, as if we had choreographed it. Finally, we almost merge with the dancer, for as Bergson suggests, "the regularity of the rhythm establishes a kind of communication between him and us, and the periodic returns of the measure are like so many invisible threads by means of which we set in motion this imaginary puppet" (12). Yet, if we pay close attention to how we feel when we are immersed in watching a brilliant dancer, we see how the intensity comes not from an increase in magnitude, but rather from the accumulation and interpenetration of the sensations and feelings occurring in each moment of the experience. In other words, the increase in intensity occurs not because of a difference in degree—a measurable alteration in one sensation—but because of a difference in kind—we experience "many feelings" in succession which flow together so seamlessly that they appear to be a single feeling.

The third strand in Bergson's argument emerges from his discussion of affective sensations. After presenting a number of examples—a pin pricking our hand, sound vibrations produced by our vocal chords, the sensations of heat, cold, or pressure on our body, for instance—he concludes, "it will be perceived that the magnitude of a representative sensation depends on the cause having been put into the effect" (47). He extends this observation, providing an alternate way of looking at brightness in his example of the illumination of a sheet of white paper. It is worthwhile quoting his comments at length:

> Look closely at a sheet of paper lighted, for example, by four candles, and put out in succession one, two, three of them. You say that the surface remains white and that its brightness diminishes. But you are aware that one candle has just been put out; or, if you do not know it, you have often observed a similar change in the appearance of a white surface when the illumination was diminished. Put aside what you remember of your past experiences and what you are accustomed to say of the present ones; you will find that what you really perceive is not a diminished illumination of the white surface, it is a *layer of shadow* passing over this surface at the moment the candle is extinguished. This shadow is a reality to your consciousness, like the light itself. If you call the first surface in all its brilliancy white, you will have to give another name to what you now see, for it is a different

> thing: it is, if we may say so, a new shade of white. We have grown accustomed, through the combined influence of our past experience and of physical theories, to regard black as the absence, or at least as the minimum, of luminous sensation, and the successive shades of grey as decreasing intensities of white light. But, in point of fact, black has just as much reality for our consciousness as white, and the decreasing intensities of white light illuminating a given surface would appear to an unprejudiced consciousness as so many different shades, not unlike the various colors of the spectrum. This is the reason why the change in the sensation is not continuous, as it is in the external cause, and why the light can increase or decrease for a certain period without producing any apparent change in the illumination of our white surface: the illumination will not appear to change until the increase or decrease of the external light is sufficient to produce a new quality. The variations in brightness of a given color—the affective sensation of which we have spoken above being left aside—would thus be nothing but qualitative changes, were it not our custom to transfer the cause to the effect and to replace our immediate impressions by what we learn from experience and science. (*TFW*, 53–4)

Bergson challenges the conventional way we think about and represent this experience because he insists that we pay particular attention to the qualitative changes that occur in illumination—the shades of grey that exist between the polar opposites of white and black—and not only to the increasing diminution of the sheet of paper's whiteness. These qualitative changes, which he calls qualitative multiplicities, are the very stuff of inner states of consciousness. However, an important aspect of these qualitative multiplicities remains as yet undisclosed: that they operate not in space, but in time. But it is not time as it is conventionally understood; instead it is time as re-conceived by Bergson. This is what he tackles in the next chapter.

Duration

Bergson begins Chapter 2 by continuing his interplay between quantity and quality, initially using those terms to distinguish between time and space as we conventionally understand them. He then drills down more deeply into our understanding of time, tracking the qualitative multiplicities that show us how to "distinguish between time as quality and time as quantity, between the multiplicity of juxtaposition and that of interpenetration" (*TFW*, 75). Having established that we function with two distinct notions of time—conventional (or spatialized) time and what he calls *durée*—Bergson returns our gaze to states of consciousness. The thread that links the components of his argument in this chapter is his contention that symbolic representations, language in particular, "give a fixed form to fleeting sensations" (131) and, in so doing, prevent us from thinking about or discussing our immediate experiences independent of space. The chapter opens with a long discussion of the concept of number, in which Bergson seeks to show us that counting occurs in space and not time.[13] Using a variety of examples he demonstrates that "in order that the number should go on increasing in proportion as

we advance, we must retain the successive images and set them alongside each of the new units which we picture to ourselves: now, it is in space that such a juxtaposition takes place and not in pure duration [*durée*]" (*TFW*, 77).

When we count the flock of sheep, for example, we juxtapose one sheep to another, then the second to a third, but if we did not hold simultaneously an image of all the sheep we count in our mind, we would not be able to arrive at a count of the whole flock. We also omit the individual characteristics of each sheep, relying instead on a generic notion "sheep"; this introduces the concept of homogeneity into the mix. These three characteristics—juxtaposition, simultaneity, and homogeneity—presuppose the existence of space. Because Bergson argues that it is relatively straightforward to see how counting in this sense is spatial, he provides us with the example of bell chimes—a sensation that links to inner states of consciousness more subtly than counting sheep—to show us how we unknowingly import space into our customary sense of time.

Bergson acknowledges that the "sounds of the bell certainly reach me one after the other," indicating that we experience a succession of distinct sounds that elapse over a period of time. However, he provides us with two alternative understandings of how we "count" the sounds:

> Either I retain each of these successive sensations in order to combine it with the others and form a group which reminds me of an air or rhythm which I know: in which case I do not count the sounds, I limit myself to gathering, so to speak, the qualitative impressions produced by the whole series. Or else I intend explicitly to count them, and then I shall have to separate them.

So if we choose to count the chimes of the bell, we are imposing a spatial framework on our sensations of hearing the bell. He makes this point explicitly when he says "there are two kinds of multiplicity: that of material objects, to which the conception of number is immediately applicable; and the multiplicity of states of consciousness, which cannot be regarded as numerical without the help of some symbolic representation, in which a necessary element is space" (*TFW*, 87). The former is what he calls discrete multiplicity, which Bergson asserts is the basis of our customary conception of time. It is in the latter, the "multiplicity of states of consciousness," what he calls confused multiplicity, that Bergson locates real time, what he calls *durée*. As he says, "Pure duration [*durée*] is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states" (100). We have now arrived at a crucial juncture in not only the specific argument Bergson is constructing in *TFW*, but also in his broader challenge to Western intellectual tradition, because for us to embrace, or even understand, the concept of *durée* requires a fundamental shift in how we think not just about time, but also about consciousness.

In his example of how we experience a melody, Bergson continues to elaborate on both confused multiplicity and *durée*. He asks us to consider whether, "even if the notes succeed one another," can we "perceive them in one another" and can we accept "that their totality may be compared to a living being whose parts, although distinct, permeate one another just because they are so closely connected?" (100). He

continues this point, saying, "We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought" (101). Confused multiplicity, in contrast to discrete multiplicity, is thus characterized by "succession without distinction" and by "mutual penetration," both of which presuppose a heterogeneity in which no two states are ever the same. Yet we tend to impose an organization on the successive chimes of the bell, so how to avoid importing space into our experience of them? The solution is a form of temporal memory, in which, as he notes in his discussion of the pendulum, "each increase in stimulation is taken up into the preceding stimulations" and "the whole produces an effect of a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note" (106). This is not our customary memory faculty with a distinct past, present, or future operating together in a linear fashion, but rather a dynamic form of memory which stitches together different moments in time—each musical note anticipating the one to come, altering the one that precedes it, and all acting in concert to create a singular effect in each moment. Bergson will go on to develop his theory of memory more fully in later works, particularly in *Matter and Memory*, but its importance to his treatment of time and especially *durée* is evident here, since without re-conceiving memory in this manner, we would unthinkingly import space into confused multiplicity, too.

Establishing that there are in fact two very different concepts of time allows Bergson to reorient his consideration of inner states of being. His focus turns to two types of self: reflective consciousness and immediate consciousness. The former he associates with spatialized time. It is what he calls "the shadow of the self projected into homogenous space," which "substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives the reality only through the symbol" and as a consequence this "self, thus refracted, and thereby broken into pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self" (*TFW*, 128). Immediate consciousness, in contrast, is the province of *durée*. Bergson says that "the deep-seated conscious states" that make up immediate consciousness "have no relation to quantity, they are pure quality; they intermingle in such a way that we cannot tell whether they are one or several, nor even examine them from this point of view without at once altering their nature" (137). The closest we come in our daily lives to immediate consciousness is in dream states, where the "imagination of the dreamer, cut off from the external world, imitates with mere images, and parodies, in its own way, the process which constantly goes on with regard to ideas in the deeper regions of intellectual life" (136–7). Bergson acknowledges that both states of consciousness exist within each of us, and he admits that "[a]n inner life with well distinguished moments and with clearly characterized states will answer better the requirements of social life" (139). However, he also cautions us that the price of opting for the social self over the fundamental self is found in the "contradictions implied in the problems of causality, freedom [and] personality" (139).

Freedom

In Chapter 3, Bergson finally addresses directly the problem of free will versus determinism. He will conclude that "every demand for explanation in regard to freedom comes back, without our suspecting it, to the following question: "'Can time be adequately represented by space?' To which we answer: Yes, if you are dealing with time flown; No, if you speak of time flowing" (*TFW*, 221). To reach this conclusion will require a further re-conceptualization of the differences between time and space, between consciousness and matter. First, he makes what may be seen as an audacious move, claiming that time is a form of energy which exerts a force on inner states of consciousness, but which is not subject to physical laws because it does not consist of matter. Second, he will extend the role that memory takes on to show how inner states are truly free in a way that inanimate objects are not. And third, he shows us the flaws in the arguments of both sides of the free will issue—the determinists and the proponents of free will—which he demonstrates are created, once again, by language's imposition of immobility on experience, which ends in denial of true freedom.

If we view all phenomena as governed by the rules of the physical world, we deny the possibility of freedom; but if we hold as fundamental that consciousness is not bound by those same physical laws, then we open up the possibility of real freedom. This is Bergson's starting point. He says, "the law of the conservation of energy can only be intelligibly applied to a system of which the points, after moving, can return to their former positions. This return is at least conceived of as possible, and it is supposed that under these conditions nothing would be changed in the original state of the system as a whole or of its elements" (152). But, according to Bergson, "this is not the case in the realm of life. Here duration certainly seems to act like a cause, and the idea of putting things back in their place at the end of a certain time involves a kind of absurdity, since such a turning backwards has never been accomplished by a living being" (153). The passage of time alters our experience: not only can we literally not return to a previous moment in time, but our experience of that previous moment in time is absolutely changed by each moment that has occurred since then.[14]

He continues with his distinction between the material world and consciousness, saying of the realm of consciousness, "A sensation, by the mere fact of being prolonged, is altered to the point of becoming unbearable. The same does not here remain the same, but it is reinforced and swollen by the whole of its past" (*TFW*, 153). Memory is the means by which the present moment is "reinforced and swollen by the whole of the past," but Bergson is careful to retain the dynamic quality of memory: "While past time is neither a gain nor a loss for a system assumed to be conservative, it may be a gain for the living being, and it is indisputably one for the conscious being" (153).[15] Time, here conceived as *durée*, is a real force of energy because when it acts upon consciousness, each new sensation, feeling, or inner state alters the ones that preceded it. There is no ideal, closed system to which consciousness returns or aspires and in which energy must be conserved. There is only an existence that is based completely in the present moment. Having thus claimed for consciousness the capacity to be free, he also says, "Thus understood, free acts are exceptional" because "we generally perceive our own

self by refraction through space, that our conscious states crystallize into words, and that our living and concrete self thus gets covered with an outer crust of clean-cut psychic states, which are separated from one another and consequently fixed" (*TFW*, 167). We have the capacity to be free; we routinely fail to exercise it.

Bergson follows this discussion with a detailed examination of two different positions on free will: that of determinists who hold that in any given situation "there is only one possible act corresponding to the given antecedents" and that of proponents of free will who maintain "that the same series could issue in several different acts, equally possible" (175).[16] He points out that both arguments are flawed because they once again reduce living beings to inert matter. The symbolic representations they use to present their arguments collude with this "spatial thinking" to obscure the fact that in the very manner of posing the question, they have denied the possibility of freedom. Bergson reinforces this observation with his careful consideration of causality. He remarks that "the relation of external causality is purely mathematical, and has no resemblance to the relation between psychical force and the act which springs from it," and he continues, "the relation of inner causality is purely dynamic, and has no analogy with the relation of two external phenomena, which condition one another. For, as the latter are capable of recurring in a homogeneous space, their relation can be expressed in terms of law, whereas deep-seated psychic states occur once in consciousness and will never occur again" (*TFW*, 219). Once again, he clearly distinguishes between inert matter, which is subject to physical laws, and consciousness, which is not.

What does he conclude about freedom from his examinations of these various theories? Unsurprisingly, he says, "All the difficulties arise from the desire to endow duration with the same attributes as extensity; to interpret a succession by a simultaneity, and to express the idea of freedom in a language into which it is obviously untranslatable" (221). Simply put, when we impose space on time, and when we resort to symbolic representation that normalizes this imposition to such an extent that it goes unnoticed, we render inert what is living and thus create the problem of freedom which so preoccupies psychologists and philosophers alike.

Circling back: (Re)reading and (re)thinking

The conclusion to *TFW* provides the customary summation of the various strands of Bergson's argument. But the conclusion does more than reiterate the ideas he has already painstakingly articulated. In circling back through each element of his argument, Bergson at last makes explicit his dialogue with Kant, presenting what Suzanne Guerlac calls a "rigorous critique of Kant . . . turning [Kant's thought] inside out, or on its head" (Guerlac, 44). And he also takes us one last time into new territory.

Bergson opens his direct critique of Kant by saying that his "great mistake was to take time as a homogeneous medium" (*TFW*, 232). This error led to the same sorts of misunderstandings about space, time, and consciousness that Bergson enumerates throughout *TFW*, though Bergson grants that Kant's division of the world into phenomena and noumena, the one accessible to knowledge, the other inaccessible,

"has the advantage of providing our empirical thought with a solid foundation, and of guaranteeing that phenomena, as phenomena, are adequately knowable" (234). In carving up the world in this manner, Kant "preferred to put freedom outside time and to raise an impassable barrier between the world of phenomena, which he hands over root and branch to our understanding, and the world of things in themselves, which he forbids us to enter" (235). Freedom resides outside time and space; it has been assigned to the domain of ethics. Ironically, Bergson thus accuses Kant of doing exactly what so many of Bergson's own critics accuse him of doing. However, the difference between Kant's approach to freedom and Bergson's lies first in the fact that for Bergson freedom is inseparable from the world of experience—the absolute lies not outside our lived experience, but firmly within it. Second, and perhaps more crucially, to grasp the truth of this fact requires a radical re-conceptualization of thinking itself and that re-conceptualization has been achieved through a rigorous philosophical method. This is the very territory that Bergson has taken us into throughout *TFW*, which he makes explicit in the book's conclusion.

Bergson's parting shot goes right to the root of what he has identified throughout the book as the cardinal error of various branches of Western thought. As he has consistently shown us, philosophy, psychology, and science all fall prey to the same faulty thinking. He says, "although we are free whenever we are willing to get back into ourselves, it seldom happens that we are willing. It is because, finally, even in the cases where the action is freely performed, we cannot reason about it without setting out its conditions externally to one another, therefore in space and no longer in pure duration" (240). The key here is that we are *unwilling* to surrender a mode of thinking in which symbolic representation replaces the living moment. The surface becomes, *it is* for us, reality. Bergson does allow that a surface self permits us to construct a common social world in which we engage with others, so it is a useful and necessary construct. But what he has shown us throughout, and what he makes absolutely clear here, is that we have willingly surrendered our freedom for the sake of this construct. When we accept that systems of representation are more real than the states of mind, or even the objects, they represent, we have stopped thinking in any real sense of the word. Thinking, in Bergson's reconceptualization of it, is the accumulation of experiences in time, made possible through *durée*. How those experiences act on our inner states—on our consciousness—is living reality. That living reality is constantly changing, so our thinking—and our mode of representation—must also be constantly changing and adapting.

The continuing relevance of Bergson to our century might be said to be located in *durée*, or *élan vital*, or of the immediate consciousness, concepts which he goes on to develop more fully in his later works. But I would contend that what continues to resonate most fully today is the fact that he demands that we never cease to be aware of the dynamic nature of thought itself. The *TFW* that I (re)read in preparation for writing this article is the very edition I read for the first time over 30 years ago: the binding, the paper, the words on the page—the symbols of representation—are the same. But my (re)reading of it is utterly different: my (re)reading is "reinforced and swollen by the whole of [my] past" (*TFW*, 153) and so, too, is the *TFW* that I (re)

read today. For Bergson, thinking thus always occurs in time, knowledge is always in the process of being made and remade, and any system of thought or representation that suggests otherwise is not only privileging the static product over the living process, but it is also consigning "free activity to conscious automatism" (240). This approach to intellectual (and everyday) life is what caught the attention of Bergson's contemporaries, but at first glance it might not seem all that novel to a reader in the early twenty-first century whose reading and experience have been shaped in many ways by those whose own thinking was directly and indirectly influenced by Bergson's thought. Yet we find ourselves facing that familiar challenge—mistaking our systems of representation for the things that they represent—often without even being aware we are doing so. Bergson would have been fascinated by the mapping of DNA, to cite only one current example. But he would have cautioned us not to make the cardinal error of assuming that all we need to know about each individual may be found by unlocking their genetic blueprint, undoubtedly arguing that to be human is more than the sum of one's genes, however elegantly or thoroughly documented those genes might be. Our challenge is, ironically, thus the same one Bergson posed to his contemporaries over 100 years ago. His philosophy shows us that our humanity is based on our capacity to be free and that our freedom depends on our ability to think in a manner that sees us always engaging with the immediate experiences of the moment. As Bergson told us, we are not automatons; when we choose to act freely, we can, and thus we can be truly alive.

Notes

1 *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* was published in 1889. The first English translation appeared in 1910, with the title of *Time and Free Will*.
2 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Data of Immediate Consciousness*, trans F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910), 240.
3 For example, Bertrand Russell's well-known open hostility and vigorous opposition to Bergson and his philosophy was rooted in fundamental disagreements about both the purpose and method of philosophy. Russell's analytical philosophy—with its reliance on logic, its empiricist underpinnings, and its emphasis on clarity (and simplicity) of language—was at odds with what he characterized as Bergson's practical philosophy with its unscientific concepts of *durée*, memory, *élan vital*, and his focus on inner states of being.
4 *Durée* is usually translated as duration, though F. C. T. Moore suggests that durance might "more readily applied to *the fact or property of going through time* than the English 'duration'." F. C. T. Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 58. I will opt to use the original French word and ask the reader to understand it to connote the free flowing flux of time that is at the core of Bergson's philosophy.
5 A number of scholars over the years have examined Bergson's rise and fall in popularity from a variety of perspectives. Among the studies written in English are A. E. Pilkington, *Bergson and his Influence: A Reassessment*, (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1976); Leszek Kolakowski, *Bergson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); R. C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900–1914*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988); A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass, eds, *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

6 Bergson's theories continue to inform debate in a wide variety of fields. Suzanne Guerlac notes, for example, the ongoing engagement with Bergson's ideas of time in the work of Nobel Laureate Ilya Prigogine on chaos theory and in the work of cultural theorist Brian Massumi. See *Thinking in Time* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), esp. pp 194 ff.

7 Frédéric Worms, "Time Thinking: Bergson's Double Philosophy of Mind," in *MLN*, 120.5 (December 2005): 1232.

8 Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans T. E. Hulme (London: MacMillan and Co, 1913), 1.

9 Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Bergson," in *The Monist*, 22.3 (1912): 323–4. Russell tends to use instinct and intuition interchangeably, though they have distinct meanings in Bergson's thought. His allusion to Sandford and Merton—two characters in a well known children's story which had inspired a late-nineteenth-century satire which his audience would have known—is in keeping with Russell's *ad hominem* attacks on Bergson's philosophy.

10 Elizabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze, and the Becoming of Unbecoming," in *Parallax*, 11.2 (2005): 5. While she is referring to mid to late twentieth century debates around *difference*, her distinctions are useful in Bergson's time frame as well.

11 The comments I am making about an object are equally valid to states of mind or ideas, but I am using the word object because it simplifies the prose.

12 John Mullarkey, "Bergson's Method of Multiplicity," in *Metaphilosophy*, 26.3 (July 1995): 230.

13 Many commentators have attacked Bergson's position here, not the least of them Bertrand Russell. It is not my intention in this essay to deal with these attacks or with the various defenses offered by others, as that is outside the scope of my project. However, I do want to flag this issue since the debate around Bergson's conception of number lingers on in contemporary discussions of his philosophy.

14 This dynamic conception of time as a form of energy will be reconceptualized again in *Creative Evolution*, where Bergson introduces the notion of *élan vital* which extends the dynamic energy of time into the external world.

15 Bergson will go on to consider memory more fully in *Matter and Memory*, claiming that memory involves a movement from the past to the future, not a backward looking from the present to the past. In terms of the current argument about free will and states of consciousness, this is an important point because it reinforces the idea that free will exists only in the present moment, not in the narrative of a past moment or in the predictions of future moments.

16 In *Thinking in Time*, Guerlac provides one of the more interesting, and succinct, discussions of these two positions, which I would be hard-pressed to better, so I refer you to her comments. See 83–7, especially. Guerlac's book is a substantial contribution to Bergson scholarship to which I am indebted for its insistence that to read Bergson is to relearn how to read.

2

Bergson's *Matter and Memory*: From Time to Space

David Addyman

The idea that Bergson's work concerns itself exclusively with time, that it does so at the expense of space and that the term "space" bears only one meaning ("spatialization")—the idea, in short, that his work has no time for space—has a long history and indeed is still widespread in commentaries on his work.[1] One of the earliest and perhaps the most infamous of such commentaries is Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man*, in which he accuses Bergson of starting a "time-cult" among modern artists and philosophers—a focus on time at the expense of space which shattered the order and stability associated with space.[2] Fifty years later, Michel Foucault, remarking on the "devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations," asked, "Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic."[3] Yet, where the title *Time and Free Will* had announced its focus on temporality and "the Immediate Data of Consciousness," Bergson's second major work, *Matter and Memory: Essay on the Relation between Body and Mind* (1896), suggests a new concern not just with the body, but with the world of matter in which it moves, a world which presumably must have some sort of spatial existence. Indeed, a recognition of the existence of a material, spatial world is consistent with the book's desire to stay faithful to "a conception of matter which is simply that of common sense," that of "a man unaware of the speculations of philosophy."[4] And *Matter and Memory* does in fact seem to allow for a different sense of space from that with which Bergson is usually saddled. Space not only plays a key role in *Matter and Memory*, but that work, and Bergson's work more generally, makes a major contribution—both positive and negative—to twentieth-century thought on space.

Granted, one would not obviously look to Bergson for an account of space; even if one did, one would not immediately find a clear elaboration of the issue. Part of the problem is that he tends to use the same word "space" for "spatialized" space and for what twentieth-century French philosophers and artists often called "lived space"—two concepts roughly analogous to clock time and lived time, respectively. Even in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson needs to refer again and again to a space other than geometrical or "spatialized" space, but he makes no distinction in his terminology, using the word "space" for both. Within a few pages, he speaks of "an objective cause situated in space" and of things existing "[o]utside of me, in space." He says, "[t]here is a real space," then

cryptically asserts that "[s]pace contains only parts of space."[5] The confusion persists in *Matter and Memory*, where Bergson again recognizes a space other than "spatialized" space (the second line of the book, "Here I am in the presence of images," acknowledges the necessarily implaced nature of existence), but in the first two paragraphs alone, he uses five different words to refer to this entity: "the external world," "without," "the organic world," "the universe," and even "space" ["*le monde extérieur*," "*dehors*, *le monde organisé*," "*l'univers*," "*l'espace*"] (17–18). However, these repeated references appear to confirm that this work keen to stay faithful to "a conception of matter which is simply that of common sense" is going to be much concerned with "real" space. There are, then, three forms of space in *Matter and Memory*: the "good" space of "the external world" (the "without," "the organic world"), and the "bad" spaces of, on the one hand, conceptualization that *Time and Free Will* called "spatialization," and, on the other hand, "localization" (the error of assuming that memories can be found "in" the brain). However, Bergson's critics—and even his admirers—have tended to recognize only one form of space—the "bad" space of "spatialization," so my focus will be less on the localization of memories in the brain, and more on distinguishing "spatialized" space from "real" or "good" space. An examination of the key ideas in the text will bring these two forms of space into clearer focus.

Bergson's aim in *Matter and Memory* is an elucidation of the problematic relationship between world and mind—more specifically, how consciousness, so different from the world, can nevertheless be moved by that world. "Here I am in the presence of images,"[6] but Bergson points out that one image in the world is unusual, since we experience it not only "from without by perceptions, but from within by affections." This, he says, is our body. Consciousness is mobilized in action when a "movement"—a stimulus—in the outside world begins a reaction in the body. In lower life forms such as a jellyfish, "the complete process of perception and of reaction can then hardly be distinguished from a mechanical impulsion followed by a necessary movement" (32). But in higher animals, the stimulus is taken on a detour through the complex nervous system and is thus delayed, meaning that a human's reaction to the world is not determined, because affection is interposed between action and reaction, introducing choice: humans have "leave to wait, and even to do nothing" (18). Bergson calls this room for maneuver a "zone of indetermination" (32), and he says that it is synonymous with freedom. The body "cuts through" the surrounding world in its own way, with its own agenda or "framing," with the result that the perception of the world is always partial. The body cannot manage to process the vast universe that is presented to it at each moment. It needs to filter and reduce it, and it does so—and this is central to Bergson's method—in the name of action. Where idealism and realism had argued that the goal of consciousness was knowledge, Bergson radically reformulates this to say that the goal of conscious life is action.

In order to illustrate the manner in which freedom enters in our dealings with the world, and to show how mind and world exist in relation, Bergson introduces the "arbitrary hypothesis" of "ideal perception," which he calls Pure Perception.[7] Pure Perception is "a vision of matter both immediate and instantaneous," but Bergson stresses, "In fact, there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the

immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details of our past experience" (*MM*, 33–4). Though he insists that Pure Perception is an "arbitrary hypothesis," Bergson does not mean that this form of perception does not occur in conscious life. Rather, it is "the very root of our knowledge of things" (34). Indeed, the whole of Bergson's model of consciousness rests on the reality of Pure Perception's contact with the world, since it is the manner in which the world becomes part of consciousness. As Suzanne Guerlac points out, "It is as if the object were imprinting us physically, on a motor level, as we prepare ourselves to respond to it" (134). Rather than being unreal, then, Pure Perception is better thought of as unknowable; Bergson in fact says that it could only happen if we were shut up in the present moment (*MM*, 219). Because Pure Perception is only capable of gathering instantaneous images without adding memory (affect) to them—because it is atemporal—it is part of matter, not part of conscious life. "Pure Perception of matter is . . . no longer relative or subjective" (34). In Pure Perception, then, objectivity and perception are one and the same thing. Bergson's crucial point is that perception is *in things*. It is not "an *interior* and *subjective* vision" as philosophers had traditionally held (34, emphasis in original). Pure Perception is "in matter."

The condition of Pure Perception is essentially the experience of the world as described by realism, which is to say, no experience at all, since it does not involve memory (70). The analogous concept of Pure Memory in turn demonstrates the inability of idealism to explain the experience of the individual moved by the world. Pure Memory operates spontaneously and "is necessarily imprinted right away in my memory." Frédéric Worms describes it thus: "It is as if perception automatically became a memory by virtue of being placed in time, that is, in the unfolding of a personal history, by becoming not only consciousness or perception of something, but of someone" (quoted in Guerlac, 127).

But, Bergson says, neither perception nor memory functions in this pure, hypothetical way, on the one hand, because perception always involves memory, but also because there are for Bergson two types of memory. Taking perception first, where Pure Perception is time-less, real perception occurs in time: in reality "for us there is nothing that is instantaneous" (*MM*, 69). Perception and memory "always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substances as by a process of endosmosis" (67). Therefore, as in *Time and Free Will*, real perception implies duration: we decide how to move in response to a movement in the world in the present, in order to act in the future, involving the past through the memory that we actualize in the process of choosing the best response. Memory is thus key in Bergson's negotiation of the supposed divide between mind and body and self and world. As the mediator between Pure Perception and Pure Memory, it brings the extreme positions of idealism and realism together and thereby destroys their isolationist claims. As with all the processes within Bergson's model of consciousness, this interpenetration happens in the service of action, and in the context of action, memory serves us better than perception because it can inform us of the consequences of situations in the past similar to the one in which we now find ourselves. Memory thus displaces perception, the latter serving merely to solicit memory.

However, this raises the problem of how memory survives. Keen to refute the "bad" space of localization, the idea that memories are stored by the brain, Bergson proposes two ways in which we hold on to the past. The first is through the body. Some memories are internalized by the body such that they are activated almost automatically when a certain stimulus is encountered: objects provoke movements on the part of the body; movements recur and "contrive a mechanism for themselves, grow into a habit, and determine in us an attitude which automatically follows our perception of things . . . Thus is ensured the appropriate reaction, the correspondence to environment—adaptation, in a word—which is the general aim of life" (*MM*, 84). The past is recorded in motor habits. Bergson points out that a being which did nothing but live would not need any other memory than this. This form of memory is impoverished in that it retains almost nothing of the richness of the original situation in which it developed; it is a motor memory rather than an image-based one. It ignores specificity, allowing us to ride any bike we please or drive any car that might be necessary, without worrying about differences.

It is this lack of attention to detail that differentiates the motor memory from the second form, the memory of imagination, which registers and retains everything, picturing "all past events with their outline, their color and their place in time" (88). Where motor memory is built up by repetition and contains little trace of our personal engagement with the world (which nevertheless went into its formation), image memory is unrepeatable and personal, "it retains in memory its place and date" (83). The essential difference is between the past as represented (image memory) and the past as acted (body memory). Body memory is forward-looking, bearing us on to the (for Bergson) all-important action to be completed (Bergson calls it the more "natural" form of memory), whereas image memory is backward-looking and a luxury of the "dreamer." This is not to say, however, that image memory serves no purpose. It is this which allows free will to enter into our dealings with the world. The "irrelevant" images that this memory throws up in the present—which in the normal run of things are beaten down by automatic, body memory and the dictates of action (the call of the future)—introduce the possibility of choosing against the determination of automatic responses.

And in fact, the two "extreme forms" of memory are not as separate as Bergson has so far suggested (*MM*, 88). They are distinguishable in principle only. In reality, mind (image memory) and body (motor memory) work together. They do so most clearly in the process of recognition. Although motor activity *is* recognition for a number of cases, something else is usually involved. In addition to automatic recognition, there exists "attentive recognition." In the normal run of things, the dictates of action displace image memory—everything is handled by motor memory—but in some cases perception is "strengthen[ed] and enrich[ed]" by images (101). The more memory is involved, the deeper the level of reality attained by reflection. It is as if, Guerlac notes, "the real, and the interpretation of the real, were almost the same thing" (136). The relationship is reciprocal: perception needs memory to complete it, whereas memory needs perception to provide the opportunity for it to become actualized.[8] The model is thus circular rather than linear, as Bergson showed in the two famous cone

diagrams in chapter three of *Matter and Memory* (152, 162). The point of the cone represents Pure Perception in contact with the plane of the universe, and the base is Pure Memory. Although the diagram is static and "spatialized," Bergson stresses that the actual relationship is dynamic: a "double current" passes both up and down in the cone between perception and memory. "From this double effort there results, at every instant, an indefinite multitude of possible states of memory" (168).

What moves between the levels, governing—but not determining—how they are mixed, is "character." This denotes the typical ways in which we each combine memory and perception in the interests of action (or in opposition to action if we are dreamers). By introducing character as that which governs what part of the past returns, Bergson sidesteps the question of "where" memories are stored and replaces it with "how." At the same time, he brings subjectivity and objectivity and past and present together, clustered around the concept of character. This doubling is the solution to the age-old question of the relation between body and mind: they exist, precisely, in relation. The body materializes representations, pulling memory images from Pure Memory and engaging them in the process of recognition in line with its individual character.

Time for space

It is now time to look at how space—both "real" and "spatialized"—enters into this schema. Guerlac notes that "Bergson constantly reminds us to consider time to be as real as space" (146). However, given Bergson's putative spatiophobia, which Foucault thought he had detected, and Bergson's efforts to expose "spatialization" as a chimera, Guerlac's comparison would not appear to accord time much reality. But her claim sits oddly with a passage in the closing pages of the final chapter of *Matter and Memory*, where Bergson says, "We were right . . . when we said, at the beginning of this book, that the distinction between body and mind must be established in terms not of space but of time" (221; see also 71). Here, space, as we might expect of Bergson, is relegated to an inferior position relative to time. However, what seems like a contradiction between Guerlac's and Bergson's statements in fact results from the previously noted imprecision in Bergson's terminology (and that of his commentators) where space is concerned. In Guerlac's sentence, "space" refers (one assumes) to real space, "good" space, whereas in Bergson's phrase it refers to "spatialized" or "bad" space. Viewed in this way, Bergson insists that time be considered to be as real as "good" space, which testifies to his respect for that form of space rather than to a wish to subsume it beneath time.

In fact, the radical novelty of Bergson's concept of space necessitates a whole new terminology. It is true that he seems to settle down to using "concrete extension" to refer to "good" space and "space" to refer to "bad" space in the fourth chapter of *Matter and Memory* (though this is by no means always the case, as the quotation from p. 221 above shows). However, the choice of the term "extension" is rather infelicitous because of the philosophical baggage that it carries, as Edward S. Casey shows throughout the length of his *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*,[9] and as Gregory Flaxman summarizes: "the predominant tradition of representation . . . considers

space primarily in terms of extension (*res extensa*) and, thereby, renders it a kind of tableau upon which appearances are projected like the images of a magic lantern."[10] By struggling, as he does, to express his ideas within the outdated terms of Cartesian, Newtonian, and Kantian philosophy, Bergson garbles a key idea in *Matter and Memory*: in the fourth chapter, as he begins his turn to "good" space, he says that it might be possible "to detach oneself from space without leaving extension [*se dégager de l'espace sans sortir de l'étendue*]" (187, Guerlac's translation; see Guerlac, 158). Given that within the philosophical tradition both words "space" and "extension" had been used to refer to "spatialized" space, the phrase could be taken as suggesting that one has to detach oneself from "spatialized" space without leaving "spatialized" space.[11] But nothing could be further from the truth: Bergson wants to accord real space the attention it deserves, by stepping out of "spatialized" space—again, testament to his respect for real space. The connotations of terms such as "space" and "extension" are one reason why contemporary theorists such as Casey use the word "place." In what follows I will generally use "concrete extension" to refer to "good" space, but it will become more and more necessary as we move deeper into the spatial implications of *Matter and Memory* to use the term "place."

This "concrete extension" figures most prominently in chapter four of *Matter and Memory*. Bergson begins the chapter by asking whether it is possible to apply to matter the method by which he analyzed duration in the *Essai* (*MM*, 186)—whether extension could be seized, just as "that part which goes to make up our own inner life can be detached from time, empty and indefinite, and brought back to pure duration" (186–7). What he provides is a sketch only: "We must confine ourselves to mere suggestions; there can be no question here of constructing a theory of matter" (188). He begins by considering whether the separation between inside and outside made in *Time and Free Will* still holds. In the *Essai*, Bergson had said, "the fact is there is no point of contact between the unextended [*durée*] and the extended [space]" (70). Bergson appears to uphold this distinction until the final chapter of *Matter and Memory*, where he says that to claim that quality is *exclusively* related to inside and quantity to outside is, as Guerlac puts it, "perhaps not exactly right": "He now implies that the heterogeneity he identified with duration in the *Essai* (and limited to the consciousness and to the inner experience of sensation) pertains to matter itself!" (163). Indeed, Bergson says that "the essential character of [real] space is continuity," the aspect of which changes from moment to moment "as with the turning of a kaleidoscope" (*MM*, 197). He adds, "A *moving continuity* is given to us, in which everything changes and yet remains." Bergson suggests that the world, if we could slow down duration, would possess "some likeness to the continuity of our own consciousness" (202–3, emphasis in original). In fact, in perception we grasp "at one and the same time, a *state* of our consciousness and a reality independent of ourselves" (203–4, emphasis in original). As Guerlac summarizes, "The movement of matter in the external world, Bergson now suggests—taken in itself and not projected onto ["spatialized"] space, and thereby transposed into quantity—must bear some analogy to the continuity of our own consciousness in the experience of duration" (163). The world of matter—concrete extension—is structured in a similar way to consciousness, with things acting on one another in the manner

that memory and perception act on one another in the body. Bergson thus narrows the gap between "the two terms which it is usual to oppose to each other—qualities, or sensations, and movements" (*MM*, 202)—*and* concrete extension and time. Real space, as John Mullarkey points out, is thus an "intermediate between divided extension and pure inextension" which Bergson calls "the extensive," and within which he includes qualitative difference and change.[12] But we need to abandon the "prejudices of action" in order that the concrete extended recovers "its natural continuity and indivisibility" (*MM*, 219).

Guerlac has alerted us to the surprising fact that for Bergson the qualitative nature of duration pertains to concrete extension. But *Matter and Memory* goes further, suggesting an even more surprising relation between duration and concrete extension:

> our present is the very materiality of our existence, that is to say, a system of sensations and movements and nothing else. And this system is determined, unique for each moment of duration, precisely because sensations and movements occupy places in space [*Et cet ensemble est determiné, unique pour chaque moment de la durée, justement parce que sensations et mouvements occupent des lieux de l'espace*], and because there cannot be in the same space several things at the same time. (*MM*, 139, translation altered)

The thesis here is astonishing: *duration is determined by places*—specific locations within concrete extension. Time needs somewhere to *take place*. However, it is noteworthy that it is necessary to alter the translation of the passage by reinserting the word "place" in order to let this point come out. Despite this, it is clear that places enter at every juncture in Bergson's model of conscious existence. He constantly evokes a place-ful world, speaking of "the immensity of the universe," and regularly uses place-related examples to illustrate his points, as in "the instantaneous flash which illuminates a stormy landscape by night" (*MM*, 189), or the description of a walk through an unfamiliar town in his illustration of motor or automatic recognition (93). The ubiquity of place in Bergson's thought appears to confirm Casey's remarkable insight, namely that Bergson applied to time the sense of place as capacious and embracing that he found in the *Physics* while working on his doctoral thesis, *Quid Aristoteles de Loco Senserit* ("The Sense of Place in Aristotle," as yet untranslated). Casey argues that "place plays for [Bergson] the role of covert model for a renewed and postmetaphysical notion of *time*" (369, n. 89, emphasis in original). Casey reminds us that *Time and Free Will* was written almost simultaneously with Bergson's thesis.

It is in Pure Perception that Bergson's system most obviously displays its debt to concrete extension. Given that "[i]t is in very truth within matter that pure perception places us" (*MM*, 180), and given that the only form that this matter can take is the universe of concrete extension, then from its very first contact with the world (i.e. in perception) consciousness is dependent on concrete extension—or more properly, on a singular place: perception is "contingent upon the positioning of my body in the ensemble of the material world" (229). That unique positioning—place—yields a

unique perception. Yet place also enters in memory, the faculty seemingly most distant from matter (and thus the universe of places). Indeed, it is clear that for Bergson there can be no memory without place. Memory bears the imprint of a precise location: consciousness "retains in memory its place and date"; the memory image is "known, localized and personal" (83, 95). This localization has nothing to do with localization in the brain. The place-ful nature of memory is to be expected, since memories are nothing but perceptions which have become past, so if perception bears the stamp of a place then so too must memory. Even in the form of mental life which Bergson says is most distant from matter (the world of dreams), the remainder of concrete extension is everywhere felt because dreams are only memories given free reign.

It follows from this that recognition—in whichever form—as the process by which memory and perception are blended together, must also bear the imprint of a place. Bergson says that the present activates memory ("it is from the present that the appeal to which memory responds comes," *MM*, 153). More specifically, we summon "to the help *of a given situation* all the memories which have reference to it" (153; emphasis added). The etymology of situation is Latin "situs," meaning site or position—or place. Thus, memory is actualized by concrete extension—or more precisely, by *a place*, always specific. Bergson says that, in the happy disposition, memory is "*docile* enough to follow with precision all the outlines of the present *situation*" (153; emphasis added). In a space without features—a Euclidean or Newtonian space—no memories could ever be called up in this way. This argument—that both present and past are situations, places—is left implicit in *Matter and Memory*, almost as if Bergson took it as so natural that it needed no explicit elaboration. But taken to its fullest extent, the implication is that human character comes from places. Since character is a special way of combining memory and perception, and since those two are place-rich, it follows that identity itself depends on place.[13] In other words, the shadowy, fundamental self evoked in *Time and Free Will* would be a self which is in touch with its places, whereas the inferior, habit-bound self is at one remove from that essential implacement due to its desire—or need—to "spatialize" place.

Even "spatialized" space is place-ful; it bears the stamp of place. While Bergson's attitude towards the spatialized perspective is ambiguous (at least, he condemns it less roundly than we might expect), he stresses throughout chapter four that it has its utility. After all, he has used it himself in the cone schema. By *displacing* real space, "spatialized" space allows action to happen. Thus, it is the "exacting demands" (Casey, 338) of implacement—of having to deal with this situation here and now—that make it *practically* necessary to "spatialize" place, that is, to turn "good" space into "bad" space.

But it is not just that Bergson proposes a new understanding of existence as necessarily implaced; he also suggests that the error of metaphysics since at least Descartes rests on its failure to grasp this fact and to understand the difference between concrete extension and "spatialized" space (see *MM*, Chapter 4, *passim*). Without an understanding of existence as implaced and a concept of concrete extension, there are only dualistic systems which are unable to account for the manner in which mind and matter—or, as we have phrased it here, place and self—interact. Oddly, though, a few

pages after pointing out this fact, without emphasizing the novelty of Bergson's thought on implacement, Guerlac says that "Bergson has solved the metaphysical conundrum [of dualism] by thinking in time instead of in space" (167; see also 165). However, in the penultimate sentence of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson says that when considering freedom—around which, throughout the length of the book, his whole system of consciousness has revolved, and from which existence in higher beings have gained their defining characteristic—the result is the same "whether we consider it in time or in space" (249). It might thus be better to say that he has solved the metaphysical problem of dualism by thinking in time-rich space and space-rich time (two aspects of the same thing).

Two things must be pointed out regarding Bergson's understanding of implacement. First, it is bound up with time, and it is thus instantaneous. Given that, as Bergson says, matter only exists in the present, then concrete extension, too, only exists in the present, and "[n]othing is less real than the present . . . in actuality [*pratiquement*] we only perceive the past" (*MM*, 150). As Flaxman states in his discussion of Deleuzian intensity (similar, as will be seen, to Bergsonian concrete extension), "it is worth wondering whether we can even speak of space any more" (185). However, with the whole of identity bound up with (past) places we can still accord a great role to concrete extension in conscious life, identity, and existence.

Second, it must be admitted that the model of implacement elaborated here is implicit rather than explicit in *Matter and Memory*; it is also contradictory. Indeed, Bergson appears at times to be confused by the relationship between concrete extension and "spatialized" space, leading to confusion amongst his commentators. In the fourth chapter, Bergson rejects Kant's description of space as *a priori*, as one of the innate categories of thought. As Guerlac notes, what is often at stake in *Matter and Memory* is a *dépassement* of Kant (158), and as Casey notes, it is this Kantian conception of space which held sway over philosophy until the late nineteenth century. Where Kant maintained that spatial knowledge is dictated by the fundamental structure of the mind, Bergson argues that any such structure is contingent on experience: the "mold" of consciousness is formed by the sensori-motor experiences of the body in specific and personal situations. Bergson, ever the proto-phenomenologist, thus encourages us to "seek experience at its source" (*MM*, 185). He demonstrates, for example, that sense of relief is something that we acquire in living, not something which is inert (214–15). In the light of this, we would expect Bergson to agree with Gaston Bachelard in condemning philosophers who claim to "know the universe before they know the house."[14]

But Bergson himself at times seems to invert this necessary relationship. He says, for example, "in regard to concrete extension, continuous, diversified and at the same time organized, we do not see why it should be bound up with the amorphous and inert space which subtends it" [*qui la sous-tend*] (*MM*, 187). Unfortunately, in this passage, Bergson precisely binds the two spaces together, and in a relationship of container (inert space) to contained (concrete extension): he says, in other words, that real concrete locations are held in place by an abstract space which acts as their background; put another way, "spatialized" space underlies "real" space. It seems implausible that this is what Bergson wants to say. One cannot imagine him claiming that clock time subtends

duration. Yet elsewhere he makes the same error with space, speaking of "a confusion of concrete and indivisible extensity with the divisible space which underlies it [*qui la sous-tend*]" (220). Surely the reality is that any sense of space is achieved through our interaction with places, and we slowly build up a sense of region through that interaction; that sense of region is then "spatialized" as "amorphous and inert space" in the interests of survival. To argue the opposite, as Bergson seems to, is to suggest that space is the *a priori* category that Kant claimed it was: we are born with Euclidean geometry already imprinted in our consciousness. Mullarkey, who is to be applauded for attempting to correct the misconception that there is no sense of space other than as "spatialized" in Bergson's work, nevertheless falls into the same trap as Bergson, arguing that he makes a distinction between Newtonian absolute space, and "the matter which fills it" (12). Guerlac commits a similar error. While she says, partially correctly, as we have seen, that Bergson "maintains that what he called 'concrete extension' precedes ["spatialized"] space" (169), she says that the order we encounter objects in space is necessary, that is, "it follows the laws of Euclidean geometry" (147). This sits oddly with her claim elsewhere that "[f]or immediate consciousness the given is not an empty uniform scene for the representation of objects, as in Kant. It is a full, heterogeneous real" (64). Although Bergson does not mention Euclid, Guerlac's error is consistent with Bergson's own occasional error, *malgré soi*, of knowing the universe before he knows the house—or of being more Kantian than Bergsonian.

It is perhaps the implicit nature of Bergson's thought on place that leads to the misunderstanding of his work as spatiophobic and thus leads to the reaction against him from the 1930s onwards—a reaction which often takes the form of a reassertion of space. After the passage quoted above in which Bergson says that duration is dependent on place, he asks, "Why is it that it has been possible to misunderstand so simple, so evident a truth, one which is, moreover, the very idea of common sense?" (*MM*, 139). I called this argument astonishing, but perhaps what is more astonishing is how many writers have missed the point. The surrealist Arnaud Dandieu, having already attacked Bergson more generally in his *Marcel Proust: sa révélation psychologique*,[15] later does so more explicitly for what Dandieu perceives as Bergson's betrayal of space. In an entry entitled "Space" that Dandieu wrote for the "Dictionary" edition of the journal *Document*, he argues that there is "no notion more worthy of being cherished than that of space" but that this notion has "twice been betrayed": "The first time by those who have delivered space over to the geometers, thus reducing it to an abstraction; the second time by the inventors of concrete time, romantics and Bergsonians who, subordinating space to time, under the cover of creative evolution, have initiated the most slipshod spiritualism yet seen."[16] There follows a most bizarre misreading of Bergson's work, which, like Lewis's in *Time and Western Man*, confuses description for prescription: when Bergson says that in our everyday dealings with concrete extension we tend to spatialize it, Dandieu takes this to mean that Bergson advocates such a strategy.

The idea that Bergson was somehow an "enemy" of space persists into the 1950s and 1960s, seemingly confirming Foucault's claim that Bergson had initiated a devaluation of space that had lasted for generations. But the fact that the reaction against Bergson often takes the form of a re-evaluation of space of which Foucault seems oblivious also

disproves the latter's claim. Gaston Bachelard's 1958 work *The Poetics of Space* attempts to accord space the value that it deserves, but again this is achieved only by taking issue with Bergson's philosophy, at first implicitly then later explicitly: "At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability—a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past wants time to 'suspend' its flight" (8). The phrase "who does not want to melt away" evokes Bergson, as Casey notes, and he is mentioned by name on the next page when Bachelard develops, in disagreement with Bergson, the difference between existence held in time and existence held in space. The passage also of course evokes Proust, who was perhaps the first to come to a sense of the duration's dependence on place. But this insight is missed in Georges Poulet's *Proustian Space* (*L'Espace proustien*, 1963), which instead is happy to celebrate the spatialized time that Bergson went to such lengths to undermine. Poulet argues that "Proustian time *always* takes the form of space" and this is because "it is of a nature that is directly opposed to Bergsonian time."[17] Like Dandieu and Bachelard, his arguments rest on a fundamental—and surprising—misreading of Bergson's thought on space.

But is seems that a number of writers never found anything astonishing in the fact that Bergson left room for place in his work. Casey traces an "unprecedented" concern with the idea of space as heterogeneous and qualitative, or "lived" in the twentieth century (238, 239). Among the leading figures are Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Bachelard, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida. Oddly, since Casey finds so much latent interest in lived space in the work of Bergson's "temporocentrist" contemporaries, Alfred North Whitehead and Husserl in particular, he says very little about space in Bergson's own work or about the manner in which Bergson acted both as inspiration and provocation to other theorists of lived space. Amongst those whose sense of space was inspired by Bergson we find Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze. The former, as Dermot Moran notes, was inspired by "Bergson's opposition to both materialism and idealism, his critique of various representational accounts of perception, his notion of the embodied subject as a center of action, and his emphasis on the living flux of our experience."[18] However, Moran fails to note the key role that implacement plays in *Phenomenology of Perception*, as indicated by the two chapter headings, "Space" (in which both Bergson's philosophy and the inadequacy of Kant's system of space are discussed) and "The Thing and the Natural World."[19] Where Deleuze is concerned, Guerlac argues that *Difference and Repetition* "might be considered a kind of rewriting of *Matter and Memory*" (179), and one of the ways in which it most obviously is this is in its elaboration of a concept of space similar to that we have extrapolated here. As Deleuze writes, in the Kantian perspective, "what is missing is the original, *intensive depth* which is the matrix of the entire space and the first affirmation of difference: here, that which only afterwards appears as a linear limitation and flat opposition lives and simmers in the form of free differences."[20] As Flaxman analyzes Deleuze's thought on space,

> Representation orders space by distributing a fog of extensity over the swarm of differences [i.e. intensity] that, as Deleuze says, constitute the genetic element of

> space, the singular objects and organisations of which cannot impress themselves on perception, *as* perception, because they are so quickly covered up. What would it mean to define space differently, to define space as depth, rather than to determine it solely according to the diversity of extension and figure? (182)

In addition to these thinkers, a group of artists and writers clustering around the English philosopher Matthew Stewart Prichard (1865–1936) find nothing contradictory in Bergson's interest in implacement. This group includes Henri Matisse and his son-in-law Georges Duthuit, art critic and friend of both Merleau-Ponty and Samuel Beckett.[21] These philosophers, writers, and artists explored the condition of implacement *despite* (in the traditional, temporocentrist reading of Bergson's work) or *consistent with*, *because of* (in the new, space-sensitive reading proposed here) their familiarity with Bergson's work. As Casey's philosophical account of the concept of place shows, there was simply no other theoretical perspective available that could account for the keen sense of place that can be found in the work of Proust, Virginia Woolf, Wallace Stevens, or Thomas Wolfe. It does not seem a coincidence that Bergson's most place-concerned study, *Matter and Memory*, was published just four years before the beginning of the century that made the turn to space and was translated into English in 1911. This gives literary studies a whole new perspective with which to approach the treatment of place in modernist writing, starting from the questions that modernists asked of space, rather than through a Foucauldian spatial perspective which, as we have seen, completely misunderstands Bergson, and in doing so, misses a key element in the modernist sense of implacement.[22] *Matter and Memory* gives us a sense of place as always open, always flowing into the future, and its place in modernist studies is likewise open, ready to be brought into action.

Notes

1 On entering the search terms "Bergson" and "space" in the online catalogue at the Bodleian Library recently I was prompted, "Did you mean: Bergson time?"
2 "Bergson's doctrine of Time is the creative source of the time-philosophy." Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 166. Lewis proposes in the stead of the "time-cult" a "space-philosophy," which would reinstate traditional values such as the once clear lines between objects and subjects, matter and mind, that Lewis considers essential. The idea of space explored in this article has nothing to do with this perspective. See also SueEllen Campbell, "Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and Their Philosophies of Space and Time," in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 29.3 (1983): 351–9.
3 Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (Brighton: Harvester 1980), 70.
4 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 10.
5 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2001), 106, 108, 110, 111.

6 For a discussion of the choice of the term "image," see Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 112 and 169.
7 I have followed Guerlac in capitalizing this term and also Pure Memory.
8 All other memories remain virtual, in Pure Memory (and *not* localized in the brain).
9 Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
10 Gregory Flaxman, "Transcendental Aesthetics: Deleuze's Philosophy of Space," in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 182.
11 It is difficult not to think here of Russell's criticisms of Bergson in *A History of Western Philosophy*: "The present, we are told, is *'that which is acting'* ([Bergson's] italics). But the word 'is' introduces just that idea of the present which was to be defined. The present is that which *is* acting as opposed to that which *was* acting or *will be* acting. That is to say, the present is that whose action is in the present, not in the past or future. . . . [T]he definition is circular." (Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* [London: George Allen & Unwin, n.d.], 763.)
12 John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 13.
13 This is something of which both Proust and Beckett were aware. Proust, in the first few pages of *In Search of Lost Time* writes:

> "when I woke in the middle of the night, not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller; but then the memory—not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived and might now very possibly be—would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being" (Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* Vol. 1, trans C. K. Scott-Moncrieff, revised Terence Kilmartin [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989], 5–6).

For his part, Beckett wrote in a letter to Georges Duthuit of 1949, just before he began his most famous works, *The Unnamable* and *Waiting for Godot*, "One may just as well dare to be plain and say that not knowing is not only not knowing what one is, but also where one is" (Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett: Volume 2, 1941–56*, ed. George Craig, et al. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 98). There is evidence of this concern throughout Beckett's mature works, which thus need to be seen as an exploration of implacement, and to some extent—distorted beyond all recognition—as demonstrably Bergsonian (unlike other elements of Beckett's thought which *appear* Bergsonian), since this concept of space is particular to the twentieth century and cannot be accounted for by any other figure in the canon of Beckett's philosophical sources.
14 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), 5.
15 Arnaud Dandieu, *Marcel Proust: sa révélation psychologique* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1930), 9.
16 Ed. Georges Bataille, Robert Lebel, and Isabelle Waldberg, *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, assembled and introduced by Alastair Brotchie (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 77.

17 Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 105.
18 Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 407.
19 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Stephen Priest (London: Routledge, 2002).
20 See also Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), 50–1.
21 On this last group and their relation to Bergson, see Rémi Labrusse's introduction and commentary in Georges Duthuit, *Les fauves: Braque, Derain, van Dongen, Dufy, Friesz, Manguin, Marquet, Matisse, Puy, Vlaminck*, edited and introduced by Rémi Labrusse (Paris: Editions Michalon, 2006). This work was translated by Samuel Beckett in 1949 and thus acquainted (or more likely reacquainted) him not just with the spatial turn in philosophy, but also with Bergson's work at a crucial stage in his career. See my "Beckett Translating Duthuit: A New Philosophical Landscape" and *Beckett and Place: The Lie of the Land* (both in preparation).
22 For the latter perspective, see Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), especially his chapter on Virginia Woolf, where the limitations of the Foucault/de Certeau-led reading are most apparent. My *Modernism, Bergson and Space*, in preparation, will attempt to offer the alternative reading proposed here.

3

Comedies of Errors: Bergson's *Laughter* in Modernist Contexts

Jan Walsh Hokenson

For decades after 1900, the rather stormy relationship between Henri Bergson and the modernists, especially in England and America, seemed only to worsen. Although his books went into multiple editions and translations through the 1930s and his popular readership steadily increased, he often seemed to provoke outrage among leading figures in modernist art and thought. His little book on laughter (*Le Rire*, 1900), for example, though it contains few references to the problematic notions of intuition and *durée*, was often quoted by theorists of the comic only to be pronounced dead wrong. The critical resistance to Bergson reveals a great deal about its modernist contexts and about the still deep, Aristotelian roots of comic theory in the West.

Backgrounds in theory

Life is movement and change, Bergson said. Any living thing can lapse into unthinking routine, however—and when *that* happens, he noted in a stroke of genius, it's funny! Yet for centuries, most thinking about comedy proceeded from different, unstated but consensual premises. Those focused not on vital energies but on social constraints. Bergson's *Laughter* was swept into received critical rubrics.

Ever since Aristotle's prescriptions in the *Poetics* endorsing Menandrine domestic comedy (in stern disdain for the wildly vulgar Aristophanes), comedy was almost universally explicated as a social form, whose protagonists play with or against specific societal, often domestic conventions. Through the centuries most theorists and commentators continued to think within the confines of the social, where comedy was hailed in almost political terms as conservative or radical, with respect to socio-moral "norms" or local standards of social value. By 1900, to oversimplify a complex history, the dominant theorists were assuming a priori that comedy is based on societal opposition: through myriad variations on this critical theme, most theses came down to the premise that we either laugh *at* the comic protagonist, as a deviant from social norms (thereby reinforcing superior socio-moral values), or we laugh *with* the comic character as a heroic underdog doing battle with the social establishment (thereby

ratifying the insurgent impulse to alter the social order). Whatever the rubrics used, it is noteworthy that in both formulations of laughter, whether as butt or hero, the figure of comedy disfigures something that is usually referred to as the "norm"—whether construed as "the good" (Plato), "the average" (Aristotle), "good Breeding" (Dennis), "propriety" (Hazlitt), "the civilized" (Freud),[1] or similar conceptions of a yardstick used to measure the socially desirable.

The two critical postures can be distinguished as, on the one hand, the satiric tradition, stemming from Aristotle and extending through Freud, and, on the other, the populist tradition arising in Plautus's prologues and thriving in farce and in comic prose (especially in French, as in Rabelais, Voltaire, Diderot)—but remaining in a theoretical underground until the nineteenth-century essays of Baudelaire in French and Nietzsche in German.[2] They were followed in 1912 by Frazer in anthropology, and Harrison and Cornford in classics, then later in literary criticism by Whitman, Bakhtin, and Torrance.[3] For the most part in Europe as in Anglo-America, the Aristotelian superior social posture of theorists persisted through the nineteenth century, as in such influential texts as Meredith's *Ode to the Comic Spirit*. There the "silvery laughter" of the spirit of comedy is in fact "humanely malign" toward all vanity and socio-moral errors, in a distinctly corrective way, since these violate "the unwritten but perceptible laws binding [Men]."[4]

Around the turn of the twentieth century, however, three major reinterpretations of the nature of the comic were under way, those of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Freud. As near contemporaries, they shared several basic concerns about the comic that transcended not only their national and disciplinary frontiers but also their respective cultural heritages of the comic as a socially derived mode. Perhaps partly from sheer surprise that any new definition of laughter could be anchored outside the social, critics excoriated each thinker in turn.

In rejecting rationalism and the reasoning systematization of northern European philosophy, Nietzsche posited a new science ("la gaya scienza"), founded on the medieval art of the troubadours—who in opposition to Christian doctrine had glorified not the sacrifice but the celebration of the self in the here and now. Nietzsche's project entails deliberately superficial, light-hearted delight in what might be called the mocking epistemology of laughter. In order to negate the oppressive weights of reason and the dross of Romantic subjectivities, he affectively plunges the reader into the underside of intellect, into the imperatives of the body and the unconscious—as unacknowledged regions that have shaped thinking. In order to subvert such false symmetries as real-artificial and true-false, he works in parody, paradox, and myriad other comic forms to elicit subversive laughter. Zarathustra was a later development of *The Gay Science*, though he is present there in cameo. The prime comic figure is the narrator himself. He cavorts through philosophical traditions like a harlequin, mocking now one, now another, hurling bitter lampoons while always, more importantly, affirming the age-old subversion by the human spirit—which is intractable to moralists, indefinable to philosophers, immoral to ethicists, and ungovernable to sociologues. Laughter, because it produces new knowledge in this way, opens possibilities for new understandings of the human. The merely social, in whatever form, is extraneous and patently invalid

in this enterprise. Norms are ridiculed as priestly impositions. "The fool interrupts" (341). Nietzsche, in his own voice, plays the fool to social as well as to philosophical "wisdom." His emphasis on species over social instantiations of the human—like his later formulations beyond good and evil—lifts the critical discourse on the comic off the socio-moral terrain and into abstract regions of mind. His comic enhances life in its multiplicity and sharpens our ability to perceive it through multiple perspectives.

Most modernists ignored Nietzsche's discourse on the comic, which theorists long considered inappropriate and at best extraneous. Countering critical tradition, Nietzsche placed laughter in the service of the human species, *all* humans, as a corrective of the social in its entirety. In his indictment of Judeo-Christian social organization, as in his critique of rational thinking, he yoked the comic to the infra-moral and infra-social, as a way out of moribund thought and deadening social conventions. The social norm is the laughingstock of the gay science.

This is in no way a populist theory of the comic. Nietzsche dismissed "herd morality." He hailed instead the rare individual, that ideal spirit, who can laugh most profoundly, that is, who can most radically subvert superstructures while celebrating deeper realities. Still, this is the single most direct attack on the Aristotelian satiric tradition. In Nietzsche's laughter, centuries of accretion drop away from the comic, which now celebrates a species joy, first through parody then, presumably, in autonomous triumph over the very spirit of reasoning gravity in self- or species-exultance.

This frontal attack on socio-moral values in the comic, as anticipated by Baudelaire in *De l'essence du rire* and to some extent by Diderot's *Rameau*, remained outside literary critical discourse for decades. Freud's more amenable thesis on joking and wit had more immediate effects. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud also argued that the comic is revelatory of a deeper and different kind of knowledge. He rejected the incongruity theories and similar notions based on contrasting ideas, adding in a footnote that Bergson did as well ("and he supports his view with good arguments," 401, n. 4). While incorporating the biological "relief theories" of laughter as the release of nervous energy, Freud noted that he himself brought to the subject a new instrument, "a knowledge of the dream work" (399), and he sketched a theory of the comic in the service of psychic economy. The ridiculous as pejorative drops out of view, but Aristotelian deficiencies of moral mean become in Freud "inefficiencies" of cathectic or psychic expenditure. To Freud, the comic is social ("The comic arises in the first instance from human social relations," 401). It resides in the comparison of one's own self with another ("our laughter expresses a pleasurable sense of superiority which we feel in relation to him," 407). Comic pleasure and laughter (the effect by which the comic is known) can only occur if there is a certain disproportion in psychic expenditures between the butt and oneself. Thus comic pleasure is not essentially moral or ethical but is a "mental activity" (408). As part of the unconscious, comic pleasure is automatic (in "the automatism of release," 410), an unreflected release, without affect.

More fundamentally, the comic awakens the infantile in the adult. It is the regained lost laughter of childhood, insofar as the butt reminds one of oneself as a child (in embarrassment, helplessness, poor bodily control, mimicry, exaggeration). The butt's characteristic lack of moderation reenacts the infantile, which thus reemerges in the

comic, as it does in the unconscious of dreams. To Freud the joke is a signal from the unconscious to the conscious mind. It affords a momentary economy in inhibition (by offering release to thereby pent-up energies) and an indulgence in repressed pleasures and desires, before being recouped by the superego and the role of social adult, indeed by "our personal development toward a higher civilization" (406).

Freud makes only a cursory nod to Bergson, yet he tacitly incorporates several key notions from Bergson's *Le Rire*. Bergson had posited the infantile basis of the comic as memory. He developed a notion of the "dream logic" of comedy. He specified that the source of the comic lies in the *inconscient*, and that laughter is involuntary. He insisted, even in the face of later criticism, on the absence of affect in comic pleasure, which requires the suspension of feelings or emotion. And of course he posited a (different) function for automatism in comic activity. Freud's text relies heavily on Bergson's theory of the comic, and unfortunately Freud's plundering of Bergson has in turn obscured the originality and the tenor of Bergson's ideas.

Bergson's theory of laughter

"What does laughter mean?" is the opening question of Bergson's *Laughter* (first published in *La Revue de Paris* in 1899).[5] He conducts a philosopher's investigation, seeking "the basal element" common to low and high comedy, the rictus and the chortle, vaudeville and Molière. In describing their common ground, he will not define the comic, he says, because it is a living thing that cannot be imprisoned in concepts, but the field in which it must be sought is clearly the social group. Because laughter answers to certain requirements of life in common, it must have a social significance. Yet its chief symptom is the absence of feeling, "a momentary anesthesia of the heart" (63), for its appeal is to the mind. The direct reaction is to the comic butt, who manifests "a certain lack of elasticity of both senses and intelligence" (67), which derives in turn from his self-ignorance. "The comic character is generally comic in proportion to his ignorance of himself. The comic person is unconscious . . . it is in this sense only that laughter 'corrects men's manners [*moeurs*].' It makes us at once endeavor to appear what we ought to be, what someday we shall perhaps end in being" (71). If Molière's miser were to see us laughing at him, he might not abandon his avarice but he would conceal it or show it in another form.

Bergson's wry allowance, that appearances of propriety suffice, both affirms his place in the French discursive tradition and precludes reading his theory as *morally* corrective. He has in mind a larger conception of the social. Bergson introduces three terms or entities, which designate at once overlapping sectors of daily human life and historical moments in human evolutionary development. Nature is the ground, society is the superstructure, and the individual is the human person who is always evolving in forward motion from egoistic autonomy to group or social life, and beyond. The comic character falls flat on his face. We laugh because he has involuntarily, unconsciously failed to notice the stone in the street. He was distracted or absent-minded when he should have been attentive. To act on a kind of autopilot is a ludicrous dereliction.

Every human is "a soul which is infinitely supple and perpetually in motion," and matter, as in the body, resists such motion and would pull the soul toward inertia or automatism. In absent-mindedness, for instance, it is as though the soul had allowed itself to be mesmerized into rigidity by the materiality of a simple action. The rigid, the inelastic, the mechanical, the automatic, the ready-made, are all comical modes of regression from the supple to the fixed. Nature is dynamic organics, society is supple adaptability, and the individual is a biological member of a social group.

It was Bergson's thesis, quite familiar to his substantial French audience by 1900, that man was born a social animal, impelled by instinct to form social groups, no less than the ant. From an evolutionary standpoint, human members of the social group are no different than cells in an organism. The human distinction lies in intellect, which devised reason and logic, whereby the prime value of sociability enabled advanced evolutionary stages of civilization. But in themselves, logic and rationalism are incomplete and therefore erroneous.

In his time, Bergson, no less than Nietzsche, saw rationalism as overvalued, indeed oppressive of the life force or *élan vital* that had started it all and that remained accessible to human perception only through intuition. This is the sudden involuntary glimpse of realties deeper and greater than reason allows, both in the natural world and in the inner world of the deeper self, a realm of exuberant freedom and joy in the brief but rare consonance of mind and nature. Instinct is infra-social, intuition supra-social, though we exist in an intermediate range as social beings. The original function of the intellect was to solve problems that other animals solved through instinct alone. Intellect enabled evolutionary progress independent of nature. But instinct continues to watch intellect. If the intelligence is free to rebel against social constraint, it will at almost the same time experience the pull back by instinct toward the social. Resistance and opposition both come from the intellect, though its source in the underlying instinct is both stronger and prior.[6] In evolutionary terms, the problem with social groups is that they are exclusionary, defining themselves through hostility to other groups. For societies or social groups are also always evolving, at once regressing to the sectarian and advancing toward the universal or global, the universally human social. Intellect in the service of the social is thus the basis for creative evolution.

Within the frame of *Laughter*, excluding for the moment Bergson's discussion of tragedy and music, the highest value is sociability (*sociabilité*). The comic is something mechanical encrusted on the living, as on the *élan vital* (84). Habit is the worst deadener, whether it eventuates as rote behavior in Punch and Judy or as the *idée fixe* in Molière. For its part, society rejects such rigidity "in order to obtain from its members the greatest possible degree of elasticity and sociability. This rigidity is the comic, and laughter is its corrective" (74). It is important to note that society too contains its habits and rigidities, "the outer crust of carefully stratified judgments and firmly established ideas" (89), which are comic in any ready-made form (empty ceremonies, bureaucratic absurdities, rote jargons, various social masquerades), substituting the artificial for the natural or supply responsive. In great comedy, the physical is uproariously confused with the moral, the letter is hilariously used to murder the spirit, the body comically precedes the soul, human organizations bungle natural laws, and so forth. The "outer

crust" of *both* individual and society is threatened by laughter and properly so, for in that state they have regressed into the mechanical.

"Comic fancy is indeed a living energy, a strange plant that has flourished on the stony portions of the social soil" (*Laughter*, 102–3). Life is dynamic movement, in society as shaped by biology and intellect, and thus where there is absence of the being-made (*le faisant*), the comic mocks the ready-made (*le tout fait*). The stony, arid, inorganic, static, are all forms of the mechanical. The mechanical is not an offense against social conventions or any specific, relatively insignificant standards of propriety, but it is an offense against sociability itself, a more important human attainment than any local system of ethics or morality. What comedy corrects is always "the ready-made element in our personality" or in society (156), by making us aware that we have lapsed into the mechanical. It is then, when the supple sociability of human life among one's fellows fails, that the comic erupts.

Working through both body and mind like a shaping current, the impulse toward the social is positive. The intelligence is free and egoistic, but it feels an instinctual social impulse, so it will reconsider itself and think of others. Thus it is that morality does not come strictly from intelligence but from reason pressured by social instinct, to ameliorate group life. As Deleuze put it in his study of *Bergsonism*, "this kind of play of intelligence and society, this small interval between the two, is decisive . . . For, if intelligence hesitates and sometimes rebels, it is primarily in the name of an egoism that it seeks to preserve against social requirements"; "This little interval 'between the pressure of society and the resistance of the intelligence' defines a variability appropriate to human societies."[7] It also locates the site of the comic in Bergson's thought. Much of Bergson's theory of the comic rests on this dual postulate that the social works through all human beings, like a channeled energy of instinct, leading toward sociability, even as the intelligence calibrates resistance, in both itself and the unsociable behavior of others.

Turning to comic situations, ranging from slapstick to high comedy, Bergson conjectures that the pleasure they afford entails "revivals of the sensations of childhood" (105). Many comic scenes resemble childhood games, he says, though the spectator relives not specific games but "the mental diagram" of them (*Laughter*, 112). Once joyful play now contains an element of dread or anxiety, for the comic turns the tables on the individual. Bergson explains:

> All that is serious in life comes from our freedom. The feelings we have matured, the passions we have brooded over, the actions we have weighed, decided upon and carried through, in short, all that comes from us and is our very own, these are the things that give life its often dramatic and generally grave aspect. What, then, is requisite to turn all this into a comedy? Merely to fancy that our seeming freedom conceals the strings of a marionette. (111–12, trans. modified)

The mechanical is antithetical to the individual's freedom, but not in any familiar way. It does not, for instance, turn human into machine or transform the living being into a near object. The mechanical is not a transformative agent of social forces, as it may

seem to us in our century. Rather it is a behavioral, perhaps essentially perceptual, category. Rote action merely so routinizes the individual that one ultimately becomes ignorant of the true sources of one's actions, as in the comic example of marionette strings. Defining "life" as evolution in time and complexity in space, Bergson insists that the comic is a function of the mechanical encrusted *on* the living, which includes society no less than the individual and nature. His thesis is that laughter mocks lapses in their mutual adaptability: individuals retain freedom but are also programmed biologically to live together, and he who ignores his social obligation fails a kind of species duty. The theorist's prime example is Molière's Alceste who, in *Le Misanthrope*, refuses to lie, and he thus provokes endless comic confusions. His honesty may be a virtue, says Bergson, but it is anti-social and therefore comic. In Molière's seventeenth-century Paris, to lie was eminently sociable. "The comic is not always an indication of a fault, in the moral meaning of the word" (*Laughter*, 149). For "the comic expresses above all else, a special lack of adaptability to society" (146), in the person who is not in touch with his fellow human beings, whatever their particular moral system might be. Comic faults "make us laugh by reason of their *unsociability* rather than of their *immorality*" (150).

Bergson seems indebted to Hazlitt in his subtle review of comic techniques (repetition, inversion, reciprocal interference of series, and so forth). He finds that these too can become formulaic and dull, as in Labiche and other *fin-de-siècle* writers of the light comedy of manners. Thus the finest spectacle is comedy of character, Bergson contends, since the lapsed individual best manifests inadaptability. In its social function, the comic process of correction works overtly through the playwright's mockery and reflexively through the social group's or audience's (satiric) laughter.

In Bergson's theory of the comic, humiliation is the aim of laughter, conceived as a social gesture (*brimade*). Thus, in the comic theater, the spectator's laugh is not disinterested or purely aesthetic, even if it seems so to him or her; the social is always behind or beneath it, whether we are aware of it or not. We are least aware in farce and vaudeville, which in their extremes are least like daily life, whereas we are most aware in high comedy, which more closely approximates modern social relations. Comic pleasure always implies a secret or unconscious intent, if not of each one of us, at all events of society as a whole, that is, an unavowed intention to humiliate (*Laughter*, 148). To effect pleasure, the comic writer must effect suspension of feeling, establishing a distance between the butts and the spectator by making them ludicrous and painful to behold—making them types enfiguring automatism, ignorance, or, in the funniest comedy, vanity, which in their satiric bite awaken the mind. The comically painful event appeals to the intelligence, which is a social accretion on the biological and enables all reflection. Within the social group, we laugh by reason of the characters' unsociability rather than their immorality, insofar as the comic "is frequently dependent on the manners or ideas, or, to put it bluntly, on the prejudices of a society" (150). Bergson adds that, because social groups construct morality, there is ultimately no essential difference between the social and the moral, the latter being a self-serving construct of the former. "To sum up, whether a character is good or bad is of little moment; granted he is unsociable, he is capable of becoming comic" (154).

In his final section, overtly developing Théophile Gautier's remark that extravagant comedy is the logic of the absurd, and tacitly drawing on Hazlitt, Bergson argues that the comic is a very special inversion of common sense, as we see in Don Quixote. Once his mad idea is formed, the Don goes on to execute it very reasonably. Dream logic and comic logic both effect a relaxation of the rules of reasoning, a respite from regulated thinking, and they share such features as wordplay, obsession, confusion of persons, and so forth. If, to the spectator, most comic characters are so many models of impertinence, Bergson says, the internal logic of their conduct resembles dream logic. He does not link this point to his idea of comedy calling forth, as a genre, the spectator's childhood memories. Dream logic is a small, if significant, element in his thesis that comedy is a calling to consciousness of the character—and the spectator—by the social.

At this point in Bergson's text, having sketched his typology of characters and techniques, their comic effects and social function, he begins moving into a more somber key in treating the distinction between life and art, and comedy and tragedy. The gravity of his tone proceeds from sadness at the human propensity to fall so short of full individuality in full sociability. "It is comic to wander out of one's own self. It is comic to fall into a ready-made category. And what is most comic of all is to become a category oneself . . . to crystallise into a stock character" (*Laughter*, 157). Regressing into a stock character is a daily risk, and it is why comedy is the only art that deals solely with the general, with deficient stock types, rather than with individuals, as tragedy does.

Being so verisimilar, comedy is more like daily life than is high art. Most of the time, the unique individuality of things escapes us. We see things as their labels or genera. Even language intervenes between us "and our own mental states" (*Laughter*, 159). We catch only the impersonal aspect of our feelings, that which speech has established, through resemblance. "Thus even in our own individuality, individuality escapes our ken. We move amidst generalities and symbols . . . we live in a zone mid-way between things and ourselves, externally also to ourselves" (160). Great tragedy, however, dramatizes dynamic individuals in states of becoming, and, like all high art in its finest moments, brings true reality, that which habit veils, into direct contact with our senses and consciousness. We can then enter into immediate communion with things and with ourselves, hear the strains "of our inner life" (158). Social utility demands that passion, for instance, be subject to rules. Thus, slow progress in establishing a "peaceful social life" has formed an "outward layer of feelings and ideas covering when they do not extinguish, inner or individual passion" (163). Offering nature her revenge upon society (163), high drama is the explosions of passions and hence pleasure, affording a glimpse of our deeper selves and maybe our ancestral memories. This is the supra-social realm of sensibility to nature and the *élan vital*, "certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his inmost feelings," accessible by individual intuition and by great tragic art.

If high drama's focus is the individual, the life history of a soul, comedy's is the opposite, the life history of the social. Rather Aristotelian in this sense, comedy deals with types expressing "an average of mankind" (*Laughter*, 169). It does not go deep but

works "in some intermediate region of the soul" (169), where nature and the social overlap. Other art forms may project into nature and *la durée* but comedy accepts social life as its environment. For the comic character is "inseparable from social life, but insufferable to society" (171). As measured externally, then, even visually, vanity is the cardinal comic failing because it is unconscious but visible to everyone else. Accordingly, the mid-range of the soul is where the social is equilibrated with the individual. "It is no easy matter to define the point at which the anxiety to become modest may be distinguished from the dread of becoming ridiculous" (172). But surely this anxiety and dread are the same thing, Bergson adds, in the light of the laughter that brings them into self-consciousness. It is in this sense that the social group is an ordering of individual lives as a collective, tragedy the revelation of its cost.

Concerning the spectator or reader, who replies to comical impertinence with the greater impertinence of laughter, Bergson asks: How do we know that this is to correct bad with good? (His terms are *le bienveillant* and *le mal*, over-translated as good and evil.) It seems rather inclined to return bad for bad. The reason it is good, he says, is that we at first sympathize with the butt of laughter, enjoying that movement of relaxation and nonthinking, in relief from the strain of social living (187). As the social working through the individual, laughter is natural, it is not conscious reflection, and it is not just. Laughter forces up to the surface of the social group "the disturbing elements," the "slight revolt on the surface of social life," which the social corrects to readapt the individual to the whole, utilizing the bad with a view to the social good. Examined closely, therefore, the comic reveals that nature has left a spark of spitefulness in us, in this "mechanism set up in us by nature" (188) to form social groups, where we laugh to humiliate in a way that is never absolutely just. There is thus a curious pessimism underlying such social laughter, Bergson concludes, which becomes more pronounced the closer one analyzes it. Like Nietzsche, Bergson too closes on a reflexive comic note, ending with the remark that the philosopher may find the aftertaste of such an analysis bitter indeed. Certainly, in *Le Rire* critical discourse has moved far from the yardstick of manners or decorum, or even local conventions of propriety, in this exegesis of the human being in evolution. Comic paradox has rarely been so tacitly enacted: we are to infer that the philosopher knows he cannot live alone in his ivory tower but, not unlike Diogenes, he is often dismayed by what he sees when going out among his kind.

All three early modernists—Nietzsche, Bergson, and Freud—thus situate the comic in the overlapping regions of the body-mind relationship. In each text, the body is the locus of joy and of the positive forces of natural life. The social, in one mode of repression or another, constrains the life force. Nietzsche would explode the social function, but Bergson and Freud seek to clarify its nature and value, in both cases positively. Concerning the comic, all three thinkers level the old concept of social norm, collapsing the question of socio-moral standard to one among many equivalent categories of analysis. Like Freud later, Bergson prizes the comic as a vicarious indulgence in the infantile, fully on the order of the dream and of play. Instinct, psychic or social, is thwarted in the comic, made ridiculous, and healthily laughed off the comic stage. What fascinates them, however, is less the immediate process than its socializing

effects on the individual. In Bergson no less than in Freud, society needs the comic in order to become—and remain—civilization.

Theory and resistance

The critical reception of *Laughter*, what might be called the resistance to Bergson in theory, reveals how pervasive the unstated premise of social opposition as the structuring principle of comedy had become by 1900, and how stubbornly it persisted. Several of Bergson's examples in particular have drawn fire from innumerable Anglo-American critics, partly because of errors in the original translation of *Le Rire* (published by Macmillan in London in 1911 as "the only authorised one" [although that "Translators' Preface" was soon omitted], and reprinted in 23 editions in London and New York by 1919). This flawed text, which is also the text used by Wylie Sypher in his influential anthology *Comedy* in 1956, is only now running out of copyright protection.

In French, Bergson notes, for example, that the comic process he has described resembles the rigors of a new candidate's admission into one of the Grandes Écoles, the elite professional schools in Paris. The translators Brereton and Rothwell intensify *candidat* and *Écoles* as "recruit" and "military academies." As we have seen, Bergson argues that comic characters are out of touch with their fellow beings, laughter reproves such absent-mindedness and wakes the butt from his unconscious state or "dream" of egoistic autonomy, and the awakening entails newly conscious sociability. In his example, the young student is entering a new way of life or pre-career. Once he has passed the rigorous trial of the entrance examination, he has other trials ahead—namely those that the senior students put him through—to form him for the new society to which he has been admitted and, as they say, to soften up his character (*lui assouplir le caractère*, in *Le Rire*, 103; intensified as "breaking him into harness," *Laughter*, 147). Every French reader knows of the notorious rites of ragging in, for instance, the École Normale Supérieure, and recognizes Bergson's innocuous use of them to illustrate the role of the individual relative to a student "petite société." Bergson's actual example thus strengthens, rather than diminishes, the lively role of mind or intellect in the sociable individual, candidates to the Grandes Écoles being from among the top graduates of the national universities. In short, the comic corrects some type of inflexible trait, habit, or inattention to the social that life in society requires. As members of a species, not to mention civilization, we cannot live entirely alone, and each member must avoid enclosing himself in his own character as if in an ivory tower (Le Rire, 103). If not, the price is humiliation by the social. Erroneous translation makes it difficult for English readers, however, to tell society from a military academy, let alone the intellectual from the social or instinctual.

Anglo-American critics and theorists of comedy long tended to dismiss *Laughter* as a rather Victorian document. Considered partly brilliant but radically flawed, "paradoxical," "important but ultimately unsatisfying," *Laughter* suffered in critical esteem primarily because it was read as moralistic, subordinating the comic to "social morality," according to Kern, or to the "enshrinement of social conventions,"

to Torrance.[8] Typically, readers admired one cardinal insight—the "ingenious" observation that the comic consists of the mechanical encrusted on the living—only to lament the text's overall reductive, socially conservative orientation. That is to misread Bergson, imposing emphases and values that the text does not support, yet the error is so widespread that it suggests a larger problem. As we have seen, Bergson's own quite different concept is conventionally Aristotelian in its formulation but Nietzschean in its thetic value. Misreadings of Bergson reveal how thoroughly modernist discourses situated social convention as the structuring principle of comedy and the engine of laughter.

Moreover, in Brereton and Rothwell's translation, Bergson sounds more like a straitlaced Victorian *pater familias* than a *Belle Époque* Frenchman. His French prose is lucid and spare, his phrasing elegant in its simplicity, characteristic of the texts for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1927. The English version, however, is loosely accurate at best and tends toward the overblown and tendentious, perhaps in an attempt to "Victorianize" the Frenchman for English readers. In any case, the "army recruit" example is most often cited, in my experience, as an instance of Bergson's reactionary social politics.[9] More serious are the uses of politically loaded phrasing. English readers believe Bergson promoted society's repression of *any* individual "activity with separatist tendencies" (*Laughter*, 73), a strong statement, also often quoted, whereas in that sentence Bergson merely wrote that society suspects "une excentricité" (*Le Rire*, 15); moreover, in that passage Bergson was describing the "centre commun" around which society turns, and so "excentrique" merely extends the geometric figure without added value. Much later Bergson does in fact use the words "tendances séparatistes" in the context of the group's wish to round off the angles on the individual (*Le Rire*, 135), which in translation is intensified as "to round off the corners wherever they are met with" (*Laughter*, 174). One cumulative effect of many such changes is that Bergson's rather gently correctional society becomes, in English, sternly absolutist. The Victorian Bergson seems to vaunt the military and want to stamp out the dissidents. It is difficult to discern in that English version that Bergson's *Le Rire* shows society as equally subject to ridiculous rigidity, no less than the individual. Critical dismissals of this thesis as socially or politically retrograde continued through the modernist decades. Sypher's 1956 collection made Bergson's thesis rather unpalatable to new generations of Anglo-Americans. It seems to have been largely responsible for delaying Bergson's full admission into Anglo-American comic theory until as late as 1990.

Still, the theory itself went against several ingrained ideas about the social in comedy. In the wake of Baudelaire, and notwithstanding Nietzsche's radical postulate of philosophic laughter, Bergson was one of the first moderns to propose an entirely new model of the comic. His terms, however, were prescriptive in a century that came to loathe prescription. In most Western languages today, we all tend to view such dicta as "the function of laughter is to correct" through our own post-Auschwitz, post-1960s lenses, reading Bergson as a stern moralist although he says little about morality, and detecting didacticism and political conservatism where there is nothing of the sort. In his evolutionary model of comedy, Bergson explicitly repudiates moral or even ethical

bases, while constructing a poetics of laughter as grounded in the human need for the social. The comic is explicated as a tension between full sociability and its defects or lapses.

The most startling feature of this thesis is that it does not incorporate the mean or norm of social behavior as a yardstick of value. There is no norm. There is only sociability and its temporary deficiency. The comic character is not laughed back to a norm of conventional behavior (conventions vary, according to local prejudices), but rather he is laughed back to self-consciousness as a social being. The specific content of consciousness does not matter to the comic, which is indifferent to moral ideals. All the comic aims to do is to correctively humiliate the unsociable character and thereby to advance or resume his evolution into the necessary condition of social life in common. He or she may presumably write tragedies, play music, or do whatever else, but if she is not *also* sociable, the comic will catch her out. Vanity is particularly vulnerable because, like all forms of unsociability, it is a gross deficiency of consciousness, being such deluded self-admiration that it has become encrusted with the mechanical or the unthinking. Thus comedy mocks the unthinking and the unbecoming, similarly appealing in the theater to the spectator's intelligence, never sympathy. The ontic model allows for a realm beyond intellect, but comedy's terrain is restricted to the social, as one crux in the career of the human. Intelligent, reflective laughter is the optimal response, but in any case primary laughter is involuntary. The production of laughter—the social working through the group's members—occurs whether overt or buried in surface hilarities. In whatever mode, Bergson stressed, this bringing to consciousness is the *only* way comedy corrects manners. Why, then, is *Laughter* so very often dismissed, when not derided, as something of a repressive political tract, rather than considered an evolutionary complement to other modernist theories, such as Freud's psychic thesis?

Critical discourse at least through Baudelaire internalized these rubrics to such an extent, it would seem, that it became difficult to conceive of the comic without the social norm as structuring principle. Bergson's construction of the social, as stripped of normative conventions against which to measure comic deviance, has been difficult to situate conceptually. Even Freud's theory is often misapprehended as positing the comic as liberating from, rather than constrained by, the social. The significance of Bergson's concept of the comic as the mechanical encrusted on the living is widely recognized, but it is usually taken out of context, being used to designate anything rote and thereby ludicrous, without the corollary that if it is not corrected by the social it has no value even to laughter. Molière's, and even Dennis's and Hazlitt's notions of social decorum as comic target, enriched by Marxian formulations of class conflict, might seem closer to modernist critical thinking than Bergson's. It is in that mainstream discursive legacy that Bergson is largely misunderstood as a rather haughty, if not politically naive defender of social conventions. Clearly, he knows quite well the high cost of the social, and as his notes of sadness suggest, he is not comfortable with the pessimism his biosocial model produces, but he is far from the naive reactionary he was often assumed to be. Bergson is closer to Plato's and Aristotle's notion of the soul as educable, and of comic vice as unconscious self-ignorance. The typical modernist misreading of

Bergson's thesis instates social norms and misses his point that the comic target is dual, reproving rigidity wherever it occurs, whether in society or individuals.

To twentieth-century eyes, at the apogee of a consensual tradition, Bergson's scale of values seemed inverted: he assigned rigid fixity most often to the individual, whom modernists were inclined to celebrate, and he ascribed suppleness and organic vitality to the social, which they and their successors tended to consider oppressive, impersonal, and mechanistic. Bergson has been routinely classified with Thomas Hobbes and other exponents of the "superiority" view of the comic as corrective satire of deficient manners. Thus *Le Rire* is guilty of "bringing out mostly its [laughter's] negative functions" (Bakhtin, 71). Bergson's thesis "sounds like some insidious form of secret police."[10] The evolutionary model is collapsed to one stern corrective function: "a way of chastising aberrant behavior," meaning aberrant from a socio-moral mean,[11] or a denial of play, insofar as "the idea of [primate] development and, accordingly, of regression, was alien to him."[12] The concept of the mechanical itself is often oversimplified as sheer rote or taken literally as mechanization (even a Romantic rejection of industrialized civilization, to Purdie[13]). Many problems result from translation. Thus to Nelson, for example, Bergson's own examples (such as the "fixed" habits of the "army recruit") undermine the thesis of *Le Rire*, which unravels in confusion. Yet translation is not the only problem. Many critics with a keen appreciation of Bergson's vitalism, such as Charney, Gurewitch, or Levin, still confine the social to behavioral norms rather than opening it out to Bergson's full ontic model of biosocial instinct and human cultural development.[14]

Even Torrance, in a brilliant theory of the comic hero, believes that Bergson merely restates "the didactic function of comedy and its enshrinement of social conventions" (4–5). He joins others in ascribing to Bergson a notion of the comic character as "our intellectual or moral inferior" (5), when Bergson's comic character is inferior only to the social, like us all. Bergson repeatedly equilibrates comic character and spectator as virtual peers, equals suffering precisely the same social burden, through whom the same function of the social operates. If there is a sense of superiority in laughter, it is that of the social, which laughs through us, and which absorbs all individuals, including characters and spectators, into itself. But Bergson's thesis grants little importance to social norms, and it has been difficult to grasp. Just as Torrance remarks that *Laughter* "merely corroborates and refines upon traditional assumption" of "social conventions as the ultimate criterion of human behavior" (4), so Kern regrets that Bergson "could conceive of laughter only in terms of social morality . . . [and] only in terms of specific social norms" (Kern, 36–7).

Was it criticism's own socio-critical prejudices or lenses that precluded seeing clearly Bergson's evolutionary theory of the comic?[15] "There is no a priori reason for concluding, when a group and an individual are in conflict, that it is the group which is flexible, innovative, and the dissenter who is rigid" (Nelson, 185). Morton Gurewitch begins his study of the comic, like many theorists opening a comprehensive analysis of the subject, by praising Bergson's several insights. He positions them within the context of Bergson's vitalism, though missing his concept of clock time and *durée*. "Bergson does not disguise the ugliness and even the immorality of the laughing chastisement with which society flagellates those aberrant citizens" (30). Yet Gurewitch mistakes

the final and most significant sections of Bergson's thesis, to conclude that "[i]n short, tragedy is primitivism; comedy is progressive adaptability" (33). Tragedy is rather the purview of the rare, faintly Nietzschean individual who, in Bergson's view, is capable of intuitively moving *beyond* the social, into the heart of being; the concept is not linear and seems to be directionally confusing since it is at once a coincidence with the natural body and a harmony greater than, not less than, the free intellect.

Like Nietzsche and Freud, Bergson would say we are trapped in spatial models, blind to dynamic interrelations, and defensive about individual liberty. To Gurewitch, "Bergson profoundly buries the possibility that society may be an organized betrayal of human freedom" (33). Yet Bergson clearly states, perhaps too offhandedly, that there exist personal freedoms in private but there can be no social freedoms outside the social. The social thinks through us, works its way through us, and through every faculty in us, as Nietzsche also contended about the Judeo-Christian social and the Greek descendance of the rational. The compass of the social is as absolute and englobing to Bergson as the psychic is to Freud. Freedom is at best relative. Later theorists of comedy, however, rather than building on *Le Rire*—in a tumultuous century when the social itself seemed very much at issue—tended to advance socio-political theses that initially mentioned Bergson only to place him firmly *hors de combat*: "One can only conclude that Bergson is not flexible enough" (Gurewitch, 34).

Two mid-century developments in criticism worsened Bergson's fortunes while furthering the premise of a societal norm. In the period 1960–90, Anglo-American comic theory, whether Marxian, psychoanalytic, or even feminist, was in many ways a series of footnotes to Bakhtin's celebration of the carnivalesque and to Foucault's concept of social deviance. Deconstructors of carnival readily adapted certain aspects of Nietzsche and Freud and continued to eclipse complimentary aspects of Bergson. As cultural politics championed the anti-social against the social establishment, late modernists inverted the Aristotelian scheme to celebrate the deviant and the powerless. Bergson seemed as stodgy as Victorian rosewater.

As modernists and their wake receded, *Le Rire*'s fortunes began to improve, particularly in the slipstream of such aggressively asocial plays as *Waiting for Godot*. By the 1980s such theorists as Simon and Shershow, for instance, returned to Bergson for a fresh look at *Le Rire* in light of their own asocial conceptions of comedy.[16] Berger's religious text on "cosmic incongruity" hails *Le Rire* as "probably the most important philosophical work on comedy in the twentieth century."[17] In the next century such philosophers as Gelven and Genette developed their striking, new "paradigm of mirth," although typically the Frenchman overtly built on Bergson's theory while the American ignored it.[18] Gradually even in English, however, Bergson is emerging into prominence.

Overall the reception of *Laughter* falls into stages: a first period when this text too was swept into the general charge against Bergson as anti-intellectual, making it difficult for most readers to discern the lineaments of Bergson's thesis; a long second period when fashions in critical and philosophical thought kept the text outside the dominant discourse on the comic; and, almost a century later, a gradual return to eminence, as one of modernity's great statements about why we laugh.

Notes

1 See John Dennis, *A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of It* (1702); William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Comic Writers* (1819); Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachy, (1905; New York: Norton, 1960), all in *Theories of Comedy*, ed. Paul Lauter (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1964), 215–38, 263–94, and 398–413, respectively.

2 See Denis Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (1761; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Charles Baudelaire, *De l'Essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques*, in *Oeuvres completes*, ed. Y.-G. Le Dantec (1855; Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 710–28; and Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974).

3 See James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1890–1915); Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912); Francis Macdonald Cornford, *The Origins of Attic Comedy* (1912; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Cedric Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968); and Robert Torrance, *The Comic Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). For more details of this history, see Jan Walsh Hokenson, *The Idea of Comedy: History, Theory, Critique* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 73–141.

4 George Meredith, *Ode to the Comic Spirit*, in *Comedy: George Meredith's "An Essay on Comedy" and Henri Bergson's "Laughter*," ed. Wylie Sypher (1872; New York: Anchor, 1956), 61.

5 Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (1911), in *Comedy*, ed. Sypher (1956), 59–190. French quotation will come from Bergson, *Le Rire* (1900; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1940).

6 See the discussion in Idella J. Gallagher, *Morality in Evolution: The Moral Philosophy of Henri Bergson* (The Hague: Martinus Wijhoff, 1970).

7 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 109, 111.

8 Edith Kern, *The Absolute Comic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

9 See, for example, T. G. A. Nelson, *Comedy: The Theory of Comedy in Literature, Drama, and Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 185.

10 R. D. V. Glasgow, *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), 42.

11 Jerry Aline Flieger, *The Purloined Punchline: Freud's Comic Theory and the Postmodern Text* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 38.

12 Alexander Kosintsev, *The Mirror of Laughter*, trans. Richard Martin (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2010), 2.

13 Susan Purdie, *Comedy: The Mastery of Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 152.

14 See Maurice Charney, *Comedy High and Low* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Morton Gurewitch, *Comedy: The Irrational Vision* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); and Harry Levin, *Playboys and Killjoys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

15 The author recalls an A. E. Pilkington in near despair, describing similar strains of Bergsonian misreadings as guilty of the "repeated transposition of Bergsonism from the level of explanation to that of moral exhortation." See Pilkington, *Bergson and His Influence: A Reassessment* (1976; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 185.

16 See Richard Keller Simon, *The Labyrinth of the Comic* (Tallahassee, FL: University of Florida Press, 1985); and Scott Cutler Shershow, *Laughing Matters: The Paradox of Comedy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

17 Peter L. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 28.

18 Michael Gelven, *Truth and the Comedic Art* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 2. Gérard Genette, "Morts de rire," in Genette, *Figures V* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 134–225.

4

Sub Specie Durationis, or the Free Necessity of Life's Creativeness in Bergson's *Creative Evolution*

David Scott

The problem of "life": Between philosophy and science

In *Creative Evolution* Bergson turns to the then-current state of biological and evolutionist theory (Darwinian and Lamarckian) in order to address at a two-fold level the challenge life presents for any attempt, scientific and philosophical, to fully grasp its metaphysical significance. After all, if philosophy is to metaphysically explain life, its existence, then it must certainly justify the formation of its conceptual explanation. In this fashion, Bergson anticipates philosophers like Georges Canguilhem, who will claim, "The nature and value of the concept are here in question, as much as the nature and meaning of life."[1] The meaning of life as problem is, therefore, inseparable from the problem of creating a concept that comprehends life. Bergson's work delineates the "crisis of modernism" in the form of these two dimensions—of being and thought, the metaphysical and the meta-philosophical—brought into contact through his addressing life as "problem."

More explicitly, Bergson structures his project by means of the correlative relationship, which he establishes between a theory of knowledge and theory of life.[2] A theory of life is possible only on the basis of a fundamental critique of knowledge; otherwise, we naively accept concepts that enclose facts within preexisting frames. For Bergson any theory of knowledge that does not have as its primary goal the displacement of the intellect in the general evolution of life cannot be in a position to disclose the principle engendering the symbolic frames restricting our immediate grasp of life.

Collège de France 1902–3 lectures: "Histoire de l'idée de temps"

Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France between 5 December 1902 and 23 May 1903, "Histoire de l'idée de temps," provide substantial material for his pivotal essay "Introduction to Metaphysics," as well as for chapter four of *Creative Evolution*

(as Bergson's footnote at the beginning of this chapter makes clear). Indeed, one would not be too far off base if one called these lectures a "first draft" for the later work. That said, what draws our attention in "Histoire de l'idée de temps" is the three primary characteristics of the sign or symbol Bergson defines. Nowhere in Bergson's works is the sign/symbol as fully fleshed out. *Creative Evolution* is primarily meant to demonstrate the consequences to science, once the sign/symbol has been rejected as the primary structural element of scientific method. For in Bergson's view, the method of scientific analysis is fundamentally symbolic. Thus, the breadth and method of "relative knowledge" that results is itself determined by the characteristics of the sign/symbol. Moreover, it will become clear in *Creative Evolution* that relative knowledge is Bergson's chief foe, which he accuses of being responsible for the inability of science to *absolutely* grasp the true duration of evolution.

First, the sign is necessarily general and generalizing; it both represents and is represented by generality. Second, every sign is oriented towards carrying out a practical action. Lastly, a sign is something that fixes; it has a tendency toward stability, harmony. For these three reasons the sign is the primary element of analysis. It represents, in capturing the object studied, a certain point of view corresponding to something one already knows. Scientific knowledge provided by analysis is useful and utilitarian, as opposed to a purely speculative knowledge. What is important is to be able to re-*present* movement: to make it calculable, measurable; to fix it in space, so that it provides "a hold on the object that will necessarily supplant the representation of movement that only has a metaphysical value."[3]

And here is where the difficulty lies which motivates Bergson's writing of *Creative Evolution*. Bergson's task as philosopher and psychologist is "to seek, under the word, the thing, and as a consequence to disassociate very different significations that common sense has grouped in the same word, different significations which the philosopher has tended to confuse, because, under the same word, he always seeks the same thing" ("Histoire," 63). Both the nature of language, which obscures as much as it reveals, and the "living thing" concealed beneath it, stand naked with a change of theoretical perspective. Only then, Bergson hypothesizes, might we speculatively grasp the living thing from *inside* the immanent flow of its genesis, *as* life is constituted for science as something "objective." "We say that life, if grasped from the *inside,* undoubtedly would appear to be something simple and indivisible; but seen from *outside*, physiologically—it is movements composed of movements, while anatomically—it is cells combining cells, atoms with atoms" ("Histoire," 64). A shifting of viewpoint is useful for developing a "philosophy of biology," Bergson suggests. Indeed, it authorizes a fuller appreciation for how "evolutionism is less and less Darwinist" (65).

Everything depends upon disentangling the confusion between sign and signification, according to Bergson. Darwinian theory essentially postulates that there is some particularity—some thing that exists in itself, an accidental variation that is advantageous for an animal—which, consequently, makes natural selection possible. Bergson asks a critical question: "Is it not evident that every new particularity in an animal implicates a general and radical change of the entirety of vitality?" In other words, how can one simply reduce the vitality of an animal to a single particularity

that is somehow divorced from the entirety of the movement of its being? Darwinian theory seems merely to add something to something, juxtaposing one to the other every particularity already preexisting and preformed in relation to the other. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, Darwinian theory does not create a new picture but merely potentially reduplicates ad infinitum a preexisting image. It reduces, as a result, the vital to a numerical multiplicity of a kind.[4] The questions Bergson asks are: "How can Darwinian theory make allowances for novelty on these terms? How can it not reduce change to a mechanical process of juxtaposition, as a result?" Bergson argues that if we do not confuse sign (which makes possible the theoretical juxtaposing) with the signified thing, it becomes clear that what we take to be "multiple is in reality one."[5]

Let us not ignore the governing postulate that remains largely imperceptible in Bergson's critique of Darwinian theory. We can begin to disclose this postulate if we focus on how the notion of evolution functions relative to what it must explain. For *beside* the idea of change, *any* theory of evolution (Darwinian, Lamarckian, or otherwise) must postulate "the idea of *necessity*."[6] Therefore, any particular theory of evolution is distinguished by what is taken to necessitate its postulate of "*necessity*." Bergson presents us with two options from which to choose: the logic of causality or the movement of real genesis.

Analysis postulates an *a priori* evolutionary necessity that presumes the logic of causality and the principle of identity. Bergson criticizes analysis because, prior to its explanation of evolution, it supposes reasons (or a sufficient reason) beforehand for evolution to exist. More damaging from Bergson's perspective is that such causal logic itself is grounded on a too often ignored metaphysical foundation, which further justifies scientific determinism. Without the habit of this belief in causality and those categories that draw upon it, "who can say where individuality begins and ends, whether the living being is one or many, whether it is the cells which associate themselves into the organism or the organism which dissociates itself into cells?" *Creative Evolution*, therefore, draws motivation from the "vain" aspiration on the part of rationalism and empiricism to "force the living into this or that one of our molds." The molds or categories "are too narrow, above all too rigid" (*CE*, *x*/*vi*). By contrast, Bergson asserts that "it is not enough to determine, by careful analysis, the categories of thought: we must engender them" (*CE*, 207–8). A mechanistic causality has rendered thought incapable of fully accounting for change or the production of the new, which, for Bergson, comprises the very movement of evolution. Real change mustn't be rendered a "possible" of a presupposed individual; instead, any one individual is merely one "possible" of the real change.

Intuition, according to Bergson, more fully accounts for evolution by finding sufficient reason *in the movement of its accomplishment*. "Real genesis" *will reveal* the reasons for why things are determined in the movement because it requires we engender our categories of thought, instead of merely assuming reasons already exist. Bergson finds that the cause grasps its effect only in the midst of the production of the new rather than the effect being given more or less in advance, while the antecedent is no longer invoked as the occasion for the effect and is instead rightfully seen to be the cause.

Creative evolution

In response to an article written about *Creative Evolution* Bergson succinctly clarifies the motive for his work:

> I have simply tried to demonstrate that when one abandons the domain of mathematical and physical objects to enter into that of life and consciousness, one must appeal to a certain *sense of life* that contrasts with pure understanding, and that has its origin in the same vital thrust as instinct—though instinct properly speaking is entirely another thing. This sense of life is only consciousness deepening more and more, and seeking by a kind of torsion on itself, to place itself in the direction of nature. It's a certain kind of experience, as old as humanity but from which philosophy is far from having entirely obtained what it is able to gain . . . If there is a conclusion that emerges from *Creative Evolution*, it is, on the contrary, that human intelligence and positive science, there where they exercise their own object, are very much in contact with the real and more and more penetrate the absolute. (*Ecrits Philosophiques*, 356–7)

Science reduces the "absolute" being of the vital—that is to say, the immanent genesis of life in duration—to the status granted by knowledge to the relative accidents reflective of possibilities predetermined by a more general physical or geometric order. Darwinism, for Bergson, is a prime example of such confusion. Bergson argues that heredity does not merely repeat genus identity since "it transmits also the impetus in virtue of which the characters are modified, and this impetus is vitality itself" (*CE*, 231–2).

The first chapter of *Creative Evolution* institutes the fundamental structure that orients Bergson's work: the analogy between life and consciousness. Unashamedly Cartesian in beginning this way, Bergson remains vehement that the sole existence about which we can be most assured is the existence of our own consciousness. Only a "slight effort" is required for us to turn our attention inward. And, once this is accomplished, once we note the "the unceasing variation of every psychical state"—the movement of feelings and sensations—the "blooming, buzzing confusion" (William James) that constitutes consciousness, Bergson feels confident that one cannot doubt its unceasing and persistent change: "there is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow" (*CE*, 2). As was noted earlier, analysis reduces the continuity that is consciousness into discontinuous and separated mental acts, as if the consciousness could be cut up into individual pieces to reflect the vagaries of shifting attention. Nonetheless, Bergson reminds us that these seemingly discontinuous states, in point of fact, "stand out against the continuity of background," the "fluid mass of our whole psychical existence." What holds them together is a presupposed "false" or formless ego, "indifferent and unchangeable." In itself, this "ego" is nothing except a symbolic armature postulated by science and philosophy for the purpose of threading together the "fleeting shades" of our mental states.[7] It is the adoption of the "artificial" ego by science and philosophy for the

reason that it promises coherency to consciousness, which conclusively verifies the failure of analysis, according to Bergson.

Insofar as epistemological analysis looks to its own symbolism to justify disregarding real time or *durée*, we are left with "an artificial imitation of the internal life, a static equivalent which will lend itself better to the requirements of logic and language, just because we have eliminated from it the element of real time" (*CE*, 4). This artificial or abstract time becomes for the intellect, for science, the conversion of duration into juxtaposable simultaneities.[8] Duration, on the other hand, nourishes continuous novelty and potentiality with "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and swells as it advances." A kind of memory far more ontological than psychological is formed, "continually swelling with the duration."[9] Thusly, real time is time *lived* immanently: "To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly" (*CE*, 7). The real time given in duration is absolute and, so, not relative to whatever position that might be assumed by the analyst, which would permit its being measured. The study of the nature of time is to orient oneself in order to cognitively grasp duration, invention, and the continual elaboration of the new. Similarly, we appreciate the analogical relationship between life and consciousness, which Bergson establishes on the basis of duration. "Continuity of change, preservation of the past in the present, real duration—the living being seems, then, to share these attributes with consciousness. Can we go further and say that life, like conscious activity, is invention, is unceasing creation?" (*CE*, 23).

Evolutionist theory by means of its theorizing relationships of kinship presupposes that the *logical* affiliation between forms is correlative with a relation of time reduced to *chronological* succession between species in which these forms are materialized. The issue remains: what is the impulse that actually brings about evolution—or rather, perhaps, towards what finality might the impulse instigating the *transformation* of forms begin? Bergson starts to answer this question by examining biological and embryological evidence (de Vries, Weismann). Bergson concludes that even though one would like to reconcile the logical order endorsed by the intellect with the chronological order privileged by conceiving of temporality intellectually, to explain evolution requires theoretically acknowledging a certain degree of indetermination. Although a germ-plasma singularly is not continuous (to borrow Bergson's example), it is still the transduction of a more general impulsive movement of genetic energy. And so, despite the fact that this energy at some instants is arrested, slowed at other moments, and given the form of an organism; nonetheless, in itself this impulsive movement progresses *separate from the organism* insistently and ceaselessly. "The essential thing is the *continuous progress* indefinitely pursued, an invisible progress, on which each visible organism rides during the short interval of time given it to live" (*CE*, 27). The theoretical response, subsequently, must account for the revealing of this *other* kind of temporality—a "zone of indeterminism"—to the image of a current of life passing from germ to germ through the medium of the organism, which because of its finitude is discontinuous in itself.[10]

We discern, behind the analogy between life and consciousness, the theoretical challenge of grasping (of conceptualizing) real time: "the more we fix our attention

on this continuity of life, the more we see that organic evolution resembles the evolution of consciousness, in which the past presses against the present and causes the upspringing of a new form of consciousness, incommensurable with its antecedents" (*CE*, 27). The current of "transformism" Bergson identifies, flowing through matter, might be expressed in terms of a series of structures analogous to one another—at one dimension existing in the incessant change of duration, at the other existing in the blurred movement of states of consciousness. "Things have happened just as though an immense current of consciousness, interpenetrated with potentialities of every kind, had traversed matter to draw it towards organization and make it notwithstanding that it is necessity itself, an instrument of freedom" (*ME*, 25). In this way, duration and consciousness are ontological complements of one another—each providing the other with a reciprocal domain of convertibility (whereby one *becomes* the other), *internally constitutive* for each, so that they become nearly inextricably identifiable once a viewpoint is established for seeing them in this manner. Here we can determine the structure of their immanence.

The failures Bergson attributes to mechanism and finalism, from the perspective granted by *durée*, stems from the fact that both discard the temporality of immanence. Absolute immanence is in itself; it is not something, nor does it belong *to* something, because it neither depends upon an object, nor does it belong to a subject. *Durée* is Bergson's name for the temporality incarnated in immanence. In other words, mechanism and finalism leave to one side "the movement, which is reality itself. In one sense, the movement is *more* than the positions and than their order . . . but, in another sense, the movement is *less* than the series of positions and their connecting order" (*CE*, 91). As Bergson reminds us, "we do not think real time," rather "we live it, because life transcends intellect" (*CE*, 46). The refutation of mechanism and finalism, which highlights the failure of the intellect to grasp real time, fortuitously reveals in turn the necessity for another kind of understanding to correspond with our lived duration. "The feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in pure duration is there, forming around the intellectual concept properly so-called an indistinct fringe that fades off into darkness" (*CE*, 46). The "fringe" surrounding the intellect delineates for Bergson the potential for a "supra-sensible intuition" to provide a kind of correlate form of understanding essential for grasping ontologically the effectiveness of real time. Indeed, with this kind of intuition Bergson brings Life and Concept to their point of synthesis with a philosophical method whose goal is to formulate a new concept of evolution.

The second chapter of *Creative Evolution* examines evolution via the divergence of the *tendencies* of intelligence and instinct. How do these two tendencies reflect in parallel that the problem of knowledge rehearses the metaphysical problem? The causative purpose evolutionarily fashioning the intellect is the need for human beings to conduct themselves in relation to things, to prepare themselves for any given situation, favorable or unfavorable. This means intellect has a selective function: relating one point of space to another, examining one object in relation to another, the faculty of intelligence, ultimately, remains external to what it turns its attention upon. As a result, from Bergson's perspective, it has little or no speculative value: "if the intellect were

meant for pure theorizing, it would take its place within movement, for movement is reality itself." The idea of movement, of becoming, which intelligence constructs, is composed of a static series of immobilities, or blocks of "now." Reduced to *states*, it follows that evolution is likewise reduced to a relationship of spatial simultaneities. Real temporality is dismissed; duration, as wholly metaphysical, is rendered senseless by epistemological categorization. "The intellect is not made to think *evolution*, in the proper sense of the word—that is to say, the continuity of a change that is pure mobility." Instead, it "rejects creation" to the extent that it "can no more admit complete novelty than real becoming" (*CE*, 163–5). Indeed, Bergson finds that the very categories of "distinctness and clearness" outlined by epistemology reflect the utilitarian principles of causality and confuse the sign of change with the sense of evolution.

Thus, as we previously noted in his Collège de France lectures, Bergson's focus on the idea of evolution has a more fundamental goal than merely criticizing Darwin. It provides him with the opportunity to upset the mechanistic causality underlying Darwinian and Lamarckian theory, even as he introduces—if not different logic—a different postulate of causal necessity for explaining evolution. We might characterize the nature of Bergson's postulate as a kind of "free necessity."[11] What he means by this is that a thing evolves or becomes "new" if it exists according to the *internal* necessity of its own nature. The movement of immanence that compels something to exist determines what compels the production of the new, of change.

Thus, if we return to analysis: the sign is before everything the representative of "virtual action." Through it the "mobility" or process of aging is actualized, but only because it "fixes it," arrests it in place in an "instant," and assigns it a date, thereby making it universal. Bergson defines the "making of one's way to death" as the final property of the living being. Therefore, a sign cannot really re-present the living being, which is the enduring being, in and of time. Life is "a movement," indivisibly a single and "simple" continuity of being. And it is in this living movement that science must turn in order to find true evolutionism in the metaphysics of the "vital gesture" composing life.[12]

"All movement is articulated inwardly" (*CE*, 311). For that reason, in order to comprehend evolution, metaphysically and biologically, one must not begin from the individual or the already individuated object, but from a standpoint that "all is given." It follows from this postulate that to generalize it is necessary to first abstract, and to abstract it is necessary to generalize. Because of this we find ourselves trapped in a vicious universalizing circle.[13] Bergson's silent postulate returns: it is necessary to know the individual through the persistence of becoming individuated or changed rather than change being said to originate from the already known or individuated. One cannot grasp evolution by ontologically privileging the individual. "Though we can divide at will the trajectory once created, we cannot divide its creation, which is an act in progress and not a thing" (*CE*, 309). An error is committed if the living being is treated "as a *thing* rather than as a *progress*, forgetting that the very permanence of their form is only the outline of a movement. . .the living being is above all a thoroughfare, . . . the essence of life is in the movement by which life is transmitted" (*CE*, 128). The dilemma, which the philosopher and the scientist must face together, is that life cannot be grasped by

the intellect: "Suffice it to say that the intellect represents *becoming* as a series of *states*, each of which is homogeneous with itself and consequently does not change" (*CE*, 163). As a result, *creativeness* is rejected; no longer is anything new truly possible. As such, its goal—as science—is to orient action on the basis of what is already known or recognized.[14] Bergson finds the failure of science lies in its misapplication of those categories that would reduce life to relative spatial relationships at the service of the mechanistic utility of human activity.

But instinct, by contrast, "is molded on the very form of life." Where intellect is mechanical, instinct proceeds organically. From Bergson's perspective, science too quickly abandons the experience offered by instinct. Or, rather, science does not properly appreciate it as a mode of knowledge. Instinct brings us nearer to experiencing the continuously renewing creativeness of *life*: "we can feel within ourselves and also divine" life, Bergson suggests, "by sympathy" (*CE*, 164). Let us take Bergson's own example of the Hairy Sand Wasp. In order to paralyze without killing its primary prey, the Hairy Sand Wasp (*Ammophilia hirsuta*) must deliver nine successive stings to the nine nerve centers controlling a caterpillar's three pairs of legs. But how does the wasp know the exact location and number of these nerve centers? We might hypothesize, however nonsensically, that the wasp acquires its knowledge in the same manner as the etymologists—by a series of intellectual experiments, with knowledge of the results somehow cumulative and inheritable. But what if, instead, we put forward a *more philosophical interpretation*: these organisms, the wasp and the caterpillar, are nothing more than two activities, really two tendencies, which dramatize in their concrete relation the faculty of understanding, which is "a process of knowledge—by an intuition (*lived* rather than *represented*)" (*CE*, 174, 175). The wasp must maintain a sympathetic relationship with the caterpillar in order to survive. Instinct as sympathy affords the wasp (and the caterpillar in its own manner) to experience itself *from within* the vital relationship of hunter and prey and world. The nature of sympathy escapes any mechanistic explanation science offers.

Bergson insists that instinct rather than intelligence is fundamentally *the* vital mode of knowledge and, so for this reason serves as the precursor for his development of the method of "philosophical intuition." To truly take life as "object" orients scientific and philosophical thinking squarely within the paradox of objectifying the very process that calls into question the category of the object. Thought, therefore, is burdened with the requirement for "expansion of our consciousness," so that we are introduced "into life's own domain, which is reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation" (*CE*, 178). This "reciprocal interpenetration" of life and consciousness shatters the preestablished categories that support mechanistic causality or finality. Hence, if intelligence is upturned, or forced to "leap" beyond its conventions, it is so that one might appreciate how intelligence maintains within itself the impetus for its self-transcendence. "Intelligence, reabsorbed into its principle, may thus live back again its own genesis" (*CE*, 191).

Intelligence and instinct are engendered out of the backdrop of consciousness, the latter co-extensive with the evolution of life. "The state of consciousness overflows the intellect; it is indeed incommensurable with the intellect, being itself indivisible and

new" (*CE*, 200). Now we can finally answer the question about how Bergson takes the problem of knowledge, the distinction between intellect and intuition, to be one with the metaphysical problem, the *creativeness* of life (*CE*, 185). Such is the perspectival shift wrought by the attempt to metaphysically think duration: "the absolute indivisibility of the real envisioned as a continuity in time."[15]

For Bergson, it means that the philosopher orients thinking in an indivisible and irreducible temporality, "*sub specie durationis*."[16] Thus, reversing the habits of intellectual thought, we begin not with individuated or achieved states or points but, rather, with individuation or becoming itself, which is sliced into states of transition between the individuated entities. After all, "he who installs himself in becoming sees in duration the very life of things, the fundamental reality" (*CE*, 317). One must place oneself *within* change, in duration, to "grasp at once both change itself and the successive states of materiality in which *it might* at any instant be immobilized" as "qualities," "forms," "positions," or "intentions" (*CE*, 308). Herewith, Bergson transforms the very idea of evolution: "I see in the whole evolution of life on our planet a crossing of matter by a creative consciousness, and effort to set free, by force of ingenuity and invention, something which in the animal still remains imprisoned and is only finally released when we reach man" (*ME*, 23).

As Bergson writes, "How much more instructive would be a truly intuitive metaphysics, which would follow the undulations of the real!"[17] Therefore, it goes without saying that to grasp "that which is instinctive in instinct" requires a shift from the purely intellectual or epistemological to a more philosophical perspective, which brings into view the metaphysical shift (from chronological time to *durée*) that is the condition for Bergson's conception of instinct. What philosophy must seek, accordingly, is a method that opens before us our sympathetic relationship with the generative force of life. "By intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely" (*CE*, 176). To think intuitively is to think in duration. Bergson, as a result, conceives "philosophical intuition"[18] as a mode similar to the aesthetic faculty (*CE*, 177). The wasp's sympathetic relationship with the caterpillar directs its careful sting, so the artist makes use of the aesthetic faculty to direct the paintbrush by an effort of intuition, in a similar way, placing the artist "within the object by a kind of sympathy," suspending the barrier erected between the artist and his model.

Bergson overturns the hypothesis that underlies and supports the two theoretical illusions—the illusion of nothingness and the illusion of immutability. This becomes the primary focus of the final chapter of *Creative Evolution*. Both are logical assumptions, which evolutionary theories have blindly adopted and used to arrest change. Each of these mechanistic illusions respectively relegates the movement of change to either a logically dialectical relationship directed by negation or, as in the case of the latter, slices the continuity of transformation into a series of cinematographic-like "snapshots" that separately are immobile but causally synthesized to give the illusion of movement. So, if each of these illusions ultimately justify themselves in relation to the action intended for their use, then the necessity claimed for them, "the action constituting the action

itself," either eludes "our consciousness or reaches it only confusedly" (*CE*, 299). Because "knowledge bears on a state rather than on a change," it can only function by taking stable views of instability (*CE*, 303). What we are left with is a false, if knowable, image of evolution. These epistemological illusions, from which science cannot extricate itself, finally are responsible for prohibiting the knowledge of the Absolute—the *ontological reality that is continuous movement* "between any two snapshots." The interval *between* any two discontinuous states is a reality that should be appreciated as being wholly *positive*.

For "if life is evolution and if duration is in this case a reality, is there not also an intuition of the vital, and consequently a metaphysics of life, which might in a sense prolong the science of the living?" (*CM*, 33). Here we discover the central lesson Bergson wants to advance in *Creative Evolution*: "scientific knowledge must appeal to another knowledge to complete it." Or, perhaps, more accurately, science must find its fulfillment in a kind of experience that at once is complementary to it, while challenging the epistemological imperatives structuring scientific practice. In this manner science might discover within itself the elements for its own transformation, necessary if is to "to see in time a progressive growth of the absolute, and in the evolution of things a continual invention of forms ever new" (*CE*, 344). As such, science looks to metaphysics in order to exactly match the vital process, as the latter moves through its inventing course, like the "progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form" (*CE*, 340). Physics stares impotently before temporal pure inventiveness, wedded as it is to its cinematographic method.[19] Creation takes the place of positivist knowledge itself. Consequently, Bergson calls for this "other knowledge" to provide the impetus for speculation (philosophical creativeness) by inviting a kind of "temporalism" in opposition to that assumed by science. Life is precisely "the very flux of the real that we should be trying to follow" but that escapes physics, and indeed biological and evolutionist theories, because it cannot be made synonymous with the moments of time arrested by the itinerant path of our intentions. "Either philosophy has nothing to see here, or its role begins where that of science ends" (*CE*, 174).

A different kind of Vitalism, perhaps?

"Is Bergson a vitalist?" remains, to this day, controversial and still colors reactions to *Creative Evolution*. In particular, the nature of Bergson's brand of finalism has been the focus of criticism. Bergson is himself keenly aware of the vulnerability of his vitalistic position. "The position of Vitalism is rendered very difficult by the fact that, in nature, there is neither purely internal finality nor absolutely distinct individuality" (*CE*, 42). Setting his "reformed finalism" over and against anticipated criticisms, Bergson characterizes *adaptation* as a form whereby each species—indeed, every individual—is but an energetic variant or tendency in an otherwise indivisible process of creativeness. Hence, "the truth is that adaptation explains the sinuosities of the movement of evolution

but not its general directions. And still less it explains the movement itself" (*CE*, 102, trans. slightly modified). Furthermore, Bergson writes:

> For creative evolution implicates before everything that acquired habits are not hereditably transmitted, that variations are not due to individual efforts, that these variations arise, on the contrary, suddenly, in every representative of a species, or at least in the majority of them and that, at last, if there is a finality in evolution, it is not in the sense that the philosophical tradition has given to the word 'teleology' but in a new and different sense, which biology and philosophy will have to create, none of the old concepts being able to define it. (*EP*, 678)

Bergson's introduction of the "real time" of *durée* provides thought with the means to test evolutionist theories, to disentangle the confusion between sign and sense. He would like to divorce the sense of life, perhaps, from those signs or symbols assumed to define it. Ultimately, this requires the refutation of radical mechanism and radical finalism. Bergson entirely rejects the mechanistic hypothesis that the future and past are symbolic and calculable functions of the present, as mechanistic theories of evolution only ever presuppose "a metaphysic in which the totality of the real is postulated completely in eternity," thereby insuring that "the apparent duration of things" is merely a figment of a mind's incapacity to know everything at once. His rejection of radical finalism, on the other hand, is predicated likewise on a critique of a metaphysical assumption, except in this case, supporting a teleological purpose. The end *is the sign* that furnishes life with its *logos* or "meaning." Accordingly, as it is for Aristotle, the physical is defined by logic.[20] Conventional finalism posits an identifiable final cause that directs evolution. The issue distinguishing finalisms, a radical finalism as opposed to a reformed finalism for example—is whether or not the cause is internal or external to the process of evolution. Only in this way might finalism distance itself from a mechanistic explanation.

So, in the end, if one can say that Bergson's conception of life in its entirety as "creative evolution" transcends theoretical finality—if we understand finality to be the realization of a preconceived idea—then, concurrently, we must acknowledge that he has laid the groundwork for a reformed Vitalism. Bergson's essential argument directed against mechanism in biology "is that it does not explain how life unwinds a *history*, in other words, a succession where it is not repetition, where every moment is unique and bears in it the representation of all the past" (*EP*, 444).

The "vital impetus" or *élan vital* provides the key to unlock the meaning of evolution. The image of the *élan vital* marks the threshold between mechanism and finalism. And so Bergson adopts intuition as method in order to justify his refutation of pure mechanism, while likewise establishing finalism in the very particular sense of the *élan vital*. It functions solely to establish a speculative viewpoint, from which we might see what we can of life, *as well as to see what we do not see*.[21] Speculatively, it opens thought—a precursor to Heideggerian "phenomenological destruction"[22]—to the image of evolution via Bergson's idea of duration as a kind of ontological memory. As was previously noted, in itself the *élan vital* has no ontological value. *L'élan vital* is more or less the "*originel élan* [or impetus] of life," passing from generation to generation,

from germ through developed organisms, uniting all in the continuity of its movement. "This impetus," Bergson writes, "sustaining right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, is the fundamental cause of variations, at least of those that are regularly passed on, that accumulate and create new species" (*CE*, 87). So, it is on the basis of the reality obtainable by the *élan vital*, the "special province of philosophy," that Darwin and Lamarck are shown to incompletely explain evolution, while Spencer is easily dismissed for his "false evolutionism" (*CE*, *xiii*, 84, 85, 93, 363–70). But one must be careful to comprehend the multiple imperatives behind Bergson's concept. For while *élan vital* initially would seem to be restricted to the metaphysical dimension, at the conclusion of the third chapter of *Creative Evolution* Bergson finds in it the resources to develop a richer and more unrestricted idea of "humanity." Philosophically, his intent is to endow us with a notion of humanity whose "direction is exactly that of the vital impetus; it *is* this impetus itself."[23] As a result, Bergson sees the *élan vital* as bridging metaphysics and the socio-ethical.

A new "humanity," yes. . .

"The social underlies the vital," Bergson writes.[24] Moreover, if we return to our previous discussion, we can see that the socio-ethical aspect of Bergson's thought hinges on our ability to fully grasp a logic of free necessity relative to the image of the *élan vital*. First, nature and society are understood by Bergson to be co-extensively related through immanence. Bergson explains their relationship: "everywhere the tendency to individualize is opposed and at the same time completed by an antagonistic and complementary tendency to associate, as if the manifold unity of life, drawn in the direction of multiplicity, made so much the more effort to withdraw itself on to itself" (*CE*, 259). If an individual must be separated from collectivity, then it is only ever momentary, for every individual maintains within herself the tendency toward association, that is, a collectivity. Here too is where the "free act" is found. Freedom reveals a special type of succession, since something *new* surges from it, which thwarts the equivalence between cause and effect. A new necessity is substituted for necessity of equivalence between cause and effect. "I oppose liberty to necessity, not like sentiment or will to intelligence, but like intuition to analysis, like real unity (lived and perceived from the inside) to the multiplicity of views that one can have of it, like that 'immediately grasped' by consciousness to the mediated and more or less symbolically represented" (*EP*, 282). And though Bergson opposes freedom to necessity, he nevertheless credits freedom with its own necessity. After all, every living entity maintains within itself the internal need to exist, which determines its actions, its choices and, so, its creativeness. Bergson's implicit coupling of the notion of *free necessity* with the *élan vital* directs us to look for the tendencies to "individualize" and to "associate" (as Bergson describes them) to be immanently determined as a result of an indetermination always already present and of a catalyst for the creation of life. As this author has tried to demonstrate, Bergson grasps in the vital impetus the indetermination, which nurtures the co-individuation of society and the individual. Consequently, society (and its morality) is made more dynamic

and the individual more larval, "vague and formless."[25] A society, therefore, while inert to some degree, as soon as it is formed, "tends to melt the associated individuals into a new organism, so as to become itself an individual, able in its turn to be part and parcel of a new association" (*CE*, 259). The evolution of life in the double direction of individuality and association, of individual and the collective, is not accidental but shares an operational imperative with that which brings it into a balancing relationship with consciousness. Bergsonian free necessity is the actuality of the constitutive process that is made explicit as dynamically developed ontological creativeness. It is this process that Bergson captures in the image of the *élan vital*.

It is in light of his disclosure of the co-individuation of society and the individual that we might value how Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* is the ethical and political ripening of the metaphysics introduced in *Creative Evolution*. Indeed, the former can best be taken as the speculative outcome of the latter. In the end, Bergson intends to acknowledge "the metaphysician that we each carry unconsciously within us" by means of the *image* of the *élan vital* (*CE*, 17). Intuition as philosophical method is but the commencement of a path that Bergson calls the "spiritual life." Maybe then, once philosophy is embraced as a way of life and, thereby able to grasp the *sense of life*, Bergson wonders out loud, might we "feel ourselves no longer isolated in humanity" and no longer "isolated in the nature it dominates" (*CE*, 270).

Notes

1 Georges Canguilhem, *Études D'histoire Et De Philosophie Des Sciences*, 73 éd. augm. ed. (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 335.
2 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), *xiii*. Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution Créatrice*, Quadrige Grands Textes, ed. Frédéric Worms, Éd. critique ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), *ix*. Hereafter the pages cited will be from the English edition.
3 Henri Bergson, "Histoire De L'idée De Temps (1902–3)," in *Annales Bergsoniennes I: Bergson Dans Le Siècle,* ed, Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 58. Hereafter "Histoire."
4 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001). In this work Bergson first defines two kinds of multiplicity: quantitative and qualitative, extensive and intensive.
5 "It very much seems that evolutionism begins to take account of itself, since it's in the interior effort of the animal and no longer from some kind of exterior accidental circumstance, in which it seeks the principle of transformation. One can predict that it will be more and more in this way—logic says it—because the manner of seeing evidently reposes on the confusion between sign and signified thing. The signified thing is individual; one tries to reproduce the individual thing by a juxtaposition of general signs, it is not necessary to forget that these are signs and that nature cannot proceed in this manner" (Bergson, "Histoire," 67).
6 Henri Bergson, *Ecrits Philosophiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), 231. Hereafter *EP*.

7 Bergson, *CE*, 3. Bergson's discussion of a "formless ego" is an obvious response to the then-current state of French thought dominated by Cartesianism. Elsewhere Bergson writes, "As a matter of fact, this substratum has no reality; it is merely a symbol intended to recall unceasingly to our consciousness the artificial character of the process by which the attention places clean-cut states side by side, where actually there is a continuity which unfolds" (Bergson, *CE*, 4).

8 Bergson, *CE*, 22. The opposition Bergson sets up between the "real" or concrete time of duration versus the "abstract" mathematical time embraced by the latter, reducing the former, as a consequence, to spatialized simultaneities, is what motivates his criticism of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity in *Duration and Simultaneity*. Cf. my paper on the disagreement between the "philosopher's time" and the "physician's time"—so-called by Einstein—and, how its consequences lead to Heidegger's *Being and Time*: David Scott, "The 'Concept of Time' and the 'Being of the Clock': Bergson, Einstein, Heidegger, and the Interrogation of the Temporality of Modernism," in *Continental Philosophy Review* 39.2 (2006): 183–213.

9 Of course, this immemorial or ontological idea of memory, as Bergson admits in a footnote, has its origins in his *Matter and Memory*. Gilles Deleuze has some intriguing pages that discuss the nonpsychological reality of this pure ontological memory, whose "substance" is precisely duration. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), chapter III.

10 "The evolution of life, from its early origins up to man, presents to us the image of a current of consciousness flowing against matter" (Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. Herbert Wildon Carr [New York: H. Holt and company, 1920], 27). (Bergson, *L'Énergie Spirituelle*, ed. Frédéric Worms, Éd. critique ed. [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009], 21.) Hereafter the pages cited will be from the English edition.

11 Our invoking this Spinozistic idea is not coincidental. Perhaps Deleuze more than any other has made the relationship between Bergson and Spinoza explicit. Certainly, if Bergson makes little secret of his struggle against Kant and neo-Kantianism, his relation to Spinoza is deeper, more nuanced, and oblique. Still, Bergson, despite many overt criticisms and the care he takes to distinguish his conception of God from that of Spinoza's, is quite definite about the importance of Spinoza's thought to the development of his own thinking. Famously, Bergson claims: "Tout philosophe a deux philosophies, la sienna et celle de Spinoza" (Bergson, *Ecrits Et Paroles: Textes Rassemeblés Par R-M. Mossé-Bastide, Précédé D'une Lettre-Préface D'edouard Le Roy Et D'un Avant-Propos De Henri Gouhier* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957], 587).

12 "If we are able to pierce the envelope made of materiality and functions, what we would see is evidently something simple, indivisible, I said a vital gesture, whose form evidently varied from species to species. And likewise one of our gestures, perceived like an absolutely simple thing, from the inside, appears from the outside like an infinity of undefined points which are juxtaposed; thus, this vital gesture that, under the trajectory of analysis presents us infinities enveloped in infinities—for a cell is a world–, this vital gesture seen from the inside appears to us like something simple and undivided. But it is clear that science cannot come to that vision (*ne peut en venir là*). Our science is not capable of attaining the interior, at

least by its current methods; it will probably never arrive there. This is a matter for metaphysics" (Bergson, "Histoire De L'idée De Temps [1902–3]," 68). At this point in Bergson's thought we might certainly recognize Bergson's outlining the particular need that will motivate his formulating the method of "metaphysical intuition" (cf. "Introduction to Metaphysics"). On the other hand, we can take the "vital gesture" Bergson refers to as the precursor for his formulation of the "l'élan vital" more fully developed in *Creative Evolution* and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

13 Canguilhem, *Études D'histoire Et De Philosophie Des Sciences*, 349.

14 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 155. Cf. also pp. 156–7. Here we find the basis for Bergson's criticism of Einstein's "physician's time" in *Duration and Simultaneity*.

15 Bergson, *Ecrits Philosophiques*, 551. In these extracts from a letter, Bergson responds to how his formulation of *durée* is distinguishable from William James's conception of the "stream of thought," by writing that "the *stream of thought* is of an essentially psychological nature and my *durée* is more metaphysical" (551).

16 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Citadel Press, 2002), 129.

17 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 31. Henri Bergson, *La Pensée Et Le Mouvant Essais Et Conférences*, Quadrige Grands Textes, ed. Frédéric Worms, Éd. critique ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2009). Hereafter the pages cited will be from the English edition.

18 Of course, Bergson never refers to his own method as "philosophical intuition" in *Creative Evolution*. Still, in the way he applies it to the study of evolution, this term provides a powerful example of the method as he will characterize it in his essay "Philosophical Intuition" (Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 107–29).

19 Again, Bergson anticipates his critique (in *Duration and Simultaneity*) of Einstein, on the grounds that the latter conflates time with the measurable and quantifiable, i.e. spatiality. Interestingly, theoretical physics has begun to come around to Bergson's side, though not at the expense of Einstein's theory of relativity.

20 "Thy physical will be defined by the logical. Beneath the changing phenomena will appear to us, by transparence, a closed system of concepts subordinated to and coordinated with each other. Science, understood as the system of concepts, will be more real than the sensible reality. It will be prior to human knowledge" (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 328).

21 As Bergson argues, both our knowledge and *ignorance* "are composed in a certain entirely special vision of evolution and life, when one takes up a position, between mechanism and finality, at the point I mark by inscribing there the word 'élan' " (Bergson, *Ecrits Philosophiques*, 680).

22 In spite of few detectable traces in Heidegger's works, especially *Being and Time* (1921), it is clear from several of his recently published Freiburg lectures that Heidegger fully absorbed Bergson's thought. The connection we briefly make here between Bergson and Heidegger is surprising only if we consider Heidegger's later anti-philosophical stance. However, if we restrict ourselves to before the so-called turn, one easily notices points of affinity between the two thinkers, particularly in relation to the fact that Heidegger looks to the "primordial phenomenon of life" to discern a problem-structure against rationalist philosophy. Unashamedly, the guiding purpose the young Heidegger seeks is the renewal of philosophical experience. The impetus for "phenomenological destruction" is to

bring philosophical experience in line with "factical life experience itself" (Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Intuition and Experience*, trans. Tracy Colony [London, New York: Continuum, 2010], 131). Still, in his pivotal 1929–30 lectures, "The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics," where Hans Driesch is explicitly discussed, Heidegger proposes a criticism of neo-Vitalism as "just as dangerous as mechanism." While acknowledging Driesch's importance, Heidegger argues that Vitalism solves the problem of "purposive striving" too hastily: "The task is to recognize the full import of this purposive striving before appealing to some force which, moreover, explains nothing" (Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995], 262). We should likewise take not of Bergson's own positive comments concerning Driesch in a footnote in *Creative Evolution* (42).

23 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter, R. Ashley Audra, and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 235. "In short, pure change, real duration, is a thing spiritual or impregnated with spirituality. Intuition is what attains the spirit, duration, pure change. Its real domain being the spirit, it would seek to grasp in things, even material things, their participation in spirituality—I should say in divinity were I not aware of all the human element still in our consciousness, however purified and spiritualized" (Bergson, *CM*, 33).

24 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 119. Bergson, *Les Deux Sources De La Morale Et De La Religion*, Quadrige Grands Textes, ed. Frédéric Worms, Éd. critique ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). Hereafter *TSMR* with pages cited from the English edition.

25 "It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, man or over-man [*sur-homme*], had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way" (Bergson, *CE*, 266). With the exception of the brief mention in *TSMR*, where Bergson criticizes the master/slave dialectic in *Genealogy of Morals*, Bergson's reference to *Übermensch* (in its French translation) is his only explicit *positive* reference in nearly his entire oeuvre to Nietzsche's thought. (I would like to thank the editor for reminding me about the Nietzsche reference in *TSMR*.)

5

A Reading of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, or Bergsonian Wisdom, Emotion, and Integrity

Michael R. Kelly

"It is Bergsonian to look in the direction Bergson points out to us,
but it is not at all so to carp at Bergsonism . . .
at the pigeonhole in which it is convenient to place it."
Vladimir Jankélévitch, "With the Whole Soul"[1]

Bergson's philosophy addresses a wide range of topics. A theory of integrity is not one of them. There is no sustained or explicit discussion of integrity in Bergson's oeuvre. Although his major works—most notably the first and last, *Time and Free Will* (1889) and *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932)[2]—contain reflections on emotion, these require a fare bit of reconstruction. Conceding these points, I nevertheless want to test the hypothesis that Bergson's "description"[3] of emotion in his last work can be read as a seminal, "Bergsonian" view of the condition for the possibility of integrity.

In these works, Bergson sets forth a "model" of the morally open and uncompromising human being who acts "freely," by which he means both with "her whole soul" harmonized and in the absence of social coercion, or with integrity.[4] Insofar as such a genuinely free act requires a type of "conversion" to a soul acting in harmony with itself—its words and deeds or reasons and will—and insofar as Bergson identifies emotion rather than instinct or intellect as the feature of the soul that harmonizes the soul, we may say that emotion begets integrity (*TFW*, 165–71; *TSMR*, 48). This sense of integrity will have a metaphysical foundation rooted in Bergson's theory of "evolution" and time, to be sure. But in "describing" emotion, how it acts on the soul and motivates the way in which it targets the certain "objects," Bergson is able to "analyze" what the agent values and how, that is, partially or impartially, in word and deed or in word alone, and thus with or without integrity (38–9, 234).[5] The "Bergsonian" sense of integrity I have in mind thus entails both the material and moral senses of the word—something whole, complete, or undivided, on the one hand, and a character of unwavering virtue, especially in matters of truth and justice, on the other—such as Socrates *exhibits* in Plato's "Apology" and "Republic." My reading of *Two Sources* thus seeks to harvest from the Bergsonian tree the fruit of its "description" of emotion and cultivate from its fallen seeds a Bergsonian view of integrity.[6]

I shall proceed in four steps. First, I look at the notion of the "evolution" of freedom and consciousness in *Matter and Memory* (1896)[7] as a backdrop to the soul and its modes of valuing in *Two Sources*. Second, I propose that we should take the two sources of morality and religion to be two kinds of emotions, the effect of which is two kinds of soul, namely, one egotistic, partial, and closed, the other altruistic, impartial, and opened. Third, I examine Bergson's "description" of the different kinds of emotion and how they shape and disclose different "acts" of value (attitudes) and motivate actions that differ in kind. In conclusion, by using Bergson's description of Plato's Socrates and two other brief examples, I provide a sketch of a case study of the conditions for the possibility of integrity as they can be pieced together from *Two Sources*. Along the way, we also may be able to say that Bergson's theory of emotion is the key to understanding his *Two Sources*.

A source of *Two Sources* in *Matter and Memory*

Bergson's *Two Sources* is a work of sociology or sociobiology that describes two modes of morality and religion understood as the product of two vectors of evolution, the open or closed, dynamic or progressive, altruistic or egotistic. The attitudes of the kinds of souls that espouse an open or closed view of morality can be traced back to Bergson's conception of consciousness as a "hesitation."[8] Such is the approach Deleuze takes to describe why some souls perpetuate closed morality while others create new moral paradigms when he writes that "we . . . find ourselves before [an] intercerebral interval between intelligence . . . and society."[9]

Bergson's view of this "interval" or "hesitation" is first worked out in mature form in his *Matter and Memory*. In this work, Bergson seeks an alternative to philosophy's reductive solutions to the mind-body problem, realism and idealism, materialism and spiritualism, determinism and teleology, body and memory. Starting from physical nature in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson stipulates that at the "lowest degree of the mind," the brain connects inseparably to the whole of images, that is, matter (*MM*, 222). At this level, the brain functions as the switchboard through which centripetal and centrifugal forces transfer at an impersonal, nonsubjective, and purely material level (30, 45). Unlike an amoeba, for instance, which reacts immediately to or is determined by touch, the higher functioning [human] organism enjoys a minimal freedom of response, a "zone of indetermination," as Bergson calls it (30, 32, 34, 55). This zone of indetermination arises more specifically in and from this moment of "hesitation" between the stimulus and the response wherein the brain prepares possible actions and "chooses" the most efficacious neural pathway to satisfy its vital and basic needs, for example, hunger, thirst, sex, et cetera (179/29). In the tiniest cerebral interval between stimulus and response, where the cerebral interval itself is made possible by the evolved sophistication and speed of the human organism, "consciousness" first appears as a "hesitation," a delay, a freedom, a choice that emerges in and from the purely determined. In this zone of indetermination, humankind, a "poverty of consciousness" characterized by its freedom, emerges from that organism's neurophysiological reflex circuitry (38).

Regardless of what one thinks of this notion of the brain's "choosing," Bergson's point is that the consciousness emerges from matter just [insofar] as freedom emerges in and from determinism and, eventually, memory emerges in and from matter. Deleuze comments on this emergence of humankind and society: "the *élan vital* was able to use matter to create an instrument of freedom" (*Bergsonism*, 107). It is not just that freedom emerged from matter, of course, but so did the seeds of intelligence. Intelligence, as the outgrowth of this hesitation or poverty of consciousness, is a human instrument (machine) that cuts up the dynamic world of matter, renders it into static concepts deployed to marshal natural and social resources for its vital needs of survival, health, and mutual benefit, and creates habits to facilitate and preserve those actions that conduce to satisfying practical ends (*TSMR*, 32–3, 37).

Such findings applied at the level of socio-biology in *Two Sources*, intelligence first frees the human organism from mere instinctual interaction with members of its species and introduces something new. As this vector of "evolution," intelligence takes on a dual role, however. On the one hand, intelligence will remake nature such that habits (both individual and social) will create patterns and norms of behavior—duties and obligations—that will serve the vital need for socialization; these "habits" amount less to a "second" nature and more a reflection of nature itself, an instinct (39). On the other hand, intelligence sometimes "hesitates" and moves some human agents to rebel against society's "mechanisms" for ensuring the cooperative interaction that conduces to instinct's needs, namely, obligation (28–30). Such "resistance" can be rebellious or "transfiguring," egotistic or altruistic (36, 97). To compensate for intelligence's impetus toward individual or selfish expressions of self-love, intelligence in the mode of society has developed narratives and social roles around obligations that create in the individual a social conscience and a sense of identity—"good husband, a decent citizen, a conscientious worker, in a word an honest fellow" (20). Obligation and social conscience play off the agent's emotions in such a way as to persuade her that it's in her best interest to conform with the duties of society. All of this ensures and preserves, of course, the safety and well-being of society and individuals in society. Obligations and duties, in short, are best thought as intellectual expressions of our fundamental obedience to the instinct toward socialization, or our fundamental instinct toward socialization converted into a rational formula (29–30).[10] That is, "obligation as a whole *would have been* instinct if human societies were not . . . ballasted with variability and intelligence" (20, 28).

When life is going along swimmingly, we don't notice our obligations and duties, we simply execute them—automatically. As we all have experienced, however, obligations regularly become inconvenient and thus we regularly wish to resist them. Yet social conscience—the consciousness that relates to society's outlined duties and our identity derived therefrom—draws one back to obedience to obligation:

> there occur cases where obedience implies an overcoming of self. These cases are exceptions; but we notice them because they are accompanied by acute consciousness as happens with all forms of hesitation—in fact, consciousness is this hesitation itself; for an action which is started automatically passes almost unperceived. (19)

When, for example, making a meeting and picking up groceries and cooking dinner and cleaning dishes and writing the paper due to the editor last week all seemingly cannot fit into the day—at least not in a way that leaves time for oneself with one's beer—obligations weigh on us, "pressure" us (49). One draws oneself back from the tendency to forego one of the duties—and make time for one's beer—perhaps because of fear of punishment or disgrace or social ostracizing. Wanting the warmth of the social—its protection, its conveniences, one's identity, et cetera—one resists the resistance, confirms society's values, and perform one's duties.

A new mode of hesitation, a "resistance to resistance," thus emerges (21). The original "hesitation" traced in *Matter and Memory* generated the "poverty of consciousness" and "became" intelligence. Intelligence, however, developed obligations and duties that became social pressures, the social analogue to the closed, determined system of nature; this was an instance of intelligence doubling-back on its own tendencies to transform or break free from. The consciousness first rooted in freedom from nature—the "hesitation" that is the poverty of consciousness—now becomes the pause before transgression or transformation of societal obligations: "Obedience to duty means resistance to self" (20).

This "resistance to resistance" thus seems to be spelled out as "resistance to self," for that is what obligation is for the "hesitant" consciousness. But the notion of a "resistance to resistance" is a rather vague expression and it seems reasonable to say that it can be understood in (at least) three broad ways, for example, resistance to duty, resistance to society, resistance to change, et cetera.[11] First, as we've just seen, the soul motivated by selfish, rebellious tendencies, even when it resists its own resistance to obligation, returns it to conformity with duty out of self-love and social conscience. Second, the soul that aims to transform society resists the resistance to change, resists the closed dimensions of duty, the tyranny of the majority and its often imperfect practices and customs.[12] Third, there is the soul characteristic of one who recognizes the need for change in a society but buckles under the pressure of the tyranny of the majority (social conscience), that is, resists the resistance because she's resistant to change, and thus reasserts the instinctual desire for socialization and the preservation of one's social identity (Ansell-Pearson and Mullarkey, "Introduction," 40). The first and third souls differ in degree and reflect a lack of integrity, whereas the second soul differs in kind from these others and is the embodiment of integrity metaphysically and morally. The first and third souls manifest an inconsistency between what one says and what one does, what one thinks and what one really wants, that is overcome by the second kind of soul (31).[13]

Though the resistance to resistance, however understood, seems motivated by reason in allegiance to obligation, Bergson does not accept this explanation (89). Rather, the resistance to resistance is motivated by the emotive moment, according to Bergson, because (i) "beyond instinct and habit there is no direct action on the will except feeling"—intellect is mediate—and (ii) "the potency of the appeal lives in the strength of the emotion" (39, 84). As Deleuze puts it,

> What is it that appears in the interval between [the resistance of] intelligence and [the pressure of] society? We . . . must . . . carry out a genesis of intuition, that is,

> determine the way in which intelligence itself was converted or is converted into intuition. . . . What appears in the interval is *emotion*. . . . Only emotion differs in nature from both intelligence and instinct, from both intelligent individual egoism and quasi-instinctive social pressure.[14]

Whether the agent (i) wishes to resist for selfish reasons, (ii) wishes to resist for altruistic reasons and fights against the current of culture, or (iii) wishes to resist for altruistic reasons but cannot get beyond the current of culture, the motive to resist always stems from emotion. And in *Two Sources* Bergson does precisely the work of excavating emotion's place in morality, "attributing to emotion a large share in the genesis of the moral disposition" without endorsing emotivism (Ansell-Pearson and Mullarkey, "Introduction," 47).

E-movere: The movements of souls and the two sources of morality and religion

Bergson's *Matter and Memory* is a good demonstration of his method of reasoning that pits popular and opposing theoretical viewpoints against one another to dissolve false or "philosopher's" problems. It is a method of reasoning that creates the space for the positive feature of his work, which is the demonstration of the "complexity of movement" in life in which we see "opposites comingle."[15] As Bergson's corpus develops, we see a layering of this approach, an application of it to different elements of life. Bergson's approach of working through opposites continues, for example, in his *Creative Evolution* (1907), where he develops in more detail his unique view of "evolution" understood as unexpected creation or the new.[16] And, as noted above, the method and the major themes developed in these (among other of his) works—for example, the "evolution" of humankind out of the material world, intelligence as an instrument of utility, and the *élan vital*—provide the framework for *Two Sources*. Reconsidering the matter from section one briefly, we could say that the view of "evolution" and intelligence elaborated in *Creative Evolution* is applied in *Two Sources* to the social domain. In his 1932 work, Bergson shows how intelligence, understood as an instrument for coping with one's environment, developed out of or broke free from instinct (vital need) only to grow to the point where instinct reasserts itself when the obligations constructed by intelligence "crystallize" and a particular vector of evolution closes off (28).[17]

Despite these structural and thematic similarities throughout Bergson's most recognizable major works, some have considered *Two Sources* misleadingly titled. Lacey wonders somewhat critically, "what does [Bergson] mean by the 'sources' of morality and religion?" (198). One cannot answer that the sources are the closed-society and the open-society, for that would mistake the effect for the cause. Bergson himself seems to confirm this when he notes that these two moralities are "two complementary manifestations of life" (96). Lacey tempers Bergson's apparently misleading title by claiming that "it is types rather than origins that there are really meant to be two of" in Bergson's *Two Sources* (198). That Bergson presents two different kinds of society rather

than types, however, should give readers reason enough to pause before accepting Lacey's suggestion. Ansell-Pearson and Mullarkey, on the other hand, remind us that "there are *two* sources of morality and religion and both are biological . . . because there are two major facets to Bergson's theory of evolution . . . evolution itself and fragments of the evolved. Two facets of time . . . time flowing and time flown" ("Introduction," 39). Though quite accurate, some might find this effectively succinct summation of *Two Sources* circular at worst, uninformative at best.

Instead of asking what Bergson means by "sources," since this question rightly cannot be answered by pointing to the open- and the closed-society, we should push "further" (*TSMR*, 43) and ask the question: How are the two facets of "evolution" and time construed in *Two Sources*? Again, Bergson's *Two Sources* is undoubtedly a work of sociobiology—Bergson himself claims this[18]—in which he applies his dual critique of determinism and teleology in favor of a view of evolution as the new, the unexpected, the creative. Yet, when we look more closely, we see that Bergson converts (1) the hesitation, which in *Matter and Memory* was the poverty of consciousness, into the soul or person who resists resistance in one form or another, and (2) the *élan vital*, which in *Creative Evolution* was duration, into a specific dimension of life operative in the personal and social sphere, namely, emotion. Emotion not only acts on the will differently than instinct and intelligence, according to Bergson, but also and "above all" signifies "creation" or evolution (39, 45).[19] Since *Two Sources*, like all of Bergson's works, is a text about two facets of evolution, two kinds of time, we can most revealingly understand its spirit by reading it as a text about the motion of the soul—e-motion, in the literal sense of the term, *e-movere*—an "affective stirring of the soul," "the enthusiasm of forward movement" (43, 51, 53). Hence, I am suggesting that the two sources of morality and religion are two kinds of emotion or attitude that not only disclose, but also shape and "indicate" the different values one holds.

In an important but heretofore underdeveloped way, *Two Sources* is a work about the emotion or attitude of the soul. Two points obviously need justification at this stage: First, that we can consider emotion or attitude as functional equivalents in this text; second, that this is a work about the soul and the role emotion plays in its character. Let's treat these points in reverse.

No term of art with the exception of "religion" appears more in *Two Sources* than "soul." The word "soul" appears roughly 157 times, compared to "morality," which appears 117 times, and "religion," which appears 167 times. That the word "soul" appears almost as frequently as one of the key words in the title and relatively more frequently than the other is striking and not at all trivially true. *Two Sources* is a book about souls, about one's "attitude" toward the world and their respective "effects" on morality and religion (37–9). That is to say, and concerning the aforementioned first point, *Two Sources* is a book about the e-motion or attitude of the soul. We've seen that Bergson uses the term, "emotion," in the literal sense of "to move out," or a "sort of motion" (38). Bergson, in turn, articulates "attitude" as "some sort of motion," thereby construing emotion and attitude as functional equivalents. Moreover, since Bergson identifies "psychic attitude" with "psychic motion," the motion of the *psyche* or soul, we may say that *Two Sources* describes the motion of the *psyche* and thus two sources of morality and religion (38–9).

Such a reading positions us to see that different kinds of emotion express different facets of time, "evolution." One kind of emotion, which we shall term cognitive emotion, expresses time-flown in the person and social. The other kind of emotion, which Bergson terms "creative emotion," expresses time-flowing in the person and the social. One kind of emotion is distinguishable from and follows thought, thus expressing a soul not whole with itself, not acting freely from social coercion and thus lacking integrity; in cognitive emotion, that is, opposites remain polarized, intellect and "sensibility" (44). The other kind of emotion is one with thought because it gives birth to new thought and new ideas, thus expressing a soul at one with itself, acting freely from social coercion and thus embodying integrity; in the emotive act, that is, sensibility and ideas "comingle." As Bergson puts it, "antecedent to the new morality and also to the new metaphysics, there is the emotion . . .," "creation," evolution (49). But this new emotive act eventually will crystalize:

> . . . that . . . morality expresses a certain emotional state . . . that . . . yield[s] not to a pressure but to an attraction, many people will hesitate to acknowledge. The reason is that we cannot . . . get back to the original emotion in the depths of our hearts. There exist formulae which are the residue of this emotion, and which have settled in what we may call the social conscience according as, within that emotion, a new conception of life took for, or rather a certain attitude toward life . . . [W]e find ourselves in the presence of the ashes of an extinct emotion. (49)

The formulae amount to an intellectual mediation of the original motion that was the source of some morality or religion. The emotion, as Bergson implies, remains within us only at a surface level as the metaphorical ash. While we are one, so to speak, we're fractured, and thus living as one in word and deed, reason and motion (or action), is something with which we inheritors of morality all struggle. Integrity is something with which we all struggle.

The "lived-experience" of emotion: Two not of a kind

The hesitations Bergson describes in the resistance to resistance concern two different kinds of motion of the soul, e-motions; better, two different kinds of motion of the soul generate different kinds of resistance to resistance. It is not only that "beyond instinct and habit there is no direct action on the will except feeling," but it is also the case that what one loves and how one loves it will motivate why, what, and how one resists, for example, love for self or love of others (39).[20] The sources of morality and religion are always a matter of love, for Bergson, for love and hate are the foundational emotions. There is a love that expresses what is instinctual and out of which intelligence grew into obligations and duties; this love responds to pressure—halfheartedly, if you will—and satisfies itself with reinforcing society's articulated obligations as noted above in character sketches one and three, which fundamentally express love for self (39, 51).

Then there is the love that expresses what is creative and evolving; this love responds to attraction—wholeheartedly, if you will—and "aspires" to moral progress as noted above in character sketch number two (51). The former kind of love is characteristic of the "normal working of life"—the normal, the patterns, the habits, the closed—while the latter is characteristic of "progress"—the exceptional, the "evolving," the creative, the open (34, 49–51).

The formulae of the closed society, however, are misleading in a way that enables its closed character; the formulae of the closed society prevent challenge to themselves because they speak in a way that suggests that one need not reflect on or question its attitude. Starting from the primitive and instinctual drive for self-preservation and that which ensures it, namely, obligation, society "says" that love for family is crucial to cultivate because it is the foundation for love for fellow-countrymen and love for nation. These latter types of "love," moreover, supposedly cultivate love of humanity:

> We are fond of saying that the apprenticeship to civic virtue is served in the family, and that in the same way, from holding our country dear, we learn to love mankind. Our sympathies are supposed to broaden out in an unbroken progression, to expand while remaining identical, and to end by embracing all humanity. This is *a priori* reasoning, the result of a purely intellectualist conception of the soul [. . . And] we conclude that a progressive expansion of feeling keeps pace with the increasing size of the object we love. (32)[21]

The *a priori* assumption, the assumption made independent of experience, of course, assumes that "the bigger the object, the bigger the love." There is only one kind of love, which targets different objects, and so from this assumption society "would like to have it believed that 'human society' is already an accomplished fact . . . that . . . we have duties towards man as man" (30). In practice, however, the love for family, for country, et cetera, reflects only one kind of emotion that serves the recognized and intellectualized goal of preserving oneself against one's enemies, an instinct (22). Bergson's claim is that, with a "primitive instinct" underlying society's articulated obligations and cultivated loves generated by intelligence, society can not realize its idealized "target," love of humanity (33).

Bergson is not just skeptical about what society "says"; he in fact argues that society can not grow from love for family into love of humanity. His objection runs along two lines. Concerning what we could call the "intentional" object, for example, self, family, nation, Bergson argues that love of humanity is "too vast" an "object" to motivate action with regard to it. Concerning what we could call the "intentional act," which is an emotive intentionality and in which lies the strength of appeal, since the "object is too vast," the affect on the soul will be "too diffuse" (36). To see how Bergson defends this claim, we first "must agree upon the meaning of the words, 'emotion,' 'feeling,' and 'sensibility' " (43).

Bergson's first move is negative and consists in an implicit rejection of the view of emotion defended by his intellectual friend, William James, who thinks "that . . . *bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and . . . our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion*."[22] James reduces emotion to its physiological substrate

by separating the exciting perception—the cognitive—from the excited bodily change—the sensible. Contra James, Bergson holds that it is clear that "emotional states [are] distinct from sensation, and cannot be reduced, like [sensations] to the psychical transposition of a physical stimulus" (43). Bergson is not denying that emotions contain a sensible or affective or feeling component. Emotions are affective but not, for example, mere agitations like pains or tickles, according to Bergson. A racing heart—a felt bodily change—cannot alone tell us if we're experiencing love, fear, or anger, or even if we're standing at the starting-line or the finish-line of a race. There is also a distinction to be drawn, for Bergson, between turbulent and "calm passions," e.g., the intense, palpable feeling of love early in a relationship and the calm feeling of love in a long and enduring marriage (39).

Bergson's point is that "an emotion is an affective stirring of the soul" bound up with our engagements with the world. Bergson views emotions as intentional, if you will. But, Bergson continues, "a surface agitation is one thing, an upheaval of the depths another" (43). Bergson moves very quickly with this claim. First, insofar as Bergson notes that emotion is distinct from and not reducible to sensation, it is clear that the surface agitation of which Bergson writes in this passage indicates a kind of emotion experience quite distinct from James's reduction of emotions to the physiological "feeling." What thus becomes equally clear, second, is that Bergson distinguishes between two kinds of emotion, that both kinds of emotion are distinct from the Jamesian view, and that each kind of emotion is distinct from the other.

The emotion that is the affective but surface stirring of the soul is a cognitive emotion, which Bergson has termed the intellectualist conception. This kind of emotion is not the result of a physiological state but "is the consequence of an idea, . . . the result of an intellectual state" (43). On the other hand, there is the emotion that is the affective and profound stirring of the soul. This kind of emotion is a creative emotion and "is not produced by a representation [. . . but] is pregnant with representations [. . . and] can alone be productive of ideas" (44). Neither kind of emotion is divorced from the affective; neither kind of emotion is reducible to the physiological; and neither kind of emotion is unrelated to the cognitive or intellectual. Bergson distinguishes these two kind of emotions by the way they relate to the cognitive component. The cognitive emotion follows from and is separate from the idea or apprehension of the world that generates the emotion; it follows from the formulae society offers in its articulation of morality that tells us what to love and how. The emotive-apprehension, by contrast, is one with, "pregnant with," the idea that it will bring forth into the world; it follows from the depths of our hearts. Not only can we see that one form of movement is fractured while the other is one with itself, that one is passive and the other is active, that one is caused and the other is causal, but a closer examination of the former also reveals why Bergson claims that love for family cannot grow to love of humanity because the object is too big and thus the affect too diffuse.

In contrast to the Jamesian view, the cognitivist view that all emotions are intentional, i.e. directed to or about the world, dominated during Bergson's time.[23] On this view, perception is the necessary condition for the emotion.[24] Bergson recounts this position by making three points. First, the cognitivist will "contrast sensibility with intelligence" (44). Second, "feeling is made to hinge on an object" such that "emotion is held to be the reaction of our sensory faculties to an intellectual representation" (40). Third, the

cognitivist view "will . . . define feelings by the things with which they are associated" (38). Taken together, we can see that Bergson interprets the cognitivist view to maintain that feelings are "outward expressions" that "incline" us to or repel us from some things in the world. The emotions might be bound up with our engagements in the world, but they're fundamentally reactive and only derivatively intentional or active insofar as the cognition conditions them. The cognitivist makes "of emotions a vague reflection of the representation" (44).

The cognitivist classifies emotions based on their formal and particular objects. The formal object of fear is the dangerous and the particular object is that object that fits this descriptive property; for example, my heart may race when I see a certain kind of snake if I am afraid of snakes. To say that I'm afraid of certain snakes is to say (in part) that I've perceived or believe that there are certain qualities in certain snakes that make them dangerous. That I'm not afraid of snakes in films or even in tanks in pet-shops is not surprising because in those conditions those creatures matter little to me insofar as I do not see them as dangerous. To say that I'm afraid of a certain snake when a certain pet-shop owner removes a snake from its tank and puts it before—taunting me to hold it and promising all will be fine if I do—reveals that emotions are not detached and abstract conceptual apprehensions of the world but an "evaluation or appraisal of some part of the world *in relation to oneself*."[25] As such, it is the particular object—the snake in that charming pet-shop owner's hands—that is the "cause" of the emotional reaction. The formal object cannot be the cause of my fear because is not an object at all but a general evaluative category. Even if I mistake the mouse as dangerous and fear it, it remains the case that this particular object causes the emotional reaction and is the target or focus of the emotive act (Lyons, *Emotion*, 101–2).

As the cognitivist view of emotion thus links to how the world matters for me, it holds that emotions are rational and intentional to the extent that they are reactions to how we take the world to be. The emotional reaction indicates, on the cognitivist view, that the person with love for family, for country, and of humanity regards each particular object as instantiating the properties of the loveable. And Bergson entertains this *a priori* reasoning concerning emotion in his critical discussion of society's claim to move from love for family to love of humanity:

> A psychology which is too purely intellectual, following the indications of speech, will doubtless define feelings by the things with which they are associated; love for one's family, love for one's country, love of mankind . . . The fact that these feelings are outwardly expressed by the same attitude or the same sort of motion, that all three *incline* us to something, enables us to group them under the concept 'love,' and to express them by one and the same word; we then distinguish them by naming three objects, each larger than the other, to which they are supposed to apply. This does in fact suffice to distinguish them. (*TSMR*, 38)

In the cognitivist's language, "the three objects," the particular objects or the focus of the emotion, enables us to distinguish them. But, Bergson asks immediately after this concession, "does it describe them? Or analyze them" (38)? Indeed, it analyzes them, for

analysis as Bergson means it denotes "the dividing of things according to the perspective taken."[26]

The particular object is meant to be the "cause" of the emotive reaction. The objects that are readily graspable, for example, the self, family, extended family, friends, and perhaps even nation, can "cause" feelings of love in me, even passionate love. These particular objects seemingly grow "naturally" from one another, and the idea of each can affect one. There is a natural sense of social cohesion that holds between these particular objects (family, country, nation). The primitive instinct of love for self extends to and relates to each of these objects, for "it is primarily as against all other men that we love the men with whom we live" (33). Even still, as we know, the affect in the first case (the self) becomes more diffuse in the last case (nation) (43). Generating a concept of the particular object, humanity, however, is not natural, does not stem from a natural or instinctual sense of social cohesion. We naturally relate to the social and not the human. We have to have a sense of the object—the object has to have some sense for us—in a significant way if we're to react affectively to it. I don't resist running out on my check at dinner for of love of the humanity of the server, for instance. I may think, however, about the law, or about not shaming my family, or about my "self-respect" (54). And even here it is not the dignity of humanity in myself but my view of myself that motivates me. As Bergson puts it with respect to the possibility of "mankind" becoming a particular object that will instantiate the formal properties of the loveable, "the object is too vast, the effect too diffuse" (36).

In a moment of hermeneutic suspicion, Bergson charges, "I know what society says . . . but to know what it thinks and what it wants we must not listen too much to what it says, we must look at what it does" (31). Love for family, which can grow to love for fellow-countrymen and even love for nation, never can grow to love of humanity because love for family and love for country are loves cultivated out of the desire to have the self protected from foreign threat or influence, and such "love for" implies a "choice . . . an exclusion" (39). The love *for* something, Bergson is claiming, is a restrictive love, a prejudicial and exclusionary love. The choice "for" something is always already the choice "against" something else. "Love for" thus does not "exclude hatred" for those against whom we are not "for" (39).

Bergson's linguistic analysis turns the cognitive analysis of love on its head and exposes its pretense. The cognitive view of emotion is an analysis, a division of things according to the perspective taken, a division of love into the love that serves love for self but in its love for self wants to see itself as something more than egotistical. Bergson's is a description of the language that society develops so that we may express our interests in and thus obligations toward our society. Bergson's linguistic analysis of the for and against of the cognitive view of love espoused by social morality is literally an articulation of the social. And although we should not listen to what society says but look at what it does, Bergson has shown what society wants by looking at what society says! And this can be confirmed by noting not what society says but what it does, particularly in times of strife.

If we took away "all the material and spiritual acquisitions of civilization"—which is what Hobbes and company realize would occur in the state of war—the instinct of noncivilized communities would reappear and the "essential characteristic" of the latter would revive, namely, the desire "to include at any moment a certain number of

individuals and exclude others" (30). Since in times of war such an attitude of exclusion emerges "so easily, generally and instantaneously," Bergson concludes that society's claim to have achieved a "human society" with "duties towards man as man" grown out of love for family is nothing but words (30–1, 37). The cognitivist view of love, the view of love with which we live, is a love that is not whole, that is not one with itself. Consequently, when it speaks of love of humanity, all it has in mind is words, formulae, and the love one has for self, for family, or for country will never be sacrificed for love of humanity. The intellectualist conception of the soul and emotion, that is, cannot be one in word and deed. The "love for," the love society cultivates, "at first dispersed among general precepts to which our intelligence gave itself allegiance, but which did not go so far as to set our will in motion" (35). "However much our intelligence may convince itself that this is the line of advancing, things behave much differently. What is simple for our understanding is not necessarily so for our will" (53). Regardless of the esteem in which a human society holds itself and its citizens in times of peace, convenience, and facility, societies "aim at social cohesion; whether we will or not they compose for us an attitude which is that of discipline in the face of the enemy"; indeed, as we have seen, the defense of family and, further, self if necessary would trump in such a time of conflict, for both self and society are "self-centered" and concerned at bottom with "self-preservation" (31, 37).

Conversely, Bergson articulates a superior kind of emotion that is "all love" characterized by a love that takes no object (39). That this other kind of creative love has no object means that it takes no particular object over or against another particular object (40). This superior kind of emotion has no object because it will create a new object, a new idea, because it is pregnant with a new idea. It is all activity, all free movement that responds to the appeal of love of humanity rather than the pressures of social conscience. It is, as Bergson puts it, the emotive expression of a heroic individual, for example, Jesus Christ, and "heroism itself is a return to movement and emanates from emotion—infectious like all emotions—akin to the creative act" (53). The creative emotion is the kind whole with intellect because it is pregnant with a new idea, the kind that thus evolves and creates the unexpected, the kind that is and begets integrity.

Whether one would like to classify this state of open, creative emotion and moral heroism as a mood or sensibility insofar as this kind of emotion, like moods and sensibilities, takes no object is a matter for philosophers to dispute. It is not an uninteresting question, but Bergson's philosophy is concerned with action. What already and more importantly appears available for our understanding is that Bergson's account of emotion is concerned with how our affective states direct us toward the world and how we will act in the world depending on our emotive condition. Bergson's theory of emotion provides an account of the condition for the possibility of having and acting with integrity.

Bergsonian wisdom: Emotion and the conditions for the possibility of integrity

As Jesus Christ speaks of and lives love of neighbor, which amounts to love of humanity, one might think it convenient for Bergson to propose the Son as an

exemplar of the open soul, the exceptional character driven by this creative kind of love to expose the hypocrisies of his culture and instate a new religion. But Bergson makes a more provocative move; he turns to Socrates (63). This is intriguing because Socrates, of course, promotes above all else the examined life of constant rational reflection on the most important things, the virtues and the soul.[27] Under the most difficult social, political, and economic circumstances—Socrates, of course, is broke, resented by a large and powerful contingent in his Athenean culture, and brought to an unjust tribunal facing the most decisive of penalties—he sacrifices himself for truth, renounces his life for truth, and along the way gives generously for the future of humanity. It is only because it is omnipresent in the text that emotion seems absent in Plato's presentation of Socrates' defense. Emotion is in fact everywhere in this picture of the infancy of love of wisdom, *philosophia*. What moves Socrates to exalt the virtue of wisdom and the active life of reason, in Bergson's words, is "the emotion present in [his] moral teaching"—the love he has for the child of wisdom which he birthed and uncompromisingly and unwaveringly nurtured for humanity—a "teaching, so perfectly rational, [that nevertheless] hinges on something that seems to transcend pure reasons . . . creative emotion, the emotion present in [Socrates'] moral teaching" (62).

Socrates' love for philosophy is his love for the liberating power of the examined life (the life of critical reflection on the most important things, namely, virtue and wisdom) for human life in the face of dogmatism, coercion, vice, and injustice. The love that gives Socrates the courage to defend justice in the face of death is the same love through which he can claim his integrity: "Throughout my life, in any public activity I have engaged in, I am the same man as I am in my private life."[28] Through his wholehearted commitment to his vocation to philosophy comes his practical wisdom, moreover, to know that shrinking to save his life by abandoning his principles—his love—will improve nothing for humanity. Socrates' freely chosen end to his life is critical. It exemplifies a life of action fully free from even the most coercive threat, namely death. There is no hesitation, no wavering on commitment. We his inheritors see a model of the wholeness of love, the wholeness of the love of wisdom translating into a commitment to the highest ideals of and for humanity. It demonstrates, moreover, in the most profound way that Socrates does not primarily preach what he loves but enacts it and indeed keeps it a living, growing, and dynamic movement, for talking about it rather than writing it is his way of life (61). Socrates has a vocation to truth and justice and it is his emotion, his love of wisdom that drives him to exalt reason as the means to by which humanity liberates itself, keeps itself open.

But what of us? When something greater than us that is true and good affects us in such a way that we pause and consider sacrificing social conscience for it, what of us? We've surely all been moved by the intention to act, especially to act out of love of another, even when she appears so different from us, or is unknown to us and perhaps never will be known to us. We know this is right and important, and so like the prisoner in Plato's cave we shake the most immediate shackles, trying to stand, to take a stand. But the intention, the thought, is often only partial, i.e. often only occurs part of the way. As Bergson notes with a startling frankness about socialized human beings, "there will be a wide gap between this assent of the intellect and a conversion of the

will" (48). That we at all will turn and look and say, "that practice is unjust and must be rejected," requires an affective stirring of the soul, however "surface an agitation" it may be. But then we must act with this affect and insight. And it is when this time comes, if it comes, as Bergson notes, that we often find we have only words.

The partiality of the soul is often seen when one emotion in response to one reason overcomes another, when the reason to which we've habituated ourselves exerts the force of inertia over the force of the movement of the new, when the cowardly overcomes the courageous, the closed overcomes the open, society and social conscience overcomes humanity. Think of the "moderate whites" who so frustrated Martin Luther King, Jr.:

> I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate . . . the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action.'[29]

One emotion—love for fellow countryman or self—presses against and wins out over another—an indignation that reflects love of humanity. The latter emotion as a new emotion not within our habituated and socialized character occurs in response to reason and too much as a "surface agitation," the affect of which is "too diffuse." We feel and know that bigoted and hateful treatment of persons is horrific, sickening, but the feeling dissipates when the atrocity is not before our eyes or in our radius. This cognitive emotion is not deep enough to motivate the resolve to conversion, to shake the shackles and begin walking the steep slope that leads out of the cave (48). We have not given ourselves entirely. We are the student who returns from a semester abroad during which she was exposed to the tragedy of third-world poverty. With a soul stirred, she feels strongly about justice, about love of humanity. But the affect diminishes in correlation with the increased distance and time between the experience and the new semester. Chores take over. More immediate duties put pressure on her; she now "moves" in response to them. There are reasons and there are regrets, and there are reasons to explain away the regrets. With croaking voice we say to ourselves: "Think of the disadvantages this could bring; of the danger that comes from sacrifice of self; of the vulnerability that renouncing the self requires; of the gullibility displayed when one acts in charity toward the beggar who will use that dollar for alcohol; of the self-advancement of others in society who simply do not consider such actions. And, besides, what difference will it make or can I make?" There is any number of reasons why reason cannot convert us from selfishness to love of the Other. We "make a feeble start" (36).

We are souls stirred by the precepts of society and coerced by the desire for socialization. In Bergson's disquieting assessment, we are self-centered (37). We do not give ourselves entirely. We do not perform deeds that match—indeed actualize—the noblest intentions and formulae we gave ourselves. We speak to one another and even to ourselves of "sacrifice of self, the spirit of renunciation, charity"—in short, love of humanity—but in practice "we have in mind at such times [nothing] more than words"

(36). We are not the same person in our pubic life as we are in our private life. We are left with all we ever had, words. We are not "a soul . . . equipped for action" (52).

Must we simply await, then, the touch of creative emotion to befall us, as mysterious and arbitrary as Protestant grace? The condition for the possibility of integrity is not that dire. Yet it seems it is when Bergson is often presented as suggesting the following exceptional way out of this disheartening commonplace:

> . . . we cannot repeat too often that it is not by preaching the love of our neighbor that we can [. . . expand] our narrower feelings [and . . .] embrace humanity. However much our intelligence may convince itself that this is the line of advance, things behave differently . . . In cases where logic affirms that a certain road should be the shortest, experience intervenes and finds that in that direction there is no road. The truth is that heroism may be the only way to love. Now, heroism cannot be preached, it has only to show itself, and its mere presence may stir others to action. For heroism itself is a return to movement, and emanates from emotion—infections like all emotions—akin to the creative act. (53)

By definition of hero, the majority of us seem condemned to a life lived without integrity. The emotion from which heroism stems cannot be preached; there is nothing yet there to be preached because it is the heroic action and creative emotion itself that will give rise to new ideas, new formulae. There is thus no hesitation in the hero as there is in us when we give ourselves an "infinite multiplicity" of reasons to explain the inefficacy of love of humanity before we resort to the comfortable plane of the social (37). The hero, since she has no hesitation before thoughts and speeches—since she is all love rather than a partial and mixed love that reacts to ideas and formulae—"will deny [the] existence" of the false problems, the reasons we give ourselves (53). She does not argue with herself about the "obstacles" that might confront her action. She instead executes "the simple act" and in doing so "at the same time overcome[s] the infinite multiplicity of which this simplicity is the equivalent" (37, 57). According to Jankélévitch, who most impassionedly grasps the spirit of Bergson's thought, the hero, who acts "with [her] whole soul" and embodies the most perfect example of what I'm describing as the conditions for the possibility of integrity, hears the whisper of Bergsonian wisdom, "to act as one speaks, or even without speaking" (Jankélévitch, "With the Whole Soul," 157, 160).

It is Jankélévitch more than any other interpreter of Bergson, who reminds us of the hope Bergson provides those longing to live with integrity. He writes,

> The difference between Saying and Doing is the measure of the whole distance which separates an engagement that is partial and unilateral, because it is verbal, and engagement that is total, because it is a complete commitment. The true man is he who engages himself, not only with his whole soul, but seriously, in a primary . . . manner, and without signs of hesitancy. (159)

To speak less of the hero and more of the "true man," the person with integrity, we must embrace the seriousness, the "depth" of the love of humanity. Integrity is not reserved

for the heroic and denied, by definition, to the majority of us. The hero introduces the new and introduces it to those of us with hearts to feel (not just ears to hear) and eyes to see. The hero passes down to us her example. The one who converts is the one who gives herself entirely, one who acts wholeheartedly, if you will. And thus one embodies integrity through the "simple act"; one becomes a listener by listening, a volunteer by volunteering, an adventurer by boarding the ship, an altruist by doing altruistic deeds: "The solution germinates and shapes itself in the initiative," writes Jankélévitch (163). Yet nowhere is this sentiment better put than in Bergson's own words,

> each one of us can revive [what a hero has done] especially if he bring it in touch with the image, which abides ever living within him, of a particular person who . . . radiated around him some of its light. If we don't evoke this or that sublime figure, we know that we *can* do so. (84)

"Let no one speak of material obstacles to a soul thus freed" (53)!

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Whether the interpretations and hypothesis in this essay motivate assent or even interests, one final and worthy concern remains. Bergson's works now and more and more are being taken seriously in the academy and this means scrutinized, industrialized, viewed developmentally, et cetera. *Time and Free Will* commonly is read, for example, as an immature work that has not yet freed itself from certain one-sided psychological commitments that Bergson begins to purge from his thought in *Matter and Memory*.[30] Jankélévitch himself mentions that *Time and Free Will* "says that the free man is one who totalizes himself but it does not tell us what must be done [. . . and] is . . . a little optimistic" (159). These are good, accurate, and important observations. And it is a wonderful and welcome development to see that Bergson studies are continuing to blossom once again; to see that Bergson's thought is getting its justly earned desserts; to be able to hold more than hope that Bergson might finally be getting the school of followers we (at least the contributors to and readers of this volume) might agree he always has deserved. Yet this means at minimum that the line of argument I've tried to draw in this essay cannot be one done with a steady hand. I leave this point for scholarly dispute.

If the interpretation I am presenting does not suffice at the scholastic level, I hope it contributes at least to the revival of another neglected dimension of Bergson's thought—a dimension that our all too frequently rarefied and increasingly culturally irrelevant humanities scholarship cannot address. That is, I would be gratified if my interpretations and hypothesis were to evoke once again the dimension of Bergson's thought that "average interested reader[s]" once found enticing and inviting about a philosophy that was once popularized without having been trivialized; as one American commentator long ago summarily put the matter of the average readers' popular interest in Bergson's thought, Bergson had "indeed given men more power to act and to live."[31] Bergson's philosophy doesn't encourage "Bergsonism." It exhorts its readers—perhaps

even to be "Bergsonian." It exhorts them to demonstrate integrity by living with it rather than talking about it. If my contribution were to contribute to the revival of this other lost dimension of Bergson's thought, it only will be because I've tried to accept in a "feeble," academic manner Jankélévitch's invitation to be "Bergsonian"; it will only be because I've tried to "look in the direction Bergson points out to us."[32]

Notes

I'd like to thank my friend and colleague, Christopher Arroyo, for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1 Vladimir Jankélévitch, "With the Whole Soul," in *The Bergsonian Heritage*, ed. T. Hanna (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 161.
2 H. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1954); Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: George Allen and Unwin, 1911).
3 Bergson notes at a critical moment in his account of emotion that the standard account of emotion "does in fact suffice to distinguish [emotions]." But he then asks, "Does it describe them? Or analyze them" (*TSMR*, 38)?
4 "It is the whole . . . which gives rise to the free decision." Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 165–72, 231; see also, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), 201, 271. I use the term, "model," in a way that we can take it both as the model for free and open action and as an ideal limit, which is how Bergson understands the open and the closed (*TSMR*, 84, 213).
5 Writing of the most profound kind of emotion, Bergson claims "it is still more metaphysical than moral in its essence," which means, of course, that it is moral, nonetheless, as well (*TSMR*, 234). If I can support my hypothesis, the upshot will not be a reading of Bergson's philosophy that will make a contribution to the philosophy of emotion. I don't think Bergson's philosophy of emotion can make such a contribution—at least not one that the dominant paradigms of contemporary philosophy of emotion would countenance—even if an account of Bergson's view of emotion might prove valuable to interested readers of Bergson. What I am proposing in this essay, I hope, will provide at least a new and more detailed reading of Bergson's view of emotion. See, for example: Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books 1991), 110–12; A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 204–6; F. C. T. Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30, 32–5; J. Mullarkey, *Bergson's Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 90–1, 144–7. The one exception to this circumstance is Leonard Lawlor's *The Challenge of Bergsonism* (New York: Continuum Press, 2003).
6 This is to play on Bergson's metaphor of a soul that executes a free act and with integrity, a "self," as he describes, that "lives and develops by means of its very hesitation, until the free action drops from it like an over-ripe fruit" (*TFW*, 176).
7 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

8 Bergson first presented this conception of consciousness as a "hesitation" in *TFW*, 175–6.
9 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 109. Deleuze mentions but develops neither Bergson's theory of emotion nor the various ways in which the "hesitation" manifests in human conduct. In this section and section three, I shall develop in more detail Bergson's notion of the "hesitation" in *Two Sources* and his account of the role of emotion in the different kinds of hesitation.
10 K. Ansell-Pearson and J. Mullarkey, "Introduction," in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, ed. Pearson and Mullarkey (London: Continuum, 2002), 40. Insofar as Bergson mentions that language as a system of symbols divides the continuity of duration, intelligence amounts to a "representation," a "crystallization" of the "emotion peculiar to a soul opening out, breaking with nature" (47, 52). Intelligence articulates and explicates emotion in categories of re-presentation or "formulae which are the residue of this emotion and which have settled in what we may call social conscience" (49).
11 Bergson writes at minimum in *Two Sources* of a selfish soul, an exceptional or heroic soul, and a feeble soul.
12 Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism*, chapter 4.
13 Obviously, because integrity entails a commitment to justice, we're presuming to pass over without further comment the notion that consistency in acting out against society for selfish and destructive reasons could constitute integrity.
14 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 109–10. I shall argue slightly differently from Deleuze that the original "hesitation" in one form of emotion becomes a "hesitation" turned against itself into obedience, while in another form of emotion the hesitation becomes a hesitation without hesitation, or an impulsion.
15 Mullarkey, "Henri Bergson," in *The New Century: Bergsonism, Phenomenology, and Responses to Modern Science*, ed. Ansell-Pearson and Alan D. Schrift (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), 21.
16 Cf. Nicolas de Warren, "Miracles of Creation: Bergson and Levinas," in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. M. Kelly (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 179.
17 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 107–9. Cf. Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White, "Religion within the Bounds of Emotion Alone: Bergson and Kant," in *Emotions Matter*, ed. A. Hunt, D. Spencer, and K. Walby (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 110.
18 See "Bergson and Human Rights," in *Bergson, Politics and Religion*, ed. A. Lefebvre and M. White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 245–6.
19 N. de Warren, "Miracles of Creation," 178.
20 As Bergson writes of the transfiguring, second kind of resistance to resistance, "heroism is a return to movement and emanates from an emotion . . . akin to the creative act."
21 In a recent and very rewarding study, Alexander Lefebvre more specifically examines this passage as Bergson's critique of Durkheim's view of the source of human rights, presenting compelling evidence that it is Durkheim Bergson has in mind when he rejects this view of love for family as continuous with love of humanity. See, "Bergson and Human Rights," 245–6.
22 William James, in "What is an Emotion?" in *Mind* 9 (1884): 188–205: "My thesis . . . is that *the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.* Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are

insulted by a rival, are angry and strike . . . [T]he more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be. Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth" (188–9).

23 See Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Zweiter Band. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984). *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1970). Husserl, for instance, insists feelings have cognitive content and their intentional structure discloses what the agent manifesting the emotion values and how she values it. Viewed as "*genuine acts*," the feelings "'owe' their intentional relation to certain underlying presentations. But it is part of what we mean by such "owing" that they themselves really now *have* what they owe to something else" (*LU* §15a). That feelings "owe" their intentional directedness to "something else" means that they are founded on cognitive acts; Husserl writes, "acts of emotion seem to be founded acts, and indeed founded on intellectual acts. Every act of emotion grounds itself, and necessarily so, on any represented object or any object posited as existing, on any state of affairs, on assumptions or certainties, presumptions and the like." "*Gemutsake scheinen ihrem Wesen nach fundierte Akte zu sein, und zwar fundiert in intellektiven Akten. Auf irgendwelche vorgestellten oder als existierend gesetzten Objekte, auf irgendwelche Sachverhalte, Assumptionen oder Gewissheiten, Vermutungen und dergl. grundet sich jeder Gemutsae, und notwendig*." Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen uber Ethik und Wertlehre, 1908–14*, ed. Ullrich Melle (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) (Translation by Christopher Arroyo.).

24 The founded "feeling" gives us the felt object, the object disclosed with an emotional and/or affective tonality, that reveals how we value or e-valuate an apprehended or perceived situation.

25 William Lyons, *Emotion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 71.

26 L. Lawlor, "Bergson," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, section 3.

27 Plato, "Apology," in *Five Dialogues*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, revised by J. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Press, 2002), 29d–30b, 36c–d, 38a.

28 *Ibid.*, 33a. Benjamine Jowett translates this passage as follows: "But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private."

29 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

30 Bergson commentators have argued that Bergson abandoned the view of the psychology of time (as a successive interpenetration of psychic states) in favor of an ontology of time. Jean Hyppolite, "Aspects diverses de la memoire chez Bergson," in *Revue internationale de philosophie* (October, 1949), 472. This text appears in English translation as "Various Aspects of Memory in Bergson," trans. A. Colman, in L. Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 112–27, 114–15. Cf. Stephen Crocker, "The Past is to Time What the Idea is to Thought," in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 35, 1 (2004): 42–53, p. 43.

31 Louise Collier Wilcox, "Some Implications of Bergson's Thought," in *The North American Review*, 179.700 (March, 1914), 448–51, p. 451.

32 This is, as I understand it, the point of Jankélévitch's epigram to this essay; Jankélévitch, "With the Whole Soul," 155–66.

6

The Inclination of Philosophy: *The Creative Mind* and the Articulation of a Bergsonian Method

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The Creative Mind,[1] first published in French as *La Pensée et le mouvant* in 1934, is a collection of articles and lectures that extend across 20 years of Bergson's career and which, as the philosopher states in the preface, address specifically the issue of philosophical method. It is Bergson's last major publication, released only two years after *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*[2] in a period when he was increasingly subject to illness and only seven years before his death. One of the main themes of the book is the difference between the methodological aims of philosophy and science, and yet it appears 27 years after his most comprehensive investigation of this topic in *Creative Evolution*.[3] This raises questions as to why Bergson chose to publish a work on his method at such a late stage in his career and why a collection of articles, most of which were written for other purposes including introducing or commemorating the work of fellow philosophers or scientists, was considered to be the most suitable format for this task. Certainly a number of the articles are direct statements on method, most notably "Philosophical Intuition" (1911) and the "Introduction to Metaphysics" (1903), but there still remains a question as to the cohesiveness of *The Creative Mind* due to the fact that the articles were written over such a long period of time, from 1903 to 1923,[4] and would, therefore, exhibit some degree of theoretical variation. These questions are important insofar as they can be used to better understand how the method is informed by time rather than as the pretext for a quest to discover the most consistent or orthodox iteration of Bergson's method. For Bergson no philosophical approach should presume to stand outside of time. The method cannot be separated from the time in which it is written, the revelation of the ontology of time as duration (*durée*),[5] or in the alteration of the object it purports to know. The founding principle of *durée*, as Bergson so often notes, is that "time is what hinders [*empêche*] everything from being given at once" (*CM*, 110)[6] and what this means when applied to a philosophical method is that its pauses, its overall movement and direction must be given equal standing with its claims. What this means for an investigation of *The Creative Mind* is that we should put to one side questions of consistency and generality and instead look to the method's continuity, where difference is incorporated into the movement of thought and where the lived time and theoretical inclination of the philosopher must also be taken into consideration.

There are different time periods through which the contours of Bergson's method can be traced in *The Creative Mind*, for each idea, article, and even the collection as a whole has its own movement, each of which subtends the life of the author, although with varying degrees of tension. At the time the book was published, Bergson was clearly interested in the *longue durée* of his philosophy and the part it would assume in the history of ideas. Frédéric Worms highlights the importance of this period which saw the republication of the essay "La Philosophie française," first published in 1915 but revised with the assistance of E. Le Roy in 1933, where Bergson aligns his own work with the sympathy and continuity of French philosophy and science.[7] In this work,[8] French thought is described in terms of a creative evolutionary movement (1157–8) characterized by tendencies and interests central to Bergson's philosophy, including an intimate link between philosophy and the positive sciences, the importance of introspection as a method, and a suspicion towards rigid philosophical systems (1184–6). In the following year, Bergson adopts a similar line of argument in his radio talk, "Quelques mots sur la philosophie française et sur l'esprit français,"[9] where he refers to the flexibility of the French language, the subtlety of French thought, and the desire to always speak and write in plain language—qualities that Bergson values in his own work.[10] This foregrounding of a French philosophical tendency may relate to Bergson's increasing interest in the role that France played in European and world politics following his diplomatic work during World War I, but it also describes a process of reflection that is typical of Bergson's method and holds particular importance at this stage in his career. Bergson looks back upon French philosophical history with the aim of integrating the substantial differences between individual thinkers, what one could call their philosophical tangents, into a common movement. This inclination towards integration marks a shift from his earlier work where there was a much greater emphasis on separating his theory of *durée* from the spatializing tendency in philosophy and science, most notably in the analysis of metaphysics in the closing sections of *Creative Evolution*. In isolating this spatializing tendency, Bergson set about breaking intellectual habits and carving out a space for his own philosophy, but, due to the popularity of Bergsonism, this was certainly not necessary in the later stages of his career. This tension between the assertion of philosophical difference and the reflective process of integration is played out in all of Bergson's work, but it holds particular importance in *The Creative Mind* because of the late stage in which it was published and the fact that the articles must bear the traces of the time in which they were written.

A statement of method is often the foundation for the examination of philosophical problems throughout a philosopher's working life and is as much a statement of approach as it is of belief. *The Creative Mind* is Bergson's final book and serves as, in the words of Henri Gouhier, a "testament philosophique,"[11] that is, a consolidation of his ideas that is emblematic of Bergson's wish not to leave behind anything unfinished when he died (Gouhier, *viii*).[12] To publish a method as a testament has its own complications, for how should one account for changes in approach over the course of a career and should earlier works be renounced and mistakes corrected? Should there be a purging of earlier sketches with the aim of bringing clarity to the final iteration? However in a

philosophy based on *durée*, where the past continues to act in the present, the past of the method must also be acknowledged, that is, brought into the present of a current statement. In *The Creative Mind*, it is not a matter of integrating the methods and ideas of other thinkers with his own, as it was in his brief accounts of modern French thought, but of Bergson reintegrating the variations and differences within his own philosophy such that they describe a continuous creative movement. Although creation describes a forward movement, the endless production of novelty, to understand the nature of the movement involves tracing the line of creation backwards, to discover its curves and sinuosities, and it is in this sense that *The Creative Mind* is a testament. The fact that the method is based in a process of integration gives sense both to the act of looking back and to the structure of the book as a collection, for it does not matter that Bergson's arguments have shifted in emphasis in the course of his career as long as they make sense in terms of a continuity of thought. The whole of Bergson's philosophy is founded on the premise that difference itself is grounded in the continuity of *durée*, where time generates difference but the act of generating such difference is itself continuous. This investigation of identity-in-difference is a feature of phenomenological and processual approaches to time, but it is also central to Bergson's method.

There is no question that a collection of essays and lectures on method written over a sufficient duration will reveal differences which an attentive reader will discover through investigating the slight variations in approach in each work or through plotting changes in terminology and emphasis. The issue for Bergson in *The Creative Mind* is to prevent the reader from adopting this approach, and this entails reestablishing the continuity of his thought and foregrounding the movement by which each article is generated. To ensure that the reader is properly orientated, Bergson states in the preface that he has written two essays in the form of an introduction which "go back [*remonter*] to the origin of this method" and "trace the direction it impresses on research" (*CM*, 7; *La Pensée et le mouvant*, 1251). This introduction, written in 1922, guides the reader through articles written much earlier, but there are inherent problems with such an approach if it involves retrospective thinking, where the past is used to justify a particular conception of the present or to predict events that have not yet happened or, inversely, the present is used to reconstruct the past in a way that resembles it.[13] Bergson refers to the problems of retrospective thinking in the introduction, where he argues that ideas are not envisaged in the time of their conception as precursors to future ideas because the future is always unforeseeable and, therefore, to look back on the past and assume that it simply leads to the present misrepresents it—for the unforeseeability of the future is always immanent to any past event (*CM*, 25–6). Consequently, the writing of a long introduction to *The Creative Mind* that aims to organize the chapters with regard to philosophical method could have the unintended effect of smoothing over the differences in these works in order to bring coherence to the method. Or it could imply a telos, where each idea is regarded as a step leading up, progressively, to the most recent and complete conception of the method. Bergson is clearly aware of these difficulties as is indicated in the subtitle of the first part of the introduction, "Retrograde Movement of the True Growth of Truth" (*CM*, 9),[14] and in the consideration given in the text to the importance of returning

any judgment to the time in which it is written, that is, to the specificity and "date" of its production and to the time of the object to which it refers (*CM*, 22). When this is conjoined to the aim of going back [*remonter*] to the "origin" of the method, the introduction has to integrate Bergson's statements on method across his career into a continuous theoretical movement and yet differentiate these statements according to the date and period in which they were written.[15] To accommodate these two aims, the first part of the introduction takes the form of a theoretical autobiography.

The text describes in chronological order the genesis of the main ideas that have come to characterize Bergson's work with an attempt to reconstruct for the reader the intellectual and volitional context in which they were first phrased. He refers to his own desire to find or develop a philosophy that has precision akin to that of science which led to his early interest in Herbert Spencer's evolutionary philosophy: "There was one doctrine, however, which seemed to me as a youth to be an exception, and that is probably why I was drawn to it" (*CM*, 10).[16] The relationship between science and philosophy, and the importance of philosophical precision, is a leitmotif in the introduction and is placed at the beginning of the chapter as the point of origin of Bergson's method, for it leads to his discovery that time endures. Describing the process of discovery in a book about method demonstrates that the method cannot be separated entirely from the conscious effort of the philosopher, so what Bergson sets out to know is also what comes to define his philosophy. One might expect that this effort would involve the slow process of analyzing a problem, where the philosopher sets out the propositions and through deduction and logical exposition builds the philosophical architecture, but Bergson is keen to argue that his method has always had an empirical basis but one that is grounded in the philosopher's own experience. This particular relationship is a feature of Bergson's celebration of Félix Ravaisson, first given as an address in 1904 to *l'Académie des Sciences morales et politiques*, but reproduced with some revisions in *The Creative Mind* under the title, "The Life and the Work of Ravaisson." It resembles in some respects Bergson's own theoretical autobiography in the first part of the introduction, for all of Ravaisson's actions, writings and beliefs are described in terms of a philosophical sensibility or inclination. It is the inclination of the thought of the philosopher that unifies the object under investigation, and Bergson argues that "[f]rom the contemplation of an antique marble can spring more concentrated truth, in the eyes of the real philosopher, than is to be found in the diffused state [*à l'état diffus*], in a whole philosophical treatise" (*CM*, 268). Observation is not a process of analysis, decomposition, or abstract speculation but a process of unification[17] where all the parts are reintegrated into a common purpose, which Bergson likens to the rays of colored light traced backwards through a prism in the mind of a metaphysician to their "source" as white light (*CM*, 267–8), or to the recovery of the intention of a painter by going beyond the physical traces on the surface of the canvas to locate its virtual center (273).[18]

This process of philosophical unification, common to philosophy and the arts and a feature of the introduction to *Creative Mind*, must be balanced with Bergson's interest in the empirical tradition in science, and this, in part, clarifies why he also includes a homage to the scientist and philosopher, Claude Bernard, in the collection. In this

essay, he provides an account of Bernard's experimental method, in which "[t]he fact, more or less clearly perceived, suggests the idea of an explanation; this idea the scholar asks experiment to confirm; but all the time his experiment is going on he should be ready to abandon his hypothesis or change it on the basis of the facts" (*CM*, 239). The experimental approach is a form of dialogue between the researcher and the facts in which the scientist is open to the contingency of experimental evidence. It is a form of empiricism that looks forward, unlike the act of philosophical unification, which is retrospective. The way that Bergson describes his philosophical endeavors in some sections of the introduction resembles this account of scientific discovery, where one must await the results of an experiment. There is a temporal aspect to this, for the chapter is written in a manner that invokes the novelty of time and the unforeseeability of the future. In regard to his reading of Spencer's principle of evolution, he writes: "That was what led me to consider the idea of Time; and there a surprise awaited me" and this surprise is the realization that "real time . . . eludes mathematical treatment" (*CM*, 10). There is an assumption here that concrete time or *durée* was waiting to be revealed in response to the right question, but *durée*, once established, is the empirical basis for Bergson's method, which must adapt to suit the particularity of each time or object. The genealogical approach in the first part of the introduction does not simply summarize a lifetime's work but actually demonstrates, in fact, some of the main features of the method. It aims to show that the continuity and the time of philosophical speculation is what integrates each curve, turn, or variation in an idea but also accepts that each must be situated in the time in which it was written. The time itself might be guided by the particular inclination of the philosopher, but it is also a question of novelty, where time is defined by its very capacity for alteration.

It is only after establishing this theoretical genealogy that Bergson turns to the issue of articulating its contours in the second part of the introduction. This is the most sustained discussion of philosophical method in Bergson's oeuvre that extends over 70 pages in the English edition and, when combined with the first part, comprises one third of the book. It consolidates the ideas and principles from each of Bergson's major works, and, in this sense, the chapter still forms part of a philosophical testament. The main focus is on the precision of intuition in philosophical method, but this raises the question of why Bergson dedicates so much of the introduction to this topic when he had already addressed it 20 years earlier in the "Introduction to Metaphysics" (1903), which is also included in the collection. This article enjoyed great success at the time of its publication and was the first work in which intuition was deployed as a distinctively Bergsonian concept. It was translated into "presque toutes les langues avant même la Première Guerre mondiale" and played an important role both philosophically and politically across a number of countries (Worms and Soulez, 244). However, Bergson's most influential essay, and the clearest statement of his method, is placed after the other "essais théoriques" in *The Creative Mind*, which were written later and had not enjoyed the same success. Frédéric Worms suggests that this is due to the fact that the "Introduction to Metaphysics" has contributed more than any other text to the misunderstanding of Bergson's method, especially for the scientific rationalists who saw his philosophy as a repudiation of scientific method (243–4). The placement of the

article is not a dismissal or relegation of the work, rather the nonchronological ordering of the main theoretical articles and the inclusion of a long introduction outlining the theory of intuition is a means of reintegrating the "Introduction to Metaphysics" into the general movement of Bergson's thought.

The popularity of the "Introduction to Metaphysics" was in part due to the clear opposition, at least in the first section, between absolute and relative knowledge, and a corresponding opposition between metaphysics and science. Bergson refers explicitly to the limits of science and all types of knowledge that attempt to understand an object from outside, thus creating a series of relative viewpoints, and contrasts this with metaphysics which, through intuition, enters into the object such that there is no perspectival variation (*CM*, 187). Reading the following statement from a contemporary perspective, it is difficult not to assume it is a critique of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity even though it was written a few years before the physicist published his first work on the topic:

> Take, for example, the movement of an object in space. I perceive it differently according to the point of view from which I look at it, whether from that of mobility or of immobility. I express it differently, furthermore as I relate it to the system of axes or reference points, that is to say, according to the symbols by which I translate it. And I call it *relative* for this double reason: in either case, I place myself outside the object itself. (*CM*, 187)

Unlike metaphysics, the positive sciences, and Bergson includes here the biological sciences, break up the object into a collection of "visual symbols" that have little relationship with the living movement of the object they hope to understand (*CM*, 191). The use of visual symbols is part of a process of analysis whereby the object is decomposed into a collection of discrete parts which are then recombined to explain its operation, but, Bergson argues, regardless of how many parts are posited or how ornate the structure of explanation, it is impossible to reconstitute the simplicity of the movement or object under investigation (*CM*, 190).

This basic opposition is used as a polemic in the "Introduction to Metaphysics" but, in the course of the article, Bergson suggests intuition is common to both the methods of science and metaphysics. He argues that science is founded on intuition—"the generative act of the method lasts only an instant"—but due to its long history of logical refinement, this is often forgotten: "All that has been said by the philosophers and by scientists themselves about the 'relativity' of scientific knowledge is due to forgetting this intuition" (*CM*, 226–7). This is a typical Bergsonian move for there are no absolute oppositions in his philosophy. All arguments can be brought back to a point of differentiation, in this case, a founding intuition.[19] In the "Introduction to Metaphysics," Bergson seeks to reconstitute the continuity of scientific thought and its relationship to philosophy, rather than completely reject the scientific method. The problem, however, is that both the supporters and opponents of his philosophy forgot, or possibly chose to ignore, the line of Bergson's argument in their characterization of it in terms of existing prejudices. Chevalier argues that many of the misreadings of

Bergson's philosophy are a result of his followers, who have taken his work to excess,[20] for there is a tendency in philosophy to take extreme positions, to posit opposites, and this has subsequently been used to critique Bergson, when he has in fact always taken the middle ground (Chevalier, ix).[21]

The publication of *The Creative Mind* can be regarded in part as a response to the criticisms of Bergson's philosophy, which can be roughly grouped into two main areas: those that argue that his philosophy is vague, lacking in rigor, and without an ostensible method; and those that reject his analysis of scientific problems. In the conclusion to the second part of the introduction, Bergson argues that his theory of intuition has been wrongly characterized as "instinct or feeling,"—an immediate and semi-conscious understanding of the object—when in fact it must involve reflection and intellectual effort as it works against preconceived ideas (*CM*, 103). Milič Čapek argues that the popularity of Bergson's work meant that it was often difficult to distinguish between Bergsonism and what he refers to as "pseudo-Bergsonism," "which was nothing but a mere literary fashion" taken up by an "uncritical public" and "consisted in the enthusiastic response to the emotional color of certain words, like 'intuition', 'creation', 'élan vital'." However, it also extended to critics such as Rene Berthelot, who in 1913 compared Bergson's views of matter in *Matter and Memory* to "the irresponsible speculations of German Romantic *Naturphilosophen*" and described Bergson as a "will-o'-the wisp floating over the swamps of Romanticism."[22] The philosophical modernism of Bergson's thought was not recognized, and there was an assumption that his work was founded on an incapacity to grasp the developments in science which had transformed the philosophical landscape over the period of the nineteenth century.

This type of reception of his work, as well as the misunderstanding of intuition in the "Introduction to Metaphysics," provides the context in which to understand Bergson's declaration in the introduction to *The Creative Mind* that science can attain absolute knowledge and that it has "an equal value" with metaphysics (*CM*, 42). He argues that his earlier critiques of scientific knowledge are statements on science's limits rather than an outright dismissal of its methods, and the repeated reference to the "precision" of both intuition and scientific method is also revealing inasmuch as it establishes a ground for rapprochement between philosophy and science by referring to a type of knowledge that moves from the relative toward the absolute.[23] There are also a number of footnotes appended to the "Introduction to Metaphysics" where Bergson declares his interest in and respect for scientific methods and qualifies his theory of intuition. He states that he has clarified his definition of science and metaphysics since writing the work and argues that, although metaphysics can provide a platform for talking about science, it is important to accept that the two methods take diverging paths (*CM*, 305, n. 20). In another footnote, Bergson reiterates what he has argued in the introduction to *The Creative Mind*, that intuition must first involve durational self-awareness before it can turn its attention to matter (*CM*, 306, n. 26). The addition of this extra step confirms the value of metaphysics in the articulation of scientific problems but recognizes that it cannot supplant science in addressing the specific properties of matter.

The focus on the compatibility between science and metaphysics in *The Creative Mind* is not entirely due to the reception of his most popular works, for the addition of some material had been provoked by the critical response to the short work, *Duration and Simultaneity*. In the concluding footnote of the introduction, Bergson states that he added some "pages" on current theories in physics after the introduction was written in 1922 (*CM*, 304, n. 15), which demonstrates Bergson's need to align his philosophy with contemporary science. There is also a very conspicuous footnote in the second part of the introduction, which extends over four pages, where Bergson states that the term "relative" is not entirely applicable to Einstein's theory of relativity because the latter creates a representation that, in terms of its internal mathematical consistency, can be understood to be a "whole of *absolute relations*," but he notes that there is significant inconsistency if Einstein's theory is used as the basis for metaphysical judgments (*CM*, 301, n. 5). Much of the footnote is a reproduction of an argument written by Bergson in *Revue de Philosophie* in 1924 in response to André Metz's criticisms of his analysis of Einstein's special theory of relativity in *Duration and Simultaneity*.[24] Bergson adds that the footnote was included to correct many of the misunderstandings of this work (*CM*, 302, n. 5), an issue that continued to frustrate him during this period, as is evinced in a letter he wrote to Hendrik Lorentz in 1924, a fellow Nobel Prize winner and originator of the transformation equations used in Einstein's special theory of relativity, where he complains that the relativity theorists, including Einstein, had misunderstood his critique of relativity theory[25]—a frustration that led to Bergson's request in 1931 that no more reprints be made of the book.[26]

The rapprochement with science and the clear aim of correcting the misunderstandings of the earlier work, including the "Introduction to Metaphysics," is a feature of *The Creative Mind*, but the fact that he does not completely rewrite the two part introduction following the reception of *Duration and Simultaneity* reveals much about Bergson's approach to philosophy and his method. Bergson's aim is to realign the reader with the continuity of his thought for, once the reader adopts the inclination and direction of his method, these misconceptions will disappear. However, there is the question of why he continued to use intuition in the introduction to *The Creative Mind* when it is a term that is so easily misinterpreted due to its widespread use in popular and philosophical discourse. Bergson states at the beginning of the chapter his own "hesitation" in using the term largely due to its misuse by other philosophers, such as Schopenhauer and Schelling, who see it as a means of revealing eternal concepts like "Substance, Ego, Idea, Will," concepts which are so general that they reduce all difference to unity (*CM*, 33–4). This process of abstraction can be contrasted with the popular use of the term. In a letter written to A. C. Bourquin at about the same time as the introduction, he talks of how common language is transparent in a way that technical philosophical language is not because it has adapted to the idea or object it describes.[27] This transparency of language does not describe a window on the world, or a mirror of reality, but rather a movement where the word aligns itself with the object. Alignment is not the same as identity, and in choosing to use words such as intuition, or indeed intellect, Bergson recognizes that they describe a particular type of mental operation and a particular type of philosophical problem. Despite the differences in

philosophical method, these words convey a common "direction" of thought that extends across the course of philosophical history. In adopting terms that have a popular as well as a philosophical use, Bergson proposes that philosophy must remain aligned with how we engage with the world, for each term describes a problem but also allows for difference insofar as each philosopher will pose a different solution ("Bergson à C. Bourqin," 1000–1). The problem with an overly technical vocabulary is that it breaks the continuity of thought through an overemphasis of methodological difference.

So what is the particular problem that Bergson hopes to address by placing intuition at the centre of his method? More than anything else, intuition refers, in both its philosophical and commonsense uses, to the problem of immediate knowledge. There are, however, two senses of the word immediate [*immédiate*], one that is temporal and refers to events that are imminent or instantaneous, and the other that can be defined negatively as the absence of mediation. For the most part, when Bergson uses the word "immediate" with respect to intuition he is referring to direct knowledge. In *The Creative Mind*, he argues that intuition "signifies first of all consciousness, but immediate [*immédiate*] consciousness, a vision which is scarcely distinguishable from the object seen, a knowledge which is contact and even coincidence" (*CM*, 36). The intuition of consciousness is the first object of philosophy—in this Bergson follows the line of modern French philosophy beginning with Descartes—because it describes "contact" with the real that is not mediated by the senses and, because it is introspective, not mediated by space. There is also a temporal aspect to intuition, for to be in contact with consciousness is also to be in the time of consciousness, and here direct knowledge must always coincide with an object that is always changing.

Stating that intuition "signifies first of all consciousness" highlights the importance of introspection as a means of attaining direct knowledge, but if this knowledge is always linked to the particularity of a consciousness, will it achieve nothing more than a revelation of the singularity of the empirical ego? In a letter to his cousin Marcel Proust in 1920, Bergson praised the novelist's capacity for introspection and his ability to invoke "une vision direct et continue de la réalité intérieure,"[28] and a couple of years later in the first part of the introduction, he reflects on whether or not the exploration of our interior life and *durée*, in all its particularity, is not better undertaken by the "novelist and moralist." Proust's name is not mentioned here, but there is an indirect reference when Bergson refers to a novelist's capacity to go "à la recherche du temps perdu" (*CM*, 28), and this resembles the path taken in *Time and Free Will*, where true knowledge is gained through introspection and as such is always implicated or embedded in the particularity of conscious experience:

> I smell a rose and immediately confused recollections of childhood come back to my memory. In truth, these recollections have not been called up by the perfume of the rose: I breathe them in with the very scent; it means all that to me. To others it will smell differently.[29]

In reflection on his method in *The Creative Mind*, Bergson clarifies his position and argues that the role of intuition is to "lay down the general conditions of the direct

immediate observation of oneself by oneself" (*CM*, 29). The conditions are always temporal and consequently there is no apperceptive unity through which sensual and material difference can be synthesized, rather the generality of consciousness is founded in the alteration and endurance of *durée*, where intuition "grasps a succession which is not juxtaposition, a growth from within, the uninterrupted prolongation of the past into the present which is already blending into the future. It is the direct vision of the mind by the mind,—nothing intervening, no refraction through the prism, one of whose facets is space and another, language" (*CM*, 35). In intuition the "direct vision" of consciousness gives way immediately to the general principles of *durée* and the "prolongation" of time.

These general principles extend outside the individual mind, for the intuition of the interconnectedness and interpenetration of psychological states in our consciousness provides the first step in imagining a "consciousness in general," where all minds are implicated in a general process of becoming through a process of "psychological endosmosis" (*CM*, 36). However this generalizing of conscious interconnectedness does not mean that Bergson's philosophy culminates in monistic idealism, for intuition must always subtend our experience which is always in the process of creating and/or following lines of differentiation within becoming. For Deleuze, the process of generalizing in Bergson's philosophy is not a matter of translating the experience into abstract concepts but rather of "broaden[ing]" the experience such that it is no longer tied to the immediate.[30] This involves following a particular "line" in matter and can be compared to the operation in calculus whereby a portion of a line is used to derive the line as a whole.[31] In *The Creative Mind*, intuition extends beyond conscious experience by following the line of those processes that border consciousness, that is, where there is still the continuity of time without a corresponding apperception or interiority. Intuition can broaden consciousness such that it becomes integrated into the principle of life, which in its continuity, physical organization, and intentionality confirms the initial intuition of *durée* (*CM*, 36). There is a movement here from one level of generality to another, where intuition extends its reach beyond the duration of our consciousness to the much longer duration of the movement of life in general, while maintaining that consciousness and life are both empirical facts that require *durée* to be understood.

The intuition of the continuity of life provides the ground for a further generalization, for we can pass from consciousness through life to matter[32] and in doing so extend the principle of *durée*. Bergson states that irrespective of how we attempt to reduce it to atemporal states, matter endures—it can never overcome the time of its own occurrence—for "it *keeps* our consciousness *waiting*" and therefore can be brought within the scope of intuition (*CM*, 37). In this intuitive principle of generalization, the study of consciousness precedes the study of life, which in turn must come before the study of physics and chemistry (*CM*, 36) in a path of decreasing complexity but increasing generality.[33] In this description of Bergson's method, there are two movements, the broadening out of intuition across time and the movement of intuition from consciousness to matter. Intuition cannot proceed in the opposite

direction, for an abstract conception of matter cannot be used to reconstitute the continuity of experience. Bergson argues in "The Possible and the Real" that what drives most materialist accounts, in particular atomism, is the assumption that the nonliving precedes the living, when in fact, the inert form of matter is one species of duration "where consciousness falls asleep" (*CM*, 108). If we had begun with the intuition of duration, then the universe would not be a collection of inert particles but rather a vibratory whole, where *durée* describes the movement of these vibrations and their retardation and where the vibratory movement of the universe would also form the basis of our conscious experience of time (*CM*, 109).[34] In the introduction to *The Creative Mind*, Bergson describes how his philosophical method led to a critique of the dominant view in physics that still saw the "*thing* serving as a support to movements and changes"—an idea that would inevitably give way to a physics without a vehicle for movement—and there is a sense of satisfaction when he writes that when he had come to this realization, "physics had not yet made the decisive advances which were to bring a change in its ideas on the structure of matter" (*CM*, 84–5). The precision of intuition derives from its capacity to integrate the primary concept of *durée* and its broadest generalization in the form of matter as pure movement as well as attend to the real, to take "into account its articulations" and to "follow [its] undulations" (*CM*, 35).

One of the main difficulties philosophy faces is that its concepts are not necessarily drawn from intuition and, more often than not, they are contingent on a language that is ill-suited to the description and understanding of experience. Consequently, when they are used in the formulation of philosophical problems, these problems will always assume a form that can never lead to a solution (Bergson, *CM*, 58). Bergson's most cited example of badly phrased questions are those of Zeno's paradoxes, which he returns to in *The Creative Mind* in the article "The Perception of Change" that was first presented as a lecture at Oxford University in 1911. In relation to the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, he argues that the problem of movement and stasis can be solved if we make one simple switch, from the perspective of a third person observer to that of Achilles. Achilles is able to overtake the tortoise because he is the agent of the action, is interior to the motion and continuous with his own experience. He experiences the act of running as a series of indivisible steps, each of which occurs over a definite duration (*CM*, 170–1). There is no philosophical problem for Achilles because he is corporeally aware in any one step of the duration of his own experience and the complex relationship between past and future. It is a paradox for philosophy because philosophy examines the line that subtends Achilles' movement rather than the movement itself and imagines that each point on the line is equal to another and can be infinitely subdivided. This brief summary of the "solution" to the paradox demonstrates that, for Bergson, what is most important is the rephrasing of the question with the substitution of the continuity of experience for that of space. In this very act of rephrasing, the solution will be suggested—"[f]or a speculative problem is solved as soon as it is properly stated"—and as such intuition is also inventive (*CM*, 58). The whole of "The Perception of Change" is directed to a false problem, where philosophy mistakenly assumes that "our senses and consciousness,

as they function in everyday life, make us grasp movement directly" (*CM*, 164–5), when in fact, the understanding of movement can only ever come through intuition via *durée*.

A similar task is undertaken in one of Bergson's most important essays, "The Possible and the Real," first published in 1930 but presented as a lecture in Oxford in 1920, which examines what Bergson calls "pseudo-problems" in metaphysics, such as why there is something rather than nothing and why order has come to replace chaos. These problems are founded on a separation of the act of reasoning from the movement and continuity of experience. To ask if there is something rather than nothing presumes to explain being by placing it against a backdrop of nothingness, but where is this nothingness in experience? Bergson argues that it only arises through a false projection of thought onto experience where we imagine what "might have been" in the place of the object we perceive. We suppress what *is* in favor of what *could be* and in doing so create an abstract space as the ground for all substitution, which does not have any of the qualities of being. It is an absolute nothingness that precedes or underpins all being (*CM*, 114–15). Likewise, in the question concerning why order should exist rather than disorder. To establish disorder always involves a mental act whereby we suppress one order in the name of another order that we imagine should occupy its place (*CM*, 116–17). In these "badly stated" metaphysical problems there is a suppression of the "undivided growth" of *durée*—where "reality . . . is fullness constantly swelling out, to which emptiness is unknown" (*CM*, 113)—in order to posit additional states that are falsely believed to exist prior to our experience. We might believe that order and being succeed disorder and nothingness, but, in fact, the latter are actually "intellectual" additions to the fullness of experience (*CM*, 117). This rephrasing of metaphysical problems is extended to the common application of the concept of possibility and the false assumption that the possible is a faint image of the real waiting to be realized, an idea awaiting substance. As in the metaphysical question concerning the relationship between being and nothingness, it is a matter of an emptiness waiting to be filled, but in this case, the emptiness has been projected into the future in the form of an outline of possible action. Bergson argues that the possible is not part of the continuity of the real but an intellectual addition that has been abstracted from our experience and superadded to it (*CM*, 117). In this, there is a critique of foreseeability and the idea that a future state, object, or event can be known before it occurs. For Bergson, the future is unknowable because we are always in the continuity of *durée*, within an expanded present, and we only think we know the future through constructing a mirror image of our past and projecting it forward.

In all of the false problems, there is a break in the continuity of experience, and rephrasing the question involves a return to the point at which intuition and its object are coincident. Bergson is consistent in this argument, but it is not clear in *The Creative Mind* how Bergson's method can find the much sought after common ground with science, when science is truly orientated towards the future through prediction. There are a couple of gestures in this direction, one of which is the inclusion in the collection of a preface he wrote to a French translation of one of William James's books on pragmatism in 1911.[35] In the essay, Bergson makes the grand claim: "We ordinarily define the true by its conformity to what already exists; James defines it by its relation

to what does not yet exist" (*CM*, 255). What Bergson draws from pragmatism is not a philosophy built on the possible, where imaginary structures carved out of the past are used to frame future events, but a concept of futurity that resides in the experience itself, and when we affirm a proposition, it is to affirm the direction of experience, from "a past experience to new experiences." Truth is founded in the very act of reaching into the future and can be contrasted with most philosophy which "has a natural tendency to have truth look backward" (*CM*, 255).[36] For pragmatism, all individuals are involved in marking out paths through the real and, in doing so, come into contact with other inclinations, feelings, and currents of thought. Pragmatism's role is to make the currents visible, and to explain this, Bergson uses the metaphor of a "sail-boat" which "takes the direction of the wind and makes the natural force it utilizes perceptible to the eye" (*CM*, 259). This conjunction of movement, action, and direction in pragmatism could define the border between Bergson's intuitive method and that of science, for irrespective of science's capacity to predict, it is always grounded in a material present from which it derives its theoretical and technological direction. It is intuition which makes this direction visible by returning science to experience. In the final section of the introduction to *The Creative Mind*, in a statement about science education, Bergson argues that "the intelligence will go [*remontera*] from the hand to the head"; in other words, the science student should learn how to experiment and invent through reconnecting to the continuity of material experience (*CM*, 100–1).

Bergson begins *The Creative Mind* by stating that he aims to "go back [*remonter*] to the origin of [his] method," and in one sense, he does this by speaking directly of the moment of revelation when he discovered that time must endure, but it is the process of going back that comes to define his method rather than the origin. This return is in part instigated by a desire to complete his work, to compile a philosophical testament, which is openly stated in the concluding remarks to the introduction: "I am grateful to my method for having giving me what I believe to be the precise solution to a certain number of problems, finding that as far as I am concerned, I cannot get more out of it, I shall be content to stop where I am" (*CM*, 106). In *The Creative Mind*, the end to his philosophizing is marked by a return, in the form of a theoretical autobiography and the collation of a number of essays from across his working life. The inclusion of the autobiography confirms Bergson's statement that metaphysics must "draw closer to life" in order to understand the simplicity of the object under investigation (*CM*, 126), and in *The Creative Mind*, the reader is drawn closer to Bergson's life and the thought that animates it. The process of going back is a means of reconstituting the continuous line of thought and the particular inclination of Bergson's "philosophical intuition," which had become less visible due to the popularity of his work and the great deal of academic and popular criticism that accompanied it. Bergson was obviously frustrated by much of this criticism, but rather than directly attacking his critics, the book is marked by a generosity of spirit, where he gently asks the reader to look again at what he has written and develop some sympathy with the movement of his thought. It is not simply a matter of accepting his conclusions but of "learning to read the text aloud with the proper intonation and inflection" (*CM*, 102).

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946).
2 *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932).
3 *L'Évolution créatrice* (1907).
4 The introduction is the most recent work in the collection and it is dated January 1922, but Bergson notes that some pages were added later to the introduction and this would explain the 1923 date listed here (1946, 304, n. 15).
5 Henceforth the word *durée* will be used when referring to Bergson's concept of duration and "duration" used when referring to specific temporal periods.
6 The translation does not adequately convey the meaning of the French and it would be more appropriate in this example to translate *empêche* as "prevent." See Bergson, *La Pensée et le mouvant: Essais et conferences*, in *Œuvres*, ed. André Robinet (1934; repr., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959).
7 Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson: Biographie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 246–7. The book is co-authored by Soulez and Worms, but it is divided into two parts. Worms wrote the second part, from which the references in this chapter are drawn, and therefore his name will preface any reference to the text.
8 Bergson, "La Philosophie française" in *Mélanges*, ed. Robinet (1933; repr., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972).
9 Bergson, "Quelques mots sur la philosophie française et sur l'esprit française" in *Mélanges* (1934; repr., 1972), 1514.
10 Worms notes that in this lecture, when it comes to expressing his gratitude for the role that France and French philosophy have played in the formation and development of his thought, Bergson uncharacteristically adopts a personal tone—using "je" rather than the second personal plural "nous" in the closing comments of the talk (Soulez and Worms, 245).
11 Henri Gouhier, "Introduction" to Bergson, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), *ix*.
12 Bergson asked for his papers and letters to be destroyed when he died, preferring instead that his published work would provide the proper basis for understanding his philosophy.
13 This is the main object of the critique in "The Possible and the Real," an article included in *The Creative Mind*.
14 The subtitle in the original French text is broken up into two sentences, "Croissance de la vérité. Mouvement retrograde du vrai" (*La Pensée et le mouvant*, 1253), which more clearly indicates that there are two movements in Bergson's method, both a looking back to find the curve of the method and the creative movement itself.
15 A comparison can be made with the main argument of *Matter and Memory*, where pure memory preserves the specificity of memory, yet in a constantly changing present, these memories are contracted into the movement of action and the repetition of habit.
16 Although the translation sues the first person personal pronoun "I," the French text uses the more formal "nous." Bergson does not refer to his personal life in the text and comments like this are always limited to intellectual discovery. This is to be

expected, for when William James requested autobiographical material from Bergson for use in one of his lectures, Bergson replied that there is nothing "objectivement remarquable" in his life and that only his subjective revelations are worthy of note, and then he proceeded to describe this same encounter with the work of Spencer (Bergson, "Bergson à W. James" in *Mélanges* (1908; repr., 1972), 765–6.

17 This inclination to unify is regarded as one of the main qualities of Ravaisson's philosophizing, but Bergson was accused of having " 'Bergsonized' Ravaisson," in other words, locating a unity in the work that represented Bergson's interests rather than those of Ravaisson (*CM*, 306–7, n. 34).

18 The inclusion of the article on Félix Ravaisson also in part relates to the fact that Bergson regards Ravaisson as the true heir to Maine de Biran and hails the latter as the greatest metaphysician that France "eût produit depuis Descartes et Malebranche" ("La Philosophie française," 1172). One of Maine de Biran's most important contributions is in highlighting the importance of "l'effort," which is not revealed by or reducible to any other mode of knowing (1170–1). The focus of Maine de Biran's work is on introspection and interior experience, and from this he derives the principles of his metaphysics. It is noteworthy that many of his most important philosophical arguments can be found in his journal rather than a philosophical treatise.

19 Intuition is a return or restoration which involves explaining how we have lost immediate connection to things in themselves. Deleuze argues that this loss or forgetting is "fondé dans l'être," that is, it is not so much a psychological misreading or misperception of *durée* but an ontological movement grounded in matter (Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson 1859–1941" in *Les Philosophes célèbres*, ed. Maurice Merleau-Ponty [Paris: Editions d'Art Lucien Mazenod, 1956], 293). In this case, it is the way science over-accentuates the properties of matter that leads to a split from the connecting tissue of life and finally to a mode of explanation that depends on symbols alone.

20 Jacques Chevalier, *Bergson* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1926), *viii*.

21 This critique of Bergson reached beyond the continent, most notably in the work of the English-speaking philosophers Bertrand Russell and Georges Santayana. Russell asserted that Bergson's popularity was a direct result of skepticism before World War I and that many people found in the irrational and romantic aspects of *Creative Evolution* an expression of their own desire for change (Bertrand Russell, "Philosophy in the Twentieth Century" in *Essays in Language, Mind and Matter* [London: Unwin Hyman, 1988], 458). Santayana, in 1913, claimed that Bergson's interest in empiricism, via evolutionary theory, is a regression to a primitive form of knowledge due to the link between intuition, intellect, and instinct. Furthermore, because Bergson's philosophy recoils from any attempt to establish universal laws, it can only succeed in describing the natural world through vague, mystical conceptions such as the élan vital (Georges Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine and Platonism and the Spiritual Life* [Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1971], 66–8).

22 Milič Čapek, *Bergson and Modern Physics: A Reinterpretation and Re-evaluation* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1971), *ix*.

23 There are other ways of addressing this issue. One could argue that science is precise without ever being able to reach an absolute, and this could be contrasted with philosophy which reaches an absolute without precision. In relation to the first of these arguments, David Bohm states that the precision in science is restricted to the particular temporal interval it is investigating and that, with the measurement

of increasingly shorter durations, new laws have to be developed (David Bohm, "Inadequacy of Laplacean Determinism and Irreversibility of Time" in *The Concepts of Space and Time: Their Structure and their Development*, ed. Milič Čapek [Dordrecht: Reidel, 1976], 547–59). In this case, there is difference between the precision of measurement, which is asymptotic, and a method which is precise in terms of its capacity to provide a sufficient explanation of the empirical data that is at hand.

24 Robin Durie, *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe* (Manchester: Clinamen, 1999), 188.

25 Bergson, "Bergson à H. A. Lorentz" in *Correspondances*, ed. Robinet (1924; repr., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 1119–22.

26 Jean Wahl, Henri Gouhier, Jean Guitton, and Vladimir Jankélévitch, "Preface (to the 7th edition of *Durée et Simultanéité)*" in *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, ed. Robin Durie (Manchester: Clinamen, 1999), 153.

27 Bergson, "Bergson à C. Bourqin" in *Correspondances*, ed. Robinet (1922; repr., 2002), 998.

28 Bergson, "Bergson à M. Proust" in *Correspondances* (1920; repr., 2002), 910.

29 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910), 161.

30 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 27–8.

31 Deleuze argues that Bergson's philosophy shifts between dualism and monism, as the differentiating "line" is eventually integrated back into the whole. Consequently, dualism is "only a moment, which must lead to the reformation of a monism" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 29).

32 This is the path adopted in *Creative Evolution*, where Bergson investigates the *longue durée* of evolution and life as a principle of complexification, but it is also integral to his article "Life and Consciousness" in *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*. In this article, Bergson looks for a principle of continuity and uses this to establish a link between consciousness and the concrete and visible form of the body, from one level of organization to another, but also across the course of time where he laterally extends consciousness from our experience of it to all living beings, although with different levels of tension, attention, and duration (Bergson, *ME*, trans. H. W. Carr [London: Macmillan, 1920], 1–28).

33 This hierarchy also works in the other direction when matter is united with duration, and this explains why Bergson states that Isaac Newton's theory of fluxions, a mathematical representation of movement, is due to an act of intuition (*CM*, 37).

34 The original French title of the book, *Pensée et le mouvant*, highlights the fluidity of the object to which thought attends in the use of the present participle of *mouvoir*.

35 Bergson and James were long time friends and had enormous respect for each other's work. Bergson's main purpose in writing his preface was to correct the many misreadings of James's work (*CM*, 248).

36 This importance of direction is reiterated by Bergson when he highlights the importance of James's study of mysticism in his book *Religious Experience*, which investigates the feelings and inclinations of "mystical souls" before these feelings are given concrete expression in thoughts and clearly stated ideas (*CM*, 253). Bergson adopts similar ideas in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where he argues that the openness of the mystics should be contrasted with the development of religious principles which have lost all connection with a mystical disposition.

Part Two

Bergson and Aesthetics

7

Bergson, Vitalism, and Modernist Literature

Paul Douglass

"[L]anguage . . . furnishes consciousness with an immaterial body in which to incarnate itself."

Henri Bergson[1]

Introduction

Vitalism emerged strongly and controversially in nineteenth-century science, philosophy, and psychology—from Mesmer and Bell to Freud and Nietzsche,[2] and literary artists expressed a passion for this same object, including Walt Whitman, whose "Song of Myself," announced its acceptance of "Time, absolutely": "It alone is without flaw—it rounds and completes all." Whitman sought the "word of the modern," with its "[b]ehavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass . . . and emanations . . . in new forms."[3] The nineteenth-century conflict generated by vitalism's confrontation with mechanism[4] helps explain the warmth with which many twentieth-century artists embraced Bergson's time-philosophy and its endorsement of living language, and it also accounts for the attacks on Bergson's "wild experimentalism," as Jacques Maritain wrote in *Bergsonian Philosophy*.[5] An international revolution in the arts took place in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and Bergson's philosophy played a major role, for it re-asserted the sanctity of a deep experience of human time (*durée réelle*). Bergson offered a rationale for artistic intuition, which could make inner life freshly available, ameliorating the malaise of modern urban existence. As William James said, reading Bergson was "like the breath of the morning and the song of the birds."[6] Here, I shall attempt to synthesize the main thrust of Bergsonian *poetics*—his theory of how literature is made, by whom, and to what purpose—and to evaluate its usefulness for a critical understanding of the consciously modern literature of the twentieth century. I shall attempt, that is, to show that in the works of modern writers there are consistent patterns of Bergsonian ideas about language and literary art.

Bergsonian philosophy: Key terms for poetics

Bergson subscribes to the Big Bang theory that is now the prevailing model for the origins of the universe, and his poetics stems from his general view of the universe as a creative action. He calls the "bang" the "vital impulse" (*élan vital*), and he characterizes it as original and free, saying that all creation is "merged . . . in growth" (*CE*, 241). The present is thus never fully explainable in terms of the past, because within a developing creation, we are never sure what is, until we learn what it becomes: the possible is only known "retroactively."[7] As he writes in *Creative Evolution*, "For a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly" (7).

At its heart, then, Bergson's universe is self-creative. But like Lucretius, whose *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) was the focus of his second doctoral dissertation, Bergson describes a universe succumbing to the vortex. The *élan vital* divides, and its pure energy devolves into static forms. He compared the universe to a teakettle whose steam condenses into water (*CE*, 247). He also compared it to the earth's core, congealing at the surface, but molten underneath: "If the earth were a living being . . . most likely when in repose it would take delight in dreaming these sudden [volcanic] explosions whereby it suddenly resumes possession of its innermost nature."[8] Similarly, human consciousness struggles against a regression to sentience: "[I]f consciousness is action unceasingly creating and enriching itself, whilst matter is action continually unmaking itself or using itself up, then neither matter nor consciousness can be explained apart from one another."[9]

Bergson ingeniously draws on Spencer and Darwin to define intellect and intuition, and to argue for a much "more modest" view of the powers of human intelligence to grasp the infinite multiplicity of the world (*CE*, 191). Bergson's philosophical writing appealed to his contemporaries for many reasons, one of which was his assertion that many key philosophical questions are simply mistaken. For example, in *Creative Evolution*, he refutes the very concept of "nothingness," calling it a "pseudo-idea" (*CE*, 283), and in *Matter and Memory*, he stood the question of memory on its head, asking not *how* we remember, but *why* we forget.[10] Similarly, Bergson asks (and answers) the question of why inner life's surging novelty—so apparent and obvious in childhood—is repressed (*MM*, 199). His answer is simply that attending to our inner lives is, in the Darwinian sense, nonadaptive: "We had to live, and life demands that we grasp things in their relation to our own needs," Bergson writes in *Laughter* (151). Intellect was born as a "revolt" against the "absolute originality and unforeseeability" of the *élan vital* (*CE*, 29). Intellect's purpose is to "limit, with a view to action, the life of the spirit" (*MM*, 233).[11] In the name of survival, intellect draws a veil between us and inner life. It substitutes "cuttings" (or snapshots) of the roiling ferment of the *durée réelle*: "To perceive means to immobilize" (*MM*, 275). "Still" pictures make the world stop whirling. Unfortunately, if we fully accept the intellect's rendition of life, then we embrace "the discontinuous . . . the immobile . . . the dead," and "automatism will cover over freedom" (*CE*, 165; *TFW*, 237).[12] We will live as walking shadows of ourselves, "[h]arnessed, liked yoked oxen, to a heavy task" (*CE*, 191).

This *dédoublement*—this appearance of a shadow self—is natural, even inevitable, but it must be ameliorated by revisiting primary experience. That is the role of great art, according to Bergson: to overcome the "parasitic self which continually encroaches" (*TFW*, 172) and to return human beings to an intuition of inner life. Intellect renders things static, and unintentionally abolishes freedom by reducing fluid experience to snapshots and the richness of memory to automatic responses. Intuiting life restores freedom, which Bergson asserts "is a fact" (*TFW*, 221). But to experience freedom as a *fact* requires philosophical intuition, which Bergson defines as "reflection, not feeling" (*CM*, 103). In our quest for truth, intellect is indispensable; but it can carry us just so far. Bergson assigned to *intuition philosophique* the role of renewing human awareness of ultimate reality: the flux of time. In his philosophy, the vibrant flow of life, this "beneficent fluid," coagulates into lifeless forms, which are like the dead and dying conventions of expression well-known to the practitioners of the arts (*CE*, 191).

Bergsonian poetics: Life-writing

Bergson's conception of life as a constant process of renewal energized not just writers, but painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians of his period. Kandinsky's abstract paintings, like "Bright Picture" (1913), express a Bergsonian sense of art's challenge. Cubist painters and sculptors like Picasso, Brancusi, Metzinger, Gleizes, Matisse, and Fergusson were profoundly affected by their absorption of Bergsonian ideas, as Mark Antliff has demonstrated.[13] So were photographers like Stieglitz, and architects like Le Corbusier and Wright. Erik Satie's experimental piano pieces also reflect Bergsonism. So does Edith Sitwell and William Walton's *Façade* (1922), the title of which alludes to the surfaces which modern art must seek to disrupt. The dodecaphonic (twelve-tone, or "atonal") revolution of Schoenberg and Hindemith's *Suite "1922"* (Op. 26) also testify to a Bergsonian spirit of revolution and renewal.

Bergson assigns the artist the role of practicing and preserving intuitive apprehension and "free acts" of creativity, which he describes as a welling up, an overflowing of the fundamental self. He acknowledges that "free acts are exceptional" (*TFW*, 167) and gives to art the role of fostering such exceptional acts. There can be no freedom without memory, for not to remember would mean to be unconscious.[14] To act freely, to act with full consciousness, means drawing our memories into our awareness of the present:

> The greater part of the time we live outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space. Hence our life unfolds in space rather than in time, we live for the external world rather than for ourselves, we speak rather than think, we 'are acted' rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to recover possession of oneself, and to get back into pure duration. (*TFW*, 231)

"The deeper psychic states," Bergson emphasizes, "those which are translated as free acts, express and sum up the whole of our past history" (*TFW*, 185).

So, for Bergson, the living self is always challenged to overcome the shadow self it has exteriorized in the pursuit of survival. Life may be "endlessly continued creation" and "pure mobility," but any "particular manifestations of life accept this mobility reluctantly, and continually lag behind" (*CE*, 128, 178). Human beings are caught between creation and destruction: "The home of matter is space. The home of life is time" (*CE*, 16). We live in both worlds, and so must struggle. "We do not think real duration, but we live it, because life transcends intellect," he writes; and yet, "wherever anything lives, there is open somewhere a register in which time is being inscribed." Time is our home—perhaps even ultimately our pseudonym—but it is eating us alive, like the titan Cronus devouring his children: "Real duration is that duration which gnaws on things, and leaves on them the mark of its tooth" (*CE*, 16, 46). At the same time that we are being consumed in time, "our living and concrete self gets covered with an outer crust of clean-cut psychic states" (*TFW*, 167). The artist cannot change the nature of this reality, but by "dissolving or corroding the outer crust" of our lives, art can "bring us back to the inner core," restore the awareness of "real time," and thereby return us "back into our own presence" (*Laughter*, 160; *TFW*, 133–4).

For Bergson, the literary artist must overcome the "utilitarian" origins of language. Since words evolved with the development of the intellect, they are subject to its limitations and "can express the new only as a rearrangement of the old" (*CM*, 94, 96): "Language, made for things, converts experiences into things" (*TFW*, 130). But the intervention of artistic intuition gave "birth to poetry, then to prose, and converted into instruments of art words which, at first, were only signals" (*TFW*, 96). Bergson describes the process by which poetry can overcome the deadness of received linguistic signs: "[B]y rhythmical arrangement of words, which thus become organized and animated with a life of their own, [poets] tell us—or rather suggest—things that speech was not calculated to express" (*Laughter*, 156). Literature "has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself." But that involves subverting our stock responses: "Art is certainly a more direct vision of reality, but this purity of perception implies a break with utilitarian convention" (*Laughter*, 157).

Bergson clearly explains how a poetry of images can be constructed so as to overcome the utilitarian nature of language. First, images inherently "keep us in the concrete," resisting the tendency toward abstraction and conceptualization. Though no single image can "replace the intuition of duration," literature constructed out of "many diverse images, borrowed from very diverse orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized" (*IM*, 16–17). Bergson suggests, then, that the writer "insinuates" into the reader's mind the perception of truth, "baffling" the reader on purpose (*Laughter*, 155). In Bergson's poetics, literature employs misdirection, stealing in upon the conscious mind and tricking it into a temporary moment of self-realization:

> By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would

> then be driven away at once by its rivals. By providing that, in spite of their differences of aspect, they all require from the mind the same kind of attention, and in some sort the same degree of tension, we shall gradually accustom consciousness to a particular and clearly defined disposition—that precisely which it must adopt in order to appear to itself as it really is, without any veil. (*IM*, 16–17)

This sounds final. Art breaks through to "reality." But lest we think that Bergson believes such a revelation of truth can be permanently achieved with language, he also reminds us that words inevitably return to their utilitarian origins.

Thus, he says, as readers, we may be impressed by the work of a "bold novelist" who has torn aside our "conventional ego" to show the "fundamental absurdity" of intellectual representations of life. Such a writer seems to evoke the true flux of our inner life, with its "infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named," and we are struck with admiration. We feel that the writer has penetrated to the truth. But Bergson insists,

> This is not the case, however, and the very fact that he spreads out our feelings in a homogeneous time and expresses its elements by words, shows that he in his turn is only offering us its shadow: but he has arranged this shadow in such a way as to make us suspect the extraordinary and illogical nature of the object which projects it, he has made us reflect by giving outward expression to something of that contradiction, that interpenetration, which is the very essence of the elements expressed. Encouraged by him, we have put aside for an instant the veil which we interposed between our consciousness and ourselves. He has brought us back into our own presence. (*TFW*, 133–4)

The writer must subvert the conceptual frameworks that support logical "analysis" of real duration, for *durée* must be experienced to be understood. The writers Bergson describes must go deep, and then "delve yet deeper still," groping after "the strains of our inner life's unbroken melody," acting as explorers (*Laughter*, 150, 156). They must create *resistant* works that bring fleeting but powerful renewal of contact with inner life through the reader's active involvement. Such writers guard vital language by disrupting conventional, habituated responses. They entice with concepts, but undermine rational understanding. They engage the intellect, but, by dividing our attention, they force us into an intuitive reverie that brings us closer to the creative heart of the universe, which will always remain beyond the reach of utilitarian language.

Habits and shadows form unceasingly in the human mind, and for Bergson, language is the mind's chief tool to "oppose new habits to the old ones unceasingly," thus "dividing automatism against itself." Human beings' first line of defense against the deadness of an habituated life is "language, which furnishes consciousness with an immaterial body in which to incarnate itself" (*CE*, 264–5). Indeed, Bergson compares "our whole psychical existence" to "a single sentence, continued since the first awakening of consciousness, interspersed with commas, but never broken by full stops" (*ME*, 70).

Bergson and the modernists: An inner circle of turmoil

Modernism as a literary movement is now history. But the modern era has not (and may never) end, because humanity has the sense of living in a constantly modernizing present. Bergsonian poetics thus applies not only to "Modernism," historically defined, but more generally to any consciously modern literature—as I shall argue in detail in my conclusion. But first, I shall focus on those writers of consciously "modern" literature of the early twentieth century, the "Modernists," who employed a Bergsonian aesthetic of misdirection and difficulty, and who often mused on language, memory, or intuition in their works. Take, for example, Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*, Wolfe's *Of Time and the River*, Cather's *O Pioneers!*, the poems of Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost, as well as Kazantzakis's *Zorba the Greek*. The spirit of Bergsonism is perhaps epitomized for literature in Ezra Pound's 1934 exhortation to "Make It New" and Wallace Stevens's injunctions for a "Supreme Fiction": that it must be abstract, must change, and must give pleasure.[15] Stevens strongly embraced the Bergsonian principle that language can be renewed only through disruption. Reality is mobile, chaotic, protean; and, as Stevens wrote, "The imagination loses vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real."[16] Despite the turmoil surrounding Bergson's reputation, which sank in the 1920s and 1930s, apparently leaving him to languish in a dim alcove of history, his impact on twentieth-century writing has proved to be profound and sustained.

Bergson was a primary presence for many artists and critics of that period, especially Jacques Maritain, Nikos Kazantzakis, T. E. Hulme, John Middleton Murry, Julien Benda, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot, who wrote about and sometimes translated Bergson's works. One might wish to add other names to this list—for example, the anarcho-syndicalist Georges Sorel, or Édouard Le Roy, Bergson's chief exponent in pre-World War I France—but this roll call is restricted to those who practiced the literary arts or elaborated aesthetic theory. So, at a minimum, these seven writers constitute an inner circle of Bergson's primary influence during the period that a consciously "modern" literature was being formed (c. 1909–22). That inner circle reflects the turmoil surrounding Bergson's specific concepts of time and memory, if not his conviction that "Mankind lies groaning, half crushed beneath the weight of its own progress," and that in future, humanity will require "a bigger soul."[17]

Like most of Bergson's contemporaries and critics, the members of that inner circle recognized Bergson's importance as a champion of "free will," "intuition," and "human time," in an age obsessed with determinism and materiality. However, they formed quite different opinions of Bergson's effect on culture and art. Most were intrigued with—though not necessarily convinced by—his theory of memory, his delineation of the "method" of intuition, and his conviction that the intellect generates "pseudo-problems" (*CE*, 277)—Bergson cites the paradoxes of Zeno as one such example.[18] Some, like Lewis, Eliot, Hulme, and Murry, disavowed Bergson after being strongly attracted to his philosophy.

In 1916 Eliot lectured on Bergson through the Oxford University Extension Program.[19] Thirty-two years later, in 1948, he wrote that his only "real conversion, by the deliberate influence of any individual, was a temporary conversion to Bergsonism."[20] Four years after that, Eliot described his "longing for the appearance of a philosopher whose writings, lectures and personality will arouse the imagination as Bergson, for instance, aroused it forty years ago."[21] His sense of having been converted to Bergsonism, followed by his actual conversion to the Anglican church in 1927, perhaps caused Eliot to identify Bergsonian thought as "heresy."[22] John Middleton Murry seems to have experienced a similar enthusiasm-followed-by-renunciation of Bergson, as Mary Ann Gillies has recounted.[23] (60). Wyndham Lewis also confessed to his early allegiance to Bergson in a letter written in 1949: "Bergson was an excellent lecturer, dry and impersonal. I began by embracing his evolutionary system."[24] After this initial attraction, Lewis relentlessly attacked Bergson, especially in *Time and Western Man* (1927), a polemic on Bergson, Joyce, Stein, Whitehead, and the members of what Lewis called the "time-cult."[25] Julien Benda, in contrast, skipped the conversion stage and leapt immediately to rejection, claiming hyperbolically that he would joyfully have killed Bergson if in that way his influence could have been stopped.[26] Lewis's and Benda's own work became so warped by their loathing of Bergson that his philosophy emerges in their books as an "equal-opposite" in SueEllen Campbell's neat phrase. In particular, *Creative Evolution* was, as Campbell says, "a hidden model—a model Lewis mirrors, inverts, and conceals throughout the philosophical arguments of *Time and Western Man*."[27]

The turmoil Bergson stimulated among and within his "converts" seems largely due to the popularity that had made him a polarizing figure in the era's culture wars, pitting "classicism" against "romanticism," and "intellect" against "intuition"—not to mention a political struggle in France between moderates and far right nationalists. Those culture wars had little to do with Bergson's actual philosophy, and they led to intemperate words and actions—for example, the placing of Bergson's works on the Catholic Church's index of banned books in 1914.

Despite the fact that Bergson was "the object of so many hatreds," as Gilles Deleuze aptly wrote,[28] many others embraced his philosophy, especially Hulme, Maritain, and Kazantzakis. These members of the inner circle became translators and interpreters of his works, promoting them to the writers in their personal circles and attempting to ameliorate "flaws" in Bergson's arguments. Kazantzakis published a Greek translation of *Le rire* (*Laughter*) in 1910, and an article on Bergsonian philosophy in 1913. As Andreas Poulakidas has written, the Greek writer's deep commitment to freedom was shaped by Bergson's "inspiration."[29] Like Hulme and Maritain, Kazantzakis tried to elaborate in literature a concept of divinity derived from the *élan vital*. He attempted to reify that idea in *Zorba the Greek*, adapting Bergson's conviction that the universe is dialectic, with opposing processes of demolition and creation going on continuously. Zorba draws his ideas on life directly from Bergsonian principles: "[T]here is some Eternity even in our ephemeral lives, only it is very difficult for us to discover it alone. Our daily cares lead us astray"; he also asserts that arithmetic must be balanced by insight: two and two do, and do not "make four."[30]

Like Kazantzakis, Hulme translated Bergson's work, rendering Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* in English by collaborating with the philosopher himself. Both Hulme and Maritain tried to interpret Bergson along lines that would reconcile his secular philosophy of evolution with established religion. Maritain's wife Raïssa describes in her autobiography she and her husband suffered under the prevailing empiricist philosophy at the Sorbonne: "Our teachers were philosophers, yet they in fact had lost all hope in philosophy. . . . Through some curious *de facto* contradiction, they sought to *verify* everything by processes of material learning and of positive verification, and yet they despaired of *truth*."[31] Husband and wife formed a suicide pact, from which they were saved (so Raïssa claimed) by hearing one of Bergson's lectures: "Bergson dispelled the anti-metaphysical prejudices of pseudo-scientific positivism and recalled to the spirit its real function and essential liberty" (84). Not long thereafter, Maritain published *La Philosophie bergsonienne*. Over a long life, Maritain returned to Bergson, elaborating a body of thought on aesthetics, including Frontières de la poésie (1935), and culminating in *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1953). In his later career, Maritain heavily criticized Bergson—seemingly for being not "Bergsonian" enough. In stark contrast to Bertrand Russell, he found Bergson too empirically oriented, and accused him of allowing science to adulterate metaphysics.[32] In a life cruelly shortened by World War I, Hulme also considered Bergsonian ideas on art in essays posthumously collected in *Speculations* (1924) and *Further Speculations* (1955). As members of the inner circle, Maritain and Hulme influenced other artists of their era through their interpretations of Bergsonian philosophy.

But of all these figures, T. S. Eliot became the most significant source of Bergsonian poetics for other writers, despite negative comments in his prose criticism aimed sometimes not at Bergson or his works, but rather at their popularization.[33] Generally, after World War I, Eliot's criticism portrayed Bergson as the center of a cultish faith in vital energy and intuition. But in his poetics—his beliefs about the origins and nature of poetry—he emulated Bergsonian principles and influenced many other writers, including Faulkner and the Agrarians. The influence of *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* alone multiplied Bergson's impact on Modernism a hundredfold.

Modernism's further Bergsonian circles

The works of many writers outside the inner circle have been studied persuasively from a Bergsonian perspective, and many more will be, as criticism sloughs off its curious amnesia about Bergson's significance. In addition to those writers in the inner circle, at least twenty more names come to mind, including especially William Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Henry Miller, Ezra Pound, Willa Cather, Robert Frost, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, and Vladimir Nabokov.[34] All of them probably read philosophical works by Bergson; all certainly read works *inflected* by the philosopher's ideas. Through that reading, and because of the cultural forces at play around them, they inevitably engaged with the signs and tropes Bergson posited and came to personify: memory, flux, the *élan vital*, real duration, the parasitic self, and the trope of metalepsis, which employs

a broken chain of metaphors, yoking ideas that have been strangely and powerfully compressed.[35] No doubt Bergson's specific works impacted specific authors, but tracing such direct lines of influence is a distraction from the real question of Bergson's meaning to Modernism.

For example, William Faulkner claimed to have read Bergson, and he recommended *Creative Evolution* to a younger writer, saying, "It helped me." Biographer Joseph Blotner speculates that Faulkner had "read his Henry Bergson" possibly while still of college age—meaning c. 1919–20.[36] Whether Faulkner read Bergson in any depth remains unverified, but as I have argued elsewhere, we *can* verify that Faulkner responded to Eliot's poetics and wrote experimental novels like *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*[37] Those novels portray characters alienated from the irrationality of their own inner lives, and they describe functions of memory and self in remarkably Bergsonian terms. In contrast to Faulkner, Virginia Woolf wrote in the 1930s, "I may say that I have never read Bergson and have only a very amateurish knowledge of Freud and the psychoanalysts; I have made no study of them."[38] This letter is dated 1932, and her reading of Freud may have come later. But despite her husband's claim that Woolf never read Karin Costelloe Stephen's book on Bergson, Woolf was in attendance when Costelloe presented her paper on Bergsonian interpenetration on February 3, 1913.[39] Woolf's works—*Mrs. Dalloway*, *Jacob's Room*, and *To the Lighthouse*, for example—epitomize Bergsonian ideas about memory, intuition, self, and flux. As Mary Ann Gillies has effectively argued, *The Waves* is obviously and thoroughly "a Bergsonian work" (Gillies, 126).[40] Woolf's poetics verifies such a conclusion: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall," she wrote, "let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness."[41]

To take another case, Henry Miller stated that he was influenced "imponderably" by his reading of *Creative Evolution*:[42]

> If [*Creative Evolution*] had not fallen into my hands at the precise moment it did, perhaps I would have gone mad. It came at a moment when another huge world was crumbling on my hands. If I had never understood a thing which was written in this book, if I have preserved only the memory of the word creative, it is quite sufficient. This word was my talisman. With it I was able to defy the whole world, and especially my friends . . . The discovery of this book was equivalent to the discovery of a weapon . . . It gave me the courage to stand alone, and it enabled me to appreciate loneliness.[43]

Miller almost certainly held *Creative Evolution* in his hands and felt its magic. But even at face value, what does his statement tell us?—little beyond his excitement at the word "creative," and his claim that Bergson's influence was "imponderable"—at best an ambiguous assertion. The real point is that this novel employs a Bergsonian poetics—found in Miller's experimental and hybrid form, his surrealism, and his stream of consciousness passages. Miller connects language and "timelessness" in *Capricorn*: "The talk goes on, in that low throaty voice. No beginning, no end. I'm aware

not of time nor the passing of time, but of timelessness" (*Capricorn*, 346). Like Joyce and Faulkner, Miller seeks to represent "our whole psychical existence" in Bergsonian terms: that endless sentence that is "never broken by full stops" (*ME*, 70). Like Faulkner, too, Miller sees a choice between outrage at, or acceptance of, perpetual change: "We can know the truth and accept it, or we can refuse knowledge of it and neither die nor be born again" (*Capricorn*, 334). Miller's rambling narratives and surrealistic passages stem from the Bergsonian device of creating tension between two sorts of time—intuitive and intellectual—and Miller's work aims pretty bluntly at the distraction and disorientation of the reader, so that, in Miller's words, "swimming you are in it and of it, and. . . . you are fixed in a reality which permits the thought that nothing is fixed, that even the happiest and mightiest rock will one day be utterly dissolved and fluid as the ocean from which it was born" (*Capricorn*, 332). Much remains to be done to reveal Miller's constant repetition of Bergsonian principles. For those who are moved by his achievement, the keys lie on the table: "[A]ll is flux, all is perishable. The surface of your being is constantly crumbling" (*Capricorn*, 64).

The question of where Miller got his understanding of Bergson is not the right focus because, on the one hand, its solution may be impossible, and on the other, what we care about is not what anyone—even the author—claims about Bergson's influence upon her or him. When Woolf wrote that she had "never read Bergson," she might have been emulating Eliot's and Pound's efforts not to be identified with an unpopular pedigree, or misremembering, or stating what was simply true for her at that moment. Joyce's allusion in *Finnegans Wake* to "the sophology of Bitchson"[44] may be a comment on Bergson's role in popular culture, or a condemnation of Bergson's poetics of intuition. Woolf perhaps minimized her knowledge of Bergson's work. Perhaps Faulkner exaggerated his. Wallace Stevens was not shy about supporting Bergson, and he almost certainly read some of his works—but in how much detail, and with what understanding, we cannot really know. Since it is not possible to answer the question of influence confidently, we must ask a different question: Is there a pattern in the works of consciously modern writers that seems remarkably consistent with Bergsonian poetics?

Regardless whether by direct absorption or secondhand infection, Woolf, Faulkner, Frost, Miller, Cather, and Stevens are clear examples of the literary incarnation of Bergson's *élan vital*. Woolf concluded *The Waves* with that double-vision of surging energy and slumping decay, communicated simultaneously in the image of a surging wave: " 'And in me too the wave rises. . . . I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!' *The waves broke on the shore*."[45] *The Waves* concludes then with a remarkable echo of a passage from *Creative Evolution*, in which Bergson describes "the whole of humanity, in space and time" as "one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge" (*CE*, 27l). Similarly, Frost wrote of an *élan*-like force in "West-running Brook" (1928):

> Our life runs down in sending up the clock.
> The brook runs down in sending up our life.
> The sun runs down in sending up the brook.

And there is something sending up the sun.
It is this backward motion toward the source,
Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
The tribute of the current to the source.[46]

Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens also seem to echo *Creative Evolution*'s vision of life. Tom Quirk has argued that Cather found her path as a novelist about the time she read *Creative Evolution*, exchanging a "Spencerian" for a "Bergsonian" world-view, and embracing a belief in "the life impetus coursing through the living world" (Quirk, 126, 179). Quirk's analysis exposes consistent Bergsonian patterns in Cather's way of drawing character and rendering narrators' thoughts, and especially her exploration of "the doubleness of human personality," for which Bergson "provided a metaphysic" (Quirk, 146).

Greatly enlarging upon and deepening observations of Frank Doggett, Frank Kermode, and Joe Riddel, Quirk also argues convincingly that Bergson played a major role for Wallace Stevens, who made a breakthrough after a long lull in his poetic output after encountering *Creative Evolution* (Quirk, 186).[47] Stevens became more and more conscious of his debt to Bergson, and later in life quoted the philosopher, for example in "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet,"[48] embracing the idea that poetry is the "spirit of visible and invisible change."[49] But the real proof of Bergson's value for readers of Stevens appears when we use his concepts to penetrate cruxes in Stevens's poetry, for example, in convincing readings of many poems from *Harmonium*, Stevens's first collection.

An example of a theme Stevens shares with other writers of the Bergsonian milieu is that he thoroughly rejects the concepts of nothingness and chaos. Like Henry Miller, Stevens echoes Bergson's critique of the idea of "Nothing." In chapter four of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson argues that "nothingness" is "a self-destructive idea, a pseudo-idea, a mere word" (*CE*, 283). It is true that Miller sometimes talks about negation or more specifically "nullification" in his late work, *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird*,[50] but these are allusions to human destructiveness, not to a concept of the void. Stevens also uses negation of a proposition to suggest the inadequacy of language to its object: "The pears are not viols,/Nudes or bottles."[51] Again, this is not an acceptance of nothingness; Stevens actively critiques the absurdity of the idea of "nothing" in an early poem that echoes *Creative Evolution*. The narrator of "The Snow Man" imagines someone listening, who "beholds/Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (Stevens, Collected Poems, 10). These lines echo what Bergson suggests in *Creative Evolution*—that everything is *positively* what it is, and that we should properly perceive "nothing that is not there"; but if "nothing" exists, it would be positively perceptible as "the nothing that is," making the absurdity of the concept palpable.

Echoing a different aspect of Bergsonian thought, Pound and Stein embrace the idea that writers make "discoveries" by descending psychically into the flux of experience (the *durée réelle*) and also understand the importance of resisting language's tendency to lose vitality. Having received from Hulme some lectures on Bergson's thought, Pound wrote extensively from his own perspective in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910): Art, he says,

is not unlike a river "perturbed at times by the quality of the riverbed, [but] in a way independent of that bed . . . Stationary objects are reflected, but the quality of motion is of the river. The scientist is concerned with all these things, the artist with that which flows."[52] Art is always "dynamic," Pound writes, "not passive, nor static, nor in a sense reflective, though reflection may assist at [its] birth" (Pound, *Spirit*, 222). As William Harmon has pointed out, the central concern of Pound's early work as a Vorticist and Imagist was "discovering the means for subverting the temporal sequence of language so that images can present the essence or effect of sudden illuminations that transcend space and time."[53] Pound was developing an approach to art parallel to Eliot's concept of the "objective correlative"—and both approaches are rooted in Bergsonian poetics. As Bergson said, for the poet, "feelings develop into images, and the images themselves into words which translate them while obeying the laws of rhythm. In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in turn experience the feeling which was, so to speak, their emotional equivalent" (*TFW*, 15). Eliot proposed a poetic technique employing a "chain of events which shall be the formula of a particular emotion" (Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 124). Pound similarly spoke of poetry as a "sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations of human emotions" (Pound, *Spirit of Romance*, 5). Faulkner also spoke of literature as a science, like chemistry, with rules which, when properly applied, will produce art "as surely as certain chemical elements combined in the proper proportions will produce certain reactions."[54]

Stein, too, adopted a laboratory protocol in composition. Like Eliot, Maritain, and Kazantzakis, Stein had attended Bergson's lectures in Paris, and she was uniquely prepared to appreciate Bergson's ideas, having been a student of William James, who had admired and corresponded with Bergson. Stein's research under James's supervision on "normal motor automatism" (occurring when the subject's attention is systematically divided), led to a breakthrough in Stein's understanding of what James called "stream of consciousness" writing. Stein's relationships with writers like Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway reflect her subsequent lifelong focus on replenishing the power of words through subjecting them to simple but enormous pressures. She embraced Bergson's definition of the literary artist as engaged in the continuous renewal of language, and she employed Bergsonian ideas of memory and *durée* in formulating a poetics based on metalepsis and paradox—that poetry can give the *illusion* of returning us to the deep human experience of time, but that it remains part of the static world of intellect and spatiality: "Poetry may be time but if it is then it is remembered time and that makes it be what is seen."[55]

In two posthumously published texts, Joseph Riddel also probed Stein's appropriations of and resistance to Bergson, especially the relevance of Bergson's "continuous present" (i.e. his endless sentence) to Stein's work, and her conviction that paragraphs "transact a new sense of time, for paragraphs are without beginning and end, without period," and therefore "the time of the paragraph is not linear or unfolding time, but the time of transition, of translation."[56] Riddel notes that Stein called the entire text of *The Making of Americans* a "paragraph." Riddel seems to have misunderstood Bergson, for he thinks the philosopher claims to "divest metaphysics,

and his theory of time, of language's burden." Nonetheless, Riddel confirms, "Stein's notion of revisionary narrative takes a Bergsonian distrust in the old words and categories and turns them into a new genesis or genealogical fable, even though the new categories retain the old names."[57] In a series of powerfully defamiliarizing works, Stein enacts Bergson's poetics; her art of life-writing continually forces us to confront what Bergson called "the extraordinary and illogical nature of the object which projects it," leading us, weirdly and often painfully, "back into our own presence" (*TFW*, 133–4).

Stein's art focused on the *resistance* lurking in every vital impulse, and the struggle to renew the living language by (ourselves) resisting its slump back to sentience. One can open her works at random and find that focus, sometimes openly as a theme, which is frequently the case in *The Making of Americans*: "This one that I am now beginning a little to tell about . . . that I am now describing in this explaining of the way natures are and are mixed up in men and women, this one had in him resisting being and one kind of resisting being only in him and not any other nature in him."[58] Or again, later in the same text: "Categories that once to some one had real meaning can later to that same one be all empty. It is queer that words that meant something in our thinking and our feeling can later come to have in them in us not at all any meaning. This is happening always to every one really feeling meaning in words they are saying" (440). Or take any passage from *Tender Buttons* (1914), which Riddel shrewdly describes as "itself a reading, the reading, say, of a Cubist painting, and thus a reading that disturbs the perspectival grammar of space" ("Modern Times," 362):

> A NEW CUP AND SAUCER
> Enthusiastically hurting a clouded yellow bud and saucer, enthusiastically so is the bite in the ribbon.
>
> OBJECTS
> Within, within the cut and slender joint alone, with sudden equals and no more than three, two in the centre make two one side.
> If the elbow is long and it is filled so then the best example is all together.
> The kind of show is made by squeezing.[59]

The familiar, simple elements of these sentences simply defy the mind's search for conventional meaning. They suggest a hundred things without stating anything in the usual sense.

Repetition and variation play key roles in *Tender Buttons*, as in the passages just quoted ("enthusiastically . . . enthusiastically"; "Within, within . . . with"). Stein's most-quoted line, originally from the poem "Sacred Emily" (1913), is part of this quest through repetition for a deep estrangement of the mind from language: "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."[60] Stein's line has been discussed in many contexts, and some critics see it as an evocation of automatism, a loop out of which the speaker never escapes. Bergson's theory of comedy is based partly upon this foundation of automatism, the concept that words "can express the new only as a rearrangement of the old"

(*CM*, 96). But Bergson also argued that repetition and recontextualization defamiliarizes language and thus, ironically, makes it new, which seems undoubtedly the effect Stein's poetic lines seek.[61] Stein's "Sacred Emily" repeats this theme—repeats this poetical act—again and again, delineating automatism's push toward freedom: "Push sea push sea push sea push sea push sea push/sea push sea push sea"; "Pale./Pale./Pale./Pale./Pale./Pale./Pale . . ." etc., etc., etc. (Stein, *Geography and Plays*, 178, 185). Dorothy Richardson's and Virginia Woolf's novels are deeply Bergsonian, and Eugene Ionesco's comedy is quintessentially Bergsonian, but no one's work so consistently and radically enacts a Bergsonian program as Stein's. But then, she is not really on a different path from other writers of her era, even Hemingway, Steinbeck, or Fitzgerald. She is just farther along it.

Understanding Modernism: The cash-value of Bergsonian poetics

Joyce's unnamed speaker in *Finnegans Wake* demeaned Bergson as "Bitchson," but admitted that he "is not without his cashcash characktericksticks" (Joyce, 149). Joyce was not a Jamesian pragmatist—but he would probably have agreed with William James's definition of the "concrete difference" any "truth" makes in "actual life" as its "cash-value in experiential terms."[62] As I have asserted, Modernism as a literary movement may be over, but the modern era has, perhaps, no end, since the constantly "modernizing" present seems to be subject to infinite prolongation. Bergsonian poetics thus has a continuing cash-value for understanding not only the historically modernist writing that has been the focus of this essay but also, more generally, the subsequent consciously modern literatures that have ensued.

How so? First, Bergson articulates a convincing justification for art in an empirical age, arguing it can mediate between competing human cravings for survival and for truth. The purpose of art, for Bergson, is renewal of insight and refreshment of perception. Bergson repeatedly asserts that humanity requires the enlargement of the human soul. This is the main thrust of his Nobel acceptance speech in 1927, repeated in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Art's main mechanism is a loosening of the grip that survival takes on perception and understanding. Art thus takes the reader beyond the body and its needs. "By intuition," he writes, "is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible" (*IM*, 7). Thus, intuitive experience requires a deeply *unselfish* frame of mind.

Second, Bergson conceives of the universe as essentially creative, a burst of continuing protean change, and that has become the dominant cosmological theory. His vitalistic philosophy was reviled by many in the 1920s—hijacked by others for political purposes he despised—and is sometimes dated by his respectful engagement with early twentieth-century science. Yet the principles he outlines in *Creative Evolution*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Time and Free Will* have not lost their power. Consistent with modern

physics, he finds unpredictability at the core of the universe, and hence of all human experience. As he underscores in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, destruction is the inevitable companion of creation, and each person experiences that reality: "Inner life is both the unrolling and the rolling up of a coil. And it is neither" (*IM*, 11–12). Despite having been pronounced dead years ago, ideas connected to the *élan vital*, including flux, indeterminacy, and duration, have re-emerged in scientific and philosophical discussions.[63] Bergson attempts to merge scientific reason with "common sense," cautioning against the intellect's inadequacy, and this satisfied neither the promoters of hard science like Russell nor the adherents of neo-Platonist metaphysics like Maritain. But his middle position may yet prevail.[64]

A third point is that Bergson defines great art as inherently difficult, and this is explanatory of most serious modern literature. Bergson explains the need for such difficulty simply: literature must confound thought to evoke intuition. Fragmented poems like *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* and novels with resistant styles like *The Sound and the Fury* or *The Waves* have a common Bergsonian strategy. The writers' images "keep us in the concrete. No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very diverse orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the point where there is a certain intuition to be seized" (*IM*, 15–16). T. E. Hulme promoted this poetic as translator of Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Hulme's colleague, Pound, also pushed Eliot in that direction with his revisions of *The Waste Land*, which ruthlessly pared away context and elaboration, making the poem's collage and bricolage—and its metaleptic tendencies—much more prominent. Pound employs those strategies of collage and bricolage in his *Cantos*, with interruptions, redirections, shifts in diction, unexplicated and untranslated quotations. The *Cantos* are a revelation of thought—sinuous, outrageous, unpredictable. As Bergson argues, though we cannot have direct presentation of the deep experience of time's flux in art, we can still have what he—and Hulme, Eliot, Pound, and others—called the "emotional equivalent" of it (*TFW*, 15), paid for with constant experimentation in form. A quasiscientific experimental attitude among serious writers of literature has consequently become one of the permanent legacies of Modernism. The attitude is reflected everywhere—in nonfiction, for example, in H. G. Wells's late work, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), in which one can hear the early stirrings of late twentieth century "creative nonfiction." Like poetry, fiction must constantly find new ways to evade habitual expectations of readers. Beginning with Naturalism's experiments with typical characters in typical situations, and going on through the work of Hardy, Woolf, Lawrence, Joyce, Faulkner, Proust, Toomer, and others, Modernism promoted unrelenting experimentation in fictional form and style. The modernist idea of "experimental literature" derives from a Bergsonian paradigm and lives on in the work of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Edmund White, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, John Fowles, Italo Calvino, and Anne Carson.

Fourth, Bergson's ideas of memory and the self are ubiquitous in modernist literature. Bergson argues that there is "one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time—our self which endures" (*IM*, 3). At the same time, he had explained

how the "parasitic self" arises, and how self-alienation leads to the failure of memory (*TFW*, 172). He asks not, "How do we remember things?" but rather, "*Why do we forget anything?*" The power of this question resonated with writers from Proust, Joyce, and Faulkner to Eliot and Pound and to Woolf and Wolfe—and on to Miller, Nabokov, and Vonnegut. The emergence of the memory play—from Thornton Wilder to Tennessee Williams to Harold Pinter—can be traced partly to Bergsonian psychology, which states plainly, "consciousness means memory" (*IM*, 12–13). Permanence of the past, repression of memory, and the struggle to overcome alienation from the self—these principles guided novelists' and playwrights' development of character and elaboration of action.

A fifth point to consider is that Bergson's critique of cinema, given cinema's huge influence upon the literary arts, has renewed his significance. Deleuze's *Cinema 1* (1983) and *Cinema 2* (1985) spring from Bergson's insights and arguments, transforming Bergson into a proponent of the technology he consistently faulted as the epitome of an intellectual rather than intuitive representation of time. Whether one accepts or rejects Deleuze's argument that modern cinema is profoundly Bergsonian, there is little doubt that Bergson's understanding of how art represents inner experience is being applied fruitfully to film, most recently in John Mullarkey's *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (2010).

A sixth and final point: Bergson's ideas persisted and persist among theorists of literary art. Bergsonian intuition was the direct forebear of Georges Poulet's concept of intuition, elaborated in *Studies in Human Time* (1956) and "The Phenomenology of Reading" (1969). Poulet's intuition is, like Bergson's, an act of self-forgetting and self-discovery in one—without contradiction. It restores an alienated inner life. Poulet had a profound influence in the work of J. Hillis Miller, who becomes—unlikely as it might seem to some—part of the Bergsonian heritage.

The genealogy of Miller's work points toward the fact that Bergson will be more and more productively connected to post-structuralism. Deleuze's adaptation of Bergsonian concepts has already produced copious commentary. And, as Suzanne Guerlac suggests, Derrida has taken "a vantage point" (especially on Husserl), "that, to my mind, is very close to Bergson's perspective," leading Guerlac to assert the "proximity of Derrida's notion of deconstruction as writing practice and Bergson's keen analysis of the limits of language in the face of time" (185, 186). For example, *Creative Evolution*'s critique of the concept of nothingness, discussed briefly above, anticipates core ideas of deconstruction and poststructuralist literary theory: "[H]owever strange our assertion may seem, *there is* more, *and not less in the idea of an object conceived as "not existing" than in the idea of this same object conceived as "existing"; for the idea of the object "not existing" is necessarily the idea of the object "existing" with, in addition, the representation of an exclusion of this object by the actual reality taken in block*" (286; Bergson's italics). Bergson points out the ways in which language outruns and disrupts philosophical inquiry, laying the groundwork for Jacques Derrida's discussion of the interplay of presence and absence, which in turn led to his claim that "there is nothing outside the text" (*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*).[65] Derrida's master-stroke in the deployment of negation echoes that fourth chapter of *Creative Evolution*. Moreover, his concept of time seems

to be in dialogue with Bergsonian thought, as Daniel Alipaz argues in "Bergson and Derrida: A Question of Writing Time as Philosophy's Other," for Derrida's notion of the future "is a constantly unfolding one, a movement that defies understanding at its very root, but simultaneously, like Bergsonian *durée*, is creative."[66] For Alipaz, there is "an unquestionable overlap between their two discourses" (99), which will be much more widely recognized as Bergson's thought is recuperated in the twenty-first century.

For all his keen awareness of language's limitations, Bergson believes that writing epitomizes the arts. His subtle understanding of literature is complemented by a rich appreciation of creativity. To make a poem, a statue, or a painting may be "toilsome," but it is also precious labor, "more precious even than the work which it produces, because, thanks to it, one has drawn out from the self more than it had already, we are raised above ourselves" (*ME*, 29). Bergson's poetics starts with the joy of creation—an echo of that original free act that created the universe: "[J]oy always announces that life has succeeded, gained ground, conquered. [. . . and where] there is joy, there is creation; the richer the creation, the deeper the joy" (*ME*, 29). Bergsonian poetics challenges artists to restore to words the "lawlessness" that Whitman celebrated. Bergsonian poetics demands that language be constantly restored to life, made again so heartbreakingly alive that it might almost bleed if we cut it, since it constitutes that "immaterial body" by means of which we may give birth, once more, to our selves.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 265.
2 Nietzsche desired to become a "philosopher of life," as he wrote in a letter to Mathilde Maier dated July 15, 1878. Quoted in Frederick Amrine, " 'The Triumph of Life': Nietzsche's Verbicide" in *The Crisis in Modernism*, ed. F. Burwick and P. Douglass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 131.
3 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," sections 23 and 29 in *Leaves of Grass*, ed. S. Bradley and H. W. Blodgett (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973).
4 For more background on the debate over vitalism, see *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass.
5 Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 66.
6 William James, *A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), 270.
7 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), 22.
8 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 159.
9 Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. W. Carr (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), 23.
10 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1911).

11 Despite strenuous effort, Bergson did not avoid the label of "anti-intellectual." Bertrand Russell in particular stated contemptuously that "intellect is the misfortune of man, while instinct is seen at its best in ants, bees, and Bergson" (*A History of Modern Philosophy* [1946; repr., Routledge 1996], 716). But Russell's glib dismissal completely misrepresents Bergson's view of the intellect's limitations. What Bergson really said was that the intellect has been "given to us, as instinct has been given to the bee, in order to direct our conduct" (*CM*, 91). Thus Bergson gives intellect an indispensable role. It evolved, he says, to allow humans to cope with protean reality. Intellect spatializes the mesmerizing flow of immediate experience so it can be grasped and controlled. If immediate experience is normally veiled from us by intellect, that is a good thing, as he writes in *Mind-Energy*: "Fortunate are we to have this obstacle, infinitely precious to us is the veil!" (*ME*, 70).

12 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1910).

13 Antliff's excellent book, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), delineates not only aesthetic but social and political consequences of the absorption by Parisian artists of Bergsonian vitalism. Antliff argues that adaptation of organicist/vitalist ideas from Bergson fuelled the fascism of Sorel, Mussolini, Marinetti, and others involved in the Cubist, Fauvist, and Futurist movements. Antliff thus agrees with his predecessor, Maurice Friedman, who argued similarly in *To Deny Our Nothingness: Contemporary Images of Man* (New York: Delacorte, 1967): "Understandable as a reaction against the sterile abstractions of philosophical idealism and rationalism, Bergson's vitalism falls into the trap of an identification of energy with ultimate reality and of a relativism in which all movement, of whatever nature, is equally good so long as its flow is not staunched. That Bergson himself would have been the first to be horrified by the Nazi conversion of vitalism into unlimited demonry only shows that he had other values that found no explicit place in his philosophy" (72).

14 Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 12–13.

15 Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 380ff.

16 Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1951), 6.

17 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), 298.

18 See, for example, *Time and Free Will*, 74, 240, and *The Creative Mind*, 16. A good recent discussion of Bergson and Zeno is to be found in Gregory Flaxman, "Cinema Year Zero" in *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Flaxman (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 87–108; see esp. 97ff.

19 See Ronald Schuchard, "T.S. Eliot as an Extension Lecturer" in *Review of English Studies* 25 (1974): 163–73, 292–304.

20 T. S. Eliot, *A Sermon Preached at Magdalene College Chapel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 5.

21 Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), *xi*.

22 In 1936, Eliot argued that Bergson participated in the heresy of humanism: "The hope of immortality is confused (typically of the period) with the hope of the gradual and steady improvement of this world" (Eliot, *Selected Essays* [New York:

Faber, 1980], 335). Around the same time, though, he also wrote, "Most of us are heretical in one way or another . . . The essential of any important heresy is not simply that it is wrong; it is that it is partly right . . . an exceptionally acute perception, or profound insight" (Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* [London: Faber, 1934], 25–6).

23 Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 60.

24 Wyndham Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1963), 488–9.

25 Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927).

26 Robert J. Niess, *Julien Benda* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 122.

27 SueEllen Campbell, *The Enemy Opposite: The Outlaw Criticism of Wyndham Lewis* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), 98–9.

28 Deleuze's comment occurs in his and Claire Parnet's *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 22. This translation is by Suzanne Guerlac, in her *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 29.

29 Andreas Poulakidas, "Kazantzakis and Bergson: Metaphysic Aestheticians" in *Journal of Modern Literature* 2.2 (1971–72): 283.

30 Nikos Kazantzakis, *Zorba the Greek*, trans. Carl Wildman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 204–5.

31 Raissa Maritain, *We Have Been Friends* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1961), 67–8.

32 Jacques Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, trans. H. L. Binsse (London: G. Bles, The Centenary Press, 1943), 65.

33 For example, Eliot's satirizing of Bergson in "Eeldrop and Appleplex," as Tom Quirk effectively argues, does not "seriously question Bergsonian philosophical assumptions." Instead, Eliot seems more intent on "separating himself from pedestrian enthusiasms." In short, Quirk concludes, Eliot wished to avoid being found guilty by association with Bergson's image as "an enthusiast" and, worse, "a romantic" (Tom Quirk, *Bergson and American Culture: The Worlds of Willa Cather and Wallace Stevens* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990], 84).

34 In addition, then, to Jacques Maritain, Nikos Kazantzakis, T. E. Hulme, John Middleton Murry, Julien Benda, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot, here is my list of twenty-four writers who form part of the Bergsonian legacy: Willa Cather, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Joseph Conrad, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Frost, Eugène Ionesco, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Marianne Moore, Vladimir Nabokov, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, John Crowe Ransom, Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein, John Steinbeck, Wallace Stevens, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, William Carlos Williams, Thomas Wolfe, Virginia Woolf.

35 The trope of metalepsis is called "transumptio" in Latin. See Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 99. Metalepsis characterizes many important passages in *The Waste Land*, particularly its concluding section. For example, lines 420–2: "your heart would have responded/Gaily when invited, beating obedient/To controlling hands," in which wings, heart, and boat are all both potentially "controlled" and characterized by "beating."

36 Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), 2:1219, 2:1302.

37 Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (Louisville, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), chapters 6 and 7.
38 Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume 5: 1932–1935*, eds Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautman (London: Hogarth Press,1979), 5:91.
39 Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell, and Epistemology of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 35.
40 I am indebted to Laci Mattison, who points out that Ruth Gruber's *Virginia Woolf: A Study* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1935), the first dissertation on Woolf, argues that Woolf "is too innately creative, too inherently Bergsonian to be called Bergson's imitator. It is conceivable that she would have found the way without him" (49). Just so, it is the *coincidence* of these things and not any direct "source" with which we ought to grapple.
41 Woolf, "Modern Fiction" in *The Common Reader I* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), 150.
42 See Henry Miller, in his letter to Lawrence Durrell, Big Sur, March 14, 1949, in *Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller: A Private Correspondence*, ed. George Wickes (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1963), 261.
43 Miller, *Tropic of Capricorn* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 219.
44 James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Viking, 1972), 149.
45 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1931).
46 Robert Frost, *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems, Complete and Unabridged*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Henry Holt, 1979), 260.
47 See Kermode's *Wallace Stevens* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), Doggett's *Stevens' Poetry of Thought* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), and Riddel's *The Clairvoyant Eye: The Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1965).
48 Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 242.
49 See also Paul Douglass, " 'The Theory of Poetry Is the Theory of Life': Bergson and the Later Stevens," in *Critical Essays on Wallace Stevens*, Steven Gould Axelrod and Helen Deese, eds (G.K. Hall & Co., 1988), 245–60.
50 Henry Miller, *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* (New York: New Directions, 1962), 190.
51 Wallace Stephens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 196.
52 Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (New York: New Directions, 1953), 7–8.
53 William Harmon, *Time in Ezra Pound's Work* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 8, 45.
54 William Faulkner, *Early Prose and Poetry*, ed. Carvel Collins (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1962), 74.
55 Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America: Or, The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 210.
56 Joseph N. Riddel, *Turning Word: American Literary Modernism and Continental Theory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 91, 116.
57 Riddel, "Modern Times: Stein, Bergson, and the Ellipses of 'American' Writing" in *The Crisis in Modernism*, ed. Burwick and Douglass, 358.
58 Stein, *The Making of Americans* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 372–3.
59 Stein, *Tender Buttons* (New York: Claire Marie, 1914), 11.

60 Stein, *Geography and Plays* (Boston, MA: Four Seas, 1922), 187.
61 It seems apparent that the Russian Formalist concept of *ostranenie* ("estrangement") as Viktor Shklovsky defined it in "Art as Device" (sometimes translated as "Art as Technique"), is directly related to Bergson's poetics. "Art as Device comprises the first chapter of Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose* (1925)," trans. Benjamin Sher (Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990).
62 William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (London: Longmans Green, 1907), 200.
63 For example, in F. C. T. Moore's *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42ff, and see Ronnie Lippens, "The Interstitial and Creativity: Bergson and Fitzpatrick on the Emergence of Law" in *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology* 2.2 (2010): 1–21.
64 Deleuze's *Bergsonisme* (1966; trans. 1988) is often credited with having revitalized interest in the philosopher, but one should not forget that in 1962 Thomas Hanna published a small but important retrospective collection of essays titled *The Bergsonian Heritage*, and in the same year Shiv K. Kumar published *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*. Pete A. Y. Gunter must also be credited with having made Bergson studies immensely more accessible with his prodigious *Henri Bergson: A Bibliography* (1974; rev. edn. 1986).
65 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 143, 158.
66 Daniel Alipaz, "Bergson and Derrida: A Question of Writing Time as Philosophy's Other" in *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy—Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française* 19.2 (2011): 111–12.

8

Perception Sickness: Bergsonian Sensitivity and Modernist Paralysis

Paul Ardoin

"Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world"
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry"[1]

"Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call life: though unreal shapes be painted there"
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Lift not the painted veil"[2]

Henri Bergson broke no new ground when he declared artists particularly adept at tearing away the veil of everyday life to reveal a vibrant, fluctuating truth beneath. But when we examine that argument within his larger body of work on perception and movement, we find potential explanations for the conditions of paralysis, perpetual dream, and madness so common to a modernist literature that positioned itself as the principal imaginer of what we might call a "perception sickness." One character after another—always artists or artist figures—suffers from a too-keen perception with dangerous consequences. We find in both Bergson and modernist literature a particular way of viewing the perceptive powers of the artist, but the idea of perception-as-suffering is not a focus for Bergson (though he brushes against it more than once). His work is not interested in imagining the full results of tipping the perceptive scales in a certain way; it would be the fiction writers who would do the imaginative work of following those ideas down their various possible trajectories.[3] A parallel examination of the philosophy and the literature, then, provides an opportunity to better understand the implications and consequences of elements in Bergson's philosophy through modernist literature and, at the same time, to revisit and better understand by-now-standard foci in modernist literature—paralysis, an acute sensitivity to a daily bombardment of stimuli, the stream of consciousness, and the artistic temperament, to name a few—by returning to Bergson. Understanding modernism becomes intertwined with understanding Bergson.

According to Bergson, "perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it."[4] Perception is always a sort of recognition: "every perception is already memory" (*MM*, 150). This is why Bergson is so frequently called upon to provide a framework for discussing authors like Marcel Proust and William Faulkner. Bergson argues, "your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable

multitude of remembered elements" (150), filtered and directed toward productive use, what he will frequently call "action." "The normal self" is interested in "just enough . . . to lend useful aid to the present action" (163). We make use of what we need to function in the day-to-day world. And we need only "enough to follow with precision all the outlines of the present situation" (153). While we can access all levels of Bergson's famous memory cone (*MM*, 152 and elsewhere), life demands we access only what is useful in order to make sense of our situation.

Such is the typical operation of perception, but there are exceptions. Among these, Bergson lists the "man of *impulse*" (*MM*, 153, emphasis in original, throughout) as close to one extreme, and dreamers, madmen, children, "savages" (154), and artists as close to the other:

> To live only in the present, to respond to a stimulus by the immediate reaction which prolongs it, is the mark of the lower animals: the man who proceeds in this way is a man of *impulse*. But he who lives in the past for the mere pleasure of living there, and in whom recollections emerge into the light of consciousness without any advantage for the present situation, is hardly better fitted for action: here we have no man of impulse, but a *dreamer*. (*MM*, 153)

In our literal dreams, our memories are not "limited to the necessities of action." This, Bergson says, is a sort of "indifference" in us when we are not awake and therefore not required to act (154). It is not a luxury available to us in our waking lives, unless we live the relatively responsibility-free life of children—a condition William James describes "as one great blooming, buzzing confusion" we will gradually resolve as we mature.[5] James meant his metaphor to explain the perspective of an infant, but a certain strain of modernist literature suggests such a state is never far away: particular psychological types are liable to slip into that confusion at any time. The protagonist of Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, for example, continues to experience the world that way long past his infant years. Murphy "open[s] his eyes" to see that "the features emerging from chaos were the face against the big blooming confusion,"[6] and that feeling never really leaves (Beckett, *Murphy*, 245). Part of the condition of modern life, at least according to Virginia Woolf, is its "incessant shower of innumerable atoms." The question becomes what a person does with those "myriad impressions" her "mind receives,"[7] how to navigate a simple trip to buy flowers that becomes "a lark! . . . a plunge!" into that incessant shower.[8]

Bergson does not give us much on the unfortunate madman, overwhelmed by stimuli. He does, however, discuss characteristics of the artistic type in some detail. (The artist, we might infer, falls somewhere between the average, habitual perceiver and the madman.) Most men, Bergson tells us, are only able or willing to perceive that small portion of reality that is useful for action, but "now and then, by a lucky accident, men arise whose senses or whose consciousness are less adherent to life. Nature has forgotten to attach their faculty of perceiving to their faculty of acting. When they look at a thing, they see it for itself, and not for themselves . . . they are born *detached*."[9] These men are the artists. They boast "a fuller view of reality" than their fellows and are able to tap into what moves "beneath the quiet humdrum life that reason and society

have fashioned for us."[10] This is not far from a long history of romantic views of the artist, and it is all over modernist literature. We might think, for example, of Paul in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* who attributes his artistic success to his ability to see beyond the surface of life. The resulting work is "more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside really."[11] The artist who elicits our interest, who makes us ask "Why do I like this so?" (Lawrence, 189), is the one who gets beneath the veil.

This innate ability of the artist to get beneath the veil has been tied to a dark or weak side since at least the earliest modernist thought. Long before Edmund Wilson read modernist literature as a sort of enactment of authorial sickness in his seminal *Axel's Castle*, Charles Baudelaire celebrated the great "artist who was always, spiritually, in the condition of [the] convalescent."[12] Baudelaire's great artist is presented in contrast to "the majority of artists . . . no more than highly skilled animals, pure artisans." A great artist must possess that "mainspring of . . . genius . . . *curiosity*." Baudelaire—not so unlike Bergson—describes this condition as "like a return towards childhood. The convalescent, like the child, is possessed in the highest degree of the faculty of keenly interesting himself in things, be they apparently of the most trivial" ("Painter," 7). So, too, does Baudelaire anticipate Bergson when he aligns the condition with inebriation: "The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always *drunk*" (8). And like Bergson, he will leave a space on the scale from man of impulse to dreamer—placing children closer to dreamers, where "sensibility is almost the whole being" and the artist in a more moderate place, where he has access to a heightened sensibility ("genius is nothing more nor less than *childhood recovered* at will") but is protected from being as overwhelmed as the always-drunk child by "sound nerves" (8). Here we are not far from the philosophical and artistic acts of intuition by which the Bergsonian might place himself into sympathetic duration.

There is a tendency in modernist *thought*, then, to imagine an artist at the precipice of a dangerous pit of sensibility, diving in at will and returning easily to assemble the artistic fruits of her labor. This is the artist of Bergson's *Laughter*, who "delve[s] . . . deeper . . . in order to bring us face to face with reality itself" (78–9). Bergson does offer a brief, optimistic-sounding hypothesis of the result of a more extreme artistic detachment from the everyday. He declares, "Were this detachment complete, did the soul no longer cleave to action by any of its perceptions, it would be the soul of an artist such as the world has never yet seen" (78), but the implication here is that such an artist would have slid to the far end of the productivity spectrum with the dreamers and madmen. Is this the hermetically-sealed, sleeping world of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*? Or something more ominous? The Bergson of *Matter and Memory* tells us "There is hardly any perception which may not, by the increase of the action of its object upon our body, become an affection, and, more particularly, pain" (53). Pure art, we might conclude, equals pure pain. This is the artist over the precipice. This is a step beyond the "sound nerves" Baudelaire claims protect the man of genius and a step beyond Sigmund Freud's assertion "that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art."[13] This is closer to the territory of Cesare Lombroso on genius as a nervous

disorder (*The Man of Genius*) and Max Nordau on artists as "degenerates" in the same "anthropological family" as "criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics."[14] All of this can be filed under the old artist as pained genius motif, but a certain strain of modernist *literature* takes over the imaginative work of extending the very specific line of this inquiry—the affective dangers of heightened attention.

The necessity of the great deadener and the dangers of lifting the veil

"The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind—"
Emily Dickinson[15]

"Fortunate are we to have this obstacle,
infinitely precious to us is the veil!"
Henri Bergson, Mind-Energy[16]

If it was widely agreed that the metaphorical lifting of the veil allowed access beyond the habitual perception of everyday life, it was not so widely agreed that this was a universal good. Beckett perhaps paid the most attention to the dual nature of habit. What is described as the "great deadener" in *Waiting for Godot* is viewed as a compromise in Beckett's essay on Proust: "Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities, the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. Breathing is habit. Life is habit."[17] Our very existence depends upon that same habit which chains us and dulls us. Habit is, in fact, "a minister of dullness," but it is at the same time "an agent of security," counted upon "to spare its victim the spectacle of reality," to avoid "an exposure that has its advantages and disadvantages" (Beckett, "Proust," 517). An exposure to reality makes us "for a moment free" at the same time as we face those new "disadvantages" (517). Beckett describes this "pendulum oscillat[ion]" as moving back and forth between the "boredom that must be considered as the most tolerable because the most durable of human evils" and the "suffering" that comes when one "opens a window on the real" (520). This suffering, for Beckett, is "the main condition of the artistic experience" (520). He derives this theory from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, in which habit is described as "that skillful but very slow house keeper who begins by letting our mind suffer for weeks in a temporary arrangement; but whom we are nevertheless truly happy to discover, for without habit our mind, reduced to no more than its own resources, would be powerless to make a lodging habitable."[18] Proust's protagonist, on his way to becoming an artist, already sees habit as a way to tame chaos: habit is necessary to even recognize home. During the brief period of adjustment to a new locale (or even a newly darkened familiar room), before habit works its great deadening effects, Marcel is "anxious . . . restive . . . heart-pounding," until finally, "habit had changed the color of the curtains, silenced the clock . . . diminished the apparent height of the ceiling" (*Swann's Way*, 8). It is not

mere linguistic coincidence that habit made the lodging habitable. The veil of habit is "infinitely precious" (Bergson, *ME*, 55).

Paul Douglass's book on Bergson and T. S. Eliot enumerates the "precious," habitual actions of our lives. Douglass writes, "Without automatic responses, stock ideas, dead language, we would actually stand unable to function in a world requiring action, action, action. But though we should not stare into the sun, we need light."[19] If we *do* stare too long, too directly into the sun, if we tear away the veil completely, rather than merely peeking beneath, there are consequences. Here we might point to the importance of release in Freud's Principle of Constancy, in which "the nervous system endeavours to keep constant something in its functional relations that we may describe as the 'sum of excitation.' It puts this precondition of health into effect by disposing associatively of every sensible accretion of excitation or by discharging it by an appropriate motor reaction."[20] When extra excitations are not discharged, according to Freud, the result is a "psychical trauma" and a resulting hysteria (154). The nervous system, according to this theory, is a closed system, not unlike the "constant quantity" of "tears of the world" Pozzo argues in *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett, 26) or the argument in *Murphy* that the "quantum of wantum cannot vary"(38, 120). Once such a closed system is upended or flooded—overwhelmed—the heightened senses of the artist become a danger, to others and himself. The narrator of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* argues that "society can only exist if the normal, if the virtuous, and the slightly deceitful flourish, and if the passionate, the headstrong, and the too-truthful are condemned to suicide and madness."[21] In *Murphy* a doctor prescribes "freedom from poetic composition" to a patient "whose breakdown had been due less to the pint than to the pentameters" (55).

Much of modernist madness can be attributed to this sort of "dysfunctional hyperawareness" clinical psychologist Louis A. Sass describes as the result of "a heightening rather than a dimming of conscious awareness."[22] The protagonist of Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* is launched on a bi-polar whim of temperament in the novel's opening pages. He explains, "A rare and delicate mood, a feeling of wonderful lightheartedness had taken hold of me. I began examining the people I met or passed, I read the posters on walls, noticed a glance thrown at me from a sidecar, let every trivial occurrence influence me, every tiny detail that crossed my eyes and vanished."[23] This rare mood (and the related rare attention) becomes a serious problem for the character, though its development seems at first merely artistic: "Nothing escaped my eyes, I was sharp and my brain was very much alive, everything poured in toward me with a staggering distinctness as if a strong light had fallen on everything around me" (*Hunger*, 15). These same powers of observation that have the potential to serve the character so well in his art are paralyzing him in his life. The immediate result will be a hunger that only exacerbates his condition, leading to a laundry list of other effects. The Bergsonian artist cannot turn his attention back off.

These "organisms [are] keyed higher – and lower – than usual," according to Robert McAlmon's description in "The Futility of Energy" of a painter character who is even more artistic than other artists.[24] That inherent condition creates a string of dreamers, stalkers, madmen, and suicides—a catalog but also a sort of spectrum. In the category

of dreamers, we might place that literally-dozing HCE of *Finnegans Wake* or those who see too much and cannot or will not focus, like Strether in Henry James's *The Ambassadors* or Dowell in Ford's *The Good Soldier*. *Mrs. Dalloway*'s Septimus Smith, too, who (even before he sees too much in the war) is already hooked on reading and writing literature and demonstrating a particular susceptibility and blooming hyperawareness. " 'It has flowered,' the gardener might have said, had he opened the door" to Septimus's room in the days before the war and found him behaving much like the protagonists of Hamsun's *Hunger* and John Fante's *Ask the Dust*, "found him writing; found him tearing up his writing, found him finishing a masterpiece at three o'clock in the morning and running out to pace the streets, and visiting churches, and fasting one day, drinking another, devouring Shakespeare, Darwin, *The History of Civilisation*, and Bernard Shaw. Something was up" (Woolf, *Dalloway*, 85). Septimus is in love, but he is also opening up his powers of perception and expression, behavior grotesquely echoed by his frenzied, post-war writing sessions. His boss Mr. Brewer worries about this departure from ordinary life. He suggests Septimus play a bit more football.

The impulsive shifters go in this dreamer category as well, along with almost all the characters of a novel like *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In that book we learn, "The quiver was going through the man's body, as the stream of consciousness again changed its direction."[25] So too Laura, "the artistic one" from Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party": "Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze."[26] This after a morning of minor actions and giant swings in mood and thought. A fitting protagonist for a story that begins midthought with an "And," and a character who recognizes her own rarity: "she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else" (Mansfield, 30), any of the others—"she seemed to be different from them all" (38). Verbs like "flew" describe her movement but match also her thoughts, as she moves in an instant in her impressions. She finds a crowd of workmen "impressive," then she is embarrassed to be seen by them, then she tries to "look severe" and intimidate them, then she is "ashamed" again, then she is instantly delighted by a kind look because "his smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered" (30). But she is never a mere past-tense recovered. She is jetting off to the next emotion, always exclamatory: "What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. 'Cheer up, we won't bite,' their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning!" (30). These exclamation marks punctuate the wild emotional swings of *Hunger*, *Ask the Dust*, and the few moments of Louis-Ferdinand Céline works not reserved strictly for the omnipresent "three dots." In *Guignol's Band*, Céline opens with both: "Boom! Zoom! . . . It's the big smashup! . . . The whole street caving in at the water front! . . . It's Orléans crumbling and thunder in the Grand Café!"[27] The punctuation pushes, pulls, and connects, creating a sense of movement and flow, not unlike Wyndham Lewis's elongated "equals" signs or Filippo Marinetti's "plus" signs. Such formal effects have the capacity to parallel the emotional and psychological operations of characters in a permanent flux.

This flux—itself an effect of heightened perception—takes its toll, resulting in a heightened danger to the various artist characters and those who surround them. Take,

for example, the odd frequency of "stalking" in modernist prose literature, which we can read through our Bergsonian lens of hyperawareness as a sort of moving paralysis (a paralysis of uncontrollable motion). Aldous Huxley's short story "Half-Holiday" takes its protagonist from sensitivity to the environment to dream to fantasizing and following. The story opens with a mood in the air, or, a description of the environment that focuses as much on perception of it as the affective power of it. "London was beautiful, like a city of the imagination."[28] Trees are described as "incorrigibly hopeful," colors as "unbelievably fresh": "There was something contagious about the vernal miracle" (Huxley, 196). The environment exacerbates feelings of love and misery. It "intoxicate[s] . . . suddenly" (196–7). It encourages an inner "burgeoning" and the "sudden gush" (197). The story's protagonist, Peter Brett, is not a literal artist, but a disability has forced him into a life of a sort of poetic creation. Because of a stammer in his speech, Peter has become as "ingenious as those Anglo-Saxon poets" in his deployment of synonyms to get around "words beginning with a difficult letter" (208). So, like "every one else who came within [the] range of influence," this afternoon's environment "profoundly worked" on Peter, but even more than the others, he is overwhelmed into action (197). At first, he merely "turn[s] for comfort to his imagination" (198), in which he is a hero who saves a young girl from an injury or a child from drowning. As in the case of Mansfield's Laura, Peter's rapidly flowing thoughts infect the narrative discourse; the *ands* proliferate in an imagined conversation: "And she said, 'I'm an orphan too.' And that was a great bond between them. And they told one another how miserable they were. And she began to cry. And then he said, 'Don't cry. You've got me.' And at that she cheered up a little. And then they went to the pictures together. And finally, he supposed, they got married" (199).

So, too, does the form of the writing draw attention to the resulting action Peter will take, drawing out a sentence describing geography and surroundings before abruptly abbreviating Peter's ominous behavior. A resulting, attention-focusing imbalance arises when "The two young women turned out of the crowded walk along the edge of the Serpentine, and struck uphill by a smaller path in the direction of Watts's statue. Peter followed them" (201). His already-aroused attention sharpens even more and simultaneously grows more threatening: "A exquisite perfume lingered in the air behind them. He breathed it greedily and his heart began to beat with unaccustomed violence" (201). And again, "Greedily he sniffed their delicate perfume; with a kind of desperation, as though his life depended on it, he looked at them, he studied them" (202). Peter is not a dangerous man, and his story will end without violence, but for a time, he is out of control of his own mind, so overwhelmed is it by an attention to his surroundings.

The slowly-starving, perpetually-out-of-work writer protagonist of Hamsun's *Hunger* is mystified by his own lack of control. He spends his days wandering around the city of Christiania, taking in the sights of people and places around him, so much at the whim of his own temperament that when a woman passes, "Suddenly my thoughts shot off on a lunatic direction, and I felt myself possessed by a strange desire to frighten this woman, to follow her and hurt her in some way or other" (Hamsun, 13). And it is some sort of possession. The character explains, "I was conscious all the time that I was following mad whims without being able to do anything about it. My deranged

consciousness ran away with me and sent me lunatic inspirations, which I obeyed one after the other. No matter how much I told myself that I was acting idiotically, it did not help" (14). The end of the incident is treated as a relief for the follower. It is not until the woman is safely inside her house that the narrator "escape[s] by turning into a side street" (17). A close call most of all, it seems, for the protagonist, debilitated and paralyzed-in-motion by his own senses.

The scene is strikingly similar to the one Woolf would craft years later in *Dalloway*, when another Peter—her Peter Walsh—thinks, "But she's extraordinarily attractive . . . as, walking across Trafalgar Square in the direction of the Haymarket, came a young woman who, as she passed Gordon's statue, seemed, Peter Walsh thought (susceptible as he was), to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting" (Woolf, *Dalloway*, 52). Peter discerns (with the help of a stirred imagination) all of this in an instant, and, "stealthily fingering his pocket-knife he start[s] after her to follow this woman" (53). Like Hamsun's protagonist, Peter is not likely to actually harm the woman, but he does fondle his knife while thinking himself "an adventurer, reckless . . . swift, daring, indeed . . . a romantic buccaneer" (Woolf, *Dalloway*, 53). When the woman finally enters her home, Peter simply thinks, "Well, I've had my fun" and goes on about his business (54).

An instance of stalking comes to an equally uneventful (but funnier) end in *The Road to Los Angeles* (written 1936, published 1985) for Arturo Bandini, the budding writer-philosopher who also shows up in *Ask the Dust*. An unfamiliar woman's "presence jumped across the room . . . like a deluge of electricity";[29] "the curved mystery of her form flood[ed] me" (Fante, *Road*, 124). Arturo takes everything in right away: "one glance was enough for me. I would never forget that face," and the catalog of appearance details that follows does indeed demonstrate an incredible perceptive ability. "Frenzied" and "deliriously and impossibly happy," Arturo follows the woman: "I just walked right out of there and down the street after that woman . . . I didn't really know I was following her. When I realized it I stopped dead in my tracks and snapped my fingers. Oh! So now you're a pervert! A sex-pervert!" (120). He is unsure of his own intentions, but his perception of the world and his attention to the woman have (as in "Half-Holiday") created a sort of feedback loop, intensifying as it gathers inertia. Now he notices "that smell of the sea, the clean salted sweetness of the air, the cold cynical indifference of the stars, the sudden laughing intimacy of the streets, the brazen opulence of light in darkness, the glowing languor of slitted crescent moon. I loved it all. I felt like squealing" (Fante, *Road*, 120). When the woman lights a cigarette and drops the match, Arturo leaps at the opportunity to perceive more. He "picked it up . . . half burned, a sweet-smelling pine match and very beautiful like a piece of rare gold. I kissed it . . . I put it in my mouth and began to chew it. The carbon tasted of a delicacy, a bitter-sweet pine, brittle and succulent. Delicious, ravishing . . . The finest match I ever ate" (122). The perception and obsession build to the point where finally, when Arturo catches up to the woman, he can do nothing but cough, clear his throat, and take off running "like a fool . . . elbows chugging and nostrils meeting the salt air," unsure of why he followed the woman and why he is running from her (124–5).

Equally unsure of their motives and intentions are characters like the speaker of Breton's *Nadja*, who both cites a "well-known lack of frontiers between *non-madness* and madness [which] does not induce me to accord a different value to the perceptions and ideas which are the result of one or the other"[30] and "suddenly" senses a "sudden vividness" which causes him to "run, completely at random, in one of the three directions [Nadja] might have taken" (91). The repetition of *sudden*-ness in the sentence—"Suddenly, while I am paying no attention whatever to the people on the street, some sudden vividness on the left-hand sidewalk"—operates similarly to Fante's references to the "deluge" and the "flood." The characters with the blessing of keen perception cannot so easily control its timing or power. Bandini manages to mostly avoid consequences for his lapses of control, but other modernist characters will not so easily do so.

Sarah, the protagonist of Richard Wright's "Long Black Song," will see attention spur a passion with a deadly outcome. Sarah is perhaps already primed by a naturally Bergsonian condition: "We git erlong widout time" she says to a confused traveling salesman who wants her to purchase a clock.[31] Her explanation positions clock time against a more natural flow the salesman will view as existing "without time." His product for sale is a combination clock and graphophone that will simultaneously introduce clock time and recorded music into her life. Clock time is a devastating introduction for Sarah, who is already feeling the pain of her husband's temporary absence but had previously experienced his trips away and his returns home as one, uninterrupted cycle, another of the natural rhythms of her world. The introduction of clock time breaks up the cycle and creates a frustrating mountain of seconds, minutes, and hours to overcome in the wait for her husband. Much like the Eleatic paradoxes Bergson takes on in *Matter and Memory* and elsewhere, clock time makes the indivisible divisible, and at the same time, infinite. Such is the nature of Zeno's paradox of the race between Achilles and the tortoise. Achilles will never catch the tortoise once the latter has a lead. He can only reach where the tortoise just was, creating an infinity of division—I am two steps behind, one step behind, half a step behind, a quarter of a step behind, an eighth of a step behind. Sarah might have survived the wait for her husband before it was separated from his return by a million ticks of the second hand, but once she begins to sense every second, she is doomed, paralyzed by her own awareness: now "the gilt on the corners" of the clock/graphophone "sparkled. The color in the wood glowed softly" (132). And the sounds of the recordings will take her over, "her body caught in the ringing coils of music . . . She rose on circling waves . . . Higher and higher she mounted . . . Her blood surged . . . Her blood ebbed . . . She gave up" (133). By the time the music stops, it is night and Sarah is more easily coerced into sex with the salesman,[32] leading to a struggle between the man and her husband, and finally, a possible lynching and multiple deaths. When Sarah's Bergsonian ways of experiencing the world come into contact with the multiplying minutia of the everyday tick of the clock, the awareness piles up, and the infinity of division overwhelms.

Any so sensitive human, Frederick Tarr warns us in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*, is always at risk when faced with art. Only "the lack of art or illusion in actual life enables the sensitive man to exist. Likewise the phenomenal lack of nature in the

average man's existence is lucky and necessary for him."[33] The same Lewis will explore his love-hate relationship with Bergson and Bergsonism in much detail and exquisite aphorism in 1927's *Time and Western Man*[34]—and his preface to the 1918 version of *Tarr* already bears the beginnings of that later attack. Charlie Chaplin, for example, shows up as "the little scurvy totem" in *Tarr* (11) before serving as key evidence against the "time-children" (55) and the "child-cult" (53) Lewis attacks in *Time and Western Man*'s first book, "The Revolutionary Simpleton." Gertrude Stein, Joyce, Chaplin, and Bergson are all degrading space, separation, and stable and fixed borders of identity, according to Lewis, and we can see that anxiety imagined and depicted not only in Lewis's fiction but in the fiction of many less critical artists. The inevitable end for Woolf's Septimus—an already-sensitive soul, senses further primed by art, borderline before the war, irretrievably shocked after—was perhaps always an early death. By the day of Mrs. Dalloway's party, Septimus has become an exaggerated and dark parody of the artist, finding too much truth and beauty at every turn:

> To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them; and the flies rising and falling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, in mockery, dazzling it with soft gold in pure good temper . . . all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere. (69)

The new Septimus became "excited suddenly for no reason . . . and waved his hands and cried out that he knew the truth! He knew everything!" (140). Still the artist-figure, Septimus's veil has been permanently torn. He experiences feelings described as "exquisite" in response to the "ordinary." He sees in poetry, with alliterative swallows swooping and swerving. Flies make their way into the scene, emphasizing the minute detail in which Septimus views the world, while also alluding to death and decay. The very sun mocks him with its shifting, dazzling rays. Septimus is overwhelmed. Perhaps Tarr is right to describe the English and their artists as particularly "subject to shock, *over*-sensitiveness" (Lewis, 40).

Understanding modernism to understand Bergson

For Bergson, the inseparable pair of perception and memory only appears at its most unadulterated in dreams (a paralytic state for the dreamer) and madness. The hyper-perceptive stalker-flâneur of Hamsun, Woolf, Fante, et al., exhibits the symptoms that are always a risk for the professional observer. Guy Debord's late-modern, Situationist project of aimless-(in practical terms)-but-hyperaware wandering through city streets (called "dériving" or the "dérive") drew warnings of the same risk. A 1963 letter to Debord cautions, "just as analysis unaccompanied with anything else is almost always *contraindicated*, so continual dériving is dangerous to the extent that the individual,

having gone too far (not without bases, but . . .) without defenses, is threatened with explosion, dissolution, dissociation, disintegration. And thence the relapse into what is termed 'ordinary life,' that is to say, in reality, into 'petrified life.'"[35] The letter's author "now repudiate[s]" his earlier "propaganda for a *continuous dérive*." An extended retreat from ordinary life—no matter how petrified or false that habitual life may seem—is dangerous. The human mind is not designed to dwell too long in the durational flow. "Consciousness" itself "might be [thought of as] a thoroughgoing illness" (Sass, 8), curable only if containable.

Bergson explains the extremely selective process of normal perception in *Matter and Memory*. "In the space of a second," he writes, "red light – the light which has the longest wavelength, and of which, consequently, the vibrations are the least frequent – accomplishes 400 billion successive vibrations" (205). The amount to be perceived in that mere second, according to Bergson, is so great that to be "separately distinguished in our duration" in comprehensible succession would take "more than 250 centuries" (206). "Millions of phenomena," it seems, "succeed each other while we hardly succeed in counting a few" (207). Modernist literature offers us a parade of artistic characters who fail by succeeding in counting a few more. These figures are variously disoriented, paralyzed (in place or in uncontrollable movement), crazed, often killed. They are sentenced to death or derangement by hyperawareness, a condition most effectively read through Bergson's philosophical appropriation and scientific reframing of a much older metaphor for artistic perception.

There are perhaps implications here about Bergsonian intuition as method, though we need not read such dire consequences as death-by-Bergsonism. Bergson already tells us that the life of action requires a large dose of habit and a veil of illusion; we cannot, the implication goes, live philosophically all of the time. To do so is not simply inaction but *mis*-action. We cannot live simultaneously in philosophy (in duration, in ourselves) and in society. Bergsonian thought, then—intuition as method—is preferable to the fixity of a Bergson-*ism*. Lens, that is, not lifestyle; Bergsonian tools at arm's-length, at small dosage.

Bergson's definition of comedy in his essay *Laughter* is rooted in the imposition of the mechanical on the organic. When we encrust what was flexible, we turn man into machine. No longer able to make adjustments on the fly, he slips on a banana peel. Some of the decidedly dark novels and short stories I catalog here offer far fewer chuckles than others, but funny or not, directly parodic of the artist figure or not, they depict a perception that encrusts the perceiver, a useful picture of philosophical living gone awry.

Notes

1 Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley* (London: Bibliophile Books), 642.
2 Shelley, "Sonnet," in *The Selected Poetry and Prose*, 224.
3 Paul Eluard and André Breton demonstrate modernist literature's desire and ability to do this kind of work in their collaboration, *The Immaculate Conception*, in which

a section of "The Possessions" offers "Attempted Simulation[s]" of "Mental Debility," "Acute Mania," "General Paralysis," "Interpretive Delirium," and "Dementia Praecox." Breton, Eluard, and Soupault, *The Automatic Message:* The Magnetic Fields *and* The Immaculate Conception (London: Atlas Press, 1998).

4 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Paul and Palmer (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2005), 133.
5 William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 462.
6 Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 29.
7 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, 1984), 150.
8 Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1981), 3.
9 Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Carol Publishing, 1992), 114.
10 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 80.
11 D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (New York: Modern Library, 1922), 189.
12 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1964), 7.
13 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (London: Psychology Press, 2001), 85.
14 Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896). Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1895), *vii*. See also William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905) on the likelihood "insane temperament, loss of mental balance, [and] psychopathic degeneration . . . when combined with a superior quality of intellect in an individual, make it more probable that he will make his mark and affect his age" (22–3).
15 Emily Dickinson, Poem 1129, in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. T. H. Johnson (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), 507.
16 Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. W. Carr (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 70.
17 Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, in *Dramatic Works* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 83. Beckett, "Proust," in *Poems, Short Fiction, Criticism* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 515.
18 Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Penguin, 2004), 8.
19 Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (Louisville, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 36.
20 Freud, "On the Theory of Hysterical Attacks," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Norton), 153–4.
21 Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (New York: John Lane Company, 1915), 291.
22 Louis A. Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4, 392.
23 Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*, trans. Robert Bly (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 7.
24 Robert McAlmon, "The Futility of Energy," in *A Hasty Bunch* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 256.
25 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Stilwell, KS: Digireads, 2008), 135.

26 Katherine Mansfield, "The Garden Party," in *The Garden Party* (Middlesex, UK: The Echo Library, 2006), 30, 32.
27 Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Guignol's Band* (New York: New Directions, 1969), 3, 6.
28 Aldous Huxley, "Half-Holiday," in *Two or Three Graces* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), 196.
29 John Fante, *Ask the Dust* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2006). Fante, *The Road to Los Angeles* (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1985), 119.
30 André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1960), 144.
31 Richard Wright, "Long Black Song," in *Uncle Tom's Children* (New York: HarperPerennial, 2004), 131.
32 The event is correctly identified as a rape by most critics, but still one for which the victim is partially conditioned by the music, the clock, and so on.
33 Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918), 63.
34 Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and company, 1927).
35 Ivan Chtcheglov, "Letters from Afar," trans. K. Knabb, in *Internationale Situationniste* 9, repr., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), 372.

9

"Blast . . . Bergson?" Wyndham Lewis's "Guilty Fire of Friction"[1]

Charlotte de Mille

Etienne Gilson characterized the first third of the twentieth century as the "age of Bergson."[2] Described as "the most dangerous man in the world," Bergson was regarded as *the* figure of his day. Yet, outside the recent revival of interest in Bergson's work in some quarters of philosophy, it is rarely given proper consideration as a force that helped to shape, if not define, culture at the start of the last century. For Bergsonism was not only a phenomenon which provoked the leading thinkers of a generation, but it also sparked popular interest. His lectures attracted a huge lay public. In Britain, beyond a plethora of articles in the academic press, the popular journals *The Spectator* and *Saturday Review* both carried reviews of his texts in 1911. In March 1914, the international *Gazette du Bon Ton* advertised an appropriate attire should one be invited to meet the eminent professor. So what was it in Bergson's philosophy that was so captivating?

Partly, the answer may be found in what is for the most part accessible prose: Bergson's use of example and description famously led to Bertrand Russell's dismissal of Bergson's "pretty fairy tales."[3] Partly too, in the immensely reassuring, if grossly misrepresented, face of Bergsonism. *Creative Evolution*, published in French in 1907, was a run-away success. With the *élan vital*, Bergson effectively bridged the gap between the insecurity engendered by neo-Darwinian theory and the human need for some form of spiritual force. Bergson's primacy of intuition gave British audiences the misleading impression that extended education did not necessarily provide any advantage when confronted with his texts. It was precisely Bergson's broad appeal that fired Wyndham Lewis into an obsessive and multifaceted revolt against anything that could be interpreted in a Bergsonian context. Despite the work of David Ayers, Paul Edwards, and Sue-Ellen Campbell, the relationship between Lewis and Bergson is often far too easily glossed over. It is this relationship, then, that I wish to give greater consideration to here.

The concepts of influence, self-definition, and flawed humanity create a tightly woven mesh in Lewis's thought that ensures its lasting opacity. To quote Lewis himself: "When mankind cannot overcome a personality, it has an immemorial way out of this difficulty. It becomes it. It imitates and assimilates that ego until it is no longer one" ("Enemy," 67). Harold Bloom has transformed influence into a theoretical mode in

which it is possible to trace the creative process. Influence is "a metaphor, one that implicates a matrix of relationships—imagistic, temporal, spiritual, psychological—all of them ultimately defensive in nature . . . the anxiety of influence *comes out of* a complex act of strong mis-reading, a creative interpretation" in which the original is mutated beyond recognition.[4] The anxiety of influence is a construct that Lewis would have understood well, and his oppositionary tactics have been noted by a host of critics. Bernard Lafourcade, in particular, has made much of Lewis's "secret complicity" and "strategy of concealment" with regard to Freud.[5] These strategies are equally in action in Lewis's early relation to Bergson.

Lewis became aware of Bergson at an exceptionally early date for a young British art student. Recollecting his Paris days, he claimed to have "followed Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France, and shared the philosophical studies of friends of mine then at the Ecole Normale."[6] It is clear from letters to his mother that Lewis was comfortably established in Paris by 1903, during which year Bergson was lecturing on the history of different methods of thought from the ancients to Kant. According to one attendee, the course concerned the "method of intuition and the method of analysis,—of absolute knowledge and relative knowledge, by signs and concepts."[7] Lewis is frustratingly reticent about his artistic and intellectual activities in these letters; therefore that Bergson is not mentioned should not be off-putting in any absolute sense. Three of his editions of Bergson's texts have survived, however, and they are now in the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin. It is the annotations in these copies that enable this essay to offer a full reconsideration of Lewis's Bergsonism.[8] These three editions are: a compendium of extracts from *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Creative Evolution*, entitled *Henri Bergson; choix de texte avec Étude du Système Philosophique*, put together by Rene Gillouin and published in Paris in 1910; T. E. Hulme's authorized translation of *An Introduction to Metaphysics* from 1913; and *Creative Evolution*, in a 1920 reprint of the 1911 authorized English translation by Arthur Mitchell. A key issue for my research has been the dates of these publications, and in particular that of *Creative Evolution*. Lewis scholarship is agreed that 1920 was a year in which much pre-war and Vorticist thought was under reconsideration. What then, of Lewis's annotations? Surprisingly, these seem to reflect his earlier concerns rather than looking forward to other projects of the twenties, or, most obviously, *Time and Western Man*. Highly informative, they consolidate the intellectual and theoretical context from which Lewis's most explosive work grew.

Little of Lewis's work, artistic or literary, has survived from his first few years in Paris. Speculative reasons for this need not concern us here, for, in any event, Lewis apparently claimed that "what he started to do in Brittany he was to pursue for ever."[9] It is indicative of the importance that Lewis himself gave to these short travel stories that he chose to re-publish them as a collection in 1927, for which he provided two explanatory introductions. In the "Meaning of the Wild Body" (1927), Lewis aimed to elucidate the "angle from which they are written . . . in giving a general rough definition of what 'comic' means for their author."[10] Based on this statement, Paul O'Keefe, in his introduction to the Penguin edition, has chosen to contextualize this work by returning to Bergson's *Laughter*, noting in concurrence with Alan Munton

that Lewis's definition of the comic is a direct inversion of that found in Bergson's 1900 treatise.[11] For Lewis, the comic is to be found in the "sensations resulting from the observations of a *thing* behaving like a person" (Lewis, "Meaning," 158). O'Keefe no doubt had in mind Bergson's maxim that "the attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine" (Bergson, *Laughter*, 29). However, Bergson's first contention is not to the mechanization of the human, but rather to the animation of matter, just as Lewis himself expounded: "Several [philosophers] have defined man as 'an animal which laughs.' They might equally well have defined him as an animal which is laughed at; for if any other animal, or some lifeless object, produces the same effect, it is always because of some resemblance to man" (Bergson, *Laughter*, 3–4).

It is arguable that, to a certain degree, Lewis viewed Bergson's theorization of evolution as an extension of this insight, a mere shifting of the frame in which it could be explored. Bergson, in broaching his infamous concept of the *élan vital*, supported the neo-Darwinian view that genetic variation was caused by "an impulsion which passes from germ to germ across the individuals."[12] Lewis highlighted this sentence in his copy of *Creative Evolution*, noting "innate impulsation [sic] in *all* the germs etc." The "germ," the most basic element of life in Bergson's formulation, is nevertheless the most crucial facet for adaptation even of the highest organisms. Life in general, and humanity in particular, is, in this formulation, reduced to the lowest common denominator. Lewis's bizarre imagery of vegetated humanity in both stories and drawings may therefore be read as a satirical critique of Bergson's evolutionism, whilst remaining a critique that hinges upon Bergson's theory of the comic.

Lewis first attempted to theorize his intentions in writing the stories collected as *The Wild Body* in a short article called "Inferior Religions," probably dating from the winter of 1914–15. It is made clear that his exercise was primarily an anthropological one, which took as its object of study the "fascinating imbecility of the creaking men machines."[13] His narrator in *The Wild Body* takes the role of a "showman" who directs his cast to unveil through the "complexity of the rhythmic scheme," a "subtle and wider mechanism," which we discover is the sociological core of these communities. In their "imitation and standardizing of [the] self" (151), these individuals and the communities of which they are part conform absolutely to Lewis's definition of the comic. Whilst I do not intend to develop Lewis's comedy here, one further point may be made. The narrator in one of the first of these stories, "Les Saltimbanques" observed that "violence is the essence of laughter . . . It must be extremely primitive in origin, though of course its function in civilized life is to keep the primitive at bay."[14] The stories emphasize the barbarism at the root of these mock communities, and, importantly, an argument could be made for the Vorticist play "Enemy of the Stars" to be read in a comic light.

Lewis's first concern, then, be it expressed in literary or visual terms, was with the inhumanity, or at least primal bestiality, of mankind.[15] He marked Bergson's statement that "in a large number of animal species (generally parasites) phenomena of fixation, analogous to those of vegetables, can be observed."[16] It is precisely this that informs many of his "pseudo-pastoral" drawings attributed to 1912. As Paul Edwards has said, the figures in these landscapes are fused to the land from the waist down.[17] The pencil,

ink and gouache *Figure Holding a Flower* (FIGURE 9.1 1912, collection of Walter and Harriet Michel) indeed is submerged to the neck, its torso molded comparably to the rock that surrounds it. The left arm serves not as a division but an echo of the contours whose colors leach across the hesitantly defined limb. It may be suggested that the figure is in an early stage of becoming, for, unlike the merged torso and arm, its legs traverse the space in an attempt at three-dimensionality. Their puny form undoes such a view, however, and the figure's androgyny assumes greater significance. This complements the asexual biology of the drooping flower, for which the right arm acts as an impotent stem. The vegetative analogy is equally practised in the untraced drawing *Two Figures* (1912), whose torsos jut out of the earth in the same direction as the tree behind them, apparently sculpted by the prevailing wind. (And it is worth noting in passing that *Two Figures* actually depicts three—the foremost figure holding a baby.) These are anthropological specimens, fulfilling Bergson's warning in *Creative Evolution* that "evolution is not only a movement forward; in many cases we observe a marking time, and still more often a deviation or turning back."[18]

It is clear that Lewis's speculation implicated this vegetative state in his exploration of the self. These figures are absurd, as much so as the idea of the "cabbage reading Flaubert" with which Lewis illustrated his comic theory in "The Meaning of the Wild Body" (158). A passage of *Creative Evolution* which discusses genetic individuality and aging provoked a sideways comment from Lewis, typical of the way in which he reacted against Bergson whilst adopting his metaphor and imagery. Where Bergson's text merely read "it is easy enough to argue that a tree never grows old, since the tips of its branches are always equally young," Lewis transformed the statement into a diabolical vision. "The Tree," he noted, "interesting comparison with life of a man. If all his life grew and grew like a snowball, dead inside, live only at the surface, till it filled the Universe like the swelling expanding trunk of [a] tree."[19] The figures of the 1912 drawings lack depth, and whilst their physical past may be encoded in their substance, any mental past is entirely absent. It is this belief that underpins Lewis's conception of the contemporary state of humanity, and that he expounded in his Vorticist play "Enemy of the Stars" (1914).

In the intervening two years from the production of the drawings discussed above and the writing of "Enemy of the Stars," Lewis's engagement with these issues deepened considerably to encompass the psychological and societal affects of the condition of degradation. The stories and images associated with the *Wild Body* project humorously presented what Lewis, in 1925, was to castigate as that "unfortunate by-product of the human state": the self.[20] The characters that parade across the pages of these stories are without exception "puppets,"[21] the "iron and blood automaton"[22] that rigorously follows its role or fate, without question. They are, with the possible exception of the circus troupe in "Les Saltimbanques," stereotypes that can be identified by characteristic actions, whether met individually or as part of a social group. Lewis's program is to reveal the absurdity of these overtly recognizable personalities as being in fact personless. In *Wild Body*, this is achieved by highlighting their lack of originality and their surface engagement with the life they lead. "Enemy of the Stars," however, profoundly questions the constitution of a sense of self, and in the insoluble problem it articulates,



Figure 9.1 Figure Holding a Flower (1912)
Source: Private Collection, on extended loan to The Courtauld Gallery, London

provides a sophisticated development from the crudely standardized self satirically exposed in *Wild Body*.

In "Enemy of the Stars," Lewis adopts a dualistic presentation of the self akin to Bergson's in *Time and Free Will* (1889). As ever, Lewis's methodology comprises a complex manipulation of Bergson's system. Here the superficial life—life on the

surface—is equated to space, and the interior life of the mind to time, equated to Bergson's experiential psychology known as "duration." Ultimately Lewis's priority was for a spatial art, yet in Bergson's system this would fail to provoke sustained reflection. For as Bergson makes clear in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), the rationalist method of the psychologist which re-constructs self-hood from fragmented states by analysis, merely builds "form without content."[23] Equally, Lewis argued, the interiority of duration precluded its clear communication from individual to individual and led to a dysfunctional society. His task was therefore to expose the flaw of subjectivity inherent in duration, whilst appropriating its insight to an objective spatial realm.

In *Time and Free Will* Bergson provided an explanation of duration in which he elucidated the role of society in the creation, or rather evolution, of selfhood: "Consciousness, goaded by an insatiable desire to separate, substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives reality only through the symbol. As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general, and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self."[24] This, in essence, is the path of "Enemy of the Stars." Of the two protagonists, Hanp and Arghol, Hanp may be read as Arghol's "refracted" self. Lewis emphasizes Hanp's identity as the "physical parallel of his Master," who in turn is described as a "sunken mirror." Both share "one soul" only.[25] The play traces Arghol's battle against the communal tendencies of his consciousness, and to this end, the character assumes the role of visionary. Self "is the one piece of property all communities have agreed it is illegal to possess," he claims. And, transposing his language to evolutionary metaphor, "Self is the race that lost" ("Enemy," 66). As less well adapted to life within a community, individual identity has been bred out of humanity. Bergson's vision of man at the apex of evolution, his aspiration for a future "superman," a man more fully in possession of himself, is shown to be impossible.[26] Whilst Arghol's insights might place him as an archaic "mastadon" type survival, his attempt to define his own identity is simultaneously rendered futile by the constraints of his environment ("Enemy," 64).

Lewis's descriptions of Arghol emphasize the extent to which he has been swallowed by the evolutionary tendency to backwardness. Physically akin to the vegetative humanity of the 1912 drawings, Arghol is first met sitting with his "hands [forming] a thick shell fitting [the] back of [his] head, his face a grey vegetable core" (65). Both characters are mere "brain specks of the vertiginous seismic vertebrae, slowly living lines of landscape" (66). Whatever Arghol may claim, Hanp and he share a common root, and for this reason, his fight with this other self is as doomed as it is inevitable: as a "blunt paw of Nature" he and his actions "mechanically . . . become part of a responsive landscape" (75–6). With the tone of a (pseudo-) scientific law, Bergson judged that man's "tendency to individuate is opposed and at the same time completed by an antagonistic . . . tendency to associate" (*CE*, 273). The struggle implicit in Bergson's language of *Creative Evolution* is once again taken to extremis by Lewis, for whom such antagonism defines the relationship between Hanp and Arghol.

This reading may be supported by another drawing dating from 1912, now in the collection of Tate, London. Entitled *Two Mechanics* [FIGURE 9.2], the figures merge through their feet, yoked together to form one precarious being. The right hand figure takes up the form of the shadow of the foremost figure's previous position, as if dragging the past into the present. In spite of the postures, there is little evidence of actual movement in Lewis's drawing: both are anchored leadenly to the earth beneath, sculpted to their stances by the arcs which sweep backwards. Progress is denied, and to follow the temporal metaphor, there is no change of state during this "lived" experience. Rather it is one, ever-lasting monotony. They are, however, *two* figures, as Lewis's title emphasizes. Two selves, melded together through their mutual influence, yet both also formed in accordance to an external order. And this order, Lewis implies, is no more than the near-empty, undulating landscape that is invisible from their subterraneous space. It is blindly, unconsciously followed, Lewis again suggests with the blank cavernous profiles. For once, the eye to which he gave so much significance in both his stories and visual art is absent. As we have already seen, mechanism was the grounding principle in Bergson's and Lewis's theories of the comic. For Bergson, the "comic person is unconscious," having an "effect of automatism and inelasticity" (*Laughter*, 18). However, in this instance, there is little to identify these figures as comic. The mechanical state is far too great a threat, and likewise, it is this sentiment that lifts the drama of Arghol and Hanp from being yet another "Wild Body" experiment to the level of a text which takes such mechanism seriously.

Arghol and Hanp function not only as parts of one individual, but also as separate beings. In a moment of insight, Arghol realizes: "Men have a loathsome deformity called Self; affliction got through indiscriminate rubbing against their fellows. Social excrescence" (Lewis, "Enemy," 71). It is this threat of merger with the other, and the resulting collapse of fundamental difference to the homogeneity of Bergson's superficial self that holds Arghol's vision with tenacity. In a self-condemning invocation of Platonic idealism, the "process and creation of life, without any exception," is viewed as a "grotesque degradation and 'souillure' of the original solitude of the soul."[27] Arghol's geographical (spatial) escape from the community of the town where he had previously lived can never be, therefore, a mental escape also. In Hanp's words, "to have humanity inside you—to keep a doss house" is a recurrent problem regardless of physical separation ("Enemy," 71).

The point is driven home through Arghol's dream world, which is manifestly outside space. In the first of three revelatory dream situations, Arghol sees himself visiting a café from his past Berlin days. Just as it was in Lewis's first published story, "The Pole" (1909), the social personality utilized in any meeting of people is characterized as a "parasite," for the relationship is necessarily one of dialogue, dependence, and influence.[28] Arghol's friends at the café table are rendered "companions of [the] parasite self . . . My dealings with these men is with their parasite composite selves not with them."[29] Bergson makes a similar point in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, where he refers to the person met in pragmatic duration, who is "known to me only by so many comparisons with persons or things I know already." These are "signs by which he is expressed more or less symbolically," as opposed to the immanent self expressed



Figure 9.2 Two Mechanics (1912)
Source: ©Tate, London 2012

in "pure" duration (*IM*, 27). For Lewis, the parasitical personality is again identified in evolutionary terms as the lowest form of life, unable even to sustain itself as an independent entity—a "transgression," or "awful swerving" of the progress to more sophisticated life.[30] And once again, the evidence suggests that the root for this is also Bergsonian: "While consciousness sleeps in the animal which has degenerated into a motionless parasite," Bergson stated, "it probably awakens in the vegetable" (*CE*, 118–19). This passage is extensively lined by Lewis in his edition, with the comment: "Reverse order of animal and vegetable consciousness. Of what does this consciousness consist in man: and how would it be affected by adoption of the anti-concept?" Arguably, Lewis's entire project is an exploration of these questions, and the 1912 drawings envisage the farcical consequences of their logical conclusion. Equally, it is just this fear of reversal that so drives Arghol's dire quest.

Arghol's great effort to overcome his fear of merger with another is entropy. Seeing a "man directly beneath his friend [who] . . . has been masquerading" as himself, his defence of the self can only be a negation of that identity which had been appropriated. "I am not Arghol" ("Enemy," 78). Yet, as he had already complained, the statement cannot be fulfilled, for "self . . . is like murder on my face and hands," the "stain won't come out" (66). Arghol's flaw is his confusion of the pragmatic aspect of self as something which is identifiable externally, with the elusive, ever-shifting entity which contains his authenticity. To quote once again from *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson defined the "ego" as merely "a sign by which the primitive . . . intuition which has furnished the psychologist with his subject matter is recalled, it is only a word . . . The error lies in believing that while remaining on the same level we can find behind the word a thing" (*IM*, 36). To perceive the true quality of his "stain," then, Arghol's alternative course is necessarily one directed away from the social life, a course of isolation combined with acute self-awareness, one in fact comparable to Bergson's duration. Where Bergson believed that "[t]o get a notion of this irreducibility and irreversibility . . . we must do violence to the mind,"[31] Arghol describes self-hood as a "sacred act of violence" that runs counter to his programmed tendencies. Knowledge gleaned through an "offence against the discipline of the universe" may only be partial, however ("Enemy," 66, 70). In a passage Lewis labels "the fringe of INTUITION," Bergson described how the "feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in *pure duration* is . . . an indistinct fringe that fades off in darkness." Thus Arghol: "anything I possess is drunk up here on the world's brink."[32]

Arghol's program is nevertheless to grasp this intuition as a key by which to transcend, or escape, his condition of humanity. Accordingly, his plan is to "accumulate in myself . . . dense concentration of pig life. Nothing spent, stored rather in stagnation . . . So burst Death's membrane through, slog beyond, not float in appalling distances" ("Enemy," 68). The surface social life is rather a living death; death is cast as "anti-manhood" ("Enemy," 74) and in Bergson's terms, it is the plant that has a "membrane of cellulose" (*CE*, 117). Arghol's ardent desire is to "leave violently slow monotonous life" (i.e. death), a feat only possible if one can "cling to any object, dig your nails in earth." Whilst this phrase brings to mind the regressive and sub-human vegetative imagery of 1912, it leads also in an entirely new direction. Curiously, Lewis

was to replace the phrase "in earth" in his 1932 re-edition of the play to read "into the galloping terra firma beneath you."[33] The revision marks the influence of Bergson's most florid image: "The whole history of humanity, in space and time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death" (*CE*, 286). Lewis's adaptation of this passage is particularly noteworthy, for it comes from a section of *Creative Evolution* that captured popular imagination, and indeed, pandered to the poetical mind of the lay reader. Often cited in the press, it would have been immediately recognizable by the great majority of *Blast*'s readers at the time of its publication. If Lewis's program in 1932 is to clarify thought implied in the earlier edition, the absence of direct reference in 1914 can only be a considered an act intended to veil his influencing sources. I would therefore suggest that it was only when Bergson's impact was greatly diminished that Lewis felt it safe to acknowledge his work. In any event, the real question must be why he felt it necessary to instate (or reinstate) such an explicit reference to this passage at a time when it had certainly become obscure.

With regard to Arghol's resolution, Bergson's lyrical prose makes it plain that his desire to escape all vestiges of human contact remains misguided. The influence of the history of humanity is one that bears down on the individual irrepressibly, yet not to engage in this history is merely to float in appalling distances. Whilst in the Lewisian terms of 1912, to dig oneself into the earth is only to embed oneself in the very [in-] humanity of the vegetable state that Arghol wished to escape, entering the duration of another thing on its own terms, accumulating this duration as part of one's own, is the key to the method of intuition expounded in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Using lived time to engage in space, one may pass beyond the living death, but only at the expense of the individual self. For logically, to admit these durations is to become multiple, to become therefore, again, "inhuman," or what Bergson termed "superhuman." This multiplicity is not at all that of the superficial selves of Hanp's "doss house," but rather what Lewis would come to express as the "one synthetic and various ego" (Lewis, "Inferior Religions," 151). It is this that Arghol fails to grasp: that to be fully himself is to be more than himself alone.[34] Arghol desires a "soul" that may "drop down Eternity like a plummet."[35] His metaphor again betrays him, for to materialize the soul would be to give it fixity, the first condition of the mechanization of humankind which both Lewis's and Bergson's theories of the comic sought to counteract. The image of dropping is therefore more apt than Arghol appears to realize, for the fall symbolizes yet another form of degradation.

It is therefore appropriate that Arghol's undoing is to be found in his mechanization. Hanp's anger is directed towards the snoring Arghol as a "chattel for the rest of mankind." Following a continuity of thought from the "Wild Body," he sees Arghol "ACTING, he who had not the right to act," being merely a chattel. Arghol is just one more "thing behaving like a person."[36] It is then, a short step to murder, if murder it be at all, for surely a "thing" cannot be killed, since it has not "life." Hanp's mental state is one of experiment: "see what happened! . . . thoughts—clown in the circus, springing on horses back, when the elegant riders have hopped, with obsequious dignity down

gangway" ("Enemy," 82). By Arghol's murder, Lewis makes it clear that he is unfit to "ride" the life that gallops over death. His search for individuality has apparently failed. At the bidding of the knife plunged in order to stop the noise of the snore, Arghol "rose as if on a spring," grotesquely mechanical in the last throws of rigor mortis. He dreamed of existence beyond the living death. It seems there is nothing beyond death in actuality. Yet Hanp, the "clown in the circus," behaved equally like a "toy wound up," and his mechanization is arrested on Arghol's death. His sense of his own humanity returns now to the "empty shadow he could hardly drag along." The form of Arghol's overwhelming influence lives on; Hanp dashes it with his own suicide.

The fulcrum of the entire play has been the reversibility of self-hood, the threat engendered by external influence, where any interaction is a form of betrayal of authenticity. In an inversion of biblical imagery, Arghol first singled out his "half-disciple" Hanp as his chosen victim by a kiss.[37] Arghol's subsequent discussion of his town life impinges that experience on to Hanp's identity. By the transference of this epigenetic blue-print, Hanp's primal self, what could be considered his innocence, is destroyed. As Hanp realizes, the friend who offered an introduction to the social life usurped his guiding role: Hanp's life was "being lived for him." His path to redemption, or self-restoration, can only be dependent upon Arghol's annihilation. Yet Arghol's own agenda was only a sublimation of those influences which had previously infected him: he had been soiled by the "tabernacle of self and unbelief" encountered in the city just as he in turn soiled Hanp's individuality.[38] Consequently he also had been a victim of betrayal, a fact alluded to by his three-fold dream in which his café friend mutates into Hanp, then finally into Max Stirner. In the "strangest dreams" Bergson wrote, "two images overlie one another and show us at the same time two different persons, who yet make only one" (*TFW*, 136). In dream, all three—friend, Hanp, and Stirner—are only facets of Arghol himself. Moreover, the last mutation demonstrates his impotence against his influencing forces, for it was Stirner's volume *The Ego and its Own* (1844) that he had earlier symbolically thrown from his window. Once again the Christian imagery is apparently inverted, Arghol assuming the role of the cock that signalled St Peter's betrayal of Jesus. He is self-condemned, his self merely consisting of a "large open book" ("Enemy," 71).

We are told that Arghol's "sensitiveness, physical and mental" ran counter to the "vigorous glorification of the self" ("Enemy," 80). Arguably then in Lewis's system, to be bookish is implicitly not to be virile. In his search for learning, Arghol neglected life, and negated his self-identity. It is appropriate that the accompanying portrait of the "Enemy of the Stars" (1914) should be unstably grounded. The torso, apparently bloated by his maelstrom of selves, is unsupported and therefore undermined by legs that are clearly impotent for action. Yet Lewis's thought has typically been judged as intellectual, well informed by works of the past, and manifestly—indeed vociferously—against the banality of "instinctual" sensation based art. The Vorticist aesthetic is furthermore overtly masculine in contrast to what Lewis perceived as the effete Bloomsbury. It is fundamental to apply Hanp's question to Lewis: "Whose Energy did he use?"[39]

Having examined this complex manipulation of selfhood in Lewis's play "Enemy of the Stars," there are two further points that should be drawn together, for they indicate

a further Bergsonian grounding for this work. First, there is a note in *Laughter* on the case of outward comedy in "dealing with persons at the point at which they come into contact and become capable of resembling one another" (168)—the case of the collective self which Arghol finds so intolerable in his café friends and that is put in *Blast* as the condition of being "Siamese."[40] As if in emphasis, Bergson goes on to couch this in far more Lewisian terms as being "something that lives upon him without forming part of his organism, after the fashion of a parasite" (*Laughter*, 169–70), phrasing that seems directly to relate to Arghol's realization that it is merely the parasitical personas at the surface of his friends' selves that he is acquainted with ("Enemy," 77). Second, it is another passage of *Laughter* that seems to underpin Arghol's dream sequence shortly before his murder: "the strange function that a dream often effects between two persons who henceforth form only one and yet remains distinct . . . some other 'he' has borrowed his body and stolen his voice" (190–1). This again is Arghol's predicament, though one in which he, too, has been guilty of thieving the ideas, if not personalities, of others, which Lewis represents in the portentous volume of Stirner's *The Ego and its Own*.

This synthesis of "Enemy of the Stars" and *Laughter* opens the way for "Enemy of the Stars" to be read in a comic light.[41] Once opened, many other comic tropes become apparent, for the play in fact adheres to many of the conventions of popular or carnival entertainment. Briefly, the outcome is billed in the opening scene, which doubles as a stage-direction to the audience at large: "breathe in close atmosphere of terror and necessity till the execution is over, the red walls recede, the universe satisfied" ("Enemy," 61). As readers, we are confronted with a mental audience relatively frequently. Beyond this suggestion of "Punch and Judy"-style participation, the audience is also referred to in "posterity," signalling the repetitive cycle of the play's "production."[42] In a further likeness to "Punch and Judy" or Commedia dell'Arte dramas, Arghol is first presented as a "heathen clown, grave booth animal" who is often beaten by his "Super"—the rich merchant employer (in "Enemy of the Stars" owner of a wheelwright yard), so often portrayed in street theatre (55). On a whim, Lewis likens the yard shadows to "gawky crocodiles," again echoing "Punch" (84). Finally, not to be exclusive in his sources or audience catchment, Lewis alludes to the legacy of Greek drama in his inclusion of "masks with trumpets of antique theatre," which is nonetheless immediately deflated in his bathetic description of "two children blowing at each other with tin trumpets" (60).

With such a schema, and a firm foundation in both the high and low traditions of morality plays, Arghol's role assumes a more symbolic import that potentially transposes "Enemy of the Stars" from a low comedy to catharsis. In this meta-text of the play, Arghol signifies the rebellious character who consciously refuses to submit to the conventions of the metropolis, resulting in his return to the simpler, more "primitive" rural life at his uncle's yard. His regular beatings are thus representative of a socially endorsed punishment for a "miss-fit" and as such provide an example of the barbarism applied in order to uphold social convention. Arghol's decision to escape the city was based on insight that had exposed the hypocritical and superficial social existence of much of metropolitan life, and in this role, he can perhaps be taken to symbolize civilization itself, sacrificed to secure the regeneration of social order. The effect of

this is to place his function back within a very ancient system: straightforwardly, in a "primitive" context as the sacrificial body so much in the public eye following Sergei Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky's spectacular staging of "The Rite of Spring" in 1914; more arcanely, within a specifically Roman heritage, where comparison could be made to the subversive "Lord of Misrule" sacrificed on the altar of Saturn, the Greek Chronos, or deity of Time. This is not as far-fetched as it might seem, as Lewis possibly indicates such a context in the very opening line of his play, where Arghol is described as being "in immense collapse of chronic philosophy."[43] Events are played out in a "Golden Age," the set a primordial "rough Eden of one Soul" (62). Apparently Lewis's classicism, if this can be so classed, is synonymous with the vision of other "primitive" European cultures, encompassed in a wider anthropological study. If such a meta-analysis is accepted, then Lewis has shifted the emphasis of the play from its comic beginning to a subject in which comedy functions far more seriously as a method to ensure the ordered functioning of civilization.

Considered historically, Bergson's philosophy may be categorized as being of the French Vitalist tradition. *Blast* was intended as an invigorating shock to explode the insincere morality of Victorian-Edwardian Britain. The provocation of Bergson's compelling mixture of popular prose with a profound re-orientation of perception made his work the obvious candidate for Lewis's agenda. After all, at the time of its publication, it stimulated a furor of attention of which Lewis himself could only dream. "Enemy of the Stars" may be read as an exposition of Bergson's system, and I use "exposition" both to mean "exposure" and "exploratory discussion." As John Mullarkey notes in his preface to the 2007 edition of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, for Bergson, "to understand something is to re-create it for oneself."[44] Concomitantly in Lewis's work, it is in its soured, distorted underside that Bergson's philosophy is salvaged, re-[in]stated, and re-created. How to navigate between authenticity and author-ity became Lewis's life-long concern.

Notes

I wish to thank Christopher Green and John Mullarkey under whose guidance this work developed, and Tom Normand, with whom it began.

1 First quotation: Wyndham Lewis, "Manifesto – I," in *Blast, Review of the Great English Vortex* Number 1 (1914; New York: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 21; second quotation, W. Lewis, "Enemy of the Stars," *ibid.*, 67.

2 E. Gilson, quoted in R. C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900–1914* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), 207. Gilson held the chair of mediaeval philosophy at the Collège de France and was a leader of the Catholic new-Thomist movement in France.

3 Bertrand Russell, letter to Lucy Donnelly, October 28, 1911, in *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Nicholas Griffin (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 400.

4 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), *xxiii*.

5 Bernard Lafourcade, "Off to Budapest with Freud," in *Enemy News* 15 (Winter 1982): 6, 9. In a psycho-biographical reference, he describes Lewis as the "champion of static space and armoured shells."
6 W. Lewis, letter to Theodore Weiss, April 19, 1949, in *Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963), 488.
7 L. Constant, "Cours de M. Bergson," in *Revue de Philosophie* IV (January 1904): 105–11, in *Mélanges*, ed. A. Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 573–8.
8 These are: *Henri Bergson; choix de texte avec Étude du Système Philosophique par Rene Gillouin* (Paris: Société des editions Louis Michaud, 1910); Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (London: Macmillan, 1913); and Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (1911; repr., London: Macmillan, 1920). All held at the Harry Ransom Center.
9 Lewis paraphrased by B. Lafourcade, "*The Wild Body*: Bergson and the Absurd," in *Enemy News* 15 (Winter 1982): 25. Here Lafourcade defends himself against criticism, writing, "I never argued that 'Our Wild Body' had Bergson in mind" (25).
10 W. Lewis, "The Meaning of the Wild Body," in *The Wild Body*, ed. P. O'Keefe (London: Penguin, 2004), 160.
11 P. O'Keeffe, "Introduction," *ibid.*, *xiv*; A. Munton, "Wyndham Lewis: the relation between the theory and fiction, from his earliest writing to 1941," Ph.D. Diss. (University of Cambridge, 1976). As the authorized translation notes, *Laughter* first appeared as three essays in the *Revue de Paris*. It therefore reached a far wider audience than Bergson's other works previously had, and was very readily available. See C. Brereton and F. Rothwell, "Translators' Preface," in Bergson, *Laughter*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (London: Macmillan, 1911), *v–vi*.
12 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), 90.
13 Lewis, "Inferior Religions," in *The Wild Body*, 149.
14 "Les Saltimbanques," 102.
15 I should emphasize that in using these terms, I am far from saying that Lewis colluded with any racial connotations that they may have held then or hold now. Rather, I shall argue that Lewis's articulation of the failings of humanity was itself a warning against any tendency towards laziness in intellect, empathy, or physique.
16 *Ibid.*, 115, margin scored by Lewis. Bergson re-iterated the point in "Life and Consciousness:" "in principle, this faculty of spontaneous motion probably exists in every living thing; but, in actual fact, many organisms have given it up,—as, for example, the numerous animals living as parasites . . . and again, almost the entire vegetable kingdom . . . Consciousness is in principle present in all living matter, but that it is dormant or atrophied wherever such matter renounces spontaneous activity." Bergson, "Life and Consciousness," Huxley Lecture read to the University of Birmingham, May 29, 1911, reprinted with some additions in *The Hibbert Journal* X (October 1911–July 1912): 24–44; 32.
17 Paul Edwards, *Painter and Writer* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 67. Edwards also relates these to *Creative Evolution*.
18 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 109. This passage is unmarked in Lewis's text.
19 Lewis, note in *Creative Evolution* (17). Lewis's metaphor of the snowball is from an earlier passage of *Creative Evolution*: "my mental state [here duration] . . . goes on increasing—rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow" (17).

20 Lewis, "Physics of the Not-Self," in *Wyndham Lewis: Collected Poems and Plays*, ed. A. Munton (Manchester: Carcanet, 1979).
21 Lewis, "Inferior Religions," in *The Wild Body* (149). This text dates from winter 1914–15.
22 Lewis, "The Cornac and his Wife," in *The Wild Body* (89). This story first appeared as "Les Saltimbanques."
23 Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme, ed. John Mullarkey and Michael Kolkman (London: Macmillan, 2007), 37.
24 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Dover, 2001), 128.
25 "Enemy," 71. Hanp is conditioned for city life by Arghol on the following page, and is thence eager to leave for the social world.
26 *Creative Evolution*, 281. Likewise of course, Nietzsche's Übermensch, which is not at all the same thing.
27 *Ibid.*, 70. Lewis highlighted the passage of Bergson that considers the "period in which we now are . . . in which the utilizable energy is diminishing," *Creative Evolution*, 258.
28 "The Pole" was published in the *English Review*, May 1909, and reworked for *The Wild Body*, where it appears as "Beau Séjour."
29 Lewis, "Enemy," 77. It is interesting to compare Bergson's analysis of dream in *Time and Free Will*: "The strangest dreams, in which two images overlie one another and show us at the same time two different persons, who yet make only one . . . The imagination of the dreamer, cut off from the external world, imitates with mere images, and parodies in its own way the process which constantly goes on with regards to ideas in the deeper regions of the intellectual life," 136–7. Bergson devoted a separate paper to "Dreams," delivered at the Institut Psychologique in Paris, March 20, 1901, and published in *Revue scientifique*, June 8, 1901. Translated into English by E. Slosson in 1913, it appeared in London in 1914.
30 Harold Bloom's terms used in *The Anxiety of Influence* seem appropriate here.
31 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 31. Lewis underlined "must do violence to the mind" in his edition. Bergson continues: "go counter to the natural bent of the intellect"—something that Lewis would have been less certain of. It remains this irreversibility of self that Arghol most fervently desires. See also *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, which defines the intuitive method as one which requires the painful effort of mental reversal.
32 *Creative Evolution*, 49. Lewis's emphasis. His summation of this passage is found on p. 52; "Enemy of the Stars," 70.
33 Lewis, "Enemy," 67; 1932 re-edition quoted in J. Selby, "Enemy of the Stars: An Inquiry into its Intellectual Sources," *Wyndham Lewis Annual* vol. 2 (1995): 31. This alteration is surely significant. Is Lewis merely clarifying a thought implicit in the 1914 edition? It may be presumed that by 1932, the Bergson would not be familiar to most readers of his play in Britain, whereas in 1914, the date of the height of Bergson's popularity, it would have been immediately identifiable. Why then embellish the text with an obscure reference unless the passage is of particular personal significance? Lewis's anti-Bergson tract *Time and Western Man* was published in 1927, yet it seems the philosopher was still not out of his psyche.
34 Lewis explores this in "The Physics of the Not-Self." In typical vein, however, he appropriates Bergsonian interiority for his own and gives to Bergson the contrary outward perspective, justified by his claim to a life of action.

35 Lewis, "Enemy," 68. Bergson notes that the "vision we have of the material world is that of a weight that falls," *CE*, 258–9.
36 Lewis, "Enemy," 80; "The Meaning of the Wild Body," 158.
37 *Ibid.*, 65. This is recognized by Paul Edwards, who continues to discuss the play in relation to Gnosticism, *Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer*, 144.
38 Arghol to Hanp: "I wanted to make a naïf yapping Poodle-parasite of you"; Lewis, "Enemy," 73.
39 *Ibid.*, 81. The reply, "He [Arghol] had been feeding on him, Hanp."
40 Lewis, "The New Egos," *Blast* I: 141.
41 There is a further interesting parallel with the work of Eugène Minkowski, who describes the schizophrenic state as being "like pantomimes . . . one can play around the self, but does not enter, [instead] resting on the outside." In *Schizophrénie, Psychopathologie des schizoïds et des schizophrènes* (Paris, 1927), 99.
42 *Ibid.*, 55. It also claims the play to be "very well acted by you and me."
43 *Ibid.*, 59. Of course, sacrifices to a deity of Time have an added resonance in a Bergsonian context, this forming one outward example of Lewis's critique of temporal philosophy.
44 Mullarkey, " 'The Very Life of Things': Thinking Objects and Reversing Thought in Bergsonian Metaphysics," in Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, ed. J. Mullarkey and M. Kolkman, 2007.

10

Bergson and Proust: A Question of Influence

Pete A. Y. Gunter

Several things can not be done in this article:

1. It can not deal in detail with the many, varied, often contentious accounts of the relations between Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust. To do so would be to write a study as long as *Swann's Way*. Nevertheless, inevitably, the opinions of some authors will be taken into account.
2. It can not present an account of the chronological development of Proust's and Bergson's thought in relation to each other. Although such a chronology would be useful, it would require a separate study. But, inescapably, references to these relations will be made.
3. It can not explore with any plausible completeness the many statements made by Proust which are uncannily similar to those made by Bergson: uncannily similar in some cases, in radical opposition to Bergson in others. Some such statements, however, will intrude themselves into this discussion.

   What this essay does attempt to do, in circumnavigating the towering mass of Proust and Proust–Bergson scholarship, is to present a single, essential hypothesis which it is hoped will clarify a number of fundamental questions concerning the relations between Bergson's philosophy and Proust's literature. With luck it might make it possible to decide which of these by now time-honored questions are likely to be answerable and which are not.

The hypothesis to be offered here is simply this: among the welter of claims for and against a Bergsonian influence on Proust, at least one appears inescapable: that Proust owed to Bergson the belief that all human memories are preserved. This thesis is in one sense minimalist. It makes Proust only in part indebted to Bergson and does not probe any of the particulars of Proust's writings to find influence and, so to speak, enclose it in amber. But in another respect, it is central, hence very general. Proust's entire project is impossible without it. There can be no search for lost time unless one is first convinced that what has been lost can nonetheless still be found. Bergson was the first to make this claim: to make it categorically and without apology. It is not difficult to show that Proust, in the milieu of pre-World War I in Paris, would have been well aware of Bergson's "take" on memory and, in any case, that he was well aware of Bergson. It can also be shown that while working out the ground plan for *À la recherche du temps perdu* he twice consulted

Matière et mémoire (*Matter and Memory*),[1] the book in which Bergson introduced the thesis of an all-preserving human reminiscence. It does not follow from this (I think it highly important to insist on this point) that Proust was a slavish follower or copier of Bergson. He could have used Bergson's ideas to back up and perhaps enlarge his own opinions and to frame his own investigations, which are, as will be seen, very different from Bergson's.

Until the main outlines of Bergson's thought are explored, however, little more can usefully be said here. What follows is a brief, pointed analysis of Bergson's basic ideas.

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Bergson's first major work, his dissertation, is *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (*Time and Free Will* [*TFW*]).[2] A many-sided study with implications for subjects as disjunct as the theory of perception and the philosophy of music, its central focus is on "inner duration": the ceaseless flowing of our personal, subjective experience. This reality, which William James terms the "stream of consciousness," is surprisingly different from what we normally think of as time—that is, clock time, spelled out in years, days, minutes. Clock time is regular, sharply segmented, homogeneous. Each of its segments is identical in character with every other. It is, par excellence, measurable. Experienced time, by contrast, is qualitative, heterogeneous, continuous. No two moments or sequences of it are identical in character. Each contains qualities the other lacks, and hence is unrepeatable. Mathematical time is the very model of repetition.

Bergson's efforts to depict the differences between clock time and personal time often involve examples portraying contrasts. We have, he states, two ways of understanding the swinging of a pendulum:

> if, finally, I retain the recollection of the preceding oscillation together with the image of the present oscillation one of two things will happen. Either I shall set the two images side-by-side, and we then fall back on our first hypothesis [of simple repetition in space] or I shall perceive one in the other, each permeating the other and organizing themselves like the notes of a tune to form a continuous or qualitative multiplicity with no resemblance to number. I shall just get the image of pure duration. (*TFW*, 105)

If pendulums, watches, and calendars exhibit simple repetition, human duration portrays a "rhythmic organization of the whole" (*TFW*, 106). It is genuinely cumulative.

But inner duration involves much more than a contrast with clock time. It can express acts which, Bergson insists, are genuinely free. If the external world progresses through repetitions towards events which are in principle predictable, inner duration can give rise to choices which are not predictable, even in principle. Such acts contain an element of real novelty:

> "for if perchance the monuments of real duration . . . permeated one another instead of lying side by side, and if these moments formed in relation to one

> another a heterogeneity in which the idea of necessary determination lost every shred of meaning, then the self grasped by consciousness would be a free cause." (*TFW*, 235)

We are capable of "free spontaneity" (*TFW*, 217). As an example, Bergson notes that when our best friends give us advice on taking some important step, that advice may well be surprisingly impersonal—considering that any important step in our lives must be highly personal by definition.

> But then, at the very minute when the act is going to be performed, something may revolt against it. It is the outer crust bursting, suddenly giving way to an irresistible thrust. Hence in the depths of the self, below this most reasonable pondering over most reasonable pieces of advice, something else was going on—a gradual heating and a sudden boiling over of feelings and ideas, not unperceived, but rather unnoticed. (*TFW*, 169)

Given the ubiquity of social pressure, we find it all too easy to ignore the feelings which *are* us. It is this deep-seated self, Bergson holds, which, embodying a deep-seated cumulative process, makes truly self-freeing acts possible.

It will be objected that even the most cursory examination of our motives will show that our actions are determined by psychological causes (love, hate, fear, desire), not by some kind of mysterious freedom. Bergson has an interesting response to such criticisms:

> it is only an inaccurate psychology, misled by language, which will show us the soul determined by sympathy, aversion or hate as though by so many forces pressing on it. These feelings, provided that they go deep enough, each make up the whole soul, since the whole content of the soul is reflected in each of them. To say that the soul is determined under the influence of any one of these feelings is to say that it is self-determined. (*TFW*, 165)

Those desires which presumably predetermine are not alien presences. They are us; they make up a unitary self evolving in duration. If this "fundamental self" (*TFW*, 100, 128) can find expression over and above the obstacles placed in its path, our action will be self-originating and free.

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What has been sketched up to this point is admittedly incomplete in at least two senses. It leaves out of this account, for example, Bergson's criticisms of psychophysics and of associationist psychology, his analysis of muscular effort and of physical grace, his concepts of degrees of freedom and of the nature of psychological intensity. Still more profoundly it fails to deal with fundamental difficulties to which *TFW* gives rise. In what follows I will deal with two of these difficulties: the limitation of Bergson's

phenomenology of inner time consciousness to the present (to the exclusion of past and future) and the exclusion of human consciousness from the external world, including the human body.

If one looks closely at the examples Bergson uses to explore human duration in *TFW*, one sees that, for all their perceptiveness, all suffer from a fundamental exclusion. The pendulum, the notes of a melody, the rhythmic organization of an act are all phenomena of the present. While such examples are useful, allowing us to focus on how we actually do perceive and make decisions, they do not make it possible to deal with the past, which lies beyond our present focus of attention. Unfortunately for Bergson, the free act, to which he devotes such attention, has on his own terms roots which reach far back into our personal pasts. *Matter and Memory*, his second major study, is a concerted effort to deal with his problem by showing the impact of long-term memory on our present state. Without it, he argues, both our ability to deal in a practical way with our surroundings and our capacity to act and to make significant choices would be impossible.

In most situations we are unaware of memory. We confront the objects around us and decide how to deal with minimal requirements, for example, to be able to recognize a pen as a pen, a straw as a straw. But to do this requires long-term memory: the recollection of previous contexts in which cylindrical objects are experienced and manipulated. Similarly for our recognition of words, faces, ideas. We require the omnipresence of memory.

What holds in these ordinary perceptual situations is still more true in more complex cases. Take, for example, reading. Here the contribution of memory becomes even more pervasive. Bergson notes (following the experiments of Münsterberg and Külpe), " rapid reading is a real work of divination. Our mind notes here and there a few characteristic lines and fills in all the intervals with memory-images which, projected on the paper, take the place of real printed characters and may be mistaken for them. Thus we are constantly creating or reconstructing" (*MM*, 103).

All our copings with the world thus involve our fund of personal memories and our capacity to focus them. Bergson presents our ordinary behavior as ceaseless problem solving. Perception involves a question addressed to the world and then, on reflection, pressed into behavior. Failure results in a new question, a new focus, and a new, hopefully more fitting, behavior.

We scarcely realize the immense store of memory that we carry with us. Yet without it we could not cope with the most ordinary tasks, much less deal with our social context or with personal decisions. So vast is this accumulation of memory that, in reflecting on it we can scarcely plumb its depths or imagine its extent. Bergson here makes his daring suggestion: no experience is ever lost, all events are preserved (*MM*, 82). Our recollection of the past, he speculates, "is perfect from the outset; time can add nothing to its image without disfiguring it; it retains in memory its place and date" (*MM*, 83). The personal past, in all its superabundance, is never lost. It follows us in perpetuity.

The preservative power of memory, however, creates problems for us. In order to focus our attention we must exclude masses of memory and include those which fit a present situation. This exclusion (reminiscent in a general way of Freudian repression) is

accomplished automatically or quasi-automatically by our brain and nervous system in conjunction with our "motor" system, that is, with our capacity for physical action. Hence our ordinary consciousness is "a consciousness which reflects the exact adaptation of our nervous system to the present situation" which sets "aside all those among the past images which cannot be coordinated with the present perception and are unable to form with it a *useful* combination" (*MM*, 84–5). If our mind performs Herculean efforts of memory, it equally clears away whole Augean stables of useless reminiscence.

In approaching Bergson's treatment of personal memory we are reaching the borders of Proust's psychology and aesthetics. But before entering into a discussion of Proust's views it will be necessary to deal with one more distinction: that is, between two contrasting kinds of memory. This distinction is made by both figures, but Proust believes he makes it differently than Bergson.

It is one thing, Bergson states, to retrieve a memory which refers to a particular date and place. It is quite another to remember the multiplication table or how to type. The first is a personal reminiscence evoking e.g. one's twelfth birthday. Like Thomas Wolfe's "hearing my father's voice upon the porch again," it is redolent with particularity. The second has neither date nor particularity, is entirely general and functions almost mechanically. The first, Bergson terms "spontaneous memory" (*MM*, 79ff., 86, 153–5), the second, "habit memory" (*MM*, 85, 155).

In splitting memory into two parts, both Bergson and Proust upended a prevailing scientific assumption that memory is one and must be studied as such. Not until the 1970s did scientists (partly through Bergson's inspiration) begin to study the two sorts of memory. Today they term the memory of specific event "episodic memory" and rote or habit memory "semantic memory." It is interesting that by employing this distinction scientists have been able to make progress in neurophysiology by relating contrasting sorts of memory to activity in different parts of the brain.[3]

For Bergson these two sorts of memory work together. Spontaneous memory, an ingredient, as we have seen, in our ceaseless probing of our environment, is involved in the establishing of habitual behaviors. Without the constancy of our fund of habits (which Bergson describes as engrained in the motor centers of the brain—areas which code for behavior), spontaneous memory could not function in guiding us. In writing these words, the author depends on habit memories to carry him effortlessly through the rote exercise of printing letters, making spaces between words, punctuating, getting spellings right. Meanwhile his mind reaches back into spontaneous memory to focus on the ideas he is struggling to express.

The continuing interaction and thus close relation between spontaneous memory (mind) and habit memory (body) is one indication of the extent to which in *Matter and Memory* Bergson is intent on going beyond the almost Cartesian dualism of *Time and Free Will*.

But for all of Bergson's willingness to broaden and deepen his philosophy, a willingness which is part and parcel with the method he chooses to employ, at one point he fails to explore data which are essential to his own viewpoint, and which could have easily deepened it. That is, while he insists on the richness and power of memory, he deflects it towards action and fails to study sheer reminiscence. It is not that he is

unaware of memories which simply embody the past. At several points he notes the intrusions of "useless" memories into our ordinary lives (*MM*, 83–5, 86, 180). Such memories, however, are filed by him under the category of dreaming and madness. In sleep, nonfunctional memories pour into our dreams, without use and against any use. It is precisely these memories—the sheer burden of our past lives—that Proust explores and Bergson does not.

At two other points in *Matter and Memory* Bergson, with profound insight, opens a door, looks beyond it, but goes no farther. One of these concerns the free act, so studiously analyzed in *Time and Free Will*. The other involves concrete extensity and its correlate, lived space.

Matter and Memory, until its very last pages, makes no claims of any kind concerning free spontaneity. The most that can be said is that here Bergson works to show the conditions (memory, attention, habit) which make the free act possible. Not until two brief passages at the end of this work (*MM*, 220–3, 247–9) does he reintroduce this latter idea. Transcending his treatment of the forms of memory, he cryptically sketches the possibility of a third, not named as such. It is an "inner energy which allows the being to free itself from the rhythm of the flow of things and to retain in an ever higher degree the past in order to influence ever more deeply the future" (*MM*, 222). In such cases the past is "organize[d . . .] with the present in a newer and richer decision" (*MM*, 249). Here one finds a restatement in embryo of the claims of *Time and Free Will* prior to their reanalysis in his third major work, *Creative Evolution*, where it is recast as creative memory. The third door which Bergson opens but does not enter in *Matter and Memory* concerns the nature of space. Like René Descartes, Bergson begins his philosophy by describing mind as unextended. But in his second major work he clearly denies this assumption, arguing that human awareness, far from being categorically isolated from the world, extends into it. In *Being and Nothingness* Jean-Paul Sartre asserts that mind is ek-static, literally outside of itself, in the world.[4] Bergson makes this claim as early as 1896, stating, for example, that perception takes place not in the mind but in the object of perception (*MM*, 66–8). Both idealism and solipsism are thus avoided, and the reality and the accessibility of the physical world are affirmed.

Bergson here makes possible an exploration of what later has come to be called "lived space": the experience of spatiality by a human being for whom extensity is an integral part of its life-world. Were human awareness understood as inherently nonspatial, explorations of felt or lived space would not be undertaken. If human awareness is understood as participating in extensity, such investigations make sense and are likely to be pursued.[5] While these points are interesting in themselves, they are particularly important for our understanding of Proust in relation to Bergson. They will be explored in the concluding part of the next section.

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Proust often wrote brilliantly; subsequent scholars have often written brilliantly about him. What follows, by contrast, will be a straightforward factual analysis. It will outline,

first, Proust's personal relations with Bergson, and next, the order in which he wrote his novel. The final section will explore what, given these factors, Proust could have taken from his intuitionist cousin. What, and in what sense.

Two factual errors need to be cleared up at the beginning. The first, widespread in the Bergson-Proust literature, is the claim that Proust attended Bergson's lectures at the Sorbonne. One can not imagine how this legend began. Bergson never lectured at the Sorbonne. His presence was not welcomed there because of his presumed anti-scientific stance. Hence Proust could not have attended Bergson's lectures there. Nor can I find any record (save for one exception, to be presented below) that Proust attended Bergson's lectures.

The second error involves the assumption that though the two men knew each other, their contacts were few and impersonal (lacking in emotional or conceptual exchange). The evidence, however, certainly can be taken to show a different picture. What follows, though it is only a skeleton of their relations, shows Bergson to have been a constant, both intellectual and personal, in Proust's life:

January 7, 1891. Bergson marries Louise Neuberger, Marcel Proust's second cousin (by marriage). Proust is best man (not page boy, as some have it) at his wedding.[6]

January 7, 1892. Bergson dines with Marcel Proust and his friend Fernand Gregh (chez Proust). Gregh notes not one such dinner but several, with Bergson, at Combray.[7]

October 23, 1895. Bergson sends Proust a copy of his talk "Good Sense and Classical Studies."[8]

August 4, 1900. Proust attends Bergson's Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France on "Our Belief in the Idea of Cause."[9]

November, 1901. Bergson regretfully declines an offer to dine with Proust's friend Antoine Bibesco. Proust reassures Bibesco that it will be easy to arrange another dinner with Bergson or to attend his lectures.[10]

August 9, 1902. Bergson sends Proust a letter to Antoine Bibesco, which he (Bergson) has personally signed.[11]

May 28, 1904. Bergson presents Proust's translation of Ruskin's *Le Bible d'Amiens* to the Academie des Sciences Morales et Politiques. A series of letters between Bergson and Proust follows.[12]

September 26, 1905. Bergson attends the funeral of Proust's mother.[13]

1906. Proust enters psychiatric hospital under the care of Dr. Sollier, whose statement of contempt for Bergson, Proust later admitted, did not aid in the success of his treatment.[14]

April, 1908. Proust responds to Georges de Lauris's letter of praise concerning Bergson, saying that he is familiar with Bergson's philosophy and is able to plot its trajectory. He has not read *Creative Evolution*, but since his friend urges him, he will read it immediately.[15]

1908. Proust reads/annotates *Matter and Memory*.[16]

1909. Proust rereads/annotates *Matter and Memory*.[17]

Proust's letter to Georges de Lauris is particularly revealing, both for its account of his response to Dr. Sollier and for its depiction of Proust's knowledge of Bergson. Though he has not read *Creative Evolution*, Proust states, he has a secure enough knowledge of Bergson's philosophy to plot its trajectory (in itself a Bergsonian metaphor). Whether he read *Creative Evolution* is not clear. One suspects at a minimum he examined its main outlines. It is also interesting because it can be taken to indicate that Proust had read at least *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*. His response to Dr. Sollier also suggests this.

Proust's annotations of 1908 and 1909 are found in his carnets (notebooks), I: 1904–1911. They focus on two significantly different aspects of *Matter and Memory*: the theory of perception, including the concept of the image, and his distinction between the two sorts of memory. Proust cites seven pages at the beginning of *Matter and Memory* (22–3, 23–4, 35–6, 42–3, 51–2, 53–4, 59–60). Here Bergson presents a concept of nature as a complex of "images" implicitly shaped by our brain and sense organs to appear more distinct and pictorial than they in fact are. Underlying this set of appearances lies actual matter, a dynamic and rhythmic existence. Our perception reaches into this materiality and is in no way contained simply within our brain or in a mysteriously unextended mind. There are no unextended sensations somehow projected into space, as psychologists have assumed. Perceptions share in extensity.

It is interesting that Proust should have concerned himself with Bergson's form of epistemological or perceptual realism. But it provides an indication of the way in which Proust could take advantage of explorations of lived space which Bergson began, sketched, but left unexplored. By contrast, it should not be surprising that Proust, beginning his great novel, should have reconnoitered Bergson's treatment of the two forms of memory. Proust cites twelve pages towards the center of *Matter and Memory* (77–8, 83–4, 84–5, 85–6, 86–7, 88–9, 89–90, 92–3, 121–2). Here he examines Bergson's account of spontaneous and habit memory, their relations to the brain and behavior, the nature of memory images, the contrast between dreams and actual perception, the nature of recognition. The longest passage cited here (83–90, arguably including 92–3) is instructive. A discussion of the "Recognition of Images," it distinguishes sharply between spontaneous and habit memory, the manner in which spontaneous memory integrally retains our personal pasts, the manner in which in dreams and ordinary relaxed attention this past returns, the difficulty we have in recovering otherwise excluded personal memories, the ways in which the two sorts of memories sustain each other. Through all of this, Bergson is clear that spontaneous memories are retained, that they do not change with the passage of time, and that they appear with the full particularity of time and place.

That Proust should have read and annotated *Matter and Memory* in 1909 (and possibly also in 1908) is highly instructive. One would think reading *À la recherche du temps perdu* that its author had simply started writing at the beginning and continued with incredible persistence through to the end. In fact—a point on which scholars interested in Proust are in total agreement—Proust wrote out the master plan for his novel in 1909, beginning with the basis for its final segment, *Time Regained*, and then

creating the fundamental structure of the novel's beginning, in *Swann's Way*. Only then did he begin the sequential writing of the novel. *À la recherche du temps perdu* is like an immense suspension bridge supported at each end by two strongly anchored pylons and stretching interminably between them. There can be no doubt that the shaping of these pylons was strongly influenced by Bergson's concept of memory.

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Unfortunately for an essay which is already of significant length, a great deal follows from this. Any discussion of what has been said so far must, however, be condensed.

The author insists that Proust was influenced by Bergson. But what is influence? More than one critic has urged that Proust simply transposed Bergson's ideas into literature, root and branch. But there is another possibility. If one appropriates an idea and transforms it, using it in ways which its original owners did not foresee, one is doubtless influenced. But one by that very fact goes beyond that influence and exercises a creativity of one's own. This is influence *qua* creativity, not influence *via* simple appropriation. One merely repeats; the other brings something new into the world. It is important—particularly in the face of those who treat "being influenced" as virtually equivalent to "plagiarism"—to insist on this point. It applies not only to the relations between Bergson and Proust, but to those between the philosopher and many others (several discussed in this volume) who were able to appropriate significant aspects of his thought.

This, it is contended, is what Proust achieved. Accepting Bergson's central thesis of the massively preservative character of memory, he reverses its direction. For Bergson, memory, which helps us to deal practically with the present, impels us towards the future. Hence Bergson's celebration of human freedom, human creativity. In the end, Bergson's is an activist theory of memory. By contrast, Proustian memory is vectored towards the past: towards recollection, towards sheer remembrance. It is not activist, it is passivist. Reaching backwards, it dwells on the past for its own sake.

At the same time, human nature, refracted through the Proustian lens, is seen not as free but as habit-bound, not as spontaneous but as out of contact with the sources of creativity. Proust did not need Sartre to convict his characters of *mauvaise foi*. They are bathed in it, in a kind of social-moral entropy which they can never quite recognize. *They never learn*, Proust reiterates. *They never learn*. For Bergson man is free, or, more accurately, self-freeing.

Given this contrast, it is easy to see why Proust, confronted with claims that he had written a Bergsonian novel, should have responded so categorically in the negative. There was in this, no doubt, an "anxiety of influence," an insistence on personal independence and creative identity. But in one sense he was, simply, right. His retrospective psychologically analytical novel was not Bergsonian and, as I have suggested immediately above, could be viewed as anti-Bergsonian. Bergson's ideal humanity can express a creative negentropy, an *élan vital*. Proust's unideal humanity exhibits an ironic moral entropy, cloaked in self-deception.

Proust was right. His was not a Bergsonian novel, and his assertion that his notion of "automatic memory" was not Bergson's notion of "spontaneous memory" is accurate.

Spontaneous memory gives us the raw past, with no suggestion of inflection towards future acts. It requires no reflection and indeed, lies outside the boundaries of rational thought.

But for all this, in his denials of Bergsonian influence, Proust had forgotten what he had taken from Bergson and what remains common to both thinkers: to repeat the point, the rich preservative nature of memory. Without this fundamental assumption (and again, to repeat) the work of neither is possible. To see that their profoundly contrasting views of man start from, and develop from an initial common root can, however, be very useful in assessing their interrelations. It can allow us to assess their differences realistically without having to deny what they have in common. And inversely, to concede what they have in common without conflating their thought.

There is a bit more to it than this. It also may be possible, by isolating the axiom of memory which Bergson and Proust hold in common, to suggest the likelihood of establishing other relations of influence based on their relative proximity to this axiom. For example, once Proust has accepted the notion of preservative memory in its richness, it is all but inevitable that he will come to postulate a second form of memory which is more prosaic, more mechanical than the first. Proust does so, terming it voluntary memory. Given the original axiom, and given the necessity of accounting for all the varieties of memory, this theorem seems inescapable. Another possibility, tied to the second but more remote still, is the possibility that Proust borrows from Bergson's treatment of habit as both necessary to coping with life and the potential enemy of human freedom. Other possibilities, more remote still, are for example, Proust's treatments of rhythm and of hacceity ("thisness").

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On the fundamental issue of human freedom and human possibility, Bergson and Proust are irreconcilably opposed. Reading them can scarcely lead to any other conclusion. And yet . . .

One looks again and finds at the end a surprising convergence. At the end of Proust's novel (*Time Regained*), his protagonist confronts the world of social pretense and chic aestheticism to which he had devoted his life, and finds it alien, uninteresting, and false. In this discovery he also finds himself.[18] That is, in what George Poulet aptly describes as a conversion experience, Proust's protagonist discovers, at last, his vocation as an artist. This discovery abruptly ends the novel.

But in a kind of paradox of self-reference, this is the novel's beginning. What the reader just read is the result of Proust's and his protagonist's discovery. If the writing of *À la recherche du temps perdu* does not provide examples of perpetually renewed literary creativity and of the iron will which sustains it, one would be hard put to find one. The writing of Proust's novel is in itself the refutation of its own endemic, encroaching negativity. It is correctly described as a creative evolution.

By the same token, Bergson's refusal in *Matter and Memory* to deal with the extra or suprarational aspects of memory is reversed in his later writing, particularly in his last work. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), such sources are explored

in both breadth and depth. In this work also the triumphalism of *Creative Evolution* becomes muted, along with its sunbright optimism. In the specter of the closed society Bergson asserts the reality of human frailty and the inability of self-transformation. One finds there thus the false society so acidly and drolly portrayed by Proust.

For Proust, it appears, only art can escape this impasse; for Bergson only a renewed spirituality. Both, if achieved, would be creative evolution.

A Bergson–Proust chronology

Introduction

Why a chronology of the letters, works, and lives of a philosopher (Bergson) and a novelist? The answer must be: because the mutual relations between these two important figures have been understood at best superficially and at worst, mistakenly. By bringing together their correspondence with each other and their many other points of contact one can construct a more accurate view of interrelations, both conceptual and personal.

What follows is thus a chronological presentation of major dates in the lives of both figures, including their various publications, their letters to and concerning each other, and any comments each made on the other's works. It is interesting that Proust made an early acquaintance with Bergson's writings. It is equally interesting that Bergson read Proust's writing in depth, commenting on them as late as 1938, sixteen years after Proust's death and three years before his own.

The following summation is as complete as the author has been able to make it. It is, however, likely that more such Bergson-Proust materials can be found. To do so it would be necessary to prowl the literary cultural massive *Nachlass* of those who knew, and knew of, these two men.

Some of the entries in this chronology require explanation. Dates of birth and death, or of book or article publication, are intended as signposts, not as proof of relations between the two authors. These are indicators of broad historical context. Some items included above involve factual assertions by third parties concerning Bergson and Proust. They are understood to be "secondary literature."

The references in 1908 and 1909 to Proust annotations of *Matter and Memory* require some explanation. Philip Kolb cites Proust's annotations of *Matter and Memory* as taking place in 1908. Florence Callu and Antoine Compagnon note that many (but by no means all) of Proust's annotations are in red ink, which places them in 1909. It appears, then, that Proust reexamined *Matter and Memory* in both 1908 and 1909, the years in which he was working out both the structure and the meaning of his great novel.

Chronology

1871, July 10. Marcel Proust is born, at Auteuil, France.
1882, October 2. Proust enters the Lycée Condorcet.

1889. Proust graduates from the Lycée Condorcet with a prix d'honneur de dissertation française, in philosophy.
1889. Bergson completes his dissertation, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (*Time and Free Will*). (Bergson, *Oeuvres*, p. 1574n)
1891, June 7. Marcel Proust is best man at the marriage of Henri Bergson and Louise Neuberger, Proust's second cousin. (Soules and Worms, *Bergson: Biographie*, 100)
1892, January 7. Bergson has dinner at the Prousts' with Marcel Proust and his friend, the young poet Fernand Gregh. (Tadié, *Proust: Biography*, 162) Writing later about this evening, Gregh speaks of the pleasure of many such dinners. (Gregh, *L'Age d'or*, 154–6)
1893. Proust, "Letter to Robert de Montesquiou." Proust responds to a volume of poems by Montesquiou (*Les Chauves-Souris*, 1893) concluding that here one finds "jaillisement spontané, source, vie spirituelle, veritable, c'est-a-dire liberté." Eng. Trans. "spontaneous pouring forth, spring, true spiritual life that is, liberty." Charles Blondel, in his *La Psychographie de Marcel Proust*, 186 (see below: January 15, 1932), quotes this passage as strong evidence that Proust had read *Time and Free Will* and was deeply moved by it. The editor agrees. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 220–1)
1895, July 7. Bergson sends Proust a copy of his *Bon Sens et les etudes classiques* (*Good Sense and Classical Studies*) (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 1, 432–3).
1895–1901. Proust's novel *Jean Santeuil* written. Not published until 1952.
1896. Bergson publishes *Matière et mémoire* (*Matter and Memory*).
1900, August 4. Proust attends Bergson's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, "On the Origins of our Belief in the Idea of Cause." (Tadié, *Proust: Biographie*, 450–1)
1901, November. Proust invites Bergson to dinner with his friend (a Bergson enthusiast) Antoine and Bibesco. Bergson is too tired to come. Proust consoles Bibesco, point out that there will be other opportunities to meet Bergson personally, either at his home (chez lui) or at his lectures. (Tadié, *Proust: Biographie*, 462)
1902, August 9. Proust, "Letter to A. Bibesco." Proust writes Bibesco enclosing an autographed letter from Bergson. Proust's mother is waiting to hear from Bergson. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 3, 83)
1903, Spring. Proust's portrait painted by Jacques-Emile Blanche, who also painted Bergson's portrait. (Tadié, *Proust: Biographie*, 175–6)
1904, March 22. Bergson, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Bergson here thanks Proust for his recent letter, thanking him also for his presentation of *Le Bible d'Amiens*. He agrees with Proust's treatment of inspiration and art in general. The arts deal with states of mind that are otherwise inexpressible. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, 622–3)
1904, May 25. Proust here thanks Bergson ("philosophe que j'admire le plus") for his presentation of *Le Bible d'Amiens* by Ruskin. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, 128)
1904, May 27. Proust, "Letter to René Peter." Proust notes that Bergson will be presenting his translation of Ruskin's *Le Bible d'Amiens* to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. (Such a high-toned academic group, Proust opines.) (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, 130–1)
1904, May 28. Bergson presents Proust's *Le Bible d'Amiens* to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. (Tadié, *Proust: Biographie*, 520; Bergson, *Mélanges*, 629–30)
1904, May 29. Bergson, "Letter to Marcel Proust." This letter concerns Bergson's presentation of Proust's translation of *Le Bible d'Amiens*. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, 137–8)
1904, June 2. Bergson, "Letter to Marcel Proust." This letter is a response to an earlier letter from Proust thanking him (yet again) for his cordial appreciation. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 4, 139)

1905, September 26. Bergson attends the funeral of Proust's mother. Cf. *Le Figaro*, 27 September 1905, 2.

1906. Proust enters a psychiatric hospital under the care of Dr. Sollier. Sollier states contempt for Bergson and his philosophy. Proust conceded in a letter to Georges de Lauris (see below: April 1908) that this did not add to the success of his treatment.

1908, near end of April. Proust, "Letter to Georges de Lauris." In this much-quoted letter Proust responds to Lauris's praise of Bergson by stating it is as if he and Lauris were together on a great height. Though he has not read Bergson's *Creative Evolution* he promises to do so, soon. He has read enough of Bergson, however, to foresee the parabola of his thought. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 106–8; Mina Curtis, *Letters of Marcel Proust*, 197–8)

1908, June 15. Proust, "Letter to Madame Straus." Proust argues here that many of those not now belonging to the Académie française should be: for example Bergson, Boutroux, Maspéro. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 139; Curtis, *Letters*, 186–7)

1908. Proust reads, annotates *Matière et mémoire* (*Matter and Memory*). (Proust, *Le Carnet de 1908*, 197)

1909. Proust reads, annotates *Matière et mémoire*. (Proust, *Carnets*, 115)

1909, August. Proust has written the introductory and concluding sections of *À la recherche du temps perdu*. For example, Robert Vigneron in "Creative Irony" (in *Proust*, ed. R. Girard, 26) holds that Proust finally arrived at the general structure of his *Magnum opus* in May, 1909.

1912, April 14 or 15. Proust, "Letter to Robert Dreyfus." Proust notes here in a postscript that the *Journal des Débats* seems convinced that those important people who say mass (i.e. those who are Roman Catholics) derive from Bergson's philosophy. If Proust's health were better he would protest. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 11, 100–2)

1912, before October. Proust, "Letter to Madame Strauss." Proust here states: "The philosophers have well persuaded us that time is a numbering procedure which corresponds to nothing real. We believe it." The reference here would be to Bergson and perhaps to some of his followers. I know of no evidence that Proust was yet familiar with another possible source, William James. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 11, 239–44)

1912, November. Proust, "Letter to Antoine Bibesco." Proust insists his is not a Bergsonian novel, since it is dominated by a distinction (i.e. a concept of memory) which is not found in Bergson's philosophy and which in fact contradicts it. (Curtis, *Letters*, 225–8)

1913. Proust, reflections on the cinematographic fallacy. In *Time Regained*, the final volume of his massive novel, Proust makes the following use of Bergson's Cinematographic Fallacy (introduced by Bergson in *Creative Evolution* [*CE*], 1907): "what we call reality is a certain connection between the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them—a connection which is suppressed in a simple kinematic vision, which just because it professes to confine itself to the truth in face departs wildly from it" (289). On page 290 he returns to this example, denying that reality is "a sort of cinematographic film." *Time Regained*, though not published until 1927, was written at the same time as *Swann's Way* (1913).

1913, April 8. Bergson, "Discours au Comité France-Amérique." In this speech in New York, in a context of treating the building of skyscrapers as an expression of American society, Bergson refers to a similar view concerning the building of Gothic cathedrals in Europe, a view asserted by "one of our finest writers"—almost certainly Proust. This was before the publication of *À la recherche*, and the universal acclaim of Proust's novels. (Bergson, *Mélanges*, 990–1001, 1617–18)

1913, September. Publication of first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

1913, November 5, 6, or 7. Proust, "Letter to René Blum." Proust here denies that his and Bergson's theory of memory are the same. Bergson does not have a theory of involuntary memory (*mémoire involuntaire*). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 12, 294–8)

1913, November 12. "Interview with Elie-Joseph Bois" in *Le Temps*. (Trans. in Shattuck, *Marcel Proust*, 167–72) In this much-quoted interview, Proust seems to preclude any influence on his writings by Bergson, insisting (as he had earlier this year in letters to Bibesco and Blum) that his concept of memory has nothing in common with Bergson's.

1913, December 16. An article in the *Mercure de France* treats *À la recherche* as a literary application of Bergson's ideas. (Christie McDonald, *The Proustian Fabric*, 180; Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 13, 49n)

1913, December 28. An editor of *L'intransigeant* treats Proust's novel as a very moving illustration of Bergson's theories in *Matter and Memory*.

1914, January 6. Proust, "Letter to Henri Ghéon." Proust here denies any attempt to introduce Bergson or Bergsonism into his novel. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 13, 37–41)

1914, January 11 (or shortly thereafter). Proust, "Letter to Gason Pawlowski." Proust here protests against being labeled a Bergsonian novelist. Nothing is less "Bergsonian than his novel." (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 13, 54–5)

1914, July 28. Proust, "Letter to Lionel Hauser." Speaking of his pressing personal economic problems, Proust states (as an ironic aside), "But I recall that if I were Bergson, that the field of consciousness has many levels and that one can think of many things at one time." This, however, does not help him when he thinks of the many differences he has to pay (aux différences à payer). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 13, 275–7)

1916. Proust, "Letter to Emmanuel Berl." Speaking of friendship, Proust comments, you need not be a friend of Bergson to profit from listening to him speak to you about Fichte. Similarly in listening to Risler speak to you about Beethoven." (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 15, 26–30)

1917, January 12. Proust, "Letter to Madame Geneviève Straus." Speaking of a seven-page letter which he has sent Madame Straus but which she has not received, Proust notes that he was a naïf in that letter "and even in this respect Bergson and Maeterlinck are perhaps naïfs but genial." (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 16, 32–5)

1917, May 14. Proust, "Letter to Lionel Hauser." In this letter, Proust recalls what Hauser has said to him about neobuddhism and about Bergson's lack of a dogmatic doctrine of belief. He then goes on to discuss works of art, Dostoevsky, Ruskin. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 16, 132–4)

1918, April 28. Proust, "Letter to Lionel Hauser." Proust hesitates here in ascribing either to Bergson or Boutroux the notion that a thinking reed (Pascal's metaphor) bends more from the weight of thought than from the weight of matter. (Boutroux turns out to have been the author of this notion.) Proust goes on to discuss the creative value of suffering, hence of physical illness. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 17, 215–19)

1918, May 2. Proust, "Letter to Lionel Hauser." Proust states: "Like theosophy, Pragmatism is at once practical and transcendent and goes from William James to Eusapia Palladino." The editor of the letters, Philip Kolb, speculates that Proust may (like Bergson) have attended one of Palladino's séances. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 17, 226–31. Cf. n. 18)

1919. Proust's *Within a Budding Grove* is published. Wins the coveted Prix de Goncourt.

1919, May. Proust, "Letter to Louis de Robert." Proust remarks in this letter that though he no longer sees Bergson, when he did he learned that Bergson regularly took trional for his insomnia and found it effective. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 18, 214–15)

1919, June 21. Proust, "Letter to the Marquise de Ludre." Here Proust discusses insomnia, dismissing veronal as helpful and suggesting that the marquise check with Bergson concerning the drug trional. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 18, 214)

1919, October 4. Jacques-Émile Blanche, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Blanche asks in passing if Proust has read a recent article in *Comœdia* in which the suggestions of Bergson, "Benda, Gide and others" for the reform of the École des Beaux Arts are roundly criticized. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 18, 410–11. Cf. n. 7)

1920, March 2. Jacques Rivière, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Rivière asks if Proust has read an article on his work in a Breton journal. The editor notes that the writer of this article observes that Proust is as difficult to read as Spinoza's *Ethics* or "the most arduous chapters of M. Bergson." (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 140–2. Cf. n. 7)

1920, August 16. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Rivière." Proust mention his being sick at the first meeting of the jury of the Prix Blumenthal (which he attended with Bergson and others). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 397. Ct. n. 2)

1920, September 2. Proust, "Letter to Gaston Gallimard." Proust cites an error in the proofs of *Guermantes I*, where Proust writes of Bergotte, the proofs contain the name of Bergson. Other errors are much more important. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 437–500)

1920, September 30. Bergson, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Here Bergson congratulates Proust on the award of the Prix Goncourt. Bergson has read *Swann's Way* and *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (*Within a Budding Grove*). Rarely, he states, has introspection been pushed so far. Proust's is a direct and continuous vision of inner reality. Parts of this letter are not presented here. Also, Bergson, in giving his congratulations, was replying to an earlier letter of Proust's, which has been lost. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 492. Cf. also Bergson, *Mélanges*, 1326)

1920, September 30. Jacques Rivière, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Rivière thanks Proust for his part in the award of the Prix Blumenthal. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 496)

1920, October 8. Proust, "Letter to Paul Souday." Concerning the award of the Prix Blumenthal to Jacques Rivière, Proust states that it was Bergson, Boylesve, de Regnier and others who, realizing Proust was sick, pushed to award the prize to Rivière. (Souday had just written a positive note on Proust in *Paris-Midi*, October 1, 1920.) (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 514)

1920, October 31. Proust, "Letter to Gaston Gallimard." This concerns Proust's inclusion in a *Pages choisies* of representative French authors, an inclusion which he thinks would be good for both Gallimard and his novel. He notes that as regards the Prix Blumenthal, a jury composed of Bergson, Gide, and Régnier is as qualified as any at the Académie Goncourt or the Académie française. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 561)

1920, November 30. Camille Vettard, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Vettard asks if the reading of Bergson's writings was the revelation to Proust it was to him (Vettard). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 637–8)

1920, December 4. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Boulenger." Proust here mentions Regnier, Barrès, and Bergson as among those promoting his candidacy for the Académie française. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 19, 649–53)

1920–21. Proust's *The Guermantes Way* is published.

1921, January 12. Proust "Letter to Gustave Tronche." Proust notes that Bergson and others are interested in having original editions of his works. The reference here seems to be to *Guermantes Way*. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 57–8)

1921, January 15. Proust, "Letter to Paul Souday." Proust thanks Souday for his article in the *Revue de Paris*, January 15, 1921, which discusses an article by Proust on Flaubert's concept of style. In this article, Souday states that while Bergson's use of metaphors (often very beautiful and very original) has charmed some readers, it has alienated others. The metaphor is only an "à peu près" (a not quite). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 70–2, n. 5)

1921, February 16. Bergson, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Bergson here asks Proust if he is willing to be interviewed by Algot Ruhe (Bergson's Swedish translator) who has published an article on Proust in Sweden. Ruhe interviewed Proust at least once (possibly twice) in June 1921 and may have returned later for a conversation. Ruhe published an account of his conversations with Proust in Swedish. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 109–10; Cf. n. 4) In turn, Proust was later to include a somewhat satirical account of a "Norwegian philosopher" in *Sodom and Gomorra*. (Cf. Proust below, 1921)

1921, March 8. Albert Thibaudet, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Thibaudet relates that his former professor (Bergson) really likes Proust's novels and delights in sitting down to read his "*jeunnes filles en fleurs*" ("*In a Budding Grove*"). Proust's work fits so harmoniously into Bergson's psychological landscape. Proust's time lost and rediscovered accords so well with Bergson's duration. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 122–6)

1921, April 8. Proust, "Letter to Madame Bugnet." Proust suggests concerning the Prix Blumenthal that if Madame Bugnet's husband is curious about this award he might contact Tégnier, Boylesve, Bergson, etc., who were members of the jury with Proust. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 168–9)

1921, April 12. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Boulenger." Proust does not understand why he is so upset with his preface to the poetry of Paul Morand. If Boulenger is upset with the notion (derived from Bergson, not Proust) that the author must be fused with his subject, Proust responds that he entirely ignores the Bergsonian views of art to which Boulenger takes issue. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 122–6; Cf. n. 6)

1921, April 17. Robert de Montesquiou, "Letter to Marcel Proust." Montesquiou speculated on who some of Proust's characters might stand for in real life. He suggests that Bourget or Blanche are the basis for Elstir. Perhaps Bergson is. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 186–9)

1921. Proust, "On the Effects of Soporifics on Memory" in *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Here Proust recounts a discussion between Bergson and the philosopher Émile Boutroux, a discussion reported by a "Norwegian philosopher" (Bergson's Swedish translator and friend Algot Ruhe). Bergson believed that soporifics (e.g., "sleeping pills"), taken in moderation, did not influence ordinary memory but interfered with higher order memory concerned with more abstract subjects, like remembering a passage in Greek. Proust responds that whether induced by drugs or deep sleep, his own memories of abstract subjects remains unaffected while his ordinary practical memories are enfeebled. He then goes on to speculate on whether we are able to recall memories from our past lives of which we are not aware. (The question is rhetorical.) *Sodom and Gomorrah*, published in French in 1920–21, was written in 1916–17. The section on

the Norwegian philosopher would have been added in 1921. This is the only explicit reference to Bergson in Proust's writings.

1921, May 11. Proust, "Letter to Paul Souday." In an essay in *Le Temps* (May 12, 1921), Souday describes Proust as the Bergson and the Einstein of the psychology of the novel ("psychologie Romanesque"). Proust replies, noting that there are many things in Souday's articles that touch him, that he is honored to see his name cited along with those of Bergson and Einstein. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 186–9)

1921, June 6. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Boulenger." Citing his fatigue, Proust ends his letter stating that he is entirely of Boulenger's opinion concerning Rivière, Martin-Chauffier, Boylesve, Bergson. They are—as would be said in the seventeenth century—the entire universe ("tout l'univers"). (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 258–61)

1921, June 17. Proust, "Letter to Duc de Guiche." Proust here discusses a theoretical point (Bergson's theory of telepathy) before moving on to discuss other matters. What is remarkable, considering that for Bergson we all may be communicating telepathically at all times, without knowing it, is that we should knowingly communicate telepathically so rarely. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 348–9)

1921, October 12. Proust, "Letter to Sydney Schiff." Proust, turning down an offer to visit London, notes concerning his own present fame, that persons as valuable as Bergson are probing deeply into his writings while eminent persons in America and Germany are writing him with great warmth. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 485)

1921, November 28. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Rivière." This letter concerns the prose poems of Algot Ruhe (Bergson's Swedish translator), which are far from being of poor quality (though their French could be improved). Can he have more time to read them? (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 485–6)

1921, November 29. Proust, "Letter to Jacques Rivière." Proust points out that concerning the poems of Algot Ruhe, it will be alright to correct them. Right now Bergson is so preoccupied with Einstein that he has given up teaching. Does Ruhe, Proust wonders, see himself as the Norwegian philosopher of Sodome II? (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 20, 540–1)

1922. Proust, "Reflections on the Nature of Dreams" in *The Captive* (153–60). Though published in 1923, *The Captive* was first completed in 1916 (Tadié, 748) but, like others of Proust's volumes, was added to intermittently afterwards. Tadié notes (840–1) that in Proust's *Cahiers* 59 and 60 there are numerous negative remarks on Bergson's theory of dreams, remarks which found their way into *The Captive* in 1922. Bergson's essay, "Dreams" ("Le Rêve") originally published in 1901, was republished in *Mind-Energy* (*L'Energie spirituelle*) in 1919. Proust's descriptions of dreams are like Bergson's in depicting the vast differences between dream and waking temporality (154) and the effect of bodily position and state on the content of dreams (157). Proust seems to think that Bergson has not paid attention to the possible moral value (259) and the aesthetic value (160) of dreams.

1922, January. In an introductory essay (Introduction II, later published in *La Pensée et le mouvant*, 1932; Eng. trans. *The Creative Mind*), Bergson states that novelists have never sought to deal methodically with inner duration except under the pressure of necessity. This methodological approach he imputes to "à la recherche du temps perdu," i.e. to Proust. Proust breaks down a barrier. (*Oeuvres*, 1268; *CM*, 28)

1922, towards March. Proust, "Letter to Camille Vettard." In discussing Vettard's views of his thought and of his writings, Proust compares his viewpoint to a telescope focused

on time, which makes apparent unconscious phenomena otherwise situated far in the past. "It is perhaps, on reflection, this special meaning (*sens*) which brought me to encounter . . . because one says it . . . Bergson, for he did not, so far as I can see, have on me any direct influence (suggestion)." (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 21, 78–9)

1922, March 24. Proust, "Letter to Gaston Gallimard." Proust here complains that the publication of Algot Ruhe's poems in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* has delayed his response to Bergson by at least ten months. Gallimard can examine his letter to Jacques Rivière. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 21, 100–2; Cf. n. 107)

1922, early May. Proust, "Letter to Henri Bergson." Proust here addresses Bergson as "the greatest metaphysician since Leibnitz and greater than Leibnitz." Part of the text of this letter is missing, making its interpretation difficult. Proust encloses a copy of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 5, *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 21, 163)

1922, May 17 or 18. Proust, "Letter to Gaston Gallimard." Proust notes that he has sent copies of the original edition of *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* to Blumenthal, Muhlfed, Jaloux, and Bergson. (Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 21, 204–7)

1922, November 18. Proust dies.

1922, November 22. Burial.

1923. *La prisonnière* (*The Captive*) published.

1925. *Albertine disparue* (*The Fugitive*) published.

1927. *Le temps retrouvé* (*Time regained*) published.

1929, February 9. Bergson, "Letter to E. Burnet." Bergson responds here to Burnet's *Essences* which contains an essay on Bergson and Proust. Though Burnet sees influences on, and similarities between him and Proust, Burnet has been careful not to make Proust his disciple or his imitator. Here Bergson concludes, "you have been guided by an accurate intuition." (Bergson, *Correspondances*, 1292–3)

1929, September 10. Bergson, "Letter to Charles Du Bos." Bergson responds to two books which Du Bos has sent him, *Byron et le besoin de la fatalité* and *Le Dialogue avec André Gide*. Though Bergson finds similarities between the writings of Proust and those of Du Bos, these similarities are in the manner of approach to problems and involve no influence. (Bergson, *Correspondances*, 1311)

1929, October 28. In a discussion with Jacques Chevalier, Bergson mentions that Proust was best man at his wedding. He sees Proust rarely since Proust comes out only at night. Proust sent him wax earplugs to help with his insomnia, but he was unable to use them. The literature of Proust and André Gide poses a problem for him: Proust's more than Gide's. (Chevalier, *Entretiens avec Bergson*)

1932, January 15. Bergson, "Letter to Charles Blondel." This item concerns Blondel's study *La Psychographie de Marcel Proust*. Blondel has given a valid ("la note juste") account of the relations between "Proustism" and "Bergsonism." Blondel provides numerous apt parallels between the fundamental ideas of Proust and the fundamental ideas of Bergson. In the end, however, while conceding Bergson's influence on Proust, he insists: "Proust may seem to *Bergsonize*. But in the end he always *Proustifies*" (Blondel, *Psychographie*, 185). (Bergson, *Correspondances*, 1359)

1936, January 2. Bergson, "Letter to Georges Cattaui." Bergson here thanks Cattaui for his highly suggestive and penetrating study, *L'Amitié de Proust*. Cattaui has entered into Proust's personality. (Cattaui states that Bergson had a "determining influence" on Proust but nowhere pursues this claim, using Bergson as an example of various aspects of the *Zeitgeist* [*L'Amitié*, 229].) (Bergson, *Correspondances*, 1523–4)

1937, end of December. Bergson, "Letter to Henri Massis." Bergson here agrees with Massis's statement (in his *Le Drame de Marcel Proust*) that Proust "turns his back on the *élan vital*." Yet, Bergson states, in Proust's very negativity, he "prepares in others the *sursam corda* which arises from the spectacle of their imperfection." (It would be very interesting to know, in this context, if Bergson had read Proust's concluding novel, *Time Regained*, which forms the basis for his *sursam corda*.) (Bergson, *Correspondances*, 1525)

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (1911; repr., New York: Zone Books, 1988).
2 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (1910; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950), 251.
3 This work has been undertaken by Endel Tulving and his younger colleague Daniel Schacter. CF. Daniel Schacter, *In Search of Memory* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 398. The author is currently working on an article exploring Bergson's influences on current memory science, including contemporary theories of brain localization.
4 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. E. Barnes (1943; repr., New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 9–11, 137. Cf. Pete A. Y. Gunter, "Bergson and Sartre: The Rise of French Existentialism" in *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*, ed. F. Burwick and P. Douglass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 230–44; Pete A. Y. Gunter, "A Criticism of Sartre's Concept of Time" in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. M. R. Kelley (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 134–47. The former article argues that Bergson and Sartre hold numerous positions in common: the centrality of the individual, the locus of freedom in the present, the critique of mathematics, and their fundamental dualism. They disagree fundamentally over the reality and function of negation. The latter article argues that Sartre's radical privileging of negation makes it impossible for him to account for the persistence of memory or for our commerce with the "other." It follows from this that Sartre's ekstatic consciousness exists in the world only negatively, as a negation of the world. For Bergson our grasp of the world is positive (immanent in things).
5 The implicit reference here is to Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space*, trans. Elliot Coleman (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 120.
6 Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson: Biographie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 100.
7 Fernand Gregh, *L'Age d'Or: Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse* (Paris: Gasset, 1947), 154–6, 158.
8 Henri Bergson, *Correspondances*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 432–3.
9 Henri Bergson, *Mélanges*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 450–1.
10 Marcel Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Kolb.
11 Marcel Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 3, ed. Kolb.

12 Bergson, *Correspondances*, vol. 4, 622–3; Proust, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, 128, 130–1, 137–9; Bergson, *Mélanges*, 629–30.
13 *Le Figaro*, September 27, 1905, 2.
14 Proust, *Correspondance*, vol. 8, 106–8.
15 *Ibid.*, 106–8.
16 Proust, *Le Carnet de 1908*, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 197.
17 Proust, *Carnets*, ed. F. Callu and A. Compagnon (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 115.
18 Cf. Roger Shattuck, *Proust's Binoculars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 127–39.

11

Joyce's Matter and Memory: Perception and Memory-Events in *Finnegans Wake*

Dustin Anderson

"The present contains nothing more than the past,
and what is found in the effect was already in the cause."

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*

". . . the only world that has reality and significance,
the world of our own latent consciousness."

Samuel Beckett, *Proust*

In his longer fiction, James Joyce codifies memory as a monadic moment where opposites meet. He focuses on that instance of meeting—that transaction between memory and the body. His most innovative approach to this transaction is the one he privileges in *Finnegans Wake*: the search for authentic and original memory. And no footprint is clearer than Henri Bergson's in that search, which inevitably highlights the creative impact perception has on the memory process. Because of the creative input that perception instills in that process, all memories become entropic or transmutative in nature. In *Finnegans Wake*, the process of transmutation must paradoxically take place within a system that is both closed and porous. However, because the original perception has undergone a substantial change (or in Joyce's case, a transubstantial change), it becomes an image, and the original, or pure, perception is impossible to recover. Since those originals are inaccessible, Joyce leaves forgeries (new manufactured memories) in their place. Although not necessarily identical, the schema that Joyce constructs for these *forged memory-events* in *Finnegans Wake* looks much like a development of Bergson's own discussion of perception—specifically the changes that take place as pure perception (for Joyce, the unattainable original memory-event) moves along the continuum of perceived images from singular memory-image to aggregate image as part of the perceiver's representation of the universe. Much like the process of selection that the perceiver must make to consciously understand the surrounding world in a rational way that Bergson explains in the first section of *Matter and Memory*, the *Wakean* characters select—and when those selections are unavailable, they forge—what they have perceived.

Much of the work on memory in Joyce's fiction focuses on either *Ulysses* or *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. When *Finnegans Wake* is mentioned, it is either connected to *Portrait* or *Ulysses* without discussion, or it is brought up simply to indicate the difficulty of identifying memory that the *Wake* presents. Since Shiv Kumar's 1963 study,[1] a small number of scholars[2] have discussed Bergson alongside Joyce's *Ulysses*, but, remarkably, a study of the ways Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* parallels, revises, or diverges from Bergsonian thought has yet to be attempted, which is particularly surprising since *Creative Evolution* was among the books in Joyce's personal library bought from F. H. Schimpff.[3] The notable exception to this is Mary Ann Gillies's *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996), which both uses Kumar's early study as a starting point and develops his ideas past the limitations that the earlier study incidentally imposed on itself.[4] Gillies modifies Kumar's approach to move beyond his focus on technique by incorporating the philosophical implications of Bergson's theories among early twentieth century artists. Rather than providing what she calls a "specific historical-materialist analysis" of modern writers' works, Gillies contends that "Bergson exerted an influence on modernists, because he was part of the general social condition of the time" (5).[5]

Where most studies focus on a combination of Bergsonian flux and time, Gillies incorporates Bergsonian memory and intuition as well. Gillies sees Joyce in opposition to an author like Woolf (whose aesthetics reveals "the opposition of *durée* and *l'étendu*") since his "interest in time" is focused on how to represent "life's fluid inner world" (Gillies, 134). Gillies pursues the connection between Bergson and Joyce further than Kumar to say that "Joyce's borrowings from Bergson are central to the development of his unique treatment of characters in fiction" (134). While the direct connection is questionable, her explanation of Joyce's use of memory as a narrative structure takes Bergson's role in Joyce's fiction in a more productive direction. The epiphany in Joyce, according to Gillies, is Bergsonian memory. The Joycean epiphany and Bergsonian memory are both, "the recollection of the past moment illuminat[ing] both the previous experience from which it comes and the present experience that prompted the recollection in the first place" (136). She does not point to *Matter and Memory* specifically in this instance, but the epiphany's resemblance to Bergson's memory cone is striking. The initial recollection (or first memory-image) interacts with both the aggregate representation of pure memory and with perception to create the epiphany (or moment of consciousness).

Gillies's epiphanic memory reading of Joyce's *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, and *Ulysses* works well because it can also point back to the initial memory-image. *Finnegans Wake* is left out of her commentary, perhaps because that initial memory-image is impossible to recover. Gillies cites the following passage from the *Wake* to demonstrate Joyce's dislike for Bergson:

> upon my for the first remarking you that the sophology of Bitchson while driven as under by a purely dime-dime urge is not without his cashcash charackterick-sticks, borrowed for its nonce ends from the fiery goodmother Miss Fortune (who the lost time we had the pleasure we have had our little recherche brush

> with, what, Schott?) . . . The speechform is a mere sorrogate. Whilst the quality and tality (I shall explex what you ought to mean by this with its proper when and where and why and how in the subsequent sentence) are alternativomentally harrogate and arrogate, as the gates may be.[6]

The "sophology of Bitchson," Gillies contends, is a slight on Bergson's theories of time (Gillies, 132). However, the reticence Joyce's narrator voices in this passage might have more to do with the ease of identifying specific instances of memories rather than an attack on Bergson's theory of duration. Gillies focuses on the Bitchson and Winestain (Bergson and Einstein) rather than on the "Miss Fortune . . . who lost time." Proust too appears to be the object of derision, and the uncomplicated ease with which Marcel recalls specific memories is nowhere to be found in *Finnegans Wake*. Even apart from the framework of the sleeper's unconscious mind, the characters in the *Wake* all encounter new moments of perception, experience both habit and spontaneous memories, and create new memory-images, but are unable to draw any of these back to the original memory-events. The *Wakean* characters are in a constant state of presentness. It seems that the closest any character can get to an original memory is the transitions between images. Memory in the *Wake* is always caught in the middle. The characters are unable to connect present perception and past memory-images to that initial image within the aggregate ("harrogate and arrogate") of pure memory.

Bergson's concept of multiplicity is central to understanding memory as a continuous or durative process and consists largely of the ways in which we should understand the relationship between perception and memory. Bergson's theory of perception, image, and representation, discussed in *Matter and Memory*, stems from his dissatisfaction with preceding philosophies of cognition; both "realism and idealism both go too far" for Bergson.[7] "It is a mistake," he says, to reduce matter to the perception which we have of it, a mistake also to make of it a thing able to produce in us perceptions, but in itself of another nature than they. Matter, in our, view, is an aggregate of "images." And by "image" we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less that which the realist calls a thing—an existence placed halfway between the "thing" and the "representation" (*MM*, 9).

Both matter and representation interact with what I call the durative aggregate of memory-images. We should note the difference between images and memory-images. Images are always part of a process of duration. They always resemble one another—they are similar despite slight recognizable differences. The image comes from matter, and should therefore be consistent regardless of who perceives the material object of focus. Memory-image, however, is unique to each individual person. They contain something like what neuro-philosopher V. S. Ramachandran would call in a *Brief Tour of Consciousness* the qualia of experience, and because of that qualia are much closer to representation than simple images.[8] These individual memory-images cannot exist without the surrounding images to provide the qualitative context, so they are also durative. In the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson shows the slight difference that is dependent on some type of unknowable change. The single instance of perception—by our sensory cells (i.e. the eye)—are changed by the "miraculous

power" of the cerebral cortex "into a representation of things" that will ultimately become part of our pure memory (29).

Matter itself cannot create representations, but the process of change, which our perceptions undergo as they become memory-images, ultimately builds the representational aggregate. The perception of matter is different from the image in the same way—to borrow Arsene's metaphor from *Watt*—that the grain of sand is different from the mountain. The character or material of both the sand and the mountain are the same, but the grain is not the same thing as the mountain. The multiplicity of the grain is the mountain. Likewise, the memory-image is the single isolated unit of the aggregate but cannot function independently of it. The difference between image and representation is one of degree, not a difference of kind.

Because of the durative aggregate of memory-images, our perception cannot simply be an isolated interaction with an exterior material object. Our perception immediately forms transactions with single memory-images from the aggregate to interpret the object and simultaneously create a new memory-image of it. Like the image of the Russian General within the King Mark-HCE continuum, the memory-image is an isolated image of the face, but it is both the memory-image of that single instance and always part of the whole representation of all that it is connected to spatially: the individual or avatar, the permutations of character, and the concept of face or of usurped father-figure. All of these latter categories are part of Bergson's pure memory and the concretizations that are based on the immediate perceptions that we discern. The memory-image is created anew every time perception interacts with the representational whole, but, more importantly, it points to the inaccessibility of pure perception or absolute presentness and, most importantly, pure memory.

To understand how Joyce conceptualizes memory, we must first look at how he reverse-engineers memories to find the triggering original memory-event in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce uses much larger cultural markers than a single individual's memory to highlight the missing memory-image. Like the characters themselves, memories in *Finnegans Wake* are in constant flux. By examining the act of transmutation we can see the changes memory undergoes when *Wakean* characters find it impossible to access any kind of legitimate original memory. Both the absence of genuine original memory-images and the constant change that memory experiences point to Stephen's declaration at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen's desire to "forge in the smithy of [his] soul" the consciousness of his people comes full circle in *Finnegans Wake*. Since both individual and cultural memories are inaccessible, memory, for Joyce, becomes a series of forgeries.[9]

This mechanization of words and stories most closely approximates Shem's plagiarism as he forges palimpsests: an enactment of Wittgenstein's words on the arrangement and understanding of knowledge. He says, "problems are solved, not by reporting new experience, but by arranging what we have always known."[10] We so often return only in memory to these events and then misremember them or appropriate these misrememberings as authentic memory. By validating Joyce's example of recreational re-creation, the reader has been duped by Joyce. In reading this narrative of forgetting, have we forgotten the claim that young Stephen makes in *Portrait*? We

have avoided what we *know*, that a prominent and recurrent character (not to mention the one often used to represent Joyce himself) has declared that he will create—*will forge*—this consciousness. This act is transformational; it shows the way memory shapes language in all its representative forms.

At the beginning of the Washerwomen section, Joyce draws attention to the telling of tales, or rather the variance of the telling of tales, and the notion that that variance should be obvious: "Well, you know or don't you kennet or haven't I told you every telling has a tailing and that's the he and the she of it" (*Finnegans Wake* [*FW*], 213:11–12). The concept of variance within repetition seems so native to reading Joyce that it should be unnecessary to remind either reader or character that every tale has its own way of being told, or, more importantly, remembered.

Joyce's repetition, the oldest rhetorical device, should, of course, draw our attention, here specifically, to the phrase "every telling has a tailing," or the telling of tales. We all know how telling tales works: characters are introduced, plots begin to develop as the character experiences this or that event, and so on. Whenever tales don't begin this way—when our genre-based expectation is subverted by the omission of this linear development—we take notice. As Gillies explains, the original telling (or experience) is always built into every subsequent telling (or experience) that resembles the initial memory-image (Gillies, 136).

Of course, the cyclical nature of history is pronounced in *Finnegans Wake*, but the question of *why* remains. In *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake*, Clive Hart asserts that this type of ritualistic return to pattern and revisitation of motif is the staving off of forgetfulness.[11] Whether this type of mytho-historic accumulation is the same thing as mankind's forgetful nature is unclear. This forgetfulness seems somehow far more fabricated than incidental. In the second epigraph, the speaker announces that the memory of something is about to be both unveiled and un-availed. There is no subject here. Is it that the memory is inaccessible or forgotten? This inaccessible memory appears to be the Ur memory—the initial event—which is always inaccessible in Joyce's translations of the various world creation stories. Even as Joyce moves the mytho-narratives backwards towards a point of origin, he simultaneously moves them forwards as he "encircle[s] him circuly" (*FW*, 505:13). Just as we see in Bergson's memory cone, this dual movement, for Joyce, cannot translate the initial event. Like the black hole, the story is drawn toward the initial event, but the point of origin remains unobservable. Where it should be completely unknowable, Joyce actualizes memory-events through specific and separate types of spatialization. In *Finnegans Wake*, these memory-events speak to the larger culture and history of Ireland. While this is certainly not always the case in *Portrait* or *Ulysses*, the spectre of Irish history, culture, and terrain looms over all of the characters. The allegory dissolves in *Finnegans Wake* as the memory-events are directly linked to a type of national character.

For Joyce, original memory must be created. Joycean memories—even *virtual memories*—however, are not merely intangible ideas, but concrete things, be they organic, geographic, or material writing. Or, as Deleuze most clearly paraphrases Bergson in "Bergson's Conception of Difference," "memory is not a representation of something, it represents nothing, it *is*."[12] Because it exists as a material state, memory

can affect the space around and can indeed act as a force. We see this pronounced nowhere clearer than in the way that Joyce spatializes memory to force a linguistic shift or transformation. Spatialized memory forces language to shift or transform into a type of memory-image. For Bergson, this type of spatializing always distorts, or discerns, the memory-image into something new (Bergson, *MM*, 38). This discernment does not add or take away from any memory-image but creates a new aspect of that image. On a continuous basis, this creates a multiplicity of images that is separate from, but not different than, the representation.

Bergson creates a continuum of image with pure memory and pure perception at opposite poles. For Bergson, there is no fundamental difference between matter, what we encounter as pure perception, and representation, what comprises pure memory. It might be helpful to think of pure perception as perception devoid of memory, and pure memory as representation without specific perceptions. The memory-image is always caught somewhere in between those two poles. The memory-image is not wholly virtual like representation, but neither is it wholly actual like perception. When we perceive the material world around us aurally, visually, and tactility, we take in an extraordinary amount of information. However, we cannot consciously process the entirety of those immediate perceptions. Rather, as Bergson says, we discern or focus on a very small percentage of those perceptions that interest either our current thought process or bodily needs. The reminder of those selections or pieces of perceptions are not necessarily filtered out, but they continuously build our unconscious representation of the world. The moment, or event, of "actualization" is where memory slips for Joyce. Virtual surroundings become literal in some cases and even more elusively figurative in others. The absence of authentic national memories drives Joyce's reverse-engineering of memory in the *Wake*. The characters are constantly searching for the initial memory-event or memory-image that will allow them to tell their stories from the beginning, and for Joyce, these initial memory-events must be forged anew.

The key to *Finnegans Wake* is a question of beginnings. However, we never see the beginning—the *origin* event—in the *Wake*. Where Joyce focuses on the memory of initial event, it functions identically to Bergson's concept of pure perception. For both authors, there can be no truly recalled perception of a material event. There is no discernible *actual* event, only a fluid *virtual* replication of the event. All we ever see are the permutations or the consequences, some more closely positioned to the origin than others. The closest we can come in the *Wake* is an allusion to the beginning (the fortunate fall or *felix culpa*), which is always paired with H.C.E. as the tumbler ("O foenix culprit!", *FW*, 23:16), and is recalled mostly in this section alongside the dead Tim Finnegan, "Oh Finlay coldpalled!" (506:9). (*Finlay* as in Tim Finnegan or Finn McCool or H.C.E., and *coldpalled* as in deathly pallor or cold and pallbearer-ed.) Bernard Benstock criticizes Niall Montgomery's reading of the pun on St. Augustine's exclamation "O felix culpa" as missing the underlying suggestion of universal sexual guilt in favor of propounding the concept of Original Sin.[13] However, Benstock over-essentializes this notion as well. Instead, we should consider Walter Benjamin's citation of Karl Kraus's *Worte in Versen*: original sin is not the goal, rather "Origin is the goal."[14] The *Wake* always begins *in medias res* (like the *Odyssey* or *Paradise Lost* and later

Molloy) rather than *ab ovo* (like *Tristram Shandy*). Even in the most basic stories, we never see the beginning. As is the case with the Edenic reference in the epigraph, *in the beginning was* a story being told of Adam's post-creation and post-lapsarian lives, not the story of (or perhaps narration of) Adam's creation or anything anticipating that creation. There is no Genesis 1:1 or John 1:1 (i.e. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" or "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"). The narrative threads in the *Wake* appear already formed, like Athena bursting full-grown from Zeus's head.

These mythic origin narratives are always durative in nature. The same constituent components are slightly altered and then reformed into new, yet familiar, narratives. Duration, especially regarding memory, becomes a constant process of recomposition. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson describes it this way:

> The true effect of repetition is to decompose and then to recompose, and thus appeal to the intelligence of the body . . . In this sense, a movement is learned when the body has been made to understand it . . . Now the logic of the body admits of no tacit implications. It demands that all constituent parts of the required movement shall be set forth one by one, and then put together again. (*MM*, 137)

From these constituent parts, we should understand this as the basis of Bergson's discussion of *nothingness* and *becoming*. *Creative Evolution* positions duration and becoming as inextricably meshed. While on the one hand, becoming, according to Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), is simply the "extreme contiguity within a coupling of two sensations without resemblance,"[15] it is also a melding—simultaneously one and many.[16]

Because of this contraction of numerous constituent images, the aggregate of memory-images are always multiplicities. They are simultaneously one and many images. We might also understand the fluidity of character in *Finnegans Wake* as qualitative multiplicity. A group of father figures is their own type of flock. They are all individually identifiable but share so many commonalities that they can seamlessly fit into one another's roles—they are not a succession of fathers but reiterations of a father figure. HCE, Adam, Mark, Finn MacCool, Parnell, and Tim Finnegan are all the genesis of their family. Each father-figure is heroic in some way, each is accused of some crime or has a fall from grace. Because they can co-exist in one space (HCE is all of the preceding characters), they do not exclude or discount one another. Bergson prefigures Joyce when he illustrates this multiplicity of memory with his memory cone from *Matter and Memory* (*MM*, 152). The point of the cone becomes the congregation of images focused into a single image as it interacts with both our perception and with the plane of our representation of the universe.

This cone shows both the interactivity and mobility of memory-images. This progressive movement of memory as a whole takes place, according to Deleuze, between the extremes of the immobile base of pure memory and the plane of action.[17] Consciousness occurs when pure memories form transactions as they move down into

singular images or instances—what Deleuze describes as a "new *monism*" since there is a "contraction-memory" within each transaction of "recollection-memory" as it moves down the cone (Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 74).

We see this model patterned throughout the *Wake* (though typically in a Viconian vein). The first consequence leads to the second, but the third is not only a byproduct of the second, but also an accumulation of the first and second; the third consequence would be both a byproduct of the third and an accumulation of the first two consequences. Thus in the Vicoian structure of the *Wake*, the Age of Gods leads to the Age of Heroes, and the combination of those two ages (or the acts and ideals therein) lead to the Age of Men, and all three ages combine in the ricorso. We find the structure specifically developing in content as well. The inquisitors find Yuan drunkenly sprawled or crucified in the flowery middenheap. Consequentially, they interrogate him. The entirety of Book III Chapter 3 is that interrogation coupled with the drunkenness leads to an inebriated (recodified and unfinished) telling of all those events that brought him to this point (i.e. HCE and ALP first coming together and producing the twins and so on).

Historically, we imagine this kind of consequence as a linear progression (consequence 1 leads to consequence 2, etc.). The trends of most Western histories develop the same way. In the Judeo-Christian canon we see this trend develop through expulsions: Satan first breaks with God, and we find the repetition of that pride-based break in Eden. Satan is expelled by God from Heaven, and consequent of Satan's and their own actions, Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden. Then Cain is expelled by Adam, Ham by Noah, Ishmael by Abraham, Jacob by Isaac, Joseph by his brothers, and the Israelites by the Egyptians. The ancient Greek cosmology happens with births and coups: Ouranos sires the Titans and foresees that they will overthrow him, thus he imprisons them in Gaia; consequentially, Gaia helps Kronos usurp Ouranos (and, incidentally, produces many other offspring). As a consequence of his own actions, Kronos cunningly eats his children before they can vie for power with him. Despite his attempt at infantiphagy, Kronos is overthrown by Zeus. Zeus follows his father's and grandfather's methods and eats Metis (with whom he has coupled), and, consequentially, Athena is born from Zeus's head. That birth then drives Hera to parthenogenically produce Hephaestus, and so on (or the Titanomachy, Gigantomachy, Theomachy). Norse cosmology develops with counterparts and dualities in the battles between the Æsir and Ásynjur and Jotans, Jotans and Humans, et cetera. However, if we chart out the typical readings of these mythologies by combining Alain Badiou's evental site chain and Bergson's memory cone, we see that the history of events stems from a single point of origin, just as, at each single moment of conscious discernment, our understanding of the representational world of memory-images stems from an instance of unattainable pure perception.

In section Five (§*V*) of *Being and Event,* Badiou outlines one of his basic goals: to expose the potential for "transformative innovation" in any given situation. These innovations are only initiated by an exceptional, though fleeting, break with the status quo, what he calls an "event." These can occur at any time but are located near the edge

of some type of "void" or the place that is "indistinguishable" in a situation (the area of a situation where traditional modes of recognition or understanding no longer have any significant agency). That event makes it possible for a "truth" to develop out of the "evental site" (what Feltham translates from *site événementiel*). For Badiou, these truths are dogmatic convictions of those effected people who develop the revolutionary implications of the event and thus become "subjects" of that event's truth. A bit tautologically, subjects and their adherence to the consequences (dogmatic, although sometimes random) of an event carry their ideology forward, while the truth becomes nothing more than the accumulation of after-event consequences, and, because of this cumulative effect, the consequences will invariably be inconsistent. By applying these consequences, a situation will vastly reorganize itself to keep with the implications of the original event.

By analogy, Badiou's model then pertains to these traditional mythic socio-cultural events, where memory would function something like an event; the memory-event substitutes for the void, and the rememberer becomes subject to that memory-event. The truth to which the rememberer-subject eventually adheres, with conviction, is the accumulation of both types of memory that Bergson outlines: the "truth" is the catalogue of memory-images, but the conviction to it is the mechanical memory that responds to further the consequences of the believed, or perceived, memory-event (see figure below).

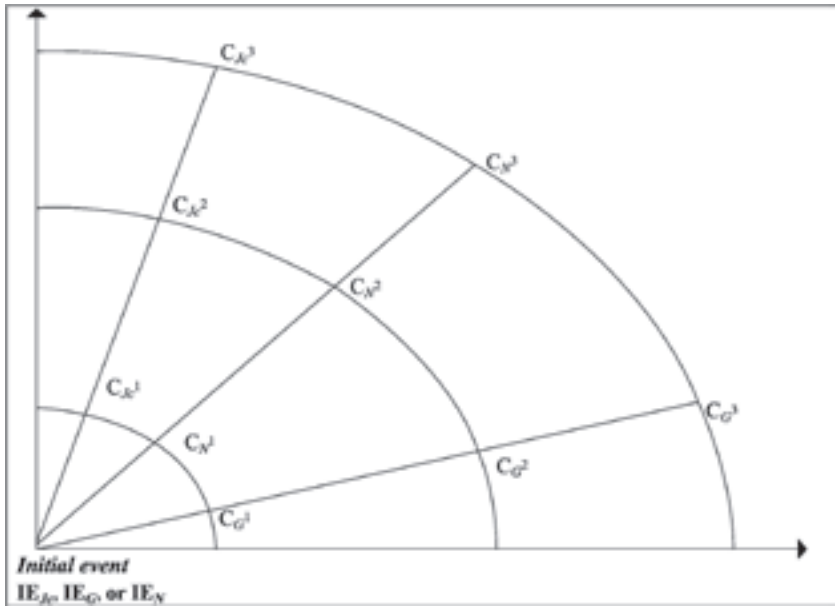

Figure 11.1 The Event-Myth Tree: an incorporation of Badiou's Event Trajectory Model and Bergson's Memory Cone

From the initial event, we see a series of consequences develop. While the events vary in detail from one another, they remain thematically consistent. Each event is an independent monadic moment but extends to interact with every subsequent monadic moment. The Judeo-Christian mythos begins with the Void being replaced by Heaven and Earth (IE_{Jc}), the Greek with Chaos (IE_{G}), the Norse with airs of Fire and Ice (IE_{N}). The consequences work likewise. The first one involves a power struggle between creator and created. The first Judeo-Christian consequence is Satan's challenge to God (C_{Jc}^{1}), while the first Greek consequence is Ouranos's eating his children (C_{G}^{1}), and Ymir begetting Bure (C_{N}^{1}) in the Norse mythos. The second set of consequences focuses on the expulsion or imprisonment of the losing party: Satan's expulsion (C_{Jc}^{2}), Ouranos's imprisonment (C_{G}^{2}), and Ymir's murder (C_{N}^{2}). The third consequence shows a repetition in action as the consequences begin to accumulate: Adam and Eve's fall mirrors Satan's expulsion (C_{Jc}^{3}), Zeus eats Metis (C_{G}^{3}), and Höðr murders his brother Baldr (C_{N}^{3}). Every subsequent consequence both develops new byproducts while accumulating byproducts related to the initial event (for instance, C_{Jc}^{X} might be Noah's olive branch and Christ's cross, C_{G}^{X} might be Odysseus's bedpost, and C_{N}^{X} could be the tree-grazing goat, Heiðrún, that produces all the Scandinavian rivers). In each of these cases, at least one byproduct remains consistent: the Tree (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree in which Zeus hides, or the World Tree, Yggdrasil).

Joyce's interest in the memory of these initial events seems to lie in two areas: the byproduct of the initial event and the transformations that develop within specific consequences. The important innovation in the Greek trend, for instance, is this: Ouranos imprisons Kronos, Kronos imprisons Zeus, Zeus imprisons Prometheus and Meits. From these latter actions two transformative innovations occur. In both instances the victims (who are known for their cunning) are able to produce a new free radical consequence; that is, they make possible an evolution in the traditional consequence trend. Prometheus's imprisonment is the consequence of not imprisoning (through physical or intellectual means) his offspring, mankind. Because Prometheus first releases Athena from Zeus's head (because he ate Metis), Athena is able to instruct Prometheus on how to bring fire to man, thus enabling man to create/invent all other things (like civilization)—allowing the human story to move forward.

That byproduct is as far back as Joyce translates these histories. The beginning is absent in the Wake, represented only by silence. This silence is always set apart and, of course, appears in a numerically significant fashion: three times, "(Silent.)," "(Silents)," and "SILENCE" (*FW*, 14:6, 334:32, and 501:6). Joyce focuses not on the initial event but rather on the first common byproducts and consequences. The silence is a brief interruption of a previous line, but the lines which follow return immediately to noise of various kinds—history lessons on A.D. 566 and A.D. 1132 (14:11), the "mewseyfume's" lithographs on the "mizzatant wall" (334:24), or stage directions (501:6–7).

The narrative of Book III, chapter 3, suffers the same kind of noisy interference of memory. Here again we see the story start in the midst of things as Yuan is commanded to retell his own creation narrative, as the inquisitors demand he "Recount!" about his "Ma's da. Da's ma" (496:17 and 20), or his "ouragan of spaces" (504:14). Yuan first implies his connection to Milton through comments about his own style ("Your bard's

highview," 504:16, and "without too much italiote interfairance," 504:17–18). Yuan's telling of his origin, however, becomes progressively more Miltonic as Yuan proceeds with references to Milton's characters, such as silvertongued Satan ("Godamedy, you're a delville of a tolkar!" 503:17), Adam as he names the animals ("put his own nickelname on every toad, duck and herring," 506:1–2), and the soaring angels of paradise ("Amengst menlike trees walking or trees like angels weep-ing nobirdy aviar soar anywing to eagle it!" 505:16–17).

Yuan consistently develops allusions to themes and events in *Paradise Lost*, such as the serpent "snakedst-tu-naughsy" (505:7), the earth and Eve dichotomy "creation and her leaves" (505:9), and the repeated sinning "sinsin-sinning" (505:9–10). More tellingly, Joyce conflates the fall and the tree in phrases like "Upfellbowm" (505:29) and "treemanangel" (505:33). The "treemanangel" or tree-man-angel and "menlike trees" or men who are treelike emphasizes the role of the tree in the creation narrative. Joyce again concentrates on the tree when he alludes to God's commanding Adam to admit to eating from the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in "Telleth that eke the treeth?" (505:19), and "Woe! Woe! So that was kow he became the foerst of our treefellers?" (506:15–16), and "Now, no hiding your wren under a bushle! What was it doing there, for instance? Standing foreninst us. In Summerian sunshine? And in Cimmerian shudders. You saw it visibly from your hidingplace? No. From my invisibly lyingplace" (504:3–9).

This telling of a tale also draws together the parallels of the Judeo-Christian and Norse myths (as well as Sumerian Ur myths) when Joyce pairs Adam and Eve, the first couple, with Yggdrasil: "An evernasty ashtray. I see. Now do you know the wellknown kikkinmidden where the illassorted first couple first met with each other?" (503:7–9); and "There used to be a tree stuck up? An overlisting eshtree? There used, sure enough. Beside the Annar. At the ford of Slivenamond. Oakley Ashe's elm" (503:30–2). Yuan, however, never goes further back than the Miltonic telling of this creation tale—there is no Void, no chaos—the characters are always already in motion. The closest that Yuan can come is the trees in these stories.

The trees, a particular initial event byproduct, might allow Joyce to unwind Celtic cosmology. The reason that Celtic cosmology will not fit neatly into the Event-Myth Tree is because the Celts have no creation narrative (if there was one, it did not survive the Roman empire). The Irish are missing the fundamental piece of cultural identity that would allow them to form a cosmology completely separate from the rest of the Western world. These Celtic mythic cycles are all derived explicitly and directly from the Greek or Judeo-Christian mytho-genealogies (i.e. Cessair, Noah's granddaughter, led the early inhabitants). We never see the initial event—no chaos, no Void, no word. Each of the Cycles begins in *medias res*: biblical or magical in the Mythological Cycle, romantic in the Fenian Cycle, heroic in the Ulster Cycle, or all of these (to lesser degrees) in the Historical Cycle. The earliest instance that we find in these Cycles is the long onomastic lists that comprise the *Metrical Dindshenchas* (*Metrical Lore of Places*), which would parallel it with Adam's naming of the animals or the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*The Book of Invasions* or *The Book of the Taking of Ireland*) that traces the Irish patriachial line directly back to Noah (making it a late Genesis

equivalent at best). Animals in Irish cosmology have always had names. Adam and the Earth have always existed, and there has never been just the Void. Irish cosmology has no initial event. There is no original memory-image to organize the subsequent memory-images. The linkages between perception and the pure memory aggregate is missing. For Bergson this demands a recomposition of memory, but for Joyce this link must be forged anew.

However, the initial event byproduct of the trees allows Joyce to move closer to the preter-rational cosmological world. The Celtic trees (*Crann Bethadh* or *Trees of Life*) and their counterpart deities (in the surviving *Lebor Gabála Érenn* account) precede the Irish alphabet, and the letters (thus language) are ultimately derived from it. The attractiveness of this idea to Joyce is clear: these are not simply groups of sacred symbols or mythic figures; they are ancient *multiplices* accepted in the larger cultural narrative of a people. These images are manifested from the representational aggregate of a cultural memory.[18]

Beyond the recurring trees, Joyce also hints at earlier, more fundamental (the pun on fundament would not be lost on Joyce) elements: earth and air, from which both God and Prometheus made man/Adam. In quick succession, Joyce moves from merely mentioning dirt ("Simply awful the dirt," 503:7, and "dirt on him than an old dog has fleas," 506:36) to connecting the fundament of air to our ability to speak: "Get out, you dirt! A strangely striking part of speech for the hottest worked word of ur sprogue. You're not! Unhindered and odd times? Mere thumbshow? Lately?" (507:21–3). The "ur sprogue" is, of course, "your brogue," but Úr or Úir is also the Irish name of the eighteenth letter of the Ogham alphabet, meaning "clay," "earth," or "soil."[19] Ur, as language, represents what we traditionally have considered the unified pre-Babel (proto-World), or pure, language.

It is hard to consider the phrase "pure language" without thinking immediately of Benjamin's discussion of translation in his introduction to "The Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*"—especially given his invocation of Messianic *tsimtsum*:

> Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel.[20]

In his counterpart essay on Baudelaire, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin engages Bergson directly. Benjamin refers to *Matter and Memory* as an "early monumental work" towering above Baudelaire's (and Proust's) work (Benjamin, "Motifs," 157). Although he ultimately uses Bergson's *durée* to confirm his concept of *Erlebnis* within Baudelaire's poetry, Benjamin makes clear that we find an "uninterrupted stream of becoming" as we examine the spectrum of origin, perception, translation, and memory ("Motifs," 199). These events, especially translation, can never be fully isolated.

According to Benjamin, they can never be experienced alone; *Erlebnis* (experience or *durée*) "is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data" ("Motifs," 157). This kind of quasitranslation and amalgamation bears a striking resemblance to Joyce's polyglot portmanteau words, a series of creations that seem as if they come as close to Benjamin's notion of pure language as possible: "For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language" (Benjamin, "Translator," 80). Joyce conveys similar phono/archeological tendencies when he describes the "clay-layers" of Oisín making gradual "morphological changes in [the] body politic": "these modes carrying us back to the superimposed claylayers of eocene and pleastoseen formation and the gradual morphological changes in our body politic which Professor Ebahi-Ahuri of Philadespoinis (Ill)—whose bluebutterbust I have just given his coupe de grass to—neatly names a *boîté á* surprises" (*FW*, 165:25–30). In this instance, Professor Ebahi-Ahuri's interpretation superimposes the image of hod-carrying ancient Celts ("pleastoseen" as the Pleistocene epoch of geological history) over the contemporary Irish "body politic" (British *Plasticine* modeling clay), which creates a new barrier to realizing the original or genuine image of either the Celts or the Irish. The break, or here "coupe de grass," matches the barrier it must overcome. These breaks are always subjective based upon how we understand these barriers to be conceived or imagined. Like Vico's ricorso, these barriers are accumulations of the previous consequences that must be destroyed to be resurrected: the image of the crucifix superimposed on the image of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As Benjamin writes:

> To grasp the genuine relationship between an original and a translation requires an investigation analogous to the argumentation by which a critique of cognition would have to prove the impossibility of an image theory. There it is a matter of showing that in cognition there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if it dealt with images of reality; here it can be demonstrated that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living—the original undergoes a change. ("Translator," 73)

Every stage of language (proto-, preter-, or otherwise) undergoes this type of translation and change. Content is translated even in the developmental stage of language, the nursery rhyme: the "House that Jack Built" enacts a Benjaminian translation, which occurs throughout Joyce's text. Joyce first demonstrates this translation with Zeus and Prometheus: "to some hastyswasty timberman torch priest, flamenfan, the ward of the wind that lightened the fire that lay in the wood that Jove bolt" (*FW*, 80:26–8); later, with God and Adam: "This is the glider that gladdened the girl that list to the wind that lifted the leaves that folded the fruit that hung on the tree that grew in the garden Gough gave" (271:25–9); and, finally, with Zeus and Europa/Lyda (who are simultaneously H.C.E. and A.L.P.): "So this was the dope that woolied the cad that kinked the ruck that noised the rape that tried the sap that hugged the mort? That legged in the hoax that

joke bilked" (511:32–4). This type of accumulated history is something that Benjamin explains in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" as he discusses the interconnected, and cyclical nature of history,

> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome incarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past.[21]

Benjamin says to understand the modality of translation we always must go back to the original to find the laws governing the potential translation to determine whether this translation can have a dual meaning ("Translator," 70). However, without that original, we cannot identify a legitimate or pure language. Without the zero point (the memory-event) language will always be a translation. Translation, in these instances, includes the original sense of the word as well. These transformative innovations allow the stories to develop into something new and chimerical rather than simply stagnating in the routine ritual of slight variances in story translations—something new, not the origin. The innovations in memory ultimately point out how these characters are always in the past. Although the characters think they are experiencing what Bergson would describe as presentness, Joyce illustrates how these characters are perceiving the present as past—they think they are hearing the first telling of a tale (the telling in the present), but the characters are framed within a narration (so the telling has already happened). Those characters who are *seeing* the first telling of the first tale have already *seen* it since they are described within the frame of the re-telling; or as Joyce puts it, "And were they watching you as watcher as well?" (508:35–6). The best that these characters can do is to forge or fabricate the point of origin.

All memory in the *Wake* is mediated through the surrounding contextual memories. The accretion of memories always includes those memories adjacent to them. Because of this accretion, the original memory-image remains inaccessible. Although Joyce focuses on the impossibility of *remembering* rather than *perceiving* in these origin events, the legacy of Bergson's approach to memory-events in Joyce's own dreamscape schema is clear, and that is exactly what we should understand memory as in *Finnegans Wake*: constant, if not pure, perception.

Notes

1 Shiv Kumar, *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 106. Kumar is careful not to claim a strong link between Bergson and Joyce. The tie between the two is not as tenuous as Kumar might fear, though. A small number of scholars draw together Bergson and Joyce through

Wyndham Lewis's comment in *Time and Western Man* that Bergson planted the seed for *Ulysses* and that Joyce is "very strictly of the school of Bergson-Einstein-Proust." See Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (New York: Black Sparrow, 1993).

2 In *James Joyce, Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), John Coyle points out: "If memory is constructed in the present, the past, as such, can never be recovered" (104). This is a noteworthy observation since it succinctly indicates the creative and active process of memory—rather than memory as a repository—and implies the ongoing attempt that each character makes to recover memory in Joyce's work. Readings like Coyle's imply a Bergsonian approach to memory, but fail to mention him specifically. John Rickard mentions in *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of Ulysses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998) that Bergson's *élan vital* could serve as a "useful narratological term for Joyce's development of plot in *Ulysses*" (29). Rickard is right, though, to not assign a direct Bergsonian influence to Joyce's work. The relationship between Bergson and Joyce might be better described as their contemporaneous and parallel curiosity about memory as a process rather than as an artifact. In *The World According to James Joyce: Reconstructing Representation* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1997), Cordell Yee's discussion does include *Finnegans Wake* but only discusses Bergsonian perception in a limited capacity. During his critique of Lewis's *The Art of Being Ruled*, Yee draws Bergsonian and Joycean perception together, first against Lewis's purely intellectual understanding of visual and aural perception, and again as Lewis sees both Joyce and Bergson as "enemies of the eye" (69–71). The majority of Yee's discussion of Bergson, though, has to do with time. He mentions *Creative Evolution*'s use of flux (as Bergson talks about the flow of *time* as *reality*) to explain how *Ulysses* is caught up in a stream of language and consciousness (48). Much of Yee's discussion is similar to Kumar's critique of both time and duration in Joyce's work. While Rickard cites Kumar twice in regards to involuntary memory as "a permanent aspect of [Marcel's and Stephen and Bloom's] mental processes" (qtd. in Rickard, 129) in both *A la recherche du temps perdu* and *Ulysses*, Yee does not mention Kumar at all.

3 Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 40. Both Michael Patrick Gillespie's catalogue and Richard Ellmann's biography establish a material connection between Joyce and Bergson. According to Gillespie's *Inverted Volumes Improperly Arranged: James Joyce and his Trieste Library* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1983), Joyce had not heard of either Bergson or Bertrand Russell before he left Dublin.

4 Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 3. The limitation, according to Gillies, happens primarily because Kumar's book could not take into account materials found on Joyce, Woolf, Richardson, and Bergson since its publication in 1963 and because his study: "is hampered by its desire to 'bring out the parallelism between the notion of the stream of consciousness as it appears in [Woolf, Joyce, and Richardson] and the Bergsonian concept of flux.'" Despite that Kumar's conclusions are admittedly limited, Gillies follows through on the study that Kumar began. In the introduction of *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*, Kumar explains how Bergson's theories of duration, memory, and intuition are necessary steps to move beyond psychoanalytical readings of modernist novels.

5 Although she does not mention specifically the predominant role of psychoanalysis in memory studies on modernist texts, Gillies does point to other studies, like Margaret Church's *Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), as examples of how discussions of Bergson are limited to "temporal issues" while memory falls generally under the aegis of psychoanalysts (Gillies, 134).
6 James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 149:12–32.
7 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Paul and Palmer (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002), 9.
8 Vilayanur S. Ramachandran, *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pi Press, 2005.
9 James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Dover, 1994), 213. Joyce is not the first to tackle these issues, of course. He operates within an Irish tradition of questioning the authenticity of memory and the identity that is created around it. In *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne employed similar omissions to those that we see both in *Finnegans Wake* and later in Beckett's *Watt*. The elided details replaced with ***s in Chapter XX or Chapter XXII, or the completely empty Chapter XVIII and XIX, speak not only to the inconsistency or unreliability of memory but also to the notion of remembering what one chooses. The cock-and-bull story that Sterne creates through Shandy is thematically similar to Joyce's *Wake*, but Swift's skepticism in *Gulliver's Travels* is more closely related to the textual inauthenticity that Joyce forges in the *Wake* (or Gulliver's spatially mapped memory). For each instance of storytelling, we not only see a shift in language (and learn how Gulliver comes to this new language), but we also find that he remembers these instances based on where they happened geographically. Each instance has a time and a place that corresponds with the concurrent memory creation. These mythical lands and people mutate as easily in Gulliver's memory as the avatars in *Finnegans Wake*. Swift's conclusion—albeit a bit frustrated—seems to be the impossibility of authentic communication through language due, in large part, to translation or transcription.
10 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), §109. Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 85. According to Stanley Cavell, we must go back and challenge these assumptions: "what precedes certain discoveries is a necessity to return to a work, in fact or in memory, as to unfinished business."
11 Clive Hart, *Structure and Motif in Finnegans Wake* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 53.
12 Gilles Deleuze, "The Conception of Difference in Bergson," in *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 55.
13 Bernard Benstock, *Joyce-Again's Wake: An Analysis of Finnegans Wake* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1965), 82.
14 Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1992), 261.
15 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Tomlinson and Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 173.
16 Similar to Bergson's discussion of duration, becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari, dismisses binaries while allowing multiple transformations. The key difference

is, perhaps, that the spectator's consciousness is a necessary aspect of becoming, whereas duration is a vital force of nature.

17 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Tomlinson and Habberjam (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1991), 59–60.

18 The third tree (Ash) is what we find Joyce returning to in this cosmological vein (though certainly not exclusively). Each of these trees not only has a counterpart deity, but a totem animal and element as well (i.e. a chieftain tree associated with the magician, the storyteller or trickster, Gwydion, lightning strikes, and the Adder). The prominence of this tree is not surprising given its totem's association in other cosmologies: the adder/caduceus as a symbol of Hermes, Loki, and Satan, each of these acting as tricksters or storytellers. Hermes is perhaps most important here as he forms the model of alchemical Hermetic methods concerned with transmutation of substances. All of these mytho-genealogies deal with trees as symbols of knowledge, but the trees more importantly indicate the mutation of knowledge into a more permanent form (i.e. the written word, the letter). The emphasis of Norse mythology might have to do with the chimerical nature of that transmutation, as Yggdrasil is guarded by both the serpent Jormungandr, and devoured by the basilisk pair Nidhogg (the serpent) and Gullinkambi (the rooster). Like the Edenic forbidden tree, the Norse tree, Yggdrasil, is where Odin obtained the Rune Alphabet, and sacrificed an eye to gain wisdom. Translation, transmutation, chimerical biology, and alchemy are all bound for Joyce, as they represent the flux of being. Each is, more importantly, a multiplicity: a contraction of images or states into a new aggregate representation.

19 Leonard Wolley, *Ur Excavations: Publications of the joint expedition of the British museum and of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania to Mesopotamia* (London: Trustees of the two British Museums, 1939), 94–7. Ur, in southern Mesopotamia, was considered one of the earliest known civilizations in world history. The Ur, as described in the biblical book of Genesis, is the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham, thus the beginning point of the Western lines of Hebraic man. Moreover, Ur is the richest archaeological find of cuneiform, the earliest written language. The mid-nineteenth century excavations of the ziggurats by J. G. Taylor, as described in "Volume V" of Leonard Wolley's *Ur Excavations* (1939), showed that Ur was part of the ancient Babylonian necropolis even after it had ceased to be inhabited. The cuneiform was preserved largely in shards of broken pottery and limestone tablets from the tombs.

20 Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: The Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableux Parsiens,*" in *Illuminations*, 78.

21 Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 261.

12

Minds Meeting: Bergson, Joyce, Nabokov, and the Aesthetics of the Subliminal

Leona Toker

In his article on Faulkner, Jean-Paul Sartre notes that "a writer's technique always relates back to his metaphysics."[1] This does not amount to saying that the technique *expresses* a metaphysics; rather, it means that the technique may bear witness of the author's having lived in the vicinity of certain philosophical ideas and having included them, whether endorsed or questioned, in his or her repertoire. Here I shall read Bergson's philosophy as indirect commentary on some of the aesthetic experiments in Joyce and Nabokov—and, conversely, the work of these two writers as pointing to ambivalences in Bergson's philosophical system.

Both Joyce's and Nabokov's exposure to Bergson's ideas is well documented. In 1913, about a year before starting to write *Ulysses*, Joyce obtained a copy of *L'Evolution créatrice*.[2] It is not known whether the bookseller was ever paid for this item, but Joyce's wish to have it in his possession is likely to have been associated with previous familiarity—from his Left-Bank Paris days—with Bergson's work and reputation. Nabokov, whose modernism has "a markedly Gallic slant,"[3] lists Bergson among his "top favorites" during his Western European exile,[4] when Bergson's classes drew huge audiences (his laurels still disturbing many a modern philosopher). Indeed, between the two world wars the ideas of Bergson's books, as well as of his essays and lectures collected under the title *Mind-Energy*, are likely to have been the subject of discussions in intellectual gatherings: topics of conversations largely lost to posterity. Later phenomenology blocked or, conversely, made significant advances in the strands of thought that passed through Bergson,[5] but most of those strands divided themselves into several different avenues, philosophical and artistic, the latter including Proust and Faulkner as well as Joyce and Nabokov. I believe that Nabokov's interest in the French philosopher's work may have been a matter of recognizing a kinship rather than of accepting an influence[6]; Joyce too may have been responding in partly overlapping ways to the same features of the philosophical climate of the times. But influence has its own mysterious ways as well as its anxieties.[7]

Education of the senses

A recurrent motif in Bergson's oeuvre, especially in *Mind-Energy*, is the motif of "disinterest," in the sense of a time-out from the struggle for survival. "Disinterest" is also a Kantian notion, still viable despite the criticism it has attracted in the past decades. For Kant, it is a necessary condition for aesthetic judgment: the aesthetic judgment of a work of art is one that is free of all considerations of private interest.[8] Aesthetic experience, as distinct from aesthetic practice (such as dutiful visits to the museums and concert halls) and from the aesthetics of everyday life, is grounded in such self-transcendence, albeit momentary. In that respect, it is so similar to mystical experience that one cannot be sure which of the two a Wordsworth or a Keats attempt to evoke in their poetry. The very notion of aesthetic experience, as well as the belief in the possibility of trance-like states not determined by psycho-physiological causes, has been called into questions in the last decades. However, as in the case of religious experience, those who know it first-hand assume it to be real rather than psychologically determined and illusory. At such moments total concentration on the object that has triggered the spiritual heightening suspends our awareness of the self and its needs. Schopenhauer, with whom Bergson has elective affinities, would see such moments as pauses in the inexorable progress of the immanent Will, pauses for the duration of which the Will is silenced.[9]

Aesthetic experience in response to a work of art or a natural scene may be spontaneous, but it can also be promoted by *the education of the senses*. According to Bergson, the latter consists in our learning to perceive that which is not necessary for our survival, interest, well-being.[10] In primitive organisms, such as amoeba, perception and action coincide: an amoeba automatically shrinks away from the external irritant. In more complex organisms, perception is delayed action: one takes account of what is relevant to one's comfort even if the action of seeking or shying the object is not immediate. Bergson regards the brain not as a storehouse of memories but as an instrument of recall, selection, and blockage. Total recall is inimical to purposeful action; it may have a disempowering effect (reversing the causal relationship, the protagonist of Borges's "Funes the Memorious" discovers and develops total recall when paralyzed after an accident[11]). Brain, the body organ geared up mainly to the exigencies of future-oriented action, is a sifting agent: "we perceive virtually many more things than we perceive actually," and "the part that our body plays is that of shutting out from consciousness all that is of no practical interest to us, all that does not lend itself to our action."[12]

Education of the senses runs counter this tendency of the brain and, by implication, is affordable at those advanced stages of personal and social evolution when a concentrated effort of survival can be diluted. The nonutilitarian refinement of the senses is learning to notice details that have no bearing on our future interested action (Bergson, *MM*, 46–8). Yet the education of the senses also has an ethical aspect: learning to perceive not only that which is actually or potentially associated with our own well-being may also increase our responsiveness to the "irrelevant" pain of another human being, to that which appeals to pity rather than to the sense of

the beautiful. It is not, of course, *bound* to do so: an aesthete all too often deliberately closes himself up to human pain. Still, a conscious commitment to the good of others—the kind of commitment that Nabokov's Sebastian Knight, for instance, would like to but fails to maintain, does not suffice unless one is *trained* to perceive implicit appeals to sympathy. In his *Lectures on Literature*, Nabokov defined art as "Beauty plus pity."[13] The context for this cryptic remark can be found in Bergson's comments on pity in *Time and Free Will*. If pity entailed nothing but imaginatively entering the situation of a sufferer, "it would inspire us with the idea of avoiding the wretched rather than helping them, for pain is naturally abhorrent to us."[14] But Bergson believes that true pity

> consists not so much in fearing suffering as in desiring it. The desire is a faint one and we should hardly wish to see it realized; yet we form it in spite of ourselves, as if Nature were committing some great injustice and it were necessary to get rid of all suspicion of complicity with her. The essence of pity is thus a need for self-abasement, an aspiration downwards. This painful aspiration nevertheless has a charm about it, because it raises us in our own estimation and makes us feel superior to those sensuous goods from which our thought is temporarily detached. The increasing intensity of pity thus consists in a qualitative progress, in a transition from repugnance to fear, from fear to sympathy, and from sympathy itself to humility. (Bergson, *TFW*, 19)

Pity, in Bergson's description of it, is thus akin to aesthetic experience in that it "temporarily detach[es]" us from "sensuous goods." It differs from aesthetic experience in that it does not amount to total disinterest: there is an element of self-congratulation in our feeling "superior" to the goods that pity helps us to scorn; there is emotional self-interest in our sense of not being "in complicity" with what has caused the suffering of the object of pity—no wonder we often resent becoming objects of pity ourselves. Yet self-hugging is but one porous stage in the qualitative heterogeneity of the process of pity: the vector of self-abasement leads "from repugnance to fear, from fear to sympathy, and from sympathy itself to humility." Literary texts, indeed, frequently question our instinctive denial of complicity with the causes of the suffering that elicits our pity.[15]

One may note, by way of a short detour, Joyce's handling of heterogeneity of affect whose complexity prolongs the duration of a very short span of time. This is how the speaker of *Giacomo Joyce* analyzes (in an almost chemical, if not alchemical sense) a compliment paid him by the father of a young student with whom he is fascinated, almost in love. The compliment might sound bland in English translation, "My daughter has the greatest admiration for her English teacher," but its Italian rhythms and, apparently, personal undertones turn it into an epiphany:

> *Mia figlia ha una grandissima ammirazione per il suo maestro inglese*. The old man's face, handsome, flushed, with strongly Jewish features and long white whiskers, turned towards me as we walk down the hill together. O! Perfectly said:

> courtesy, benevolence, curiosity, trust, suspicion, naturalness, helplessness of age, confidence, frankness, urbanity, sincerity, warning, pathos, compassion: a perfect blend. Ignatius Loyola, make haste to help me![16]

Nabokov's formula "beauty plus pity" can be understood as follows: given a prior general commitment to the good of others, the heightening of one's disinterested sensitivity to beauty may also sharpen one's sensitivity to another person's pain. The reader's response, then, oscillates between aesthetic heightening and the kind of ethical processing of the text's world in which the self returns to the foreplane in a subsidiary oscillation between complacency and mortification.

The mutually supportive relationship between aesthetic refinement and ethical attention is seldom automatic—a conscious moral commitment is necessary to make the two connect. Nor is the self-referential turn in the reader's response to Nabokov's texts automatic: the texts create the conditions for such a self-critical twist, but it is up to the individual reader to *choose* to revise his or her own attitudes, to open up to the possibility of such a revision. This choice, moreover, need not take place during the direct confrontation with the text: very often it is while reading critical discussions, in a process which, in *The Company We Keep*, Wayne Booth has called "coduction," that we experience moments of shame for having missed things which should have been noticed.[17] At such times, we usually also wish to return to the text, to watch how our enriched perception alters it. If the self-referential twist is sufficiently conscious, on a repeated reading we may also watch the changes that the previous response to the text has produced in ourselves.

Such training often compensates for the lack of a more spontaneous aesthetic response to a work of art. In either case our trancelike focus on the details and their part in the whole is undisturbed by the task of singling out data for further use in learned conversation, just as our aesthetic response to a landscape is divorced from thoughts of a potentially profitable tourist attraction.[18] The passing of the trance and its replacement by doubt is a familiar poetic topos: "If this be but a vain belief" (Wordsworth); "fled is that music/Do I wake or sleep?" (Keats); "at length/My trance was canceled, stricken through with doubt" (Tennyson). In Joyce and Nabokov, the carnivalization of the thoughts associated with such a temporary heightening of the spirit may be seen as a way of laughing off the frustration about their elusiveness, both as experience and as a subject of knowledge.

The Bergsonian view of the brain as an instrument of struggle for survival liable to block "disinterest" is also the background for Nabokov's remarks, resonating with Housman's statements in "The Name and Nature of Poetry," that the response to the beauty of the work is not in the brain but in other parts of the body, in particular the "spine."[19] The privileging of the *spine* as a metaphoric antonym of the "brain" may be associated with Galvani's vivisection experiments; in Russian, moreover, the term for "bone-marrow" is "bone-brain": the realm of the subliminal thus remains anchored in the individual body, even though mystical connotations frequently cluster around it in Nabokov's texts. This is one of the productive tensions in Nabokov's (and Bergson's) poetics, a tension between the sense of the autonomy of a discrete self and

the subliminal reaching out towards what in *Ulysses* Joyce referred to as the "Akasic records"[20]—Joyce's communal memory not lodged in any individual brain.[21] Having rejected the consistent Catholic doctrine of the afterlife and having refused to replace it by another, Joyce, however, carnivalizes his own repertoire of mystical references.[22] Nabokov seems to prefer to retain a melancholy perplexity, relegating the search for mystery to adolescent disputes in the fragment "Ultima Thule." In his autobiography, *Speak, Memory*, he almost—but not quite—admits defeat:

> Short of suicide, I have tried everything. I have doffed my identity in order to pass for a conventional spook and steal into realms that existed before I was conceived. I have mentally endured the degrading company of Victorian lady novelists and retired colonels who remembered having, in former lives, been slave messengers on a Roman road or sages under the willows of Lhasa. I have ransacked my oldest dreams for keys and clues—and

The rising suspense of the passage prepares us for an anticlimactic denial of success, but Nabokov chooses to defuse the issue by a diversionary maneuver: he follows the associative link provided by "dreams" and then, anticlimactically, mounts a hobby-horse attack against his favorite straw-figure of Viennese wisdom: "—and let me say at once that I reject completely the vulgar, shabby, fundamentally medieval world of Freud, with its crankish quest for sexual symbols . . . and its bitter little embryos spying, from their natural nooks, upon the love life of their parents."[23] Bergson's, Joyce's, and Nabokov's minds meet at an impasse which the novelists seem to acknowledge more readily than the philosopher. One might venture to suggest that part of the reason for Bloom's not unmixed attractiveness for Stephen is precisely the attitude of Judaism (at least of some of its intellectual strands that form Bloom's forgotten heritage) to the idea of personal afterlife as irrelevant to moral and spiritual life. Nor could Nabokov deny the distinct though distasteful likelihood of the body being, after all, the seat of personal consciousness which is bound to perish along with the mortal frame. In his 1922 poem "Rasstrel" ("The Execution"), he entertains the possibility that, after the firing squad, the young hero's consciousness is replaced by the darkness that defies all appeal—*neumolimaia t'ma*.[24] The philosopher-protagonist of his novel *Bend Sinister* cannot accept "the inanity of accumulating incalculable treasures of thought and sensation, and thought-behind-thought and sensation-behind-sensation, to lose them all at once and forever in a fit of black nausea followed by infinite nothingness. Unquote."[25] The anguish about the latter eventuality, in multiple quotation marks, could eventually be alleviated by Bergson's denial of nothingness (reminiscent of the coda of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*):

> the idea of absolute nothingness has not one jot more meaning than a square circle. The absence of one thing being always the presence of another which we prefer to leave aside because it is not the thing that interests us or the thing we were expecting suppression is never anything more than substitution, a two-sided operation which we agree to look at from one side only: so that the idea of

> the abolition of everything is self-destructive, inconceivable; it is a pseudo-idea, a mirage conjured up by our imagination.[26]

Yet Nabokov was not quite convinced. Bergson rejected the typological relationship between the dissolution of the body and the cancellation of individual consciousness; Nabokov, however, partly accepted the possibility that "the dead are good mixers" on the spiritual as well as the physical plane.[27] As the dissolving body merges with the physical environment, the limited personal consciousness may be imagined as melting within an "infinite consciousness" (Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, 192), which in *Bend Sinister* is described as the fulfillment of "the attempt of a point in space and time to identify itself with every other point."[28] This suggestion comes from a fictional philosopher, whose mind is stunted by a painful recent loss yet who remains honest enough to contemplate an alternative aftermath of death—"absolute nothingness, *nichto*" (*Bend Sinister*, 175). Thoughts about this eventuality are especially painful since *Bend Sinister* represents the beginning of a dystopian turn taken by the vital impulse: it is still a long time before its path will wind down to the end, the way a similar dystopian trajectory does in Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*.

Creative impulse and the reabsorption of debris

Bergson seems to have wished to believe that what is waived by the mission-oriented consciousness is not lost, yet collocating his writings with Nabokov's and Joyce's enhances one's sense of the intellectual integrity that bracketed this dream. Some of Bergson's statements suggest that the content of subliminal perception and subliminal memory does get lost by the wayside of the creative impulse, unless reabsorbed (painstakingly perhaps) into the life of the spirit. Creative process is not only the precipitant forward movement of the creative impetus (Bergson's *élan vital* giving the name to a *Finnegans Wake* character Elanio Vitale[29]); it also includes the work of reabsorption, saving the content of the subliminal memory from oblivion by allowing it to rise to the surface of consciousness and public record. In *Creative Evolution* Bergson describes the life of consciousness as "a movement" in the direction opposite to that of materiality[30]:

> materiality is the inverse movement . . . the matter which forms a world being an undivided flux, and undivided also the life that runs through it, cutting out in it living beings all along its track. Of these two currents the second runs counter to the first, but the first obtains, all the same, something from the second. There results between them a *modus vivendi*, which is organization.[31]

The idea of the "undivided" flux of life is balanced by the thought about the scission that takes place in that flux: the stream branches when it meets obstacles produced by the counterflux of matter. But then it confronts matter not only up front but also laterally, recuperating (in a version of osmosis) parts of life from flowing towards the gaping oblivion.

These two functions of the creative process are distributed between the two male protagonists of Joyce's *Ulysses*: the task of Stephen Dedalus, the artist, is to engage the flow of reality up front, to cut into the unknown so as to create; the province of Leopold Bloom, the average sensual human being, is to pick up the debris cast off in the process and reabsorb them into human consciousness and moral-intellectual life. The salvaging of throwaway fragments (material and mental) of the main line of progress is what may be called "economy"—in the Gilbert and the Linati schemas, "economy" is the "Art" of the "Calypso" episode in which Bloom makes his entrance into the text. Not for nothing is a "Throwaway" one of the most insistently recurrent motifs of the novel, associated with the literalization of the Bergsonian metaphor of "flow": after prolonged wonderings, it is carried off by the river—while a dark horse named Throwaway unexpectedly wins the Ascot race.

This division of labor is not rigid: Bloom's lateral reabsorption of experience is not alien to Stephen; Stephen's forward thrust of creative energy is not alien to Bloom. Indeed, Stephen also processes and reshapes odd scraps of academic disciplines and extracurricular literary and philosophical data. Yet at the beginning of the day celebrated in the novel, he still lacks the warmth and conscious care for this lateral flow. The final episodes of the novel emphasize that this principle of care represented by Bloom may partly rub off on Stephen when the two meet, provided Stephen's internal flow of consciousness sheds part of its superciliousness towards the alien and prepares to accept, and receive for reprocessing, the once-discarded abject.

This is, of course, but one of the numerous interpretations of what Stephen may gain from his encounter with Bloom or of what this encounter may symbolize. An even more directly Bergsonian interpretation would be that Bloom helps complement Stephen's intellect with openness to intuition. Here an ambiguity in Bergson's figurative language seems to be diagnosed by Joyce: for Bergson, the vital impetus is *not* the "march of the mind"; and yet it is for the march of the intellect that the semantics of the forward thrust is used. The evolving human consciousness, writes Bergson, "not only abandoned cumbersome baggage on the way; it has also had to give up valuable goods" (*CE*, 291). These "goods," the debris, include intuition. And yet it is intuition that runs *with* the vital impetus, whereas intellect adapts itself to the flow of matter: "intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and this finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter. A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development" (*CE*, 291). At the beginning of the novel Stephen seems to be waiting for his intellect rather than intuition to forge his creativity—Bergson would have recommended reserving the intellect mainly for a careful processing of the by-products of intuition. Gilles Deleuze's reading of Bergson denies the distinction between intuition and rigorous philosophical thinking: "Intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method, one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy" (Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 13). The fictional Bloom is not trained to subject his intuitive responsiveness to the contingencies of life, his not-quite-disorderly sympathy, to rigorous intellectual processing that would raise

it to the level of a philosophical method, yet his reabsorbed intuitiveness may work its way into one strand of a creative impulse, even though not the same one as that of Deleuze.

States of consciousness, interpenetrating

For Bergson, the locus of convergence between matter and consciousness was the image; or rather strands of imagery, each developing a duration and a trajectory of its own. This privileging of the image[32] is implemented in Joyces's and Nabokov's narrative preferences, as is also the Bergsonian thought about the interpenetration of successive states of consciousness (Bergson, *TFW*, 98–9). In the work of both novelists, the latter phenomenon takes the shape of the recurrence of images and motifs: traces of earlier states of consciousness penetrate the successive states in the shape of memories that are signaled by the recurrence. In Joyce, the recurrent motifs are frequently deployed as part of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Nabokov, who did not take recourse to this technique beyond hints of its possibility (especially in *Bend Sinister* and *Transparent Things*), tended to organize the recurrent motifs, such as the kidney-shaped blot in *Bend Sinister* or the Red Rocks in *Lolita*, into nonlinear patterns, as parts of a paradigm supplementing a syntagm. This feature is also prominent in Joyce's work ever since his story "The Dead."

The "interpenetration" that Bergson has in mind is not atomistic: it is not a matter of separate discrete verbalizable ideas or states of mind. As A. R. Lacey notes by way of explaining Bergson's critique of associationism, if I stand up to open the window and then forget why I have stood up, my forgotten purpose lends my state of consciousness

> an indefinable qualitative tinge, 'a confused feeling that something remains to be done' (TF, 160). My state of mind while I am standing there is different from what it would have been if I had stood up for some other purpose, e.g. to open the door. Another example: I smell a rose and it brings back memories of my childhood. Again we have not got two separate ideas associated with each other, the smell and the memories, but the memories form part of the experience of the smelling itself; anyone else who smelt the same rose would have a qualitatively different experience. (Lacey, *Bergson*, 71–2)

This subliminal lingering of previous experience is represented in, for instance, Nabokov's *Pnin*, when the protagonist is shown remaining subliminally disturbed by an impatient remark he had made to the librarian and an unwelcome piece of news that she imparted to him: his subsequent experience is colored by a sense of oppression, as if by indistinct memory of "a blunder we have made, a piece of rudeness we have allowed ourselves, or a threat we have chosen to ignore."[33] For Nabokov, good writing consists in approximating such qualitative heterogeneity of experience. The protagonist of his *Invitation to a Beheading* dreams of writing in such a way that "a commonplace word"

might "come alive" and "share its neighbor's sheen, heat, shadow, while reflecting itself in its neighbor and renewing the neighboring word in the process, so that the whole line is live iridescence."[34] And though on smelling a rose each person may have a different experience in accordance with his or her memories, in responding to an image in a novel, an individual reader is also influenced by his or her memory of the prior parts of the text, often distancing and obtunding traces of extra-textual personal experience: different readers' responses to images and motifs after the text has got well under way can be expected to have more common ground—created by the text itself—than direct responses to objects in the "real" world.[35] On the syntagmatic level, good writing renders the qualitative heterogeneity of experience, but the nonlinear patterns that it creates may draw us into the shared rhythms of that heterogeneity: bracketing skepticism, it is but mildly hyperbolic to say, with the narrator of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, that "any soul may be yours, if you find and follow its undulations."[36]

There are two main interpretive strategies in analyzing recurrent imagery in fiction. One is to collect the instances of the recurrence and seek their semantic common denominator. For instance, the kidney-shape patch of color in *Bend Sinister*, whether that of a blot, a puddle, or a lake, associates with the protagonist's wife's fatally unsuccessful kidney surgery, and hence with disaster, also signified by the toponym Lake Malheur. The other strategy, a syntactic one, is to treat the recurrent detail as a character's leitmotif and watch its metamorphoses in interaction with the "neighboring" states of consciousness—here an apt example is the recurrent motif of the squirrel which is associated with Pnin and which is constantly morphing—from quick New England squirrels, to the representation of the "shadow-tailed" creature in the postcard Pnin sends Victor, to the "vair" (squirrel fur) of Cinderella's slippers (which had, Pnin believes, turned into glass [*verre*] through the mechanism of folk etymology), to the root of his first love's name, "Belochkin," derived from the Russian for "little squirrel."[37]

Both Joyce and Nabokov took the technique of interpenetration a step further, giving, as it were, narrative resolution to Bergson's tentative approximations of the idea that memory is not entirely personal, individual—that the storehouse of memory images (call it "Akasic records") may be beyond an individual brain.[38] In both Nabokov and Joyce, the interpenetration of states of consciousness is sometimes intersubjective. In the "Aeolus" episode in *Ulysses*, in the section bearing the suggestive rubric "LINKS WITH BYGONE DAYS OF YORE" (Joyce, 176), J. J. O'Molloy's lighting up for a smoke seems to conjure up, as if by association the following uncharacteristic sentence: "I have often thought since on looking back over that strange time that it was that small act, trivial in itself, that striking of that match, that determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives" (177). In the Gilbert and Linati schemas the "organ" of this episode is the lungs; and its most insistently recurring image, consistent with its Homeric substrate, is the wind. The sentence above is clearly a parody (note the recurrence of "that") of a long-winded Dickensian (days-of-yore) sentence, complete with a verbal allusion that Gifford and Seidman have traced back to *David Copperfield* (146). But it also sounds like a fragment of the prize story "Matcham's Masterstroke" (associated with Joyce's own juvenilia) that Bloom has been reading in the jakes in "Calypso"—only it

is not Bloom but Stephen who is present on the scene, with O'Molloy in the editorial office. This may be but one of the signals of the interpenetration of Stephen's and Bloom's states of consciousness; the image of Shakespeare walking in the Fetter Lane (cf. 259 and 362) may be another, possibly based on memories of the same readings, the same biography of Shakespeare. The motif of a trivial event impacting the lives of two people is auto-descriptive and self-parodist: the melodrama of a humdrum event "determin[ing] the aftercourse of both our lives" is supposed to be staged at the end of *Ulysses* and, by implication, be remembered for many years. In an essay on *déja vu*, Bergson suggested that "*the formation of memory is never posterior to the formation of perception; it is contemporaneous with it*" (*ME*, 126). Nabokov's 1925 short story "A Guide to Berlin" is largely devoted to this contemporaneity, to the perception of the present as the formation of future memories.

Nabokov's handling of intersubjective interpenetration of states of consciousness takes several shapes: from the suggestion that the momentary perceptions of Darwin at the end of *Glory* may be replicating those of Martin Edelweiss to the complicated play of a solo narrative with duets and trios in *Transparent Things*, as well as, apparently, in the unfinished *The Original of Laura*. The technique is practically laid bare in *Pnin*: on a repeated reading of this novel, when we know that Pnin's experience is related not by an authoritative omniscient narrator but by the first-person narrator who steps onto the stage in the last chapter, the line between Pnin's own memories and those "given" him by the narrator from his own mental stock is radically blurred. In *Bend Sinister* there is a partial overlap of the voice of the narrator (who represents "the anthropomorphic deity impersonated" by the implied author of the novel, xii)[39] and the free indirect discourse of the protagonist, a technique which is also traceable in "The Vane Sisters" and in *Transparent Things* where several consciousnesses seem to be competing for the control of the text.

Such a contest is presented in the form of a drama, stage-directions and all, in the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*. This Nighttown episode gives surrealistic developments to the motifs taken from the experience of Stephen and from that of Bloom, precluding the possibility of placing the material of the chapter "in the brain" of any of the two protagonists:[40] in a lecture on *Ulysses*, Nabokov noted that here "the book itself is dreaming" (*Lectures on Literature*, 350). Its dream reabsorbs the lateral debris of previous chapters into its re-energized *élan vital*. Some of its images are, moreover, neither from Stephen's nor from Bloom's day. For example, the evicted tenant who attacks Bloom in one of the dystopian sequences of the episode comes from the "Cyclops" episode where the anonymous narrator mentioned that the truculent nationalistic Citizen cannot show his face in his home county because he had acquired the holdings of an evicted tenant farmer.

In his essay "Dreams," published in *Mind-Energy*, Bergson pointed out that the subliminal consciousness deployed in the dreams prefers the insignificant, the elements of the past discarded by active consciousness. It thus becomes an agent of recuperation. This emphasis on the minor and the transient rather than (*pace* Freud) on the wish-fulfilling has to be taken into account when we think about Joyce's representation of Leopold Bloom. Much has been said about Bloom emerging from "Circe" as a masochist,

an effeminate ambitious nonentity, a prurient practical joker, and a voyeur—all this amounts to identifying Bloom with his Nighttown avatar. And yet, if we play along with Bergson's thoughts on "the instability of the dream, the rapidity with which it can pass[41] and the preference it shows for insignificant recollections" (*ME*, 101), what "Circe" magnifies is exactly the insignificant, the temporary—repressed tendencies and passing thoughts rather than abiding traits that determine the protagonist's character. True, throughout the novel Bloom does have his voyeuristic moments (as on observing the socialite about to go up into her carriage, Joyce, 90) and hints of interest in masochistic experience ("Whacking a carpet on the clothesline. She does whack it, by George," 70; "How will you pun? You punish me?" 361) but these are mainly fleeting (though recurrent) moments rather than sustained "morose delectation."

By contrast, Bloom does seem to feel guilty over his onanistic orgasm in the presence of Gerty MacDowell. His not unmixed remorse takes the shape of a nightmare figure of Gerty accusing him of making her bleed—his earlier thought about her impending menstruation blending with the thought of a sexual abuse of a virgin. Bloom's moment of guilt is not about his act of masturbation itself but about having used the image projected by Gerty for that purpose; the gap between this image and Gerty's actual independent life is signalized as early as in the "Nausicaa" episode, when, after his not too secret orgasm Bloom notices that Gerty is lame. The moment of the sense of guilt in "Circe" is over the relics of the male chauvinist attitudes in Bloom's moral make-up. When Dixon represents Bloom as "a finished example of the new womanly man" (613–14), one should read this not only as a reference to the suggestions of Bloom's effeminacy (a strand of thought traceable to Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*) but also, and perhaps mainly, to his being the kind of man who might have the approval of the "New Woman" movement.

The fantastic shapes that fleeting thoughts assume in the dream episode are explicable in Bergson's terms as temporary "inattention to life" (*ME*, 147) which can be translated into the book's laying aside all effort of realistic world-building. In that sense the episode, even though largely dominated by the image of Bloom, is closer to the state of mind of the intoxicated Stephen, who inadvertently gets into grimly comic trouble with English soldiers at the end. Whereas "inattention to life" may be a condition of aesthetic experience in the framework of aesthetic practice, whether writing or reading (or dreaming—"useless memories, or 'dream' memories, may slip into the field of consciousness, availing themselves of a moment of inattention to life," *ME*, 76), in everyday life, and in the eyes of observers, it can produce the kind of absent minded stiffness which, in the essay "Laughter," Bergson describes as the source of the comic effect. Indeed, Bergson regards comedy as the least purely aesthetic of art forms: its main function is corrective: since one fears being ridiculed, one attempts to avoid that which provokes laugher, viz. rigidity in human behavior or absurd automatism in social regulation.[42]

Throughout what can be constructed as the realistic deployment of "Circe" (as distinct from its nightmare sequences) Bloom is, on the contrary, very attentive to life—especially Stephen's life. In the role of a responsible adult rather than a comic subject of kinky fantasies, he is on the alert for the possibility of trouble; and he does,

indeed, manage to save Stephen from being arrested or badly abused by the soldiers. This rescue is accomplished by making use of the abject—that is, by enlisting the help of a police informer, whose involvement literalizes the idea of recycling the discarded, reintegrating it, for what it is worth, into human life.

The oscillation of Bloom's image between that of the prurient alazon of the "Circe" nightmare and the alert and benevolent active agent in the "waking" parts of the episode, like the oscillation of Nabokov's Pnin between alazon and lyrical hero, can be read as drawing out another consequence of Bergson's thought. Bergson explains the prevalence of "what had been least noticed" by the dream-self's being "a distraught self, a self which has let itself go. The memories which harmonize best with it are the memories of distraction, those which bear no mark of effort" (*ME*, 104). In the framework of Bergson's theory of laughter, the distraught self, whose intelligence is not at the moment geared up to self-preservation, is ridiculous to the observers. Yet it is precisely when the struggle for survival and for adaptation to the environment is allowed to pause that a person's inner life—dreaming, day-dreaming, playing, or reflecting—can achieve a most beautiful *flow*, often in comic contrast with the concomitant absent-mindedness of the temporarily neglected self-presentation.

Flow

"Flow" is the metaphor for duration that Nabokov shares with Bergson,[43] a metaphor that is repeatedly realized in Joyce's *Ulysses*, by a throwaway being carried away in wind and water, by water flowing through the Dublin waterworks to Bloom's kitchen tap, by alcohol and bodily fluids, or, autometadescriptively, through the very use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. As if to prevent the sense of duration from congealing into a concept, Bergson and Joyce complement the metaphor of the "flow" with other metaphors, such as Bergson's "melody," or "growth,"[44] the former of paramount importance also in *Ulysses*. In Nabokov's *Speak, Memory*, the image of moving water is surrounded with a whole semantic field: the dead metaphor of "the flow of time" is revived, whereas the literal images of currents and streams yield to the figuration of time, as when "the endless tumultuous flow of a water mill [gives] the spectator (his elbow on the handrail) the sensation of receding endlessly, as if this were the stern of time itself" (72–3). Nabokov describes the birth of his self-reflexive consciousness at the age of three, his becoming aware of being, in terms that suggest the intersubjectivity of the inner and outer flow: "I felt myself plunged abruptly into a radiant and mobile medium that was no other than the pure element of time. One shared it—just as excited bathers share shining seawater—with creatures that were not oneself but that were joined to one by time's common flow, an environment quite different from the spatial world" (21).

As in Joyce, the metaphysical implications of the train of imagery are subjected to a self-mockery: in *Ada*, Van Veen's aunt Aqua is presented as obsessed with water, especially water flowing from taps.[45] Yet there is a touch of method behind Aqua's madness. It is not unreminiscent of what *Speak, Memory* tells us about the death-bed

vision of Nabokov's great-aunt Praskovia Tarnovski whose last words, as reported by Nabokov's mother, were "That's interesting. Now I understand. Everything is water, *vsyo—voda*" (68). One may surmise that, with her life-preserving intelligence giving way, Praskov'ia Tarnovski (born Kozlov), "a doctor, the author of works on psychiatry, anthropology and social welfare" (67), replaced a verb with a noun: "*Vsyo voda*" may mean "*vsyo techet*," everything flows—in this common flow one's individuality is a matter of the fragile discreteness of space.

The function of our brain, says Bergson, is to "direct our thought towards action, to bring it to prepare the act that the circumstances call for" (*ME*, 74). If we believe that the whole of a person's life flashes in front of his or her eyes at the moment before death, this "panoramic vision" is due "to a sudden *disinterestedness in life* born of the sudden conviction that the moment is the moment of death" (*ME*, 75). Nabokov generally opts for a different literary topos than the metaphysical illumination at the moment of death, but its etiology may be imagined as similar to this ultimate insight: when its struggle for the preservation of its own discreteness is given up, individual consciousness achieves intuitive vision of the nature of things. This ultimate sympathy with "the common flow" is modeled, in one's lifetime, by moments of creative rapture, one's consciousness temporarily blending within *élan vital*.

Schema and image

Laying one's faculties open to the eventuality of reabsorbing the content of memory into the creative thrust, like laying one's heart open to grace in a religious context, is (as Stephen Dedalus's progress through *Ulysses* can illustrate) the cornerstone of Bergsonian psychology of creativity. Genuine artistic creativity combines gifts of the subliminal with a conscious intellectual effort. The artist's joy of achievement, whether in constructing an overall scheme of the work or on having woven a felicitous segment of texture is a type of oscillation between "disinterest" and interest, or between the joy of the creative epiphany and the pleasure of its implementation or, in Nabokov's overlapping terms, between *vostorg* (rapture) and *vdokhnovenie* (inspiration), "which can be paraphrased as 'rapture' and 'recapture' " (*Lectures*, 378). The minds of the author and the reader may meet at moments of aesthetic heightening as well as at its ebb, the latter often gelling in the sense of shared ideas. The latter are to a large extent a part of our coping with life; they tend to represent a keen and often self-serving interest in life rather than a "disinterest"—unless they too combine into aesthetically pleasing patterns[46] (ideologically suspect for precisely that reason).

In an essay entitled "Intellectual effort," Bergson presents his theory of creative invention, using Théodule-Armand Ribot's *L'Imagination créatrice* as a springboard:

> As Ribot has observed, to create imaginatively is to solve a problem. Now, what other way is there of solving a problem than by supposing it already solved? We set before ourselves, as Ribot says, a certain ideal, that is, we present to our mind a certain effect as already obtained, and then we seek to discover by what

> composition of elements we can obtain it. We pass at a bound to the complete result, to the end we want to realize, and the whole effort of invention is then an attempt to fill up the gap over which we have leapt, and to reach anew that same end by following, this time, the continuous thread of the means which will realize it. But how is it possible to know the end without the means, the whole without the parts? We cannot know this end or whole under the form of an image, because an image which would make us see the effect being brought about would show us, within the image itself, the means by which the effect is obtained. It must necessarily be assumed, then, that the whole is presented as a scheme, and that invention consists precisely in converting the scheme into image. (*ME*, 170)

The word "image" here should probably be read in the meaning of "the concrete," which Bergson links to Frédéric Paulhan's description of poetic invention (in *Phychologie de l'invention*, chapter iv) as a movement from the abstract to the concrete. A very similar process is described by Nabokov in a famous interview with Alfred Appel, though the partial meeting of minds referred to here is not with Bergson: "I am afraid to get mixed up with Plato, whom I do not care for, but I do think that in my case it is true that the entire book, before it is written, seems to be ready ideally in some other, now transparent, now dimming, dimension, and my job is to take down as much of it as I can make out and as precisely as I am humanly able to" (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 69).

Nabokov conceives of a scheme, and then waits for parts of it to become concretized. Unlike Dickens, who, faced with the problems of serial publication, made detailed chapter-by-chapter plans of some of his novels, Nabokov did not commit his schemes to paper, or, if ever he did, destroyed them on completion of the work: bearing in mind his readers' frustration at not knowing how the different parts of his unfinished novel *The Original of Laura* were meant to come together, the former surmise seems more convincing. They remained mental structures until all their parts found their concrete verbal embodiment. What Nabokov did commit to paper (in his late life, to separate index cards) were the separate paragraphs, sentences, or episodes that reflected the concretization, the filling up, the photo-resolution of parts of the scheme. Inevitably, the schemes for the episodes of *Ulysses* that Joyce had given to Gilbert and to Linati come to mind: they too, must have existed in Joyce's mind before he arranged the concrete words and images among them even though some of their details were, playfully or otherwise, added *post-factum*. Joyce's notebooks for *Ulysses*, with items destined to go to different episodes marked in different colors, testify to this method, as does the fact of the six sets of proofs, each with substantial changes and additions.

The Play-Doh that the imagination kneads in generating the concrete text reabsorbs memories, often subliminal, that might otherwise be lost; they are thus reintegrated into the further creative impulse. The uncalculated part of "recapture," in the seemingly effortless receiving mode, is one of the most exhilarating parts of this process:

> The greatest happiness I experience in composing is when I feel I cannot understand, or rather catch myself not understanding (without the presupposition of an already existing creation), how or why that image or structural move or

> exact formulation of phrase has just come to me. It is sometimes rather amusing to find my readers trying to elucidate in a matter-of-fact way these wild workings of my not very efficient mind. (Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 69)

Bergson would regard such uncalculated images, moves, or formulations as gifts of spontaneous memory, bringing the subliminal to the surface of the consciousness: "may there not be around our normal perception a fringe of perceptions, most often unconscious, but all ready to enter into consciousness, and which do in fact enter in exceptional cases or in predisposed subjects?" (*ME*, 76). It is not only a matter of figurative language that the agency here is attributed to images rather than the consciousness of the "predisposed subjects." Actually, the subjects' receiving mode is only apparently effortless: a significant effort of the soul precedes it, placing a request for creative imagination—a request that is sometimes fulfilled in most unexpected moments, as a gift of the subliminal realm making its way through the cracks in the consciousness which is, at the moment, laid at rest or directed to something else. In Canto Four of his 999-line poem, John Shade of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, notes that the most genuine in poetry comes when one is away from one's desk,

> "Or is the process deeper with no desk
> To prop the false and hoist the poetesque?
> For there are those mysterious moments when
> Too weary to delete, I drop my pen;
> I ambulate—and by some mute command
> The right word flutes and perches on my hand."[47]

The aesthetic experience that the fruit of such creative imagination grants the reader combines the outward sense of lightness with the subliminal acknowledgment of the prior difficulty overcome. It is also associated with Bergson's distinction between memory as a maintainable bodily habit and spontaneous memory, whose capricious and generous gifts seem to cancel intervening calendars. Though between his early fiction and his later novels, such as *Ada*, Nabokov may have moved to a more distanced attitude to Bergson, this distinction, and the attendant valorization of spontaneous memory, characterized his work to the very end.[48]

It must be noted that one of the most influential theories of reader response, Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading*, describes the smallest units of the text as *instructions* to the reader's imagination; the reader's following of these instructions, that is, imaginatively cooperating with the text, is regarded as the concretization of the text's otherwise lifeless schema. In the reader's experience, the temporal relationship of the "rapture," of moments of intense aesthetic joy, and the "recapture," or the not-quite disinterested enjoyment of one's success in arranging subliminal data into conscious conceptual patterns, is not predictable or structurable: many a review and many a critical interpretation can be read as a trace of an individual version of their interlacing. The author-reader literary communication involves reverse movements: from a scheme to image in the process of composition, and from concretized imagery to abstractable

scheme in the reading. In a sense, however, the final product of linear reading (and rereadings) is a sense of a spatial composite image of a work, whose details, or separate images, often blocked by our mission-oriented brain, the major instrument of our struggle for survival, linger on in the subliminal realm, often surprising us by their return to active consciousness. In this economy, the printed book becomes a type of Akasic record.

Notes

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1 Jean Paul Sartre, *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 84.
2 Michael Patrick Gillespie, *Inverted Volumes Improperly Arranged: James Joyce and His Trieste Library* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 46; Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 779, n. 30.
3 John Burt Foster, *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14.
4 Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 43.
5 On the shapes taken by Bergson's (and "the Bergsonism's") dialogue with phenomenology and on the history of that dialogue, see Michael R. Kelly, ed., *Bergson and Phenomenology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
6 See Leona Toker, "Philosophers as Poets: Reading Nabokov with Schopenhauer and Bergson," in *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 24 (1991): 185–96. Also, Toker, "L'éthique du camouflage narratif," trans. Hélène Fiamma, in *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle* 791 (1995): 71–80.
7 Work on this article has been supported by the Israel Science Foundation, grant 1465/10, for the exploration of the semiological model (semantics-syntactics-pragmatics) in literary studies. The article deals with the semantic side of the semiological triad.
8 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 38–9ff.
9 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), I, 363
10 See Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (London: Allen and Unwin, 1929), 46–7:

> Conscious perception signifies choice, and consciousness mainly consists in this practical discernment. The diverse perceptions of the same object, given by my different senses, will not, then, when put together, reconstruct the *complete* image of the object; they will remain separated from each other by intervals which measure, so to speak, the gaps in my needs. It is to fill these intervals that an education of the senses in necessary.

11 Cf. Edmond Wright, "Jorge Luis Borges's 'Funes the Memorious': A Philosophical Narrative," in *Partial Answers* 5.1 (2007): 36–40.

12 Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, trans. H. W. Carr, ed. K. A. Pearson and M. Kolkman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 75–6.
13 Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 251.
14 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), 19.
15 This is one of the central effects of reader-entrapment techniques in Nabokov's *Lolita*. However, a corpus that is practically devoted to the creation of this effect is the segment of Holocaust literature that deals with perpetrators (and by-standers), presenting them as ordinary people—as it were "like you and me." Jonathan Littell goes even further in *The Kindly Ones*: his protagonist-narrator is an active (if, as he claims, reluctant) participant in the perpetration of atrocities who makes a bid for the readers' sympathy by presenting himself as one of the marginalized and the downtrodden in so far as he was a victim of boarding-school abuse, a closet homosexual, a wounded veteran, and a victim of dogged persecution by criminal police.
16 James Joyce, *Giacomo Joyce* (New York: Viking, 1968), 5.
17 Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 70–5.
18 It is precisely this point that is comically referred to by Ostap Bender, the hustler-protagonist of Ilf and Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs*—while walking the Georgian Military Road in chapter 38, he appreciates but does not approve of the beauty of the mountains: "Too chique. Savagely beautiful. An idiot's imagination. A useless thing" (earlier, in chapter 36, Ostap did start collecting money from hikers at the mouth of a gap in the rocks—"for the maintenance of the gap").
19 For Housman, the registration of poetry in the sense of the indefinable genuine quality of the best verse, seems to be "more physical than intellectual"; it often takes the shape of somatic responses, such as "a shiver down the spine," "a constriction of the throat and a precipitation of water to the eyes," and a piercing sensation in "the pit of the stomach." All of these are a matter of setting up "in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer." See A. E. Housman, *The Name and Nature of Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 12, 47. The presence of Housman behind Nabokov's remarks on responding to a literary text with the small of one's back rather than with one's head was first noted by Richard Rorty; his seminal contribution to the understanding of this episode in the history of ideas was, however, impaired by an ideological tendency to reduce Nabokov's poetics to the "tingle" theory of aesthetic experience. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Leona Toker, "Liberal Ironists and the 'Gaudily Painted Savage': On Richard Rorty's Reading of Vladimir Nabokov," in *Nabokov Studies* 1 (1994): 195–206.
20 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 182. Cf. Peter Francis Mackey, *Chaos Theory and James Joyce's Everyman* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 139.
21 For Joyce, "thoughts, like matter, are indestructible and persist in some 'repository' out of space and out of time, yet accessible in certain privileged moments to the 'subliminal self'." Stuart Gilbert, "Introduction" in *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Gilbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 30.
22 See Toker, *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction: Narratives of Cultural Remission* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 164–73.

23 Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (New York: Putnam, 1966), 20.
24 Nabokov, *Stikhi* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1979), 209.
25 Nabokov, *Bend Sinister* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 99.
26 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton, with the assistance of W. H. Carter (London: Macmillan, 1935), 215.
27 Nabokov, *Transparent Things* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 93.
28 If "the role of the brain is to suppress memories when their proliferation threatens to swamp action . . . with the brain no longer operating one might expect a total memory of the past. . . . [I]t does not seem that Bergson has any very satisfactory answers to questions about the personal identity, the relation of mind to body, and the possibility of survival. But no doubt it could be said on his behalf that he is in good company." A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (London: Routledge, 1989), 140.
29 John S. Rickard, *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of Ulysses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 33.
30 "[T]he *élan vital* at every instant separates into two movements, one of relaxation (*détente*) that descends into matter, the other of tension that ascends into duration": Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 95. On Joyce's place in the history of ideas between Bergson on the one hand and Deleuze and Derrida on the other, see Ruben Borg, *The Measureless Past of Joyce, Deleuze and Derrida* (New York: Continuum Press, 2007).
31 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), 272.
32 Cf. also Gaston Bachelard's treatment of the image as an authentic product of "a flicker of the soul" (xviii) and of metaphor as a "fabricated image, without deep, true, genuine roots" (75). Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1969).
33 Nabokov, *Pnin* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 66.
34 Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, trans. Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with the author (New York: Putnam, 1979), 93.
35 Cf. Marco Caracciolo's remarks on joint attention to qualia in literary experience in "On the Experientiality of Stories: A Follow-up on David Herman's 'Narrative Theory and the Intentional Stance' " in *Partial Answers* 10.2 (2012, 197–221).
36 Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 172.
37 See Charles Nicol, "Pnin's History," in *Critical Essays on Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. Phyllis A. Roth (Boston, MA: Hall, 1984), 93–105; and Leona Toker, *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 26–9.
38 The current interest in "social minds" can be regarded as a further evolution of this idea, though free from mystical touches. See Alan Palmer, *Social Minds in the Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2010); and Palmer, "Social Minds in Fiction and Criticism" in *Style* 45/2 (2011): 196–240.
39 See also Donald Barton Johnson, *Worlds in Regression: Some Novels of Vladimir Nabokov* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 190–3.
40 See H. M. Daleski, "Joyce's 'Circe': A Tale of Dragons," in *Essays on English and American Literature and a Sheaf of Poems Presented to David Wilkinson* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987).
41 The instability of the dream is illustrated by sleight-of-hand transitions between different nightmare sequences in "Circe"—Bloom's rise and fall as a statesman, his

victimization by those who have just adored him, his masochistic groveling before a dominatrix, and his frustrating encounters with the whole array of unresponsive family members.

42 Bergson, "Laughter," in *Comedy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), 90.

43 See Toker, "Nabokov and Bergson on Duration and Reflexivity," in *Nabokov's World*, ed. J. Grayson, A. McMillin, and P. Meyer (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), I: 132–40.

44 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 19 and 39.

45 The essay on the texture of time that the aging and morally and metaphysically not-quite-reliable narrator Van Veen, the anti-hero of *Ada*, attempts to write towards the end of the novel proposes to dispense with " 'flowing' time, water-clock time, water-closet time" (539) alongside with faithful Bergsonism. Van Veen admits that "Space, the comedy villain [is] returning by the back door with the pendulum he peddles, while I grope for the meaning of Time" (538), but his Bergsonian caveats such as "no wonder I fail to grasp Time, since knowledge-gaining itself 'takes time' " (*ibid.*) combine with a rejection of continuing heterogeneity: "Pure Time, Perceptual Time, Tangible Time, Time free of content, context, and running commentary—this is *my* time and theme" (539).

46 Cf. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 104–11, on presence effects and meaning effects in different art forms.

47 Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 55.

48 Insightful comments on this aspect of Nabokov's relationship with Bergson as well as on Bergsonian touches in Nabokov's fictional philosophers in *Bend Sinister* and *Ada* are presented in John Burt Foster's study, *Nabokov's Art of Memory and European Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), esp. 82–90.

13

Modernist Energeia: Henri Bergson and the Romantic Idea of Language

Sarah Posman

When scholars of literary modernism engage with Henri Bergson, they do so because the French philosopher theorized a modernist time sense. Bergson proposed we discard the understanding of time as an abstract container, defined by Newton (6) as that which flows "equably without relation to anything external,"[1] in favor of a deeply personal engagement with time. It is such a sense of "duration," as Bergson defined it, which we can find expressed, in many different ways, in the work of modernists like James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf. Over the years, many stream of consciousness readings—from Shiv Kumar's 1962 *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* to such recent explorations of a modernist "everyday," "habitual," or "pragmatic" time sense by Bryony Randall, Liesl Olson, and Lisi Schoenbach—have proven very valuable in helping us understand the ways in which literature and philosophy can combine forces when it comes to the exploration of modern temporality. Paradoxically, this scholarly focus on the ways in which time is given shape in modernist literature has sparked only a modest renewed critical interest in Bergson. Literary scholars tend to stage duration as a useful concept, the continental twin to James's "stream of consciousness," but tend to sidestep a critical exploration of Bergson's oeuvre or of the ways in which his project relates to (early) twentieth-century theory. It is nevertheless such a reading that would enable us to gauge with more precision the entanglements between Bergson's project and modernist literature.

Duration counts as the key Bergsonist concept, but the philosopher's thinking on time encompasses more than a critique of mathematical or clock time. Bergson's philosophical story deals with alienation from a deeper, purer and truer reality. The alienating factor par excellence, the philosopher stresses in *Time and Free Will*, is language. Bergson cannot be called a language philosopher, and according to Jean-Jacques Lecercle, his work has been largely ignored in the post-World War II philosophical debate that centered on language alone "because language plays a minor role in his conception of the world."[2] Bergson's remarks and musings on language are nonetheless hardly insignificant. In this essay I take up Gilles Deleuze's cue that Bergson's "critique of language is considered to have been overly hasty."[3] I read the philosopher's struggle with language and representation in the context of a romantic

understanding of language and show that Bergson is far less out of tune with the linguistic turn than Lecercle suggests. My argument is that Bergson's groping to combine a pure experience of the world with a pure expression (or expressing) intersects with an avant-garde poetics that, in various guises, appeals to the power of speech in order to conjure up a new world.

The issue of language is introduced in *Time and Free Will* and returns as Bergson develops his project in *Matter and Memory*, in his essay on laughter published in 1900, in the essay "Intellectual Effort" from 1902 (later published in *Mind-Energy*), in the 1903 *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (later taken up in the essay collection *The Creative Mind*), and in his final book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. From the beginning to the end of his career, Bergson urges us not to be misguided by the language we use to communicate. In the preface to *Time and Free Will*,[4] for example, he points out that our habit to "solidify our impressions in order to express them in language" betrays the nature of those sensations, which is one of perpetual becoming. More than forty years later, in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*,[5] he still wonders how the experience of a rich reality, which is by now a mystical experience, can be translated into language. Bergson's amazed distrust of language is an issue he shared with his late nineteenth-century contemporaries. As George Steiner in *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* indicates, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed an upheaval in our understanding of meaning, representation and language. Modernity and its abundant discoveries concerning the world and man's place in it triggered a process in which transcendental value started to dissipate into what Steiner interprets as an immanent superficiality.[6] After Darwin, where to look for truth and substance?

In search for clarity, philosophers and theorists working in the empiricist and idealist tradition turned away from the vague language of the everyday and started their search for a system overlying language or an ideal logical structure. In the late 1880s, the German mathematician and logician Gottlob Frege devised a conceptual notation or *Begriffsschrift* so that he could make complex, precise mathematical calculations without relying on either experience or intuition. Influenced by Frege, the "Cambridge trinity," Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, embarked on their searches for a logically perfect language in the 1910s. And in early twentieth-century Geneva, Ferdinand de Saussure taught his Course in General Linguistics, in which he approached language as a differential system and stressed the arbitrary link between signifier and signified, showing that individual languages can be seen to function accordingly. Bergson, who opposed a narrow empiricism and a strict idealism throughout his oeuvre, does not try to come up with a system for or a logical backbone to language. He can rather be seen to side with Nietzsche's critique on "language as an alleged science" in *Human, All too Human*.[7] Although Bergson did not share Nietzsche's fascination with rhetoric, he sides with Nietzsche in turning to poetic language as the realm where knowledge may come about, truths be conveyed.[8] As Maurice Blanchot (64) argues, Bergson adds to an extreme distrust of words an extreme confidence in poetry.[9]

The idea that poetic language is most suited to the expression of reality is, of course, not a notion exclusive to the thinking of Nietzsche and Bergson. The

late nineteenth-century crisis Steiner diagnoses is the outcome of a long debate on representation. Central issues in this debate are medium, with the classic issue of "ut pictura poesis," and the status of the sign, the idea that there are natural signs (pictures) and arbitrary signs (words). Those questions, moreover, are intrinsically bound up with the issues of time and space. In the Platonic account of mimesis, immediate, spatial representation was favored over diegesis, which implies a processual, narrative attempt at mirroring the world. In this scheme, the visual arts could render the world in a relatively straightforward way by means of their natural signs, whereas the language arts, having only arbitrary means or words at their disposal, had to overcome what seemed a nonnatural mode of representation. Throughout the ages, writers and thinkers have responded to this situation in opposite ways. They have either, as Murray Krieger points out, pursued the nostalgic quest for "a language that can, in spite of its limits, recover the immediacy of a sightless vision built into our habit of perceptual desire since Plato."[10] Or they have stressed the arbitrary and temporal nature of language precisely to escape the pictorial ideal of the frozen momentary vision. Those two stances, for Krieger, tie in with yet another duplication that opposes language as a transparent medium, serving only its referent, to language as a sensuous tool, claiming attention to its medium. It has long been the aesthetic pursuit of our culture, Krieger notes, to unite these opposing tendencies, and it certainly proved a key issue in modernism.

In thinking through the status of poetic language as a means for representing a world in flux, Jo Anna Isaak (24) indicates[11] that modernists revisited such a treatise as Lessing's 1766 *Laocoön* and the romantic understanding of poetry that developed later in the eighteenth century. Lessing's is a classic essay on the rivalry between poetry and painting as mimetic arts. It claims that painting and sculpture are spatial and hence static forms of art whereas poetry is inherently temporal and therefore dynamic. Both art forms should not, by Lessing's account, try to emulate each other but should restrict their scope to the instantaneous and the sequential, respectively. Lessing's emphasis on the temporal nature of poetry was an important catalyst for the development of romantic theories of expression. By favoring the vague and suggestive qualities of language over the limited range of natural-sign representation—limited because it is determined by the physical confines of its object of imitation—the romantics made possible the revaluation of the anti-pictorial and anti-spatial character of language. For Krieger (26, 198), this development culminates in Bergson's project, only to give way almost immediately to a renewed spatialization of literary language, to the modernist formalism championed by the New Criticism.[12] Krieger's argument that the romantic understanding of a dynamic, flowing literary language stops with Bergson deserves modification. It is in Bergson's project, I argue here, that we can find the seeds for a modernist energeia.

When Krieger puts Bergson on par with romantic accounts of language, he cites from Bergson's *Laughter*. *Laughter* may be a somewhat strange text in Bergson's oeuvre because it deals with the "little problem" of what laughter means, yet the book's intention to do justice to the difficult to grasp "comic spirit" is entirely in keeping with the philosopher's project.[13] Bergson's tackling of "the comic element

in words" forms the occasion for a short reflection on the way in which poetry can undo language's shortcomings. Although in this early text Bergson posits that the "real" function of language is to accommodate itself to things and not vice versa, he does leave room for creative expression (121). Poets, he states here, have the ability to make language suggest things that cannot be represented and, in rare instances, to make language sing:

> They contrive to make us see something of what they have seen: by rhythmical arrangement of words, which thus become organized and animated with a life of their own, they tell us—or rather suggest—things that speech was not calculated to express. Others delve yet deeper still. Beneath these joys and sorrows which can, at a pinch, be translated into language, they grasp something that has nothing in common with language, certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his inmost feelings, being the living law—varying with each individual—of his enthusiasm and despair, his hopes and regrets. By setting free and emphasizing this music, they force it upon our attention; they compel us, willy-nilly, to fall in with it, like passers-by who join in a dance. (*Laughter*, 156; Krieger, 170)

In poetry Bergson encounters what Gerald Bruns refers to as an Orphic language[14]: not an instrument to talk about the world, but a creative force springing forth from the poet's imagination (or mind or soul) and shedding a particular light on the world. The poet's language enables us to share in the poet's vision and sensations. Such an Orphic understanding of language is what in the course of the eighteenth century came to problematize the classic scheme in which language represents (and thus comes after) thinking.

That the eighteenth century harbored a radical change in thinking about language can be explained by the revolutionary scientific inquiries into the origins, or foundations, of the world and man's place in it that had started in the previous century. A vital question in the work on epistemology conducted by empiricists like John Locke and Etienne Bonnot de Condillac was focused on the origins of language. It is their situating language in society and in the individual mind, ideas later developed by the German idealists Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Georg Hamann, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, that triggered the lively debate on language in which the traditional Adamic language theory started losing ground. According to this theory, the languages we speak stem from a single, divinely ordained language in which words were linked to objects in nature. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke characterizes language as "the great instrument, and common tie of society."[15] To Locke, it is man's social nature that makes communication possible, not words per se. Words, Locke makes clear, do not naturally correspond to certain ideas, "*Words* . . . come to be made use of by men, as the signs of their ideas; not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea." (III.II.1) Locke was not the first to stress

the arbitrary link between word and idea but, as William Keach notes,[16] it is the *Essay* that became the benchmark in later discussions on the relation between thought and language.

The understanding of language proposed by Locke, in which the union between word and world was severed, had huge consequences for the understanding of truth as well as for the classic aesthetic ideal of mimesis. Where Locke, for whom the obscurity and disorder of words "cast a mist before our eyes and impose upon our understandings," merely warned against too much rhetorical pomp and circumstance, romantic thinkers and writers engaged in intense theorizing on the relation between self, word and world (III.ix.21). As Hans Aarsleff points out,[17] the idea that words speak for subjective ideas, as voiced in Locke's *Essay*, entailed that one's "innermost feelings" are ultimately incommunicable. The only way out of this solipsist situation is to take part in language as a shared system, with a communal universe of knowledge and feeling. But such a language of conventions, obviously, is of little use to those writers intent on, so to say, speaking their mind. One solution to this impasse was to understand language as energeia, an energetic force stirring individual minds into a shared understanding of the poet's personal vision. It is this romantic idea Bergson builds upon when he reads poetry as expressing the rhythms of life and breath—and which he takes into modernism.

The term energeia was originally coined by Aristotle, but from Aristotle's technical discussion of different kinds of movements, it found its way into classical rhetoric where it was used to characterize a particularly enlivened or energetic way of speaking. In Renaissance aesthetics it was often paired with enargeia. Where energeia referred to a style in which vigor was created through motion, enargeia implied vividness through pictorial detail.[18] This distinction is central to Lessing's *Laocoön*, in which energeia is favored over enargeia on the grounds that language is by nature temporal rather than spatial and visual. Importantly, as Bruns points out, by the eighteenth century, the concept energeia had shifted from a rhetorical issue to a central notion in thinking about the nature of language. From Giambattista Vico's early eighteenth-century *Principi di scienza nuova*, Ernst Cassirer shows, "language was considered in terms of the dynamics of speech, which in turn was related to the dynamics of feeling and emotion."[19] For Vico a spontaneous, dynamic language, arising as spontaneously as authentic emotions, is inherently poetic. A figurative, sensuous language is, by his account, more natural than the language of abstraction, refinement, or spiritualization. The idea that poetic language can destroy "the old antithesis between Words and Things," and can, by the energy that it conjures up, unite speaker and hearer in understanding is one that goes to the heart of a romantic understanding of language.[20]

The scope of this essay leaves little room to concentrate on the various ways in which the key figures in the romantic tradition go about this search for an energetic language, a language of "living words."[21] Yet what is interesting to note here is that these romantic writers frame this dynamic, speech-oriented language in which unity is created in transcendent terms. For all their awareness of Locke's "voluntary Imposition," their wariness of the traditional rhetorical conceits and fascination with the flow of natural

speech, the romantics made the language of poetry dependent on a higher source. In Wordsworth's preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* (xi),[22] for example, the poet should look to the spontaneous and unadorned language spoken by men from a "low and rustic life." He should not mimic their way of speaking but proceed analogously; by tapping genuine, spontaneous emotion, the poet's speech will transcend the private arbitrariness of words. Furthermore, the poet should aspire to the close relation with nature from which Wordsworth's idealized rustic community benefits. In the same way as their thinking and speaking is "incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature," the poet should look to nature, or rather to a Nature beyond language, as ultimate touchstone. Where Wordsworth remained troubled by "the sad incompetence of human speech," and paradoxically turned to gravestone inscriptions for an ultimate linguistic integrity in his *Essay upon Epitaphs*, Coleridge embraced the idea that words embody thoughts and things with more confidence.[23] For Coleridge words are living things and the energy they emanate is not Nature's but God's. Although he turns to a supernatural source for language, with Logos as divine energy, he nevertheless frames the way in which words work by making an analogy with the natural sciences. In a notebook entry he sets up a comparison between the "rays of Light and Warmth in the *Air*" that make up a focal point "as if a solid flesh and blood reality were there" and what he here calls the focal word: "The focal word has acquired a *feeling of reality*—it heats and burns, makes itself to be felt. If we do not grasp it, it seems to grasp us, as with a hand of flesh and blood, and completely counterfeits an immediate presence, an intuitive knowledge. And who can reason against intuition?"[24] The force of these focal words is such that, despite their function of mediating between self and reality, they create a sense of immediacy. Their effect is that of an intuitive knowledge. How, now, does this romantic tradition bear on Bergson, apart from the obvious shared concern for an immediate, intuitive and sensuous knowledge?

When Deleuze, in *Bergsonism*, suggests that Bergson's take on language deserves scrutiny, he sees in Bergson a distinct echo of the romantic idea that language informs our acquaintance with the world. Alluding to a passage in *Matter and Memory*, Deleuze writes that Bergson analyzes language in the same way as memory. This point has far-reaching implications. For Bergson, memory is the ontological foundation of our being. If we can consider language and memory on a par, then we uncover, with Deleuze, "a kind of transcendence of sense and an ontological foundation of language that . . . are particularly important in the work of an author whose critique of language is considered to have been overly hasty" (57). Deleuze, in other words, links Bergson with that tradition of thinking for which language is "the house of being"—a tradition that has its roots in romanticism and, via Heidegger, culminates in the linguistic turn. Interesting about this link for our purposes is not so much the entanglements between Bergson and Heidegger that Deleuze hints at—to talk about ontology in twentieth-century philosophy is to talk about Heidegger—but the ways in which Bergson's project seeps through in modernist poetics. In broad terms, Heidegger and Bergson share the desire to pierce the façade of the propositions and statements we use to make claims about the world. Yet where Heidegger's hermeneutics calls for an understanding of the pre-enunciative context of the statement, moving from a particular linguistic utterance

to what he refers to as *Sprache* (language itself rather than any particular language), Bergson gives the onset to the creation of a new style, a new way of writing that would do justice to the ways in which the world, and language, work. And that, of course, is what is at stake in literary modernism.

In the passage from *Matter and Memory* to which Deleuze alludes, Bergson pauses at the way we understand language. For Bergson, the associationist take on the matter propounded by the empiricists, in which "the perception of a sound brings back the memory of the sounds, and memories bring back the corresponding ideas" is off the mark. In his account, memory comes first: "the hearer places himself at once in the midst of the corresponding ideas."[25] It is this plunge into ideas, or memory, that allows us to reconstruct intelligently the continuity of the sound which the ear perceives. In Bergson, memory does not function as a storehouse of recollections, which we could access if we wanted to reproduce the past, but rather as our multilayered, dynamic reality. For Bergson, in other words, the past is what *is*. As Deleuze puts it, for Bergson "the past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist: One is the present, which does not cease to pass, and the other is the past, which does not cease to be but through which all presents pass" (59). This is what Bergson's famous cone diagram signifies: the tip touching the plane stands for an ever-changing present moment and the base for the incessantly evolving past, made up of a welter of what Bergson calls "memory-images." These images are not just yours or mine, but, as virtual images, potentially everybody's. The tip is where we encounter the past in our present moment. The cone diagram, now, is useful in visualizing the way in which the past makes up the ontological foundation for our present experiences—the cone's tip depends on its base—but it does not do justice to the fact that memory is a dynamic constellation. To understand this we need to bring in the concept of a virtual multiplicity. In Bergson's scheme each actualized experience functions as an outlet of a virtual multiplicity. Such a multiplicity is not to be understood as a sum of parts but rather as a dynamic estuary. A multiplicity is inherently processual and, as such, the form by which to understand duration. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson defines duration as a qualitative multiplicity, as "an organic evolution which is yet not an increasing quantity; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities" (226). Memory, then, functions as the whole of duration, as a super-estuary of intermingling multiplicities.

The cone diagram, in which the past literally weighs on the present, makes it relatively straightforward to understand Bergson's idea that memory is the ontological foundation for all experience. The relationship between memory and language or sense is less obvious. This is not in the least so because Bergson repeatedly opposes intuition, the method by which to gain access to duration, to language. Intuition forms the cornerstone of Bergson's project and although it may seem tempting to relate it to intuition as it features in, notably, romantic intellectual debate, this is not altogether a fair connection. In the second of the introductory essays written for *The Creative Mind*, Bergson confesses to the hesitation he has felt in using the word "intuition": "Because a Schelling, a Schopenhauer and others have already called upon intuition, because they have more or less set up intuition in opposition to intelligence, one might think that

I was using the same method."[26] Although Bergson often appears to make a clear-cut distinction between intellect and intuition, he does not ultimately consider the two faculties in opposition. Furthermore, he turns round the classic relation to time of the intuition-intellect dualism. Throughout the history of philosophy, and particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, philosophers tended to seek an alternative for the flaws of the intellect (as a time-bound faculty) in a supra-intellectual faculty, a timeless intuition: Wordsworth's nature or Coleridge's divine energy. For Bergson, by contrast, the intellect estranges us from time, from duration. It is intuition that takes us back into duration. By plunging into memory we acquire a dynamic understanding of an essentially dynamic reality. Because we are wired to think in clear terms and to establish a sense of order in our lives, however, our mind has the habit of substituting for the immediate sense of flux a sequence of states and things. This process, what Bergson in "Introduction to Metaphysics" calls the natural inclination of our intellect (*CM*, 223), is what makes it possible for us to act and what forms the basis for scientific knowledge. Language, moreover, is very much part of this process. The original function of language, Bergson posits in the second introduction to *The Creative Mind*, is to prescribe or describe: "In the first case, it is the call to immediate action; in the second, it is the description of the thing or some one of its properties, with a view to action . . . The things that language describes have been cut out of reality by human perception in view of human work to be done" (*CM*, 80). Intuition demands we turn round this utilitarianist habit of our mind and appreciate the virtual context of actual experience.

To think intuitively, in other words, means we go against the natural inclination of the intellect. It does not mean, however, that the intellect gets ruled out. The two ways of thinking are intertwined, and, just as the intellect always comes with a fringe of intuition, there is an intellectual twist to intuition. Intuition demands concentration, an active mind, and is, in a sense, goal-oriented.[27] Although intuition shares with dreams an openness to "useless" memories, we cannot *think* intuitively when we are sleeping. Analogously, intuition is not to be confused with instinct or feeling. It is to be seen as "a certain manner of thinking which courts difficulty" (*CM*, 87), which demands effort. When we put in the effort, we can attain a better understanding of reality and, ideally, work towards a better society.[28] To this end we have to be able to share our intuitions, bring them into the public space. And here the intellect plays a vital role: "intuition will be communicated only by the intelligence" (*CM*, 42). This implies that there is more to language than prescription and description.

According to Leonard Lawlor (71), we can find a distinction in Bergson between what he calls "the absolute of language" or "the whole of language" and a particular language system or discourse—a distinction which broadly corresponds to the Saussurian levels of *langue* and *parole*. Lawlor points our attention to the lines just above the quote from *The Creative Mind* on the prescriptive and descriptive function of language. Here, Bergson draws a comparison between the way in which humans organize their lives and the rules in an anthill: "Man is organized for the life of the state as the ant is for the ant-hill, but with this difference, that the ant possesses ready-made means of attaining its end, while we bring what is necessary to reinvent them and to

vary their form. Even though each word of our speech is conventional, language is not therefore a convention, and it is as natural for man to speak as to walk" (*CM*, 80). When we are speaking, and find ourselves on the level of the *parole*, we deal in conventions. The many discourses that underpin our society—the industrial, commercial, military (80)—function by way of conventions. The impulse to speak, however, is a different matter altogether. Language itself or "the whole of language" is not conventional. The natural impulses to organize one's life, to walk and to talk harbor a sense of creativity and freedom. We tend to follow the inclination of our intellect and work towards closed systems, economical structures that allow for efficient living and make us feel safe, but we could opt out. We could "reinvent" the language we use; we could make duration resound in the words we speak. When Bergson posits, then, that in the act of understanding, we place ourselves "at once" in the midst of the ideas to which the sounds we perceive correspond, he has us plunge into the whole of language or sense. It is here that language, as duration, is connected to memory. Whereas the intellect steers us into understanding what our interlocutor is most likely saying, intuition can help us appreciate the unconventional in language.

In *The Creative Mind* Bergson touches on the creation of a new style of doing philosophy when he proposes philosophers create "fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things" (190). This style should be literary rather than abstract for it is up to "comparisons and metaphors [to] suggest what cannot be expressed" (*CM*, 42). The desire to translate unique being into the shared realm of language by coming up with a new style, which in its poeticality is more direct than the language of logic, is what binds Bergson to the romantics. Yet, as will be clear by now, the link Krieger proposes deserves modification. It is true that Bergson shares with the romantics the idea that only a dynamic language could express "the inner life of things"—language as energeia—but Bergson's take on dynamics is more radical than that of the romantics. The romantics typically had the flow of their emotions culminate in sudden, revelatory instances of timeless time, Moments or, with Wordsworth, "spots of time," which anticipate the poet's encounter with God or Nature (*Prelude*, 325). Bergson does not aim for such a transcendent sense of presence but, as we have seen, wants us to find meaning in a rich and ever-changing past. The only answer Bergson has to offer is that of a chain of alterations. Furthermore, the memory Bergson stages as ontological foundation is never a private consciousness. Memory per se is an impersonal everything to which you and I can connect. These differences mean that Bergson's tentative calling for a different style is not just a continuation of romantic aspirations. Bergson asks language to do far more than stage a Moment in which the writer's ideas, backed by divine inspiration, transcend the individual mind.

Bergson does not propose an elaborate strategy for the creation of a new style in which the incessant change that characterizes duration could be felt. In *The Creative Mind* he does nevertheless provides us with a few prompts. At one instance, he appears to justify his own project with its interrelated concepts: "duration, qualitative or heterogeneous multiplicity, unconsciousness—even differentiation" (35). Itself a chain of qualitative difference, this sequence can be seen to keep alive the original impetus

that steers Bergson's thinking.[29] At another, he demands we open our minds to an unclear clarity. In musing on the difference between easy-to-understand intellectual concepts, which present us with "elementary ideas which we already possessed," and the radically new clarity of those concepts that breathe intuition, he stresses that the latter "is the clarity of the radically new and absolutely simple idea, which catches as it were an intuition. As we cannot reconstruct it with preexisting elements, since it has no elements, and as on the other hand, to understand without effort consists in recomposing the new from what is old, our first impulse is to say it is incomprehensible" (*CM*, 35–6). When we focus on Bergson's own writings, which are as inviting as elegant and for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1927, the philosopher's advocating an incomprehensible style strikes us as paradoxical. However, when we relate this comment to the projects of early twentieth-century writers who dedicated their careers to the creation of a new style and epistemology—a mode of writing and knowing not seldom referred to as "incomprehensible" by the literary establishment—it helps us understand what was at stake in literary modernism. By way of conclusion, then, I pause at Filippo Marinetti's *parole in libertà* and Gertrude Stein's "lively words."[30] I am less interested in making a case for Bergson's influence on these writers than I am in unfolding the ways in which a post-romantic understanding of language as energeia, for which Bergson gave the onset in the early 1900s, informs the poetics of two of the most original modernist authors.

Marinetti's connection to Bergson has perhaps been somewhat overstated.[31] It is tempting to make the link between the Italian futurist's intuitive poetics of the early twentieth century and Bergson's immensely popular early 1910s lectures and writings on intuition. Marinetti's concern for intuition, however, is more in line with instinct and feeling than Bergson's intuition as a method to become acquainted with the past. The poet's project, geared towards innovation, does not seem to leave any room to learn from the past. Famous are the futurist's fulminations against what he considers a sickly veneration of what lies behind us. In "The Futurist Manifesto," for example, he asks his readers whether they "really want to waste all [their] best energies in this unending, futile veneration for the past, from which [they] emerge fatally exhausted, diminished, trampled down" (Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 15). His overtly action-oriented poetics, moreover, does not quite align with Bergson's project in which reflection (the mind contemplating the mind) comes first. More interesting for our purposes than the different function of intuition in their respective projects is the poet's program for Words-in-Freedom, which he elaborates on in his 1912 text, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature," and its 1913 follow-up, "Destruction of Syntax – Untrammeled Imagination – Words-in-Freedom." Here he unfolds a post-romantic understanding of language that tallies with Bergson's; a new style can express and trigger in others a new, free appreciation of that energy that makes up life. Marinetti's strategy of Words-in-Freedom, furthermore, is a paradoxical echo of Bergson's leap into memory.

Marinetti stages his Words-in-Freedom as an alternative for the Latin sentence and as a step beyond free verse. The Latin sentence stands for literary tradition and its rhetorical traditions. It is, in Marinetti's words, "a pretentious gesture with which arrogant, shortsighted intelligence has striven to contain the manifold, mysterious

life of matter" (*Critical Writings*, 112). In an age that has witnessed the demise of the mimetic ideal, it imprisons rather than enables the poet (105). Where the Latin sentence has trouble walking, the language of futurist literature has wings (107). More than the free verse of the romantics, which is, according to Marinetti, still too concerned with studied effects and bound by syntax and grammar, Words-in-Freedom are capable of expressing what the poet refers to as the "creative spirit" or "the deep feelings for life" (112). Central to getting such Words-in-Freedom on paper, Marinetti stresses, is the creation of "an ever-widening ranking of analogies" (108). The drawing up of clichéd comparisons, "a process which is still, more or less, the equivalent of a kind of photography," must be replaced by the forging of a network of connecting images. Poetry, for Marinetti, "must be a continuous stream of new images" (109). The creation of such a dynamic matrix of images is in tune with Bergson's leap into memory. For Marinetti, too, these sequences of inter-connected images bring to light a reality in which relations are constantly in the making. As in Bergson's appreciation of "the rhythms of life and breath" in poetry, Marinetti wants the poetic stream of images to conjure up life's energy or what he calls "deep love" (108). It is because of their power to surprise, moreover, that these images stop life from congealing in concepts. Once written on the paper they work their way into readers' minds, where they kindle a sense of wonder; "[t]he more wide-ranging relations the images contain, the longer they retain their power to amaze" (*Critical Writings*, 109). Words-in-Freedom, in other words, give access to language as the source for an unending ever-diverting process of connections, which enable both writer and reader to step out of their comfort zones and confront the rich heterogeneities that make up life.

When Marinetti stresses that a poet should learn how to speak with the force of emotion one experiences when he finds himself "in an area of intensified life (revolution, war, shipwreck, earthquake, etc.)," he revisits the romantic conceit of the sublime that Bergson and Gertrude Stein also take up and, like Marinetti, de-transcendentalize by situating it in time. For Marinetti, a poet should let "the vehemence of his emotional steam . . . burst the conduits of the sentence, the valves of punctuation, and the adjustable bolts of adjectivization" so that "the vibrations of his being" can be experienced to the full (123). In Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, the philosopher states that the qualitative multiplicities for which he argues are well familiar to passionate lovers. When a violent love takes possession of our soul, he writes, we see our everyday worlds transformed into "a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without any precise outlines, without the least tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another; hence their originality" (*TFW*, 132). It is this intensity of emotion, notably, that forms the kernel for Bergson's method of intuition as he develops it in his later work. Stein's version of the transformative power of an intense emotional experience takes the form of a slightly bathetic anecdote. "I remember very well," she writes in "Poetry and Grammar,"

> when I was a little girl and I and my brother found as children will the love poems of their very much older brother. This older brother had just written one and it said that he had often sat and looked at any little square of grass and it had been

> just a square of grass as grass is, but now he was in love and so the little square of grass was all filled with birds and bees and butterflies, the difference was what love was. The poem was funny we and he knew the poem was funny but he was right, being in love made him make poetry, and poetry made him feel the things and their names.[32]

For both Stein and Marinetti, intensity of emotion is a poetic state of mind, but Stein, in more explicit terms than Marinetti, looks to poetry as that which makes possible experience. When she writes about her older brother that it is because of his love poetry that he could "feel the things and their names," she stages poetry as a creative, Orphic source. It is poetry, or language, that makes us sense reality as it really is and that makes us reconsider the relation between things and their names.

The gesture to name things, to summon forth by means of speech, holds a central if paradoxical place in Stein's poetics. In her lecture "Poetry and Grammar" she muses at length on names or nouns. Nouns, for Stein, are functional tools but cannot convey what a thing really is:

> Nouns are the name of anything and just naming names is alright when you want to call a roll but is it good for anything else . . . As I say a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known. Everybody knows that by the way they do when they are in love and a writer should always have that intensity of emotion about whatever is the object about which he writes. And therefore and I say it again more and more one does not use nouns. (314)

The only two exceptions, Stein modifies, are "actual given names of people" and slang. Names, given at birth, really make people ("Call anybody Paul and they get to be a Paul" [313] without defining them once and for all: "anybody can be pretty well able to do what they like, they may be born Walter and become Hub" [316]). Similarly, in slang, names are kept alive because they change (316). The challenge Stein met in writing poetry was to come up with names for things that, in their originality, would echo the Adamic event of naming something for the first time without, however, summing up that thing. In order for names to function as "lively words"—a distinct echo of Coleridge's "living words"—they had to express the sense of change and movement that, for Stein, makes things real. She wants poetry to conjure up the life of things, to "recreate" things again and again. To that end, she keeps the impulse to name but not the mimetic function of names ("Was there not a way of naming things that would not invent names, but mean names without naming them" [330]).

In this respect Stein's famous line, "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," is a good example.[33] Its incantatory effect underlines the importance of the spoken word in Stein's writing. Yet, as Steven Meyer points out, it is often at once imperative and impossible to read Stein's writing aloud.[34] The linear motion of speaking makes it difficult to grasp the differential processes at work in her work. In the line "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," Stein blurs the distinction between rose as a noun and Rose, a woman's name, when

one changes into the other. The homophones problematize poetic metonymy, and the repeated roses paradoxically answer Marinetti's calling for series of different images. It is exactly by using the same word again and again that she calls attention to the many different associations that come with the single word "rose." What is more, Stein's multiple defining of what a rose is does not only set in motion sequential difference—"romance, love, civil war, the maidenhead"[35]—it also fans out. The phrases within the phrase envelop each other: "Rose" is a rose, but also "Rose is a rose" is a rose and finally "Rose is a rose is a rose" is a rose. When Stein "misquotes" the line in "Poetry and Grammar" as "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" (327) she allows it to change shape in reverse order. As Maurice Blanchot sums it up in *The Infinite Conversation*, echoing Bergson's duration as infinitely prolonged discourse: "the 'is' of the rose and the name that glorifies it as rose are both forever uprooted—they fall into a multitude of chatter, the chatter that in turn arises as the manifestation of every profound speech, speaking without beginning or end."[36] In a modernist gesture, in other words, Stein brings energeia down to chatter, she gets *Sprache* or the whole of language into our lives.[37] It is this gesture that was written out of modernist literary history by the New Criticism and subsumed by the inflation of language that characterized the heydays of deconstruction. Today, in the area of intensified life that is the global crisis of capital, we need our poets to revisit "the old antithesis of Words and Things" and awaken us to other modes of being. The leap they make will not be a return to an early twentieth-century vitalism, and they will not be practicing a twenty-first-century modernism. The past they dive into will be, for one thing, a historicized matrix, and their linguistic experiment will be grafted on globalized, digitalized discourses. But the impulse to uncover a variety of rhythms where our efficiency driven calendars move to the beat of late capitalism will be Bergson's, and their enthusiasm that compels the abusing of language will echo Marinetti's and Stein's.

Notes

1 Sir Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and his System of the World*, 1729, trans. Andrew Motte (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1934), 6.
2 Jean-Jacques Lecercle, "Berkeley: Bishop or Busby? Deleuze on Cinema," in *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics*, ed. A. Benjamin and P. Osborne (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991), 197.
3 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 57.
4 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (Kila: Kessinger, 1996), 130.
5 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1935), 233.
6 George Steiner. *Real Presences: Is There Anything in What We Say?* (London: Faber, 1989), 32.
7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. K. A. Pearson and D. Large (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 164.

8 On Bergson and Nietzsche see, for instance, Arnaud François, "Life and Will in Nietzsche and Bergson," trans. R. Lapidus, in *Substance* 36.3 (2007): 100–14.
9 Maurice Blanchot, "Bergson and Symbolism," trans. Joel Hunt, in *Yale French Studies* 4 (1949): 64.
10 Murray Krieger, *Exphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 10.
11 Jo Anna Isaak, *The Ruin of Representation in Modernist Art and Texts* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1986), 24.
12 For a different account of Bergson and romanticism, see Jean Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes, or Terror in Literature*, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006). Marx makes a case for Bergson as the precursor of the New Criticism in William Marx, *Naissance De La Critique Moderne. La Littérature Selon Eliot Et Valéry, 1889–1945* (Arras: Artois presses université, 2002).
13 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), 1.
14 Gerald L. Bruns, *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language: A Critical and Historical Study* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), 1ff.
15 John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A. C. Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), III.i.1.
16 William Keach, "Romanticism and Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 98.
17 Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 375.
18 Walter Bernhart, "Functions of Description in Poetry," in *Description in Literature and Other Media*, ed. W. Wolf and W. Bernhart (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 134.
19 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 1: Language*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1955), 150. See also Bruns, 48.
20 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1, ed. E. L. Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 625.
21 Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character on the Several Grounds of Prudence, Morality, and Religion: Illustrated by Select Passages from our Elder Divines, especially from Archbishop Leighton* (London: Printed for Taylor and Hessey, 1825), *vii*.
22 William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems*, vol. 1 (London: printed for T. N. Longman and O. Rees, by Biggs and Co. Bristol, 1800), *xi*.
23 Wordsworth, *The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem* (London: E. Moxon, 1850), 159.
24 Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge from his Published and Unpublished Prose Writings*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 101.
25 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 117.
26 Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. M. N. Andison (New York: Citadel Press, 1992), 33.
27 In Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2003), 78, Lawlor points to an address Bergson gave in 1895,

"Le bon sens et les études classiques," in which the philosopher connects what he calls good sense (le bon sense) to an active intelligence ("une disposition active de l'intelligence") and to a counter-intellectual movement ("une certaine defiance tout particulière de l'intelligence vis-à-vis d'elle meme"). Because of this dynamic good sense not only demands intellectual effort but becomes intellectual effort par excellence. Good sense, in this early text, is defined as an intuition of a superior order ("une intuition d'ordre supérieur"). See Bergson, *Mélanges*, ed. A. Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 360–2.

28 See Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* for his take on a better, open society.

29 The full sentence reads: "Whether it be intellection or intuition, thought, of course, always utilizes language; and intuition, like all thought, finally becomes lodged in concepts such as duration, qualitative or heterogeneous multiplicity, unconsciousness—even differentiation, if one considers the notion such as it was to begin with" (*CM*, 35).

30 Gertrude Stein, "Plays," in *Writings, 1932–1946*, ed. C. Stimpson and H. Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), 255.

31 Marinetti refuted Bergson's influence (Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux], 114), but quite a lot has been written on the connection. See among others: Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton, NJ, and Chichester, Princeton University Press, 1993); Günter Berghaus, *The Genesis of Futurism: Marinett's Early Career and Writings, 1899–1909* (Leeds: Society for Italian Studies, 1995); Francesca Talpo, "Der Futurismus und Henri Bergsons Philosophie der Intuition," in *Der Lärm in der Strasse. Italienischer Futurismus, 1909–1918*, ed. Norbert Nobis (Hannover: Sprengel Museum, 2001); and Noemi Blumenkranz-Onimus, *La poésie futuriste italienne: Essai d'analyse esthétique* (Paris: Klinksieck, 1984).

32 Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar," in *Writings, 1932–1946*, ed. C. Stimpson and H. Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998), 330.

33 Stein, "Sacred Emily," in *Writings, 1903–1932*, ed. C. Stimpson and H. Chessman (New York: Library of America, 395).

34 Steven Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 107.

35 William Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1978), 89.

36 Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 343.

37 A nice detail in this respect is the fact that Stein and Toklas used the phrase "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" as a letterhead and embroidered emblem on their towels and linen—making Poetry or Language work in everyday life.

14

H.D.'s Intuitional Imagism: Memory, Desire, and the Image in Process

Laci Mattison

"I must drown completely and come out on the other side, or rise to the surface after the third time down, not dead to this life but with a new set of values, my treasure dredged from the depth. I must be born again or break utterly."

H.D., Tribute to Freud[1]

Introduction

In her letter to Amy Lowell dated December 17, 1914, H.D. writes, "Our great & good friend is taking up 'Imagism' again—don't you think we'd better drop it? . . . E. P. [Ezra Pound] is making it ridiculous."[2] Critics Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis, among others, stress the ways in which H.D. developed her poetics and moved beyond the imagist project. This critical emphasis grows out of the "regendering" of modernism in the 1980s and early 90s and, more specifically, is part of the rescue and recovery of H.D.'s work (beyond the few and often anthologized imagist poems). As her words to Lowell prove, H.D. also found the confining label "*Imagiste*" problematic as early as 1914 (although her first "imagist" poems were only published in *Poetry* in 1913, and her first book, *Sea Garden*, was not published until 1916). Upheld as the "perfect imagist," H.D.'s boundaries were fixed, much like the cold, hard, sculptural poetry T. E. Hulme theorized. Pound defined her verse as "crystalline," but H.D. revised his definition. As H.D. questions in her 1949 "H.D. by Delia Alton": "what is crystal or any gem but the concentrated essence of the rough matrix or the energy . . . that projects it? The poems as a whole . . . contain that essence or that symbol, symbol of concentration and of stubborn energy. The energy itself and the matrix itself have not yet been assessed."[3] The cold, hard "crystalline" also contains the fire, just as H.D.'s multifaceted imagist poetry allows for the shimmer.

H.D. did not abandon the imagist project entirely but instead moved beyond it, crossed over the border to imagine how the crystalline image, in a different composition, can change, how it might open more emphatically to the swirl of time. While criticism surrounding H.D.'s oeuvre largely circulates around her interaction with or revision of

Freudian theory (she had been his student-analysan in 1933 and 1934 as documented in her *Tribute to Freud*), what this strain of criticism has for the most part ignored are other theories of consciousness contemporaneous with H.D. and Freud that also had much to say about time, the dream state, and, importantly, the "image." In particular, Henri Bergson is only occasionally and briefly mentioned in H.D. criticism. Bergsonian notions of *durée*, intuition, *élan vital*, memory, and the image are certainly congruent with H.D.'s prose and poetry, but a study of the ways in which H.D.'s work parallels, intersects with, and moves beyond Bergsonian philosophy has not yet been attempted. In an engagement with the Bergsonian foundations of Imagism,[4] an outline of the early theories of the image and a close reading of "The Shrine" (collected in *Sea Garden*) clearly exemplify H.D.'s imagist aesthetics.

Early poems such as "The Shrine" also suggest the ways H.D. would later develop her poetics. Along with Robert Duncan and Rachel Connor, I see that H.D.'s development of the image can be traced throughout her work (instead, as early modernist criticism would have it, that H.D.'s only valuable poetry was limited to a handful of "*Imagiste*" poems that supported Pound's theories). Writing of *Red Roses for Bronze* (1931) and the work that follows, namely, *Trilogy* (1944–46), Duncan states: "The earlier Imagist style is not gone but has awakened; it is the sea-shell of *The Walls Do Not Fall* iv, 'bone, stone, marble,' as she had often imagined her verse in Imagist days, but now the image is larger, to include 'that flabby, amorphous hermit / within,' who 'prompted by hunger' 'opens the tide-flow.'"[5] Hunger for the hermit crab, like the forces of memory and desire in H.D.'s poems, necessitates an opening outward and into the sea cycle. This is the danger of drowning, of deterritorializing the self, of opening up to an uncontrollable force. "Now let the cycle sweep us here and there, / we will not struggle," the speaker of "Sigil" affirms at the beginning of section xiv.[6] The desire for drift in these lines echoes the impulse in "The Shrine" and other poems. The opening outward of the image in H.D.'s work, then, has much to do with how memory and desire function in her poems; H.D. wants to allow her readers into the image, to "feel" with the poet-speaker the rhythm that creates the temporal "thing" in flux. Through sound, H.D. creates the image from the inside, implicating the reader in the flux of a transtemporal and transformative community. In so doing, H.D. forges a paradoxically unlocalizable space in which the reader must necessarily drown in the image, an enfolding of subject and object that occurs through Bergsonian intuition; this "death" is also a new life, an immersion and emersion, a "com[ing] out on the other side . . . with a new set of values" (H.D., *Tribute*, 80).

H.D. and Imagism

When Pound took over *The New Freewoman* in 1914, changing the name to *The Egoist*, he opened a space to publish and theorize a new type of poetry. While Pound claims to have begun Imagism as a way to circulate the poems of "H.D., *imagiste*," critics such as Cyrena Pondrom have shown that H.D. had more to do with the movement than Pound would like to admit. While H.D. did not write about poetry, as Pound, Hulme,

Richard Aldington, and Lowell did, her poetry "exemplified" the theories of Imagism in a way that Pound's did not. The problem with early readings of Imagism (and modernism more generally) is that H.D.'s early work is only taken as an example—she was the "perfect imagist"—instead of a shaping force in the way theories of Imagism were. Pondrom notably argues H.D.'s poetry not only greatly influenced the theory and practice of Imagism but also anticipated Vorticism, "provid[ing] early poetic models for the important transformation of the static form of imagist doctrine into vorticism."[7] Although Pound, in the *ABC of Reading*, claims the divergence of the moving image (phanopoeia) from the stationary as the point of difference between him and the imagists,[8] H.D.'s poetry shows this to be an overstated differentiation. As Pondrom notes, Pound's early poetry did not actually conform to the tenants of Imagism until after he read H.D.'s poems in the café at the British Museum in September 1912. Thus, H.D.'s poetry influenced the movement perhaps more than the theories of Imagism did, and her poems were already phanopoetic in Pound's sense of the term.

In March of 1913, Pound defined the image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" in his essay in *Poetry*, "A Few Don'ts by an imagiste."[9] F. S. Flint's "Imagisme," published in the same issue of *Poetry*, lists the three tenants of Imagism (198–200). The goals of imagist poetry, as itemized by Flint, were: "(1) Direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective. (2) To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation. (3) As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome."[10] Flint, moreover, attempted to correct the given opinion that Pound founded Imagism in his essay in the May 1915 special imagist issue of *The Egoist*, positioning Hulme as the "ringleader" of The Poet's Club in 1908. Flint writes of Hulme: "He insisted too on absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage . . . . There was a lot of talk and practice among us . . . with what we called the Image." Pound did not join The Poet's Club, notably, until April 22, 1909, according to Flint.[11]

For imagist theorists Hulme and Pound, Bergson's notion of the image allowed for a break with Romanticism and a new type of poetry. Hulme, along with Flint (whom H.D. first met in 1912),[12] worked on the 1913 translation of Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903). Many of the lectures published in *Speculations* (1924) and *Further Speculations* (1955) also implicitly (if not explicitly) discuss Bergsonian philosophy. Bergson introduces the image at the outset of *Matter and Memory* (1896) when he makes clear his intention to resolve the conflict between idealism and realism, and, in so doing, readdress the body/mind dualism to show that the material and spiritual are intertwined to the point at which they become nearly indistinguishable. Thus, Bergson places the "image" halfway between "representation" and the "thing." In defining matter as "an aggregate of 'images,'" Bergson asks us to "consider matter before the dissociation which idealism and realism have brought about between its existence and its appearance."[13] As Bergson argues throughout his philosophy, representation, as a stand-in for something else, is static. We "represent" the world around us when we attempt to analyze it, to understand it intellectually. If, however, we take matter as "an aggregate of 'images,'" we begin to perceive (and then sense) the world differently, as matter shifting between and among transformations. For Bergson, the difference

between the "image" and the "thing" is that of ratio: "part to the whole." Because all perception is selection and, furthermore, because perception is located not in us but in the object, Bergson argues that we can assume that the percentage of our perception of matter (the image) is of the same nature of that out of which we have selected the image (the whole or the "thing itself") (*MM*, 230).

Although Hulme's version of Imagism, perhaps the original influence for Pound's movement, claims to be Bergsonian, he leaves the fundamental aspect of poetry out of this theory: namely, rhythm. Anyone reading "The Collected Works of T. E. Hulme," the five poems Pound published in *Ripostes* (1912), will notice this immediately. Hulme states in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," "This new verse resembles sculpture rather than music; it appeals to the eye rather than the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes. This material . . . is image and not sound. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic effect of rhythm."[14] Hulme misses, then, precisely the way Bergson defines affective language in *Time and Free Will* (1889).

While Bergson critiques language as static representation which does not correspond to our lived experience of change, he leaves room, however, for poetry as the form which, through rhythmical movement, uses language in such a way that it becomes something other than representation. Bergson writes: "The poet is he with whom feelings develop into images, and the images themselves into words . . . . But we should never realize these images so strongly without the regular movements of the rhythm by which our soul is lulled into self-forgetfulness, and, as in a dream, thinks and sees with the poet."[15] Bergson, in later works, writes of the dream-state as that experience closest to intuition. So, it becomes important here, given Bergson's argument about language, that the one way in which the reader of literature can experience language outside of representation is through movement: the rhythm of the poem gently rocks us into a state in which we hear language and no longer see it. Matthew Gibson expresses a complementary argument by identifying Hulme's reduction of Bergsonian "aesthetic emotion" to "sensation" with Hulme's reading of William James's 1890 *Principles of Psychology*. For Bergson, aesthetic emotion "arises from the intuition of real duration, the other [i.e. sensation] the result of the stimulation of simple surface consciousness" (Gibson, 282). Perhaps Hulme's deeper misreading of Bergsonian intuition is that it, "like external perception, only attains the individual"[16] instead of first "attaining the individual" (the "fundamental self" of *Time and Free Will*) but then also opening the "self" outward in an ecological community.

By entering into the sound of poetry and "forgetting" ourselves, we experience the vision (image) of the poet. If the poet has been successful, her poem does not *represent a thought* but, instead, *thinks* (a thinking, however, which remains outside analysis). Through rhythm, the reader-listener inhabits a poetic, sympathetic space and experiences a communal vision that is also impersonal, for one must be "self-forgetful." For Bergson, intuition is precisely this "sympathetic engagement with things in the world," as Michael Kelly states.[17] For Lenard Lawlor, a sympathetic engagement with the world precisely depends on the "a-perspectival" nature of intuition: "[I]n contrast to both analysis and synthesis, intuition in Bergson involves no viewpoints

and supports itself on no symbols used in a reconstruction." Lawlor emphasizes that "[i]ntuition is concrete; 'one enters into' (*en*) the thing; one coincides with it immediately in its simplicity and indivisibility."[18] For Hulme, however, intuition can "only attain the individual" and thus remains a one-sided experience instead of, as it is for H.D., a double movement that also opens the image outward for readers so that they might likewise intuit the "thing" ("Bergson's Theory," 144). By privileging rhythm in her poems, H.D. reveals how our sympathetic experience of things occurs not only with language but also in language. Here, I follow Jean-Jacques Lecercle's argument that "the event is *the work of art itself*. It is not something the text represents,"[19] and, likewise, that "the poem is the true site of the event, because the event does not make sense, but is sense" (118). In other words, H.D.'s poetry shows that language functions as something other than mere representation, as it invites the reader into the movement of the image-in-process and, in this way, enables an affective experience of and in language through Bergsonian intuition.

While Hulme has much to say about intuition in lectures and essays like "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" and while he understands the "fundamental self" theorized in *Time and Free Will* as an early indication of the not yet articulated theory of intuition,[20] he clearly ignores Bergson's comments on language and rhythm and the way this, too, suggests an intuitive experience. If the image of Hulme's theory of poetry remains sculptural—an experience for the eye only and not the ear—then the reader can only collect these images like so many objects to arrange on a shelf: the reader can only look at them as an observer who is not able (because uninvited) to enter into a sympathetic, shared space of interpenetration (contra interpretation). As Bergson makes clear in "Introduction to Metaphysics," an intellectual interpretation demands that one remain an outside observer, going all around the object, tallying and totaling multiple perspectives. But, finally, when given the sum of the equation, we find the qualitative experience of the world lacking because it relies precisely on representation.[21] Hulme's description of poetry can only exist in the realm of representation and analysis; he aims to pass on images as objects instead of allowing the reader-listener into the image. The doorway into an intuitive experience of the image is movement, rhythm.

H.D. knew this to be true. While the so-called founders of Imagism upheld the image as cold, hard, sculptural and denied motion and sound a place in their poetics, H.D. understood that the image was also a sound and a movement. Adalaide Morris lays the blame for the critical turn from a consideration of poetic sound in part with Hulme and Pound, who "envisioned a hard, fixed, clear-edged poetry based on images, not sounds" and for whom "images are not events but arrangements."[22] For H.D., however, the event of the image (and, thus, of poetry) occurs through sound. Furthermore, as we will see, her use of punctuating dashes and lyric "O"s meld the visual and sonic in her poetry and thus coalesce "the direct treatment of the 'thing'" via the presentation of the image in precise language with the "sequence of the musical phrase." H.D. and Aldington, unlike Hulme, privileged the latter in their poetry, a claim Duncan affirms when he cites the preface to Lowell's 1916 anthology: "a new cadence means a new idea" (326). Without first attending to the cadence, there can be no direct presentation and no novelty; as Bergson's philosophy shows, presence

(or, immanence) and an unmediated experience of *das Ding an sich*, Kantian noumenon, can only occur through a sympathetic experience of inner flux (or rhythm, H.D.'s moving image). Although a clear Bergsonian influence can be traced to Hulme and Pound and the imagist movement more generally, H.D.'s poetry in practice aligns more so with Bergson's understanding of poetry and of matter ("an aggregate of images") in motion—a metaphysics of dynamism in which "it is change itself that is real" (*CM*, 6).

The change comes about in H.D.'s poetry, as my reading of "The Shrine" will show, through not only rhythm, but also through the drift, echo, and opening of sound (even the opening of sound into silence, or the "O" of H.D.'s poems). Although Morris does not focus on this particular poem and although her argument has more to do with the stylistic drift and the de- and re-composition of sounds, I affirm her claim that the poems of H.D.'s first collection, *Sea Garden*, "work most effectively as soundscapes in which a world-constituting percept is enacted by a wash of phonemes within, across, and through its words" (28). "The Shrine" drifts forward and backward through propelling dashes which both rend and (re)seam the fabric of time, allowing what I understand as the virtual past (via Bergson and Gilles Deleuze), to be actualized through an intuitional, creative memory in the "present" of the poem. In the immanence of H.D.'s poems, a world is created through, but most importantly, *in* language. This poetic play with time proves what is given in Bergson: that neither the past nor the future are determined.

Furthermore, H.D.'s creative memory is a concentrated effort of intuition—a practice, like that of breathing or chanting to reach a state in which one is able to connect with the larger past that includes but is not limited to one's personal history. Writing briefly of the Bergsonian influence on the imagists, Morris states: "The image of a thing set into a poem becomes for the imagists the innocent word, the word that somehow escapes the conventional, abstracting, mediating nature of language. The assumption of transparent expression is a correlate of the Bergsonian faith in the artist's direct intuition of the object." Morris writes that Bergsonian artists "find in vision a release from a shared system of signs into spontaneous, intuitive, unmediated apprehension of essences. Whatever her subsequent elaborations—and they are many and strange—this belief in the possibility of essential intuitions, so central to imagism, remains at the core of H.D.'s" poetics (97). In this way, H.D. invites the reader to enter intuitively into a poem-image (rather than observe from the outside, as Hulme's theory of poetry requires). Through sympathetic rhythm, H.D. creates an outward opening community, which might, as a result of Bergson's "self-forgetfulness," creatively re-member the past toward an unforeseeable future, might, as Morris puts it, "think culture away from catastrophe" (49). So, while Glenn Hughes posits that H.D. is "not of this world, but of one long past" and that "we must not look to her for an interpretation of modern life,"[23] what he gets right is the latter statement: H.D. does not "interpret . . . modern life" through an analytic or representational poetry. Instead, through immersion in the past, she moves beyond the present and gestures toward potential futures.

Perhaps, what H.D.'s aesthetics prefigures are the claims Elizabeth Grosz puts forth in *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (2004), her book most centered on the theories of time in Nietzsche and Bergson (as well as Darwin) and how

their understanding of time becomes relevant to current feminist debate. Writing of this virtual past, Grosz argues that Bergsonian memory (and, for H.D., the aesthetics of memory) is inherently political. She states:

> This is indeed the primary political relevance of the past: it is that which can be more or less endlessly revived, dynamized, revivified precisely because the present is unable to actualize all that is virtual in it. The past is not only the past of this present, but the past of every present, including that which the future will deliver. It is the inexhaustible condition not just of an affirmation of the present but also of its criticism and transformation. Politics is nothing but the attempt to reactivate that potential, or virtual, of the past so that a divergence or differentiation from the present is possible.[24]

The "criticism and transformation" of the "present" occurs throughout H.D.'s work. The way H.D. *thinks* in her poems is also how, through movement, she creates the image in language. And, H.D.'s process of thinking would not be accessible without memory. For Grosz, memory, is "our mode of access to the past"—in which personal history is only a part of the larger durational flow that contains the virtual past (178). When we reactivate the past through memory, we, in Grosz's (Bergsonian) terms, "leap" into this durational flow: "The only access we have to the past is through a leap into virtuality, through a disconnection from the present and a move into the past itself, seeing the past is outside us and we are in it rather than its being located in us. The past exists, but it is in a state of latency or virtuality, as the potential of other on-going presents" (179). Instead of using the past "as a way of escape from the present," as early critics such as Geoffrey Bullough have argued,[25] H.D. thinks through the past so that she might see a vision of potential futures, which she then actualizes in her poetry.

Intuition and the image in "The Shrine"

"The Shrine," a poem in four parts, opens with a parenthetical epigraph, but "('She watches over the sea')" remains without attribution.[26] The "She" in this statement is the "you" of the poem, the (hazardous) ledge of rock, which is also the sea shrine. The parentheses can be read as a whisper, and coupled with the "Sh," "es," "se," the statement enacts the sounds of the waves crashing upon land, then pulling back, only to repeat the motion (although differently, more forcefully), just as the movement of the tongue over the sounds presses the front of the mouth in three different ways, finally, with the "se" of "sea," hissing harshly at the back of the teeth. This parenthetical statement creates the image of the sea ledge from the inside: the sounds and movement and the process of the saying/hearing (or, the "a/orality" Morris appropriates from Charles Bernstein for her reading of H.D.) forms the image-in-process of the place evoked.

However, while the parenthetical might be read as a whisper, the poem suggests, through an interaction with the phallogocentric narrative, that this parenthetical statement is a narrative that has been covered over by the masculine version of the

story. In this way, the "('She watches over the sea')" can also be read as an inactivated potential. In other words, the statement can be understood as part of that virtual past, a different narrative that might have been, but was not selected and so remains a nearly imperceptible whisper, heard only when one listens closely to the "sh," "es," "se" of the water on the shore. Prefaced with this statement, it is not surprising that the four parts of the poem revise the accepted narrative in order to reactivate this virtual past and follow a new trajectory, uncovering, through intuition, an alternate narrative that accepts the shrine as a sacred place of life and death, which are not necessarily contradictory states in the composition of the poem. This poetic ability to uncover alternate narratives, enacted in "The Shrine" and in countless others of H.D.'s poems, is precisely why Grosz understands the past through Bergson as inherently political and as a necessary understanding of time for feminist studies: in order for a new future, a creative, hopeful future for oppressed groups, one must take up those inactualized trajectories—what might have been, but what was not—in order to revise the narratives, habits, and perceptions of the present.

As is the case for the parenthetical epigraph (and the soundscape it unleashes in the poem), the dashes in "The Shrine" likewise function to craft the image from the inside, although in varying ways. As images in themselves, they suggest the slash and splintering of ships upon the rock and thus emphasize the violence of the content. They also create the breathlessness emblematic of H.D.'s early poems, a quality which Hughes identifies in 1931 when he writes: "We are never allowed to 'settle down' to H.D.'s poetry; . . . we are always on tiptoe, strained and alert, while our fancy darts and flashes after the gleaming images" (115). In this way, the dashes push the poem forward (as the sea swells push the boats toward the headland), calling the community created in and through the writing and reading of "The Shrine" toward the last line, the "splendour of the ragged coast," the point also at which borders and narratives are refigured.

In the first few stanzas particularly, the dashes advance the construction of the image through either linking the questions (as in the first stanza) or propelling the answering image (in the second and third stanzas). Thus, the questions evoke a positive image that the answering stanza(s) then replace with a photographic negative. While the dashes work to join images and link questions, they also act as signals of separation (as with the binary construction set forth in the first two stanzas). However, in this dual function, the dashes enact a site of ambivalence (unlike the determined opinion of the "landsmen").

The change from present tense ("you are") in the second and third stanzas to past ("It was") in the fourth stanza indicates not only the poet-speaker's ambivalence—by moving from the accusatory to the passive construction—but also makes perceptible the poet-speaker's engagement with the accepted narrative and her intention to uncover alternate trajectories of the virtual past in order to activate a new narrative and hopeful future. The difference between these two constructions concurrently and subtly reminds us whose narrative the speaker recounts: "It was evil—evil / when they found you, / when the quiet men looked at you—" (lines 15–17). "It was evil" because the men said it was so. However, as the next stanza shifts into the present tense again,

the speaker more clearly inserts an alternate narrative, which has been actualized because she has entered into the past. Instead of simply repeating what has been told of the headland, the speaker recognizes, through her creative memory, that the shrine, like the men and their boats, is also "unsheltered" and battered. The speaker states:

> But you—you are unsheltered,
> cut with the weight of wind—
> you shudder when it strikes,
> then lift, swelled with the blast—
> you sink as the tide sinks,
> you shrill under hail, and sound
> thunder when thunder sounds. (lines 21–7)

The dashes in the last stanza of part I move the poem forward and emphasize the violence and thrashing of the waves *against the rock ledge* (not against the men and the ships), as does the chiasmus in lines 26 and 27. The anglo-saxon kenning in the concluding line of the previous stanza, the spondee "wind-blast," is separated and repeated in the stanza cited above so that the repetition of the words and the accented syllables emphasize the battering the headland endures. Both "wind—" and "blast—" end with hard consonants that are followed not with a vowel, an opening into another word that mimics the forward and backward cycle of water, but with a dash, which visually and sonically emphasizes the staggering harshness of the *d* and *t* and disallows any sort of stylistic drift by stopping the play of assonance. The graphemes "wind—" and "blast—" also are pointedly placed on line breaks, and so likewise enforce the hard endings and accented syllables. The first dash of part I (line 21), however, functions much differently. The "But" indicates a poetic turn, and the dash here opens a space, a pause, for reconsideration. As Grosz would have it, the dash acts as "cut" or "nick" in time that enables or actualizes the virtual past toward the new future the poet-speaker envisions by the last section of "The Shrine." Because the vowels of the "you" open outward, the dash acts as a prolongation, like a musical tie linking two identical notes ("you—you"). This construction echoes the earlier "evil—evil," but the "you" here is spoken not as an accusation but as an invocation, which is affirmed, as we will see, by the use of "O" in part II.

Following the dashes, "O" opens (like "you—you") a space of renegotiation in the poem. This stylistic choice positions H.D.'s poetry in a much wider lyric tradition, including Sir Philip Sidney's sixteenth-century sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella* (the "O Moone" of sonnet XXXI, for instance),[27] and while the apostrophe of "The Shrine" might seem at first like the leavings of romanticism (Shelley's "O wild West Wind"),[28] H.D.'s idiosyncratic "O" reveals her reworking of lyricism for the new modernist *vers libre* form. "O" is the sound of breath, of silence, which Roland Barthes affirms in *Writing Degree Zero* as "a way a certain silence has of existing."[29] "O" in H.D.'s work can be understood as the limit of language, one of the ways language becomes otherwise in her poetry.[30] Often for H.D., the "O" is the breath of mysticism, "an invocation to a goddess or god,"[31] an echo in the poem that charms not only the reader

but also, as image, opens like a portal into the past and calls forth a spiritual being or experience and, in this way, locates the "self" as a site of possession or transformation.

In H.D.'s poetry, often a "cut" or a dash prefaces an "O," which suggests that the cuts and rends in time allow for the opening of the "O" and the transformation of narrative and narrator(s) "The Shrine" enacts. Part I of the poem ends with a "cut": "You are useless— / when the tides swirl your boulders *cut* and wreck / the staggering ships" (lines 28–31, emphasis added). But part II opens: "You are useless, / O grave, O beautiful, / the landsmen tell it—I have heard— / you are useless" (32–5). Not only do these lines contain the first "O"s of the poem, but they come in succession, as if the breathlessness evoked in part I must be relieved in two gasps for air. With the double use of "O," H.D. also coalesces the binary established earlier in the poem: a *beautiful grave*, then, might also be a *grave beauty*. The "O" as breath offers pause in the thrashing of the storm the poet-speaker evokes and thus allows the reader to reconsider the "great, fierce, evil" (line 8) headland as also a beautiful shrine—a place of death, certainly, but also, as the final stanza affirms, a place of becoming, renewal, rebirth. Furthermore, in the making of the image from the inside, H.D. implicates the reader, too, in the shipwreck on the headland, and the reader, tossed about and cut on the rocks, gasps for breath in a language that is also silence.

By the third stanza of part II, the speaker's earlier ambivalence has become a full and thorough remembering of the headland, of that amorphous borderland between life and death. The "O"s, as portals into the past, allow the poet-speaker to see alternate narratives and potential experiences of the headland. The speaker affirms with the third "O" of the poem (an opening, again, which is enabled by the prior "cut" of line 39):

> O but stay tender, enchanted
> where wave-lengths cut you
> apart from all the rest—
> for we have found you,
> we watch the splendour of you,
> we thread throat on throat of freesia
> for your shelf.
> You are not forgot,
> O plunder of lilies,
> honey is not more sweet
> than the salt stretch of your beach. (lines 40–50)

The open vowels and generous commas in this passage, especially those in the last half of the first stanza cited here (following "rest—"), allow more breath into the poem. The repeated *ou* of "splendour" and "you," the *oa* in the double "throat," and the sound that drifts from "for" to "your" contrasts with the harsh sounds elsewhere in the poem ("wind—," "blast—") and the repetition of "cut" and "sparks." These open vowels also conclude the poem, particularly in the second and third stanzas of part IV, and contrast the *spl*, *sp*, *sc* plosives scattered in the middle of part III, which, as we will see, enact a ship crash experienced by not only the poet-speaker but the "we"—including the reader(s)—of the poem.

Desire, community, and the image

While H.D. creates the image from the inside through the drift of sound and silence and uses the "O"s as functional portals into the past so that she might refigure accepted narratives, her "O" also enacts a voicing of desire that unveils the subject in the flux of transformation. Furthermore, H.D.'s conceptualization of the image would not be possible without an aesthetics of desire, which necessitates intuition as both part of the process of creating the image in language and of a readerly engagement with the poem. In her discussion of desire in "Epitaph," Eileen Gregory writes that the "censor . . . is everywhere part of the dynamic of her [H.D.'s] writing."[32] Although she does not intend it in this way, Gregory's argument about desire and the unorthodoxy of H.D.'s poems speaks to the way in which Deleuze and Félix Guattari, taking their cue in part from Bergson, write of desire as a productive force of becoming. In a Deleuzo-Guattarian consideration of desire, the censor always works to over-code desire, to shame the poet-speaker into confession (which can be either religious or psychoanalytic for Deleuze and Guattari). The censor codifies the flux into stasis, or, as is the case for Deleuze and Guattari, territorializes the line of flight. Because H.D.'s poems implicate the reader in the making of the image, which also has to do with the force of desire and the motion desire propels in the poem, "reading H.D. risks shame, one of the most powerful and visceral of emotional tools of orthodoxy," as Gregory argues (32). Even in a poem like "The Shrine," we are implicated in a collective community enacted through and engaged with desire. We are taken along with the poet-speaker on a forward trajectory toward the headland about which we have been warned (through the speaker's second-hand account of what the "landsmen tell"); but, we are also implicated in the poetic remediation of the masculine narrative.

Finally, whether or not this trajectory tends toward a static and final death or regeneration depends on the actualization of the narrative(s) that have been covered over. It depends, likewise, on whether or not the "we" of the poem (and, by implication, the H.D. reader) will be trapped by "terror" (line 52) or, in moving through terror (as is the case in parts III and IV of "The Shrine"), we will realize the "splendour" of the "ragged coast" (line 88). This coalescing of the accepted binary of life and death into the moment at which they become one and the same (much like her use of chiasmus) is an idiosyncratic quality of H.D.'s poems and speaks to her mystical belief in life after death, which notably aligns her thought with Bergson's more so than with Freud's.[33]

For H.D., drowning enacts the point of release—going under for the third time but then emerging again—that is also a new life, a renewed vibrancy. This argument implies a different consideration of subjectivity in which one does not (passively) experience a loss of self, but the absent self instead is in the process of transforming, becoming otherwise, existing in a different state or plane. This understanding of subjectivity is what Deleuze and Guattari will take from Bergson's notion of intuition when they conceptualize desiring-machines in *Anti-Oedipus* and becoming-imperceptible in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For them, desire does not indicate a "lack" of an object (as psychoanalysis claims), but a "lack" of a subject because it is through desire that the subject undergoes transformations.[34] If "terror" in H.D.'s "The Shrine"

paralyzes movement and also blocks the actualization of the virtual past in a remaking of the present, the "presence" of the poem, and an unforeseen future, then desire allows for these experiences. For Deleuze and Guattari, fear is the territorializing impulse, desire, that of deterritorialization, which enables the activation of the latent potential. This becoming of the subject is implicit in Bergsonian intuition, as made clear in the "Introduction to Metaphysics" when Bergson describes the intuitional method, which begins first with self-sympathy, a connection to one's own duration, then extends outward in an opening up of the subject. We "dilate ourselves" and so "transcend ourselves" by moving "either upwardly or downwardly" in our connection with various durations through the method of intuition (*CM*, 158). Fear limits not only our experience of other durations, but it also alienates us from our own. Thus, we remain trapped in a static world of representation without access to the past or to the creative memory H.D.'s poems engage.

The speaker addresses this territorializing impulse at the opening of part III of "The Shrine," stating "terror has caught us now" (line 52) and "we dared deeper than the fisher-folk" (line 54). But desire is not over-coded by fear in this instance:

> . . . and you strike us with terror
> O bright shaft.
> Flame passes under us
> and sparks that unknot the flesh
> sorrow, splitting bone from bone,
> splendour athwart our eyes
> and rifts in the splendour
> sparks and scattered light. (lines 55–62)

The terror limits the passage of the "men in ships" (line 53) and distances them from a headland they can only talk about (the speaker, notably, speaks to the rock/shrine, the "you" in the poem). However, the collective narrators of the poem move toward the headland through their terror in an affirmation of the productive force of desire. The "O" in this passage suggests ecstasy and worship, as well as an invocation of the "spirit between the headlands" (line 77). And, in the way previously suggested, the "O" allows a re-thinking and re-activation of the (virtual) past. This second stanza of part III also enacts a shipwreck through the "scatter[ing]"—the sparks/splitting/splendour. "We" have been shipwrecked, although we have been "warned of this" (line 63). H.D.'s implication of the reader in a poetic community of desire further reveals how the collective aesthetics of H.D.'s poetry is enabled through her treatment of the image and how sound creates the image from the inside. The "thing," the "essence" of matter, can be intuited by the reader/writer through this process poetics.

In H.D.'s poems, an intuitional immersion in the past allows the image-in-process and enables not only the poet to actualize potentials latent in the (virtual) past but also opens the poem forward and outward toward the reader and, in so doing, enacts a transtemporal community. The aesthetic crossing-over—of borders of time and of consciousness(es)—is, likewise, the crossing-over from life to death. But, in H.D.'s

poetry, the point of crossing has become indiscernible because the borderline has not simply shifted but has been redefined as the point at which one thing becomes its opposite—not, as a binary outlook of the world would have it, the point where one thing meets its opposite. More precisely, only when life is possessive and privatized ("my life") can it be considered as the opposite of death. As Renaud Barbaras writes of Bergson's *élan vital*, "Death, which could be characterized as the negation of life only insofar as life is reduced to the living being, now reveals itself to be the condition of life's affirmation within the living thing."[35]

Thus, the act of desiring in H.D.'s poems brings us to the (redefined) border of life/death. As part III of "The Shrine" concludes with another reference to what "men said" (line 64) and an affirmation that "none venture to that spot" (line 72), part IV begins: "But hail—" (line 73). "Hail" echoes part I in which the speaker describes the shrine as "shrill[ing] under hail," however, with this poetic turn, "hail" has become not part of a violent storm but a greeting, a call for attention, and a sign of worship, a (communal) song of praise: "we hail this shore— / we sing to you, / spirit between the headlands / and the further rocks" (lines 76–9). Like the physical space opened "as the tide slackens, / as the wind beats out" (lines 74–5), the open sounds (echoing those of part II) enter into the poem again at the conclusion:

> Though oak-beams split,
> though boats and sea-men flounder,
> and the strait grind sand with sand
> and cut boulders to sand and drift—
> your eyes have pardoned our faults,
> your hands have touched us—
> you have leaned forward a little
> and the waves can never thrust us back
> from the splendour of your ragged coast. (lines 80–8)

The "drift—" of the last stanzas is not a movement toward disaster but one toward creative affirmation: the "grind[ing]" and "cut[ting]" enable new forms of being, like the "boulders" transformed into "sand and drift—," like the (re)creation of a new narrative and the transfiguration of the "we." This moment is that of (Deleuzo-Guattarian) becoming, the point of imperceptibility at which an intuitive communion has been created not only through the transition of a singular speaker into a collective community but also between the "we" of the poem and the "spirit" or spirits whose shrine this poem imagines. Duncan's words about the poet's loss of self apply also to the H.D. reader: "In our work we lose ourselves, our independence . . ., or it is fused and enters into the radiance of another person we imagine in the community of language and our work there" (558).

Like H.D.'s comments in *Tribute to Freud*, we, too, in our immersion in the poem, will "break utterly" (like the men's ships) or we will be "reborn" (80). H.D.'s collective aesthetics develop from her treatment of the image and how sound—even the sound of silence or breath—creates the image from the inside. The "we"

of "The Shrine" dramatically differs from the landsmen (and their narrative), and, furthermore, the plural pronoun indicates a community of witnesses that has remained imperceptible to the reader until part II (line 43). The poem has opened outward (by way of dashes and the "O" of silence and breath), has engaged the past and actualized new possible narratives in which the reader is also implicated in the community H.D. creates in and through language. The poet-speaker crafts the image not by circling the outside, adding together multiple points of view, but by creating the image from the inside, inhabiting the image; in this way, the poet-speaker and the reader(s) experience the "essence" (the flux) of the thing in language. This experiencing from the inside-out is precisely what Bergson means by intuition. H.D.'s process poetics include the reader not only in the "vision" and sound of the image "created" by the poet-speaker but also in the process of its making.

Notes

1 H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: Pantheon, 1956), 80.
2 Qtd. in Bonnie Kime Scott, *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 134.
3 H.D., "H.D. by Delia Alton," in *The Iowa Review* 16.3 (1986): 184.
4 Other influencing forces for Imagism include Japanese *haiku* and *tanka* and *Symbolisme* (although Pound's *isme* was intended as a revisionist movement to correct the wrongs of this earlier one), among other art forms.
5 Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book*, ed. Michael Boughn and Victor Coleman (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 385.
6 H.D., "Sigil," in *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), 411–8.
7 Cyrena Pondrom, "H.D. and the Origins of Imagism," in *Signets: Reading H.D.*, ed. Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau Duplessis (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 99.
8 Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1934), 52.
9 Pound, "A Few Don'ts from an Imagist," in *Poetry* 1.6 (1913): 200. See also Matthew Gibson, "Contradictory Images: The Conflicting Influences of Henri Bergson and William James on T. E. Hulme, and the Consequences for Imagism," in *The Review of English Studies* 62.254 (2010): 275–95. Gibson argues that Pound's definition of the image denies the temporality of the image as theorized by Bergson and enacted in H.D.'s "Hermes of the Way."
10 F. S. Flint, "Imagism," in *Poetry* 1.6 (1913): 199.
11 Flint, "The History of Imagism," in *The Egoist* 5.2 (1915): 71.
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15

Bergson and the Comedy of Horrors

John Mullarkey

"There is no set rules that you can live by . . .
you can't say, 'If I follow these rules, I will be safe'."

(Helen Hirsch in *Schindler's List*)

Introduction

Comedy or horror story? The violent events portrayed in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* are capable of eliciting either interpretation on account of the various audience responses it has been met with: laughter and horror (both at the film's events and the film-makers). In this essay I want to look at the violence in *Schindler's List* as *both* horrific and comical, though not on account of Spielberg's putatively melodramatic and clichéd treatment of Nazi violence during the Second World War (which has been widely ridiculed), but on account of something simultaneously horrific and comical in the film's cinematic re-telling of those events, a horror-comedy connected to the *contingency* of their violence. And it will be Henri Bergson's theory of comedy that will eventually help us to form this conjunction, a theory that Éric Dufour has described as forwarding the "essential principle" of both horror and comedy.[1]

In comparing such seemingly opposed approaches to violent events—comedy and horror—we might normally take either the deflationary route of supposedly neutral description (admitting that they have nothing more in common than their historical content, all else being mere subjective interpretation), or the optimistic route that conflates their formal treatments in some fashion (asserting, perhaps, that the genre of comedy is repressed tragedy, or that the horror genre is ultimately laughable, and so on). My way into the material here will be with a mitigated optimism, for, while I do not want to make any universal claims about the respective genres of horror and comedy as such, I will forward a reading of both in terms of what I will call "the horrific," a *mode* of filmic representation which can be found in horror films, comedies, and other genres.

To succeed, of course, we will have to look to what theorists have said about the nature of horror and comedy. There have been various suggestions as to what constitutes the essence of horror, some of which will be outlined first. Subsequently, I will show

how the horrific elements of *Schindler's List* belong to more than just the violent nature of the events depicted, but also to their cinematic treatment, a treatment that makes them horrific and comical *simultaneously*. As for comedy, it is Bergson's theory of the comical that is most productive here. It is this theory that I will try to substantiate below, but only by showing how, when understood correctly, it verges on and is closely related to a conception of the horrific *qua* contingent violence. Without making any claims about genres, then, we will still be able to compare comedy and horror as alternative approaches to violent events. This will also lead us to questions concerning the limits of representation (the "Unrepresentability" thesis being in various ways connected with Modernism and long associated with images of the Holocaust)—and whether laughter is perhaps the only tenable response to purportedly unrepresentable horrors.

What is horror?

As with most genres, the meaning and purpose of horror film is one more bone of academic contention: it is said that horror films are domestic dramas writ large; that they are modern forms of catharsis (as tragedy was once); that they are conformist ideologies that represent the unknown as threatening; or that they actually welcome otherness by thinking of it as sympathetic and victimized, and so on.[2] Working within a cognitivist paradigm, Noël Carroll (who was one of the first to write extensively on art-horror in film) sees horror cinema in terms of the monsters that usually lurk at the heart of the story, for the role of such monsters is to elicit both fear and disgust.[3] In other words, he focuses on the *affective* role of horror, and we will follow him here in avoiding any debates over the semantic definition/interpretation of the genre by focusing on one or two of the generic effects of a horror movie.

It is noteworthy in itself that the horror genre takes its name from the emotion these films hope to arouse in their audience (thrillers and suspense films would be other examples of this). According to Carroll, the fear *and* disgust (fear alone is not sufficient to constitute horror) is motivated by the nature of the monster, for its existence must be "repulsive and abhorrent," an unnatural abomination.[4] Even if these creatures were not dangerous—which they usually are—we would wish to avoid their presence, for it is literally repulsive, repelling us. Carroll adds that they are usually "impure" creatures, "categorically hybrid," compounding normally opposed elements (life and death—vampires, zombies; animal and human—werewolves; human and demonic—devils, anti-christs, and so on). In his later work, Carroll places even more emphasis on this hybridity, describing horror stories as narratives defying "our conceptual schemes" and "confirming the existence of something that is impossible." Horror monsters are these "impossible" or "anomalous beings" and as "the monster defies our conception of nature . . . it probably engender[s] some measure of repulsion."[5]

We must also be careful to note that the various post-war sub-genres of horror, such as the "realistic" or "psychological" horror film (*Psycho*), the "slasher" film (*Halloween*, et al.), sci-fi horror (*Alien*), or "body-horror" (works by David Cronenberg, for

instance), to mention just four, might not at face value meet the same criteria as that of the classic horror film of the 1930s based on an individuated and nonhuman monster. Yet, nonetheless, we can still find elements of the *horrific* common to each, for while there may not even be a monster in films of this type, we can still observe individuals or even just events which are monstrous in the same manner that Carroll describes a repugnant and hybrid category.[6] Events of contingent violence, I will argue, belong to just such a category.[7]

Why is *Schindler's List* horrific? On chance and death

By this question, then, I do not mean to ask whether *Schindler's List* is a horror film, but rather how it houses various traits or tendencies found most often in the horror genre (though not confined to it). While a weak argument could be made for *Schindler's List* belonging to the horror genre in terms of its main protagonists—a hero (Oskar Schindler) coming to realize what is good and what is evil, versus a monster (Amon Goeth) who seems to embody such evil; its setting (an imposing house on a hill overlooking a prison camp);[8] or its scenes of extermination (most often referred to in the literature as 'horror'), this would not amount to much more than another selective reading that stretches the boundaries of the genre once again. Indeed, given that the whole question of genre definition and classification is rife with difficulty,[9] I will restrict myself to pointing out salient cinematic elements of "the horrific" without relation to classifications of genre, sub-genre, or any other interpretative class.[10] The horrific will be found in the hybrid category that lies at the heart of the Nazi evil, the idea of industrialized death, of lives (and the ends of those lives) transformed into mechanical processes: the monstrous will not necessarily be only seen in an individual (though the person of Goeth actually does fulfill this role),[11] but also in events and *how* events are represented.

Given audience expectations, Spielberg provides the first part of his film with an eerie sense of calm—everything is quiet ("too quiet" as the horror-cliché would put it). We are not thrust straight away into the carnage and violence—it is slowly introduced against a background of everyday commercial and bureaucratic activity (or banality, as Hannah Arendt famously put it). The musical score is muted in these opening sections, but its quietness too is disturbing and somewhat sinister, given what we know must ensue.

From the first scenes of the Krakow ghetto and throughout, *Schindler's List* visually details the meticulous bureaucracy of evil: the preparation of pens and ink pads, the inspection of identification papers, the stamping of documents—these trivia are intrinsic to the inauguration of industrialized death. Indeed, it is the very concept of mechanized death that *Schindler's List* commemorates (ironically, without ever directly displaying the gas chambers at Auschwitz in operation), which is the most monstrous horror: that the most significant event, our death, is turned into the most insignificant event, a mechanical event, without meaning, without choice, without record or other acknowledgment.

But there is something abhorrent in the representation of events in *Schindler's List*, too, irrespective of the violent acts and individuals comprising them. This unnatural element is of contingency or chance. Blind chance is often shown to play a role in the outcome of events, at least for the majority of cases. Admittedly, individual cunning is sometimes seen to be effective too (Stern teaches the naïve academic to lie about his intellectual abilities and manual skills in order to survive), and, of course, Schindler's facility with money and the manipulation of others lies at the heart of this story of survival against the odds. Yet, more often than not, it is *the odds that are shown to win*: death comes by chance (getting into the wrong line, not being on the list that Schindler wants to save from Auschwitz),[12] or by whim (the woman engineer Goeth orders to be shot, the execution of Lisieck). As Helen Hirsch laments, "there is no set rules that you can live by . . . you can't say, 'If I follow these rules, I will be safe' "—and it is this which is horrific, because this contingency is a token of the mechanical, the insignificant, and lifeless.

The element of chance is fundamental, of course, to the story of the Shoah, especially from the perspective of the survivors. Why did some (most) drown while others (a tiny few) were saved? Aside from the psychological weight of this question that tortured so many survivors, *Schindler's List* dramatizes this randomness in cinematic fashion. Indeed, while Spielberg has been criticized for supposedly telling a story about personal endeavor and enterprise (as though others might also have survived if they had only tried harder), the film more often illustrates the fact that the difference between life and death was mostly a matter of luck or the lack of it.[13]

To be caught in the crosshairs of Goeth's sniper rifle, to be chosen to die or not without any more motive than that you have strayed into his range as a target: this is the perfect emblem of a contingent death. Of course, Helen's speech to Schindler in the cellar makes the idea explicit: there are no rules or tricks to survive in the camps, no way around the statistical inevitability—you will die, sooner or later, despite all personal endeavor, enterprise, second-guessing, or cunning. In the long run, chance becomes necessity (inevitably). One's death or survival will be meaningless in just this sense of "chance": it doesn't mean spontaneity but the exact opposite, the chance of the mechanical flaw, the chance that a gun won't work when fired (when Goeth wishes to execute the factory worker for inefficiency), that the stool won't give way when kicked during a lynching (hence, Goeth dies in the same manner in which he killed, absurdly).[14] Why, for instance, does Goeth simply laugh and pass on when he comes across the "little Polish clicking soldier" during the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto?

The gratuitous, random, but nonetheless mechanical cosmos of the Holocaust is illustrated most cinematically by the scene of the Krakow massacre when the camera follows one little girl, tinted red against her black and white surroundings, as she meanders through the death squads, flying bullets, and dying victims, to apparent safety. She survives, this moment, by no other means than walking from *a* to *b* without a single bullet hitting her or any soldier spotting her—by sheer chance. We later see her take refuge in a tenement building. The point of this strange scene, however, is spelled out later when the corpses from that massacre are disinterred to be cremated: in this vision of hell, her shrivelled corpse is again literally spotted in Spielberg's camera by

its red tint amongst the other bodies on the cart: the message is clear—when (and sometimes how) one died in the Holocaust was a matter of chance, but that one died was a virtual necessity (irrespective of any resourcefulness, even as the little girl had). Survival was only the exception proving the rule. Indeed, our opening quotation from Helen tallies with her own final fate, with Goeth and Schindler gambling for her with a deck of cards in a game of Twenty-One.[15]

Cinematically, the more prosaic features of the horrific abound in *Schindler's List*. Most controversial is the scene in the Auschwitz showers: its mix of restricted narration (like the people in the showers themselves, we the audience don't know what they are doing there) with unrestricted narration (historically, of course, we do know that the showers were not for washing but most often for execution), is a bit of playful direction from Spielberg, raising a degree of suspense by toying with the audiences' degree of knowledge.[16] Some have criticized Spielberg for invoking the gas chambers only to show people being showered,[17] but what is truly distasteful is not the event itself (which actually occurred), but its cinematic portrayal, which clearly belongs to the list of devices for creating entertainment—suspense followed by relief—peculiar to the horror film.

Bergson on the meaning of the comical

The majority of theories of humor can be placed into two groups: on the one hand there are "superiority" theories (such as Hobbes's) that see humor as an assertion of one's superiority at the expense of the humor's victim ("the butt of the joke"); on the other hand, there are "incongruity" theories that see comedy emerging in the clash between an expected outcome and a wholly incongruous result—"funny ha ha" reduces to "funny peculiar," so to speak—and Schopenhauer's version of this theory is the most famous.[18] Bergson's is an interesting mix of these two types of theory: laughter, he argues, is indeed a social and intellectual assertion of superiority, only what we laugh at, what is humorous for us, is a special form of incongruity. Hence, his theory is encapsulated in the twofold aspect of the title of his study of the subject, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.[19]

What is of interest here is what Bergson means by the "incongruous," for it fits into his wider metaphysical dualism of life and mechanism. Bergson's thought is renowned as one version of the Philosophies of Life current at the turn of the twentieth century (alongside those of James, Dewey, Dilthey, Husserl, and others). In the abstract, his theory proposes two basic tendencies as composite of reality—the tendency to creation, novelty, and difference (variously seen across his writings in the properties of consciousness, memory, life, or open morality) and, opposed to this, the tendency to identity, sameness, and repetition (again, embodied in such concepts as mechanism, matter, or closed morality). However, the abstract nature of this theory needs to be fleshed out in terms we can employ here with reference to film, and that is precisely what his book *Laughter* does. The comical is found whenever what we expect to evince signs of life instead displays traits of mechanism. Be it in the broad slapstick

humor of events and actions (slipping on a banana skin), the comedy of character (the inflexibility of characters such as Don Quixote), or plays on words (jokes, witticisms, or puns showing language itself behaving mechanically by emphasizing its materiality, repeating itself, and so on), Bergson shows in each case that nature is really performing a category error: what we laugh at is the incongruity of something that *ought to be* vital acting like or becoming "something mechanical encrusted on the living." Life is not a fixed element for Bergson, but something that can be more or less: one can become more or less alive, more or less mechanical or materialized in one's own life. And when one volunteers to lose some of one's vitality, either by design or by acts of omission (such as not looking where one is walking), one becomes laughable.

However, and this is crucial, Bergson says that his theory is not *reductive*, that is, he is not trying to set down a necessary *and* sufficient condition for all possible humor: rather, his is only a theory of the barest minimum necessary for humor—mechanism being encrusted onto life. Other *unpredictable* aspects would be required to render something actually funny in any particular context. In other words, *how* the category errors of nature are embodied in real contexts cannot be predicted, and so what we find funny is not predetermined (in other words, we are not forced to find someone slipping on a banana skin funny). The actual objects of humor are culturally and historically constructed, but *what* makes them humorous is biologically constructed. Indeed, having a *predictable* sense of humor would itself be humorous for others seeing us. Possessing a variable, flexible, that is, *vital*, sense of humor is precisely one sign of being more alive.

Nonetheless, what is most significant here is that Bergson's theory of the comical converges with the theory of horror we examined above, namely that what is monstrous (or "horrific") is an "anomalous being," an abomination. For Bergson, the purest abomination is of life becoming a machine, such that being the object of humor is a result of having lost some of one's vitality, of becoming a living machine, a ridiculous and monstrous hybrid. And there is a flip side to this. The horror of a film like *Hostel* (2005) concerns what we regard as vital and other—in particular, another person's view of us—not regarding us as vital beings at all, but indifferently as quasithings (an indifference Slavoj Žižek would call the "void of the Other"). As such, the *origin* of the comical is only the flip-side of the origin of horror: where the comical concerns what is alive and of value *making itself* inert and worthless, horror relates to a subject *being made* worthless and inert *by another*. What would be truly horrific in Bergsonian terms is not the monster *as* monster (being evil and loving it), but the banality, the sheer contingency of his or her being monstrous *to us* (as when one's death becomes a mere tourist attraction). The horror of *Hostel* (or 1964's *Two Thousand Maniacs* to a lesser degree) is where tourism meets murder: the psychopath is no longer sick but the new type of normal subject—one that wants to kill you for mild entertainment within a institution that makes what you regard as evil into a mere matter of procedure. Indeed, the process whereby our vitality is *disregarded* involuntarily (what Dufour describes as the inanimate appearing within the animate) would lead, *in extremis*, to the collapse of even sadism (and sadistic laughter), which would still be an acknowledgment of *a minimal* intersubjectivity. Eventually, we would be regarded as pure objects.[20] The

horror of Auschwitz, then, is the historical corroboration of procedural death that makes B-films like *Hostel* all the more distasteful.

The comedy of horrors at the limits of representation

"Auschwitz," "the Holocaust," "Shoah"—this vocabulary has become laden with ethical and aesthetic meanings going well beyond the horrors of their original referents. They now also stand for the impasse of our language, the limits of representation.[21] How can we, even if we dare, depict such inconceivable mass industrialized murder? Surely the necessary generalization, sensationalization, simplification, and trivialization will do the events an injustice. We must remain silent. What is the nature of this injunction? There are various levels to this Unrepresentability thesis as it has been explored more generally within Modernism: psychological (that it is too painful to represent certain experiences); moral (that one shouldn't try to represent certain events—out of respect to the victims, to protect the impressionable, and so on); aesthetic (that art flounders in its own inadequacy when faced with such a task of representation); metaphysical (that, literally speaking, a past event of any sort cannot be present again); and epistemological (that one can't understand an experience simply by witnessing a representation of it, that it is ineffable).[22]

The psychological interpretation of the thesis is immediately plausible, especially with a film like *Schindler's List*, which is at times, "almost unbearable to watch" (Thomas, *Beyond Genre*, 48). But does Spielberg challenge the limits of representation by making the "unimaginable imaginable, the unrepresentable representable"?[23] Most of the Jews personified in his film are also ones who survive to its very end, and this surely makes it easier to watch. Of course, this *is* a film about survivors, but one could envisage a script allowing more details to be given to the murder victims than we are shown: but then, again, that might have been simply too awful for the audience to bear. Yet this psychological view can slide quickly into the epistemological position, for we could be forced to watch scenes of immense cruelty, and indeed, Spielberg could have used less restraint and shown even more violence. But then we hit another problem: writing on Alain Resnais's documentary about the death camps, *Nuit et brouillard*, Ilan Avisar asserts: "Viewers always reach a point of saturation when they see images of atrocities. Exceed this point and their reaction is bound to be negative—too emotional, mindless, and even convulsive (e.g. nervous laughter, or even perverse pleasure.)"[24]

In other words, piling on realistic images of cruelty only brings home the point that an image is only a representation, and that the original events themselves remain mute—indeed, anything feigning too close a resemblance may actually meet with outraged, ridiculing laughter.[25] In which case we might ask whether laughter can fill the silence left by the unrepresentable. Certainly, Peter Barnes points to this possibility when writing on Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be?* (which also tackles Nazi violence): "Tragedy makes the unthinkable appear to have some meaning. It becomes transfigured, without the horror being removed, and so justice is denied to the victims. Comedy does not tell such pernicious lies."[26] Whereby laughter can, of course, signify avoidance

and lead to quietism, it can also form an attack: in this sense, it is quite rightly *offensive*, in that it is on the offensive against an opposite force, "*liberating* laughter" from under the noses of the humorless, helping us, as Annette Insdorf puts it, to "face horror with the ammunition of sharp humour."[27]

Of course, laughter is commonly related to screaming in the context of horror entertainments (think of any ride on a rollercoaster), and the physiological and neurological links between the two make for fascinating reading. However, philosophically speaking, the link between the two may be more complex than imagined, especially when appraising a horror film. The gory imagery in certain "torture-porn" films (like *Hostel*) can prove so "direct" that the images seem to bypass any intellectual apprehension, going straight to an immediate, convulsive response—horrified disgust followed by laughter.[28] And yet, for Bergson, there is an intellectual judgment even in this laughter, for are we not laughing at ourselves as well as the film, in these instances, for becoming such reflexive automata?[29] The screams turn to laughter in our self-observation of a voluntary descent into mechanism—the reflex of disgust (recoiling in horror—*our* body horror—is itself then the apotheosis of art horror) *followed by our voluntary escape from mechanism in laughter itself*. We scream at the monster and so also become a monster—but then we laugh at the monster and our own self as monster, showing that we are free.

So, again, should we dramatize the horror or laugh at it? In *Schindler's List* there is less humor as the film proceeds, as the Nazis drain humor and life from the world (some humor being restored only toward the end of the film as the war itself ends). Deborah Thomas argues that the film uses humor as a self-defence tactic in the earlier sections to help prepare the audience to deal with what is to come (*Beyond Genre*, 44). This idea can certainly be read in terms of the Unrepresentability thesis—we can only laugh at what is too unbearable to conceive seriously. But it can also work in Bergsonian terms: the laughter is there as a reproach to the unnatural reality surrounding the protagonists. Humor, for Bergson, is always at the expense of the naturally alive becoming unnaturally inert. Horror, too, is similarly the denaturing of the natural, but with the additional element of threatening danger to the subject witnessing the denaturation, the danger being that this unnatural process will also sweep him or her up towards an unnatural, that is, mechanical, insignificant, death.

Concluding note on contingency and fabulation

Our chosen theme of contingency is one that has been increasingly important in a number of recent philosophies, be they couched in terms of the contingency of the event (Alain Badiou) or the contingency of nature (Badiou's disciple, Quentin Meillassoux). However, it is worth noting that, whereas these philosophers take their "contingentism" to be a hallmark of their materialism, there remains, for Bergson, something subjective in the very notion of chance or contingency that renders it spiritual. Badiou, for example, thinks of the cast of dice as emblematic of the event "because this gesture symbolizes the event in general; that is, that which is purely hazardous, and which cannot be

inferred from the situation." As pure randomness, hazard, or chance, the event is this "supplementation of being."[30] Yet, according to Bergson's theory of "fabulation" in his final work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, pure chance too is itself a fabulation, a construction. Words like "chance," "luck," and "accident" are names that already indicate an anthropomorphization of events reflecting both our interests ("lucky for me that the bullet went over my head") and a possible influence on the future ("I better keep my head down from now on").[31] Probability and *improbability* are equally subjective (as Thomas Bayes—who knew more about gambling than most—showed).[32]

For Bergson, anything *named* an event reflects a construction out of basic processes from an inhuman though nonetheless subjective stance. An "earthquake," for example, is simply a set of physical processes that, when collected together under a name, are individuated *as* an "earthquake" that can then be *seen as* the cause of these processes (rather than simply the set of them). The disturbances with which we have to deal, "each of them entirely mechanical," combine into an "Event" with an elemental personality, mind, or interiority (Bergson, *TSMR*, 156, 169, 175). Mechanical processes become living Events whose purpose might be prevented if we try hard enough. But Bergson's choices of example (earthquakes, gunshot) are not lethal ones *incidentally*: the fabulation of events requires violence. Death, or horror at the prospect of death, is what animates events. Violent events, therefore, have a face, so to speak, but it is one *we* impose in order to master our fate through the ascribed identity or identification of the event as a quasi-person, a spiritual entity of sorts. They are an example of what Slavoj Žižek (who has analysed Bergson's idea in a discussion of free-will) would call the "Big Other" that injects meaning into the meaningless.[33] Yet, it is not a question of self-deception or false-consciousness for Bergson (as it is for Žižek), but the perception of life and avoidance of death: fabulation serves to empower. Once named and personalized, the violence of the event can be effected, if only by magic. *And this is especially true of contingent violence*. In an extraordinary passage from *The Two Sources*, Bergson describes this fabulation of contingency in the following fashion:

> A huge tile, wrenched off by the wind, falls and kills a passer-by. We say it was by chance. Should we say the same if the tile had merely crashed onto the ground? Perhaps, but it would then be because we were vaguely thinking of a man who might have been there, or because, for some reason or other, that particular spot on the pavement was of special interest to us, so that the tile seemed to have specially selected it to fall upon. In both cases chance intervenes only because some human interest is at stake, and because things happened as though man had been taken into account, either with a view of doing him a service, or more likely with the intention of doing him an injury. Think only of the wind wrenching off the tile, of the tile falling on the pavement, of the tile crashing on the ground: you see nothing but mechanism, the element of chance vanishes. For it to intervene it is indispensable that, the effect having a human significance, this significance should react upon the cause and colour it, so to speak, with humanity. Chance is then mechanism behaving as though possessing an intention . . . But

> underlying it is a spontaneous semi-conscious thought, which superimposes on the mechanical sequence of cause and effect something totally different, not indeed to account for the falling of the tile, but to explain why its falling should coincide with the passing beneath it of a man, why it should have chosen just that very moment to fall . . . . Chance is therefore an intention emptied of its content. (Bergson, *TSMR*, 148–9)

Returning to the genre of horror cinema, a film like *Final Destination* probably illustrates most clearly this fabulation of mechanical, causal sequences into *chance* events with a name, *Death*. Here, it is the event of death, understood as the chance combination of processes, that stalks and finds each character in various accidents. And it is death that Bergson describes in *The Two Sources* as "the greatest accident of all," which is only to say that its inevitability too, as an event, is fabulated or constructed subjectively, and even spiritually—being given an intentionality and life all its own (Bergson, *TSMR*, 138).[34]

This makes Quentin Meillassoux's valorization of the contingency of nature in the name of materialism all the more ironic. The "new" philosophy of contingency forwarded in his book, *After Finitude*, actually re-invents, albeit incongruously, the French Spiritualist philosophy of Emile Boutroux, whose *De la Contingence des Lois de la Nature* (1874) argues for a similar contingency in nature as Meillassoux's, only in the interest of spiritualism (which at that time meant anti-reductionism), rather than materialism. The contingent is a sign of life, not dead matter, for Boutroux. For Bergson (who can also be numbered amongst the French Spiritualists, in part), contingency is a sign of the *attribution* of life, of "an intention emptied of its content," but still living. However, whether the contingent is understood as a material aleatory encounter or a sign of freedom and the spiritual, in Bergson's account they both stem from a fabulation, a constructive representation born out of horror at the threat of contingent violence and death, at the unruliness of death (where there are "no set rules that you can live by"). Horror films—like comedies—are not simple entertainments, therefore, but glimpses into the complex means by which we deal with processes that threaten both our lives as such and the vitality of our lives.

Notes

1 Éric Dufour, *Le Cinéma d'horreur et ses figures* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), 137.

2 Many of these views are found in Mark Jancovich, *Horror Film Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002). For more on the theory of horror film, see also the essays in Jay Schneider and Daniel Shaw, eds, *Dark Thoughts: Philosophical Reflections on Cinematic Horror* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003) and B. K. Grant and C. Sharret, eds, *Planks of Reason: Essays on The Horror Film* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004); as well as Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993); Anna Powell, *Deleuze and*

Horror Film (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); and Robin Wood, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," in *Planks of Reason*, ed. Grant and Sharret, 107–41.

3 Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990).

4 Carroll, "Film, Emotion, and Genre," in *Passionate Views: Film Cognition, and Emotion*, ed. Carl Plantinga and Greg Smith (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 39.

5 Carroll, "Why Horror?" in *Horror Film Reader*, ed. Jancovich, 34–5, 37, 39.

6 In "Why Horror?" Carroll endorses the work of David Pole on horrific events as no less disgusting than individuals (monsters) on the grounds of their "categorically anomalous nature" (43).

7 In the conclusion, I will also argue that the very notion of an event per se has its origins in contingent violence, at least according to the theory of fabulation forwarded by Bergson.

8 The house's similarity to the one in *Psycho* is pertinent given the horror of Goeth's psychopathic nature: but would this imply that the camp itself is equivalent to the Bates' Motel (scene of many murders)? Perhaps some analogies should only be stretched so far.

9 See Matt Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (London: Continuum Press, 2005), 6: "the horror genre is not where it is; it exists, intertextually, rhetorically"; Edward Lowry and Richard deCordova, "Enunciation and the Production of Horror in *White Zombie*," in *Planks of Reason*, ed. Grant and Sharret, 174: horror is "one of the most difficult genres to define"; Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beezlebub to Blair Witch* (London: Wallflower, 2000), 7: "the horror genre has no clearly defined boundaries," and so on.

10 Nor am I *here* arguing that the horrific is a fundamental, cross-genre category, as, for instance, Deborah Thomas convincingly argues for the melodramatic and the comedic; see Thomas, *Beyond Genre: Melodrama, Comedy and Romance in Hollywood Films* (Dumfriesshire: Cameron and Hollis, 2000). I find her adjectival use of the comedic and melodramatic very helpful; rather than simply see the melodramatic, say, as an isolated genre, she shows that films can be Westerns or Historical dramas "*melodramatically*" (12). Likewise, I think that films can be dramas or thrillers *horrifically*, or in a horrific *mode*. (See also p. 41 of Carroll, "Why Horror?" on horror as a mode rather than a genre.) Thomas explains her "comedic" mode as one that fosters a perspective of safety, mutuality, expression, spontaneity, and benevolent magic, but not, necessarily, humor. This *comedic* mode, then, should not be confused with the *comical*, which has a definite connection with laughter and humor, *at the expense of the melodramatic*.

11 Dramatically, Goeth is portrayed by Ralph Fiennes in the modern cinematic manner of the cold-blooded psychopath, "tightly wound," and capricious. He is egocentric (he falls for Schindler's view of true power as the God-like power to pardon) while lacking self-esteem (he hates himself for desiring a Jew, for lacking control, for being a drunk)—both characteristic facets of the psychopath in popular psychology. His ability to be civil one moment (he is "worried" he might give his cold to Helen when he asks if she has domestic experience), and murderous the next (he then nonchalantly orders the execution of the engineer), is a standard trait of

the "monsters" in modern realistic horror stories. All in all, Goeth's disturbing calm before unleashing violence (which itself echoes the film's shift as a whole from calm to violence), his unpredictability, and his literally awe-ful power over life and death, both adds to our anticipation and suspense when watching him and represents one more way in which the mechanized death of the Shoah could not be resisted by reason.

12 The focus on the making of lists of names (of those for incarceration or execution at the start of the film), becomes, by the end of the film, the effort to remember the individual humanity of each Jewish person, to resist the official view that they are meaningless statistics.

13 Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood tries Evil," in *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on* Schindler's List," ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 47.

14 Interestingly, the factory worker in question finally tells Goeth that he was so slow at making hinges because his machine was out of operation all morning ("being recalibrated"). Given that Goeth's own professional tool—his gun—breaks down, the worker can thank two chance events involving machines both for his near death and survival. It is noteworthy that Spielberg doesn't have the worker give Goeth the explanation (perhaps thereby to avoid punishment) until the action is mostly over, thus reiterating the point that normal volition, rationality, or explanation have no place in the absurd universe of the Holocaust.

15 That her life is saved by a game of cards confirms her earlier view that Schindler patronizingly tried to assuage (but what else could he say?).

16 Geoffrey H. Hartman, "The Cinema Animal," in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, ed. Loshitzky, 62: "the film's pace remains that of an action movie which tolerates no diversion except to increase suspense."

17 Miriam Bratu Hansen, "*Schindler's List* Is Not Shoah: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, ed. Loshitzky, 83. See also Loshitzky, "Holocaust Others: Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, versus Lanzmann's *Shoah*," also in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, 117, n. 34.

18 Of course Freud (following Herbert Spencer) adds a third "relief/release" category: namely, that jokes ape the "dream-work" of the unconscious and act as substitutes for directly expressing repressed desires (we joke about what we can't bare to say seriously). But the singularity of this theory prompts us to leave it aside here.

19 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (London: Macmillan, 1911). For a synopsis of Bergson's theory of laughter and some critique, see A. R. Lacey, *Bergson* (London: Routledge, 1989) and F. C. T. Moore, *Bergson, Thinking Backwards* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

20 See Dufour, *Le Cinéma d'horreur*, 137.

21 See Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). This, of course, also leaves aside the even more fundamental reflection cast by these events on human nature and so-called civilization.

22 As the director of *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann, puts it, the Holocaust is "unique in the sense that it erects around itself, in a circle of flames, a boundary which cannot be breached because a certain absolute degree of horror is intransmissable"; quoted in Bratu Hansen, "Not Shoah" (83–4).

23 Loshitzky, "Introduction" in *Spielberg's Holocaust*, ed. Loshitzky, 2.
24 Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 17.
25 Infamously, *Schindler's List* met with laughter and ridicule when shown to a class of inner-city black students in the U. S.—but it has been suggested that what some found comical was the movie's portrayal of violence that, to this hardened audience already well-exposed to real-life violence, was *to them* stylized and artificial; see Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar," 50.
26 Peter Barnes, *To Be or not To Be?* (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), 77. See also p. 51: "I believe what really shocked contemporary critics was that . . . Lubitsch was not going to be serious about a serious subject. They could not see he and his writer were being serious by being funny. As in all the best comedy, the seriousness is *in* the comedy, not outside it. Every good joke must be a small revolution."
27 Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 67, 73.
28 Joan Hawkins, "Sleaze Mania, Euro-Trash, and High Art: The Place of European Art Films in American Low culture," in *Horror Film Reader*, ed. Jancovich, 128. See also William Paul, *Laughing Screaming: Modern Hollywood Horror and Comedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
29 The laughter seems especially motivated if the special effects are unrealistically "over-the-top"; see Brigid Cherry, "Refusing to Look: Female Viewers of the Horror Film," in *Horror Film Reader*, ed. Jancovich, 173. But as we'll see in a moment, even what we count as a serious and realistic portrait of violence may be ridiculed by others.
30 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 193; Badiou, *On Beckett*, ed. Alberto Toscano and Nina Power (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2003), 21.
31 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton, with the assistance of W. H. Carter (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 141, 167, 176.
32 For more on Bergson's theory of fabulation, see John Mullarkey, *Philosophy of the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010).
33 See Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 202. See also Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Four Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001), 67. Bergson's theory of events being created out of traumatic encounters with violent processes also bears comparison to Žižek's Lacanian theory of the event as something forged from an encounter with the "undead/monstrous Thing." See Žižek, *Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2000), 162–3, as well as Žižek, *Totalitarianism*, 65, on creating meaning out of catastrophe.
34 Given that Bergson also believes that nothing is *fully* inert, including material objects, this leaves open the possibility that such living matter might eventually assert claims over other life-forms: the horror of this possibility is explored in Japanese horror films like *Ringu* (1998) as well as Mullarkey, *Reverse Mutations: Laruelle and Non-Human Philosophy*, forthcoming.

16

Time and Free Will: Bergson, Modernism, Superheroes, and *Watchmen*

Eric Berlatsky

The link of Henri Bergson to modernism in the arts is a critical commonplace and one supported by the title of this book, as well as several of its essays. Certainly, Bergson's discussion of the inextricability of past and present (and the flood of near-tangible memories that result) in *Matter and Memory*[1] cannot but be linked to Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Likewise, Bergson's preoccupation with time as a "flow" impressed upon consciousness is justifiably linked to the stream-of-consciousness novel exemplified by Woolf, Joyce, Faulkner, and Dorothy Richardson. There are, however, many definitions of modernism, and some of them leave Bergson on the outside looking in, leading both to an interrogation of the nature of modernism and to a reexamination of Bergson's philosophical peculiarities in relation to it. In this essay, then, I look at Bergson's relationship to both modernism and the contemporarily developing medium of comics, particularly in terms of their mutual treatment of space and time.

Both comics and modernism blur the distinctions between space and time, often representing time spatially, as Joseph Frank discusses in his seminal essay, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature."[2] If this blurring is a feature of modernist art, science, literature (and comics), it is here that Bergson parts company with his contemporaries, refusing to see space and time as part of a "continuum." Bergson's resistance to this conflation is, in part, phenomenological, but is also rooted in problems of agency and ethics, reminding us of the degree to which modernism so often projects paralysis, impotence, and even determinism. A look at comics in the context of modernism, including a brief examination of Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's latter-day modernist graphic novel, *Watchmen*,[3] helps articulate the ways in which Bergson's modernism is different from so many of his contemporaries, particularly in its refusal to set out time as space, and its insistence on the power and necessity of human free will.

Modernism and spatial form

Oft-debated and interrogated, Frank's essay remains one of the most influential, provocative, and insightful examinations of literary modernism. In it, Frank notes that one of the things that defines modernism is its insistence on viewing time as space.

Despite this position, Frank is quick to acknowledge that narrative, and indeed language itself, unfolds in time, and is thus "naturally" a "time-art." He does so in the context of an engagement with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1766 treatise *Laöcoon,* in which Lessing defines the visual arts as spatial, while literature is an art of time.[4] In doing so, Lessing asserts that the visual arts are most effective when depicting a spatial segment of the physical world, while literature best achieves its potential when depicting a series of temporally unfolding events. That is, the visual arts and literature are suited to mimetically reflect *either* time *or* space, and each is less effective when attempting to go beyond its limited purview (Frank, 8). While Frank rejects Lessing's more judgmental rhetoric, he does concede the point that literature lends itself to temporality while the "plastic arts" are more naturally suited to the portrayal of objects "presented juxtaposed in an instant of time" (Frank, 7).

Frank's contribution, then, is to note how "modern" literature tends toward "spatial form," violating Lessing's insistence that literature should remain devoted to sequentially unfolding temporality. Instead, says Frank, modernism treats time *as* space in a variety of ways, rejecting what Lessing sees as the "inherent consecutiveness of language" (12). Imagist poetry in particular, says Frank, is devoted to using language to create an "image" capable of being apprehended in a single moment. As Ezra Pound declared, a poetic image "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."[5] Similarly, says Frank, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* consists of clusters of "word-groups" that "have no comprehensible relation to each other when read consecutively in time" (15). Each cluster instead relates thematically to other groups, and their relationship to one another can only be meaningful once the entirety has been read. As such, the reader is invited to "suspend the process" of making meaning "temporarily" until they have finished the poem, at which point they will be able to hold all of the clusters simultaneously in the mind, drawing relations between them. The order of events, and even the order of words, then, matters less to interpretation than does the *simultaneous* presence of all of the images, among which the reader can begin to construct interpretive relationships. For this reason, when Frank expands his analysis to novels like Joyce's *Ulysses*, he famously notes that "Joyce cannot be read, he can only be reread," which is to say that only once the book is completed can the reader view it as a single object, whose elements reflect and speak to one another "independently of the time sequence" (18).

While Frank does not discuss the contemporary visual arts in this context, they too were inventing new ways to use space to approximate time. As Stephen Kern discusses, while cubism is often understood as the abandonment of a single (spatial) perspective in favor of a multiplicity, some contemporary commentators saw it instead as an effort to surmount the typical limitations of painting in presenting several temporal "instants" simultaneously.[6] In 1911, Jean Metzinger expressed the belief that the combination of multiple perspectives in cubism allowed the artist and viewer to "move round the object, in order to give a concrete representation of it, made up of several successive aspects. Formerly, a picture took possession of space, now it reigns also in time" (qtd. in Kern, 22).

Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) also represents time in space, both arresting and presenting movement (physical and temporal) in a medium

of stillness (See Figure 16.1). The multiple juxtaposed images of the abstracted nude spatially presents a temporal sequence, transgressing the arbitrary boundaries for the visual arts that Lessing sets. One of Duchamp's acknowledged influences (Kern, 117), the chronophotography of Eadweard Muybridge (See Figure 16.2), similarly juxtaposes a series of temporal instants in space, though without blurring and abstraction, allowing us to witness them all simultaneously.

Similarly Futurism, particularly that of Blaise Cendrars, centers on an effort to present time in a spatial medium. While Cendrars is often preoccupied with notions of "simultaneity," it is not always simultaneity as conventionally understood (the presentation of two objects in space occurring at the same time), but rather as we see



Figure 16.1 Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912)
Source: © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/Succession Marcel Duchamp

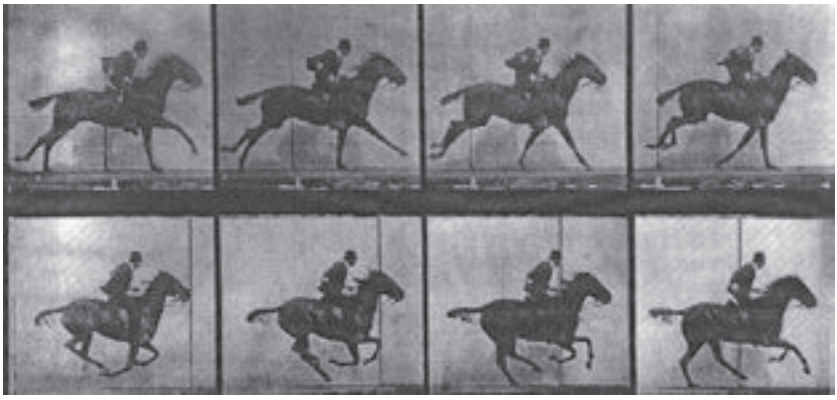

Figure 16.2 Eadweard Muybridge, *Horse in Motion* (1887)

it in Muybridge or Duchamp: multiple temporal instants presented (paradoxically) at the same time. As Kern discusses, *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France* (1913), which Cendrars referred to as his "first Simultaneous Book," is an attempt to present time as space (See Figure 16.3). The single page oversized canvas includes an illustration by Sonia Selaunay, a map of the Trans-Siberian railway, and a

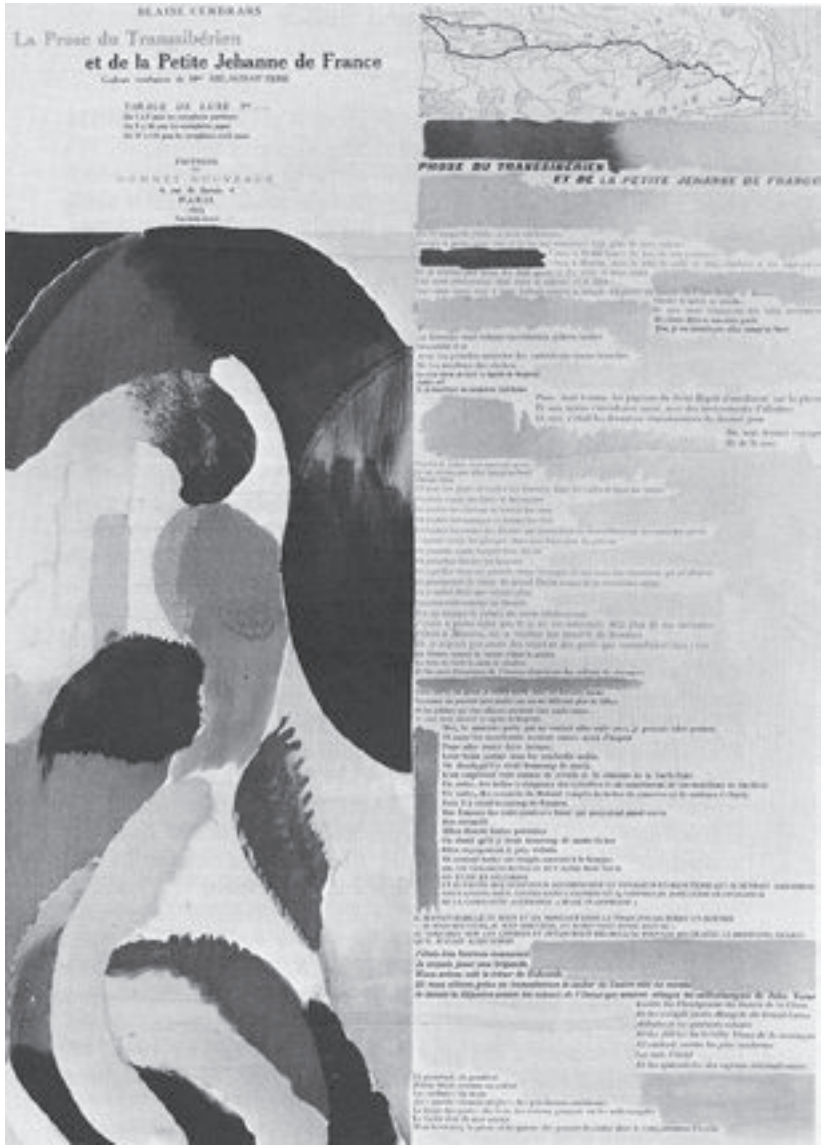

Figure 16.3 Blaise Cendrars, *La Prose du Transsibérian et de la Petite Jehanne de France* (1913)

poem about Cendrars's journey on it. The insistence on a single page serves to partially eliminate the sequential progression of time that is inevitable with the turning of pages and instead emphasizes simultaneity. The map presents multiple places "at the same time," but the "book" also presents multiple times simultaneously, using "verbal montages" not dissimilar from Eliot's poetry (Kern, 74).

In both modernist literature and the visual arts, then, space and time are not separate, as Lessing would wish, but blur and collapse. Novels like *Ulysses* and *À la recherche du temps perdu* do, of course, present a sequential narrative, even as they also adopt the spatial form that Frank identifies. Likewise, these exemplars of the visual arts present us with figures arranged in space (trains, horses, nudes), even as they also insist upon representing the movement of time. Literature and the plastic arts are not trading their traditional roles, but collapsing them, becoming neither media of space nor time, but of spacetime.

Einstein and spacetime

As Kern argues, the modernist tendency to collapse time and space seems hardly an accident given the period's dramatic developments in science and technology. Radical new achievements, like the telegraph, telephone, bicycle, car, and airplane made it possible for people to conceptualize simultaneity in new ways. With the advent of the telephone and the telegraph, it became suddenly possible for people to be "in two places at once," both in their living rooms, and halfway across the world where their voices were telephonically delivered.

The contemporary development of theoretical physics also made it possible to paradoxically imagine "simultaneous times," or two or more times experienced simultaneously. With the 1905 Special Theory of Relativity,[7] Albert Einstein introduced the then-shocking notion that time is not "homogeneous" and "empty" as Newton had asserted 200 years previously. In Einstein's account, time actually passes more slowly or more quickly based on the speed at which an object moves and by its rate of acceleration. As such, the relatively new notion that diverse spaces could be joined together "at the same time" was almost immediately undercut. Instead, the Special Theory reveals that no two places ever share precisely the same time, both because it takes time (however brief) for sound and light to travel, and because time is actually moving at different speeds in different spaces. Einstein illustrates this through his famous "Peter and Paul" thought experiment in which one twin (Paul) travels in a rocket ship away from the Earth at 80 percent of the speed of light, and the other (Peter) stays on their home planet. While 20 years pass for Peter, Paul's rapid speed actually slows time for him and his ship, and he only ages 12. That is, if Paul leaves Earth in 1905 and returns in 1925, 20 years have passed on Earth, but only 12 have passed in the ship. If time passes at different rates in different places, the idea of two spaces united at a moment in time (simultaneity) is rendered meaningless, while a paradoxical notion of simultaneous times is introduced. As Einstein notes, if there is no "present" which multiple spaces

share, then the terms "past," "present," and "future" have no universal meaning. One person's present is another's past, or future, suggesting, in a sense, that all times are "simultaneous," or coexist, a notion supported by the work of Proust, Duchamp, and Cendrars all of whom juxtapose multiple times in the same space (in Proust's case in the mind of Marcel, or the reader), making them at least metaphorically visible "at the same time."

Einstein's shift to the General Theory in 1915 also parallels these aesthetic movements. With the realization that gravitation and acceleration were equivalent forces, Einstein, with the help of Hermann Minkowsi, articulated the notion that time and space were actually connected physically, and that time could be graphed spatially as a fourth (spatial) dimension. As theoretical physicist Paul Davies notes, "Minkowski insisted that he was not . . . tacking an extra time dimension onto the three space dimensions for fun, but because the resulting entity formed a *unified* 'spacetime continuum,' in which the purely spatial and the purely temporal aspects could no longer be untangled."[8] The notion that time was merely a fourth (spatial) dimension that we experience, but cannot see as such, indicates that past, present, and future are, in some ways, *places* that we go, and that they are always already *there*, as if the universe is some kind of four-dimensional solid. From the perspective of Einstein's physics, Duchamp's effort to present time in space is not a mimetic error (as Lessing suggests), but might be read as a *more* mimetic attempt to conflate the two supposed opposites. Einstein's work implies that the problem here is not in the effort to present time as space, but in the attempt to approximate four dimensions in two (an attempt that Einstein and Minkowski themselves make with their spacetime graphs). For Einstein, time *is* space (and vice versa), and it is only the limitations of human consciousness that prevent us from seeing it. Advances in physics then serve as impetus for, or mirror-images to, aesthetic changes, and modernism's tendency to set out time as space seems explicable in terms of the ways in which science and technology "created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space" (Kern, 1).

Comics as modernism

If modernist art, literature, and science can all be viewed, in some fashion, as the blurring, or conflation, of space and time, it becomes possible to see another contemporary medium as peculiarly "modernist," though it is infrequently mentioned as such. Depending on how one chooses to define them, what we now call "comics" can be dated back to Egyptian hieroglyphics, to the Bayeux tapestry, or, at the very least, back to Rodolphe Töpfer's "picture-stories" of the nineteenth century.[9] At the same time, comics as we now know them are a peculiarly twentieth-century medium, with their dramatic rise in popularity linked initially to their mass production in American newspapers. No scholar now takes seriously the once ubiquitous claim that Richard F. Outcault's *Hogan's Alley*, which ran from 1895 to 1898 in *The New York World*, was the first comic strip. Nevertheless, those dates do help mark the

explosion of the practice of using a Sunday comics supplement to entice purchasers of newspapers.

These Sunday supplements make most evident the aesthetic qualities that comics share with cubism, Futurism, chronophotography, et al. Like these contemporaries, comics' most unique formal feature is the setting out of time as space. Like Cendrars's "simultaneous books," in fact, popular early Sunday strips like *Hogan's Alley* and Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* appeared upon one entire oversized newspaper page each week, allowing for a simultaneous view of a complete full-page design, even as viewers were also expected to devote themselves to the reading of each individual panel sequentially.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given comics' traditional combination of images and written text, in Lessing's terms the medium is both a "time-art" in the manner of literature (as one must spend time sequentially reading word by word and panel by panel), and a "space-art" capable of being viewed in a single moment. As a 1930 page from Frank King's *Gasoline Alley* indicates, early masters of the medium used this duality of space and time to their advantage (See Figure 16.4).[10] As with *Nude Descending a Staircase*, four (spatiotemporal) dimensions are here reduced to two, as each panel approximates three dimensions through the traditional use of perspective and vanishing points, with the fourth dimension of time represented by the "juxtaposition" of panels, just as Duchamp juxtaposes multiple images of the nude, or as Proust's Marcel "juxtaposes" two moments in time in his mind (see Frank, 21–31). Interestingly, however, while Proust's and Duchamp's spatiotemporal juxtapositions seem at least somewhat *avant garde* in their deviation from the usual time- or space-bound natures of their media, comics always naturally consist of the spatial juxtaposition of temporal moments. While King's use of the entire page as a single picture emphasizes the ways in which several sequential panels can be viewed at once, in fact any comic strip will allow multiple times to be apprehended in this way, as a reader's peripheral vision must always include surrounding panels. As Scott McCloud (overenthusiastically) declares about comics, "Both past and future are real and visible and all around us! Wherever your eyes are focused, that's now. But at the same time your eyes take in the surrounding landscape of past and future!" (104).

While a relative rarity, King's use of the entire *Gasoline Alley* page as a single panel-divided image serves to emphasize the simultaneously spatial and temporal quality of all comics. From one perspective, we can view the entire beach scene as a single moment in time, a frozen snapshot reminiscent of Georges Seurat's classic *Bathers at Asniéres* (1884). Like that painting, the majority of the figures in King's strip never move, lending credence to the idea that it depicts a single space at a single instant in time. If, however, the reader focuses on Skeezix and his adopted father Walt, it becomes clear that the two protagonists *do* progress in time and in space, as they clumsily traverse the shoreline and the multiple panels. The strip accomplishes this duality by manipulation of the viewer's perspective. The reader may focus on the aesthetic unit of the entire page (a spatial, or simultaneous, view) *or* on a series of panels (a sequential view), but this is only possible because in comics time *is* space, with the movement of the reader's attention from left to right only mimicking temporal



Figure 16.4 Frank King, *Gasoline Alley,* August 24, 1930

progression. Comics, like the work of Einstein, Proust, Duchamp, and Cendrars, then, imply (or insist) that it may be possible to experience multiple times "all at once." While comics were, during this period, a mass art that seemed far removed from the rarefied intellectual air of literary modernism or the turmoil in gallery culture associated with dadaism, Post-Impressionism, and cubism, they nevertheless seem "modern" in their conceptualization of time as a spatial dimension. As McCloud notes, without mention of Einstein or the aesthetics of modernism, "In learning to read comics, we all learned to perceive time spatially, for in the world of comics, time and space are one and the same" (100).

Bergson's objection

When discussed in this fashion, it is difficult to see Henri Bergson as anything but an inveterate opponent to modernism. While his philosophical view of "time as unceasing flux" is certainly congenial to the "stream-of-consciousness" novel, his philosophy is also defined by the consistent objection to the conceptualizing of time in terms of space, an objection which culminated in his debates with Einstein, and in the book which tentatively grappled with the new physics, *Duration and Simultaneity* (1922).[11]

Bergson's objections to the conceptualizing of time as space are, at least initially, phenomenological. That is, he argues that the *experience* of time is fundamentally unlike the experience of space, and that our intuition of it should trump more abstract theoretical or mathematical definitions. In addition, Bergson is invested in notions of human agency, or free will, which, as we shall see, the spatialization of time inevitably undercuts. Reorienting Bergson's critique of space/time as a critique of modernism and/or comics, as I will attempt to do, raises provocative questions. Are the aesthetics of modernism (and comics) inimical to human agency? Is the impotence and lack of heroism of the typical modernist literary protagonist predicated on new conceptions and representations of spacetime? How is it, then, that a medium, comics, perhaps still best known for its portrayal of (super) heroic "agents," shares the same aesthetic features? To answer these questions, even provisionally, it is necessary to pinpoint more fully Bergson's objections to spatialized time.

While the majority of my examples of spatial form postdate Bergson's initial discussions in *Time and Free Will* (1889),[12] the notion that time could not only be represented spatially, but might, in fact, be understood as, and even *be*, a fourth dimension of space was already emerging in the years prior to its publication (and prior to Einstein's various revelations). Edwin Abbott's weird science novel *Flatland* (1884) tentatively posits a fourth dimension of reality,[13] while C. Howard Hinton's pamphlet, "What is the Fourth Dimension?" appeared in the same year.[14] A decade later, in *The Time Machine* (1895), H. G. Wells refers to time explicitly as a fourth spatial dimension through which a new kind of vehicle can move.[15] As his Time Traveler asserts, "There is . . . a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions [of Space] and the latter [Time], because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives" (4). For the Traveler, human consciousness appears to be something of a trick, presenting us with the misconception that time is of a different nature and order from space, when in fact they are largely equivalent. This idea, influenced by contemporary speculative science is clearly troubling to Bergson, both because it rejects the primacy of conscious experience and because of what it suggests about human agency.

In *Time and Free Will*, then, Bergson distinguishes between the intuition of consciousness, direct experiences, or "qualitative" states and the "quantitative" second-order interpretations that we later use to explain or understand them. For Bergson, attempts to describe, define, or measure qualitative experiences are doomed

to failure, and we are therefore left only with a conventional agreement of how we will socially describe them. "We substitute . . . for the qualitative impression received by our consciousness, the quantitative interpretation given by our understanding" (51). However, "there is no point of contact between . . . quality and quantity. We can interpret the one by the other; but sooner or later . . . we shall have to recognize the conventional character of this assimilation" (70). For Bergson, there is no experience more "qualitative" than time, an experience that "endures" in consciousness and is so lacking in material presence that it cannot be seen, heard, or grasped. The convention, then, that the movement of a clock's hand is equivalent to the passage of time is exactly that: a convention. While we may choose to draw a parallel between the ticks of a clock and time itself, in fact there is no "point of contact" between these things. An analog clock's hands move through space, not time, while time itself is an unceasing flux impressed upon consciousness, to be intuited and undergone, but not intellectually understood. If we choose to understand time as space, argues Bergson, we do so without the authority of reality.

In fact, Bergson argues that the conflation of the quantitative measurement of time with the thing itself will lead us to a series of errors about its nature. If we believe that time can actually be separated into a measurable "number" of seconds, for instance, we will mistakenly view each second as external to those surrounding it. If we have four sheep, as Bergson discusses, we have four similar, yet different, objects (all sheep, but not all the same one), each external to the others, and each taking a position in an undifferentiated background we call "space." To count the sheep, they must be "impenetrable," since, if they were not, one could not count them as separate objects. No *two* things, as Bergson reminds us, can be in the same place at the same time (*TFW*, 89). If they were, we would simply see them as a single object.

To "count" seconds may *seem* to be a similar operation as counting sheep, but is actually, according to Bergson, of a different order altogether. Far from being a series of impermeable objects, "pure duration" (or "real time") is an overlapping or blurring flux that cannot be separated. To name parts of that flux "seconds" is itself a convention. Each second, then, cannot be positioned, or arranged, against an "empty" backdrop we call time. On the contrary, the seconds that flow together *are* time, dynamically constituting the larger abstract conception, rather than being of a separate substance arrayed within it. "Seconds" are unlike any material object arranged in space in that they are interpenetrative. Likewise, they *are* that which they are sometimes erroneously conceptualized as "within" (a sheep takes up a position *in* space, while seconds *are* time). Likewise, Bergson notes that space is typically defined as "homogeneous" with a variety of heterogeneous objects taking up positions within it. Time, however, is never a "homogeneous medium in which conscious states unfold themselves" (98). Instead, time *is* those heterogeneous conscious states *as* they unfold. Indeed, to view time as a homogeneous medium upon which conscious states are "unfolded" suggests that time (past, present, and future) is "already there" or, as Bergson says, "given all at once" (*TFW*, 98), preexisting consciousness and awaiting the appearance of those states, just as my room is an already given "space" that awaits the arrangement of furniture within it. To see time in this way, argues Bergson, "abstracts [time itself] from duration"

and "giv[es] up time" altogether in favor of an inaccurate spatial approximation of its qualities (98).

Comics depict time in all of the ways that are anathema to Bergson, and as such they are, perhaps, useful in elucidating some of his objections.[16] If we return to the *Gasoline Alley* page, we can see that far from seeing time as an infinitely permeable flux, King divides one chunk of time into 12 seemingly equal and discrete moments (panels) arranged in space. By treating time as space, King isolates individual instants and freezes them, separating them from those immediately before and after through the use of "gutters" (the white spaces between panels). All of this gives the impression that temporal instants *can* be counted and "measured" in ways similar to spatial objects. McCloud's assertion that a comics "panel acts as a sort of general indicator that time or space is being divided" (99) indicates its opposition to the Bergsonian insistence both that time and space are *not* interchangeable and that time itself is not divisible.

Perhaps more importantly, here *Gasoline Alley* is also guilty of treating time as if it is a four-dimensional simultaneity, "given all at once," bringing the problematic question of agency, or "free will," into play. While our attention and consciousness may choose to progress patiently from upper left to lower right, following Walt and Skeezix towards the beach and allowing us to be "surprised" by their final flotation in panel 12, the strip's spatial arrangement also encourages us to see the final moment before it "happens" in our reading process, since it is "always already there," something to which we can glance ahead, just as we can glance across a room to see what is lurking in the corner. While Skeezix's consciousness is limited to the present moment, the reader can glance ahead to the final panel, making it seem as if the obscurity, or unpredictability, of the future is a failure of human consciousness as Wells, Einstein, and Minkowski suggest, rather than an immutable fact.

The implications for free will and human agency are obvious. Walt and Skeezix believe themselves to be making decisions about where to take their next step, how to best avoid the drops being sprayed from the wet dog, or whether to push one another into the water. If one glances ahead, however, the reader already knows the results of all of these decisions. Everything Walt and Skeezix decide is, in fact, "already there" if we choose to take the "simultaneous" view and see the page "all at once" as a single picture of a spatial beach. If the future is already "present" as they begin their journey 12 panels into the past, there is nothing Walt and Skeezix can do to cause, or "create," their own future. The concept of causality is, after all, a product of seeing time sequentially, and the transformation of time into a simultaneously observable space removes cause/effect relations, reducing humans to consciousnesses that move across the comics page of their own lives, a page that is always already drawn and which they therefore have no part in creating.

Though Bergson is insistent that such a view of time is inaccurate, he nevertheless expresses anxiety that we may begin to see it as such. "By invading the series of our psychic states, by introducing space into our perception of duration, it corrupts at its very source our feeling of outer and inner change, of movement, and of freedom . . . hence the problem of free will" (*TFW*, 74). Here, he claims that merely conceptualizing time as space may somehow corrupt our inherent freedom. If we "introduce space into our

perception of duration," our creativity will be sapped, and we will believe our futures to be predetermined. As such, Bergson insists that "problems of causality, freedom, personality" can only be solved by a mental return to the "real and concrete self," a self he defines as unfolding in the flow of temporal progression, accreting experience and memory within consciousness. The "real self" unfolds in "pure duration" while "shadow selves" are those selves we intellectually postulate when conceiving of time as space, imagining a predetermined future, though such a thing does not exist (139). Here Bergson seems concerned that *if* we conceptualize time as space, our shadow selves will somehow usurp the position of reality. If we merely *act* as if the future is "already there," we lose the power to shape it.

In all of this, Bergson to some degree belies his own claim that "common sense believes in free will" (*TFW*, 148). In our *experience,* he argues, our actions are causes that have effects. In our *experience*, we are free to choose one course of action or another, and since experience is the only thing rooted in the flow of time, it is this we must trust: "[T]he free act takes place in time which is flowing, and not in time which has already flown. Freedom is therefore a fact, and among the facts which we observe there is none clearer" (221). At the same time, Bergson is occasionally forced to indirectly admit that this "fact" is not as clear as he asserts. If it were so commonsensical, after all, he would not have to spend an entire book (in fact, several books) making his case. As he says in *Creative Evolution,* it is an illusion "that the future is there, rolled up, already painted on the canvas," but it is an "illusion that is natural, ineradicable, and that will last as long as the human mind!" (371). That is, while "time as flow" may be "common sense," it is also "natural" to see time as space. Even Bergson admits that while the future may be a matter of our own creation, it often feels like a dreary inevitability.

Modernism and agency

Modernism, as we have seen, has a tendency to set out time as space, despite Bergson's objections. It is not surprising, then, that where Bergson celebrates and anxiously insists upon human freedom and agency, modernism tends to present us with just the opposite. Modernist literature, after all, tends to be characterized by its weak, anti-heroic, and/or impotent protagonists. Perhaps archetypically, T. S. Eliot's Prufrock finds himself incapable of expressing his love, and cannot "force the moment to its crisis,"[17] while *The Waste Land* is even more thoroughly concerned with matters of a sterility that is both cultural and sexual. Joyce's Leopold Bloom, meanwhile, is a cuckold and is at least somewhat impotent sexually. Faulkner's Benjy Compson is literally castrated and is treated as a child because of his mental disability, while his brother Quentin is equally ineffectual in his efforts first to romance, and then to protect, their sister Caddy, before ultimately committing suicide. Woolf's Septimus Smith commits suicide while experiencing psychic disintegration due to shellshock. All of these characters famously fail to achieve their goals or to imprint their will upon

their surroundings and, not surprisingly, their inability to act successfully is frequently linked to spatialized time.[18]

Prufrock, for instance, says that "there will be time" (23, 25, 27) to approach his potential lover, anxiously insisting on temporal progression and that, therefore, he will, at some point, take control of his future. Even the incessant repetition of the phrase, however, suggests the kind of "spatial" pattern Frank identifies, and Prufrock's lack of action becomes increasingly inevitable as it is repeated. Similarly, Leopold Bloom's watch stops, we presume, at the moment he is being cuckolded, suggesting that his power, virility, and agency are subverted precisely as time metaphorically ceases its moment-by-moment progression (373). Even more clearly linking impotence and spatialized time is the case of Benjy Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury.* Besides being castrated and largely incapable of taking care of himself, Benjy experiences all temporalities at once, unable to distinguish between past and present. His first person stream-of-consciousness narration jumps back and forth in time independently of his will and without clear markers for the reader. While Benjy's experience of simultaneous times is not explicitly linked to his castration (i.e. one does not "cause" the other), it certainly seems reasonable to view his lack of agency and atemporal consciousness as interrelated. If the future is always already "present," we have no power over its creation, and in those terms, Benjy's lack of agency is "inevitable" given his perception of time. Likewise, Benjy's experience of spatialized time is not the only example of such an experience in modernist literature. Frank notes how Tiresias has a vision external to temporally progressing history in *The Waste Land*, as does Dr. Matthew O'Connor in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (45–6). Like Benjy, both Tiresias' and O'Connor's experience of spatialized time is accompanied by a "practical futility" (Frank, 48).

It would be overstating the case to suggest that these protagonists have no other reasons for their lack of agency, or impotence, be it metaphorical or literal. Positioned in the prelude to, or aftermath of, World War I, or within the long, slow, historical decline of the American South, or within an Ireland whose "progression" has been retarded by a lengthy colonization, past history weighs heavily on these protagonists, preventing them from taking decisive steps toward the making of a better future. Joyce, of course, defines modern-day Dublin by "paralysis" in *Dubliners*, while, in *A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man,* articulating the various "nets" of family, religion, and nation that prevent his characters from acting freely to change, flee from, or escape, their diminished circumstances. More generally, modernity, often defined by urbanization, technological advancement, factory labor, and the assembly line, also often serves in modernist literature to emphasize the ineffectuality of a single individual, positioning them instead as simple cogs within a larger machine, replaceable and irrelevant because of their position in sequentially progressing history and not merely as a side effect of its opposite.

Nevertheless, it is useful to think of the modernist lack of agency in terms of spatialized time as discussed both by Bergson and by Frank. If, as in the *Gasoline Alley* page, these books suggest that their endings are simultaneous with their beginnings, then, like Walt and Skeezix, their protagonists can do nothing to change their

circumstances. Certainly, as Frank admits (with some prompting by Frank Kermode), *all* books in some ways display spatialized form ("An Answer," 97). By the time we start to read them, their endings *are* already written, and their characters do not actually have the power to change them. Beyond this, however, as Bergson's claims make evident, merely *feeling* that time is spatial, the future already there, may have the effect of making individuals believe that they have no agency. Again, in *The Sound and the Fury,* Jason Compson, Sr. emphasizes his son Quentin's lack of agency precisely in terms of a battle with time that cannot be won, presumably because of the "inevitable" future of death.[19] Because of this, when father gives son a watch, he calls time the "mausoleum of all hope and desire" and the "reducto ad absurdum of all human experience" (Faulkner, 76). While it is not necessarily the case that Quentin's inevitable death deprives him of any ability to affect the future that will occur before his demise, his feeling that this is the case, aided by his father's cheerful message, paralyzes him and plays a role in his eventual suicide.

While modernist "impotence" and lack of agency is not merely and only a side effect of technological, scientific, or aesthetic shifts that began to see time in spatial terms, it is clear that the two phenomena are not independent. As Bergson argues, to *feel* that the future is predetermined is to feel a lack of agency, even if that agency "actually" exists according to the precepts of "pure duration." Inversely, to feel that one lacks potency is to feel that one cannot affect the future, that it is already, spatially, "present." It is not surprising, then, that texts in which time is self-consciously spatialized project an air of doomed inevitability. Human power, creativity, will, and freedom, as Bergson notes, depend both on causality and the belief in it, and thus on temporal progression.

Watchmen, agency, and ethics

Superhero comics seem like an unlikely (final) resting spot for this discussion, insofar as such texts are, by their nature, *about* heroism, which is itself merely another name for a hyperbolized "agency." Far from being models of sexual or social impotence, superheroes function primarily as ideals of potency. Standard superhero narratives present some kind of problem, mystery, or disaster that seems irresolvable, and would indeed be so for a normal human, but the problem is solved (or the mystery unraveled, or the disaster averted) by the superhero whose power (and therefore agency) exceeds that of normal humans. As such, superhero narratives are often diagnosed as simple power fantasies, in which readers can imagine what it would be like to have the power to "change the world" (or change the future), to put an end to terrorism, to avert nuclear conflict, or simply to bring down the crime rate, when, in actuality, individuals feel themselves to have no power to affect such macrocosmic problems.

The "ideal" of hyperbolic agency is then contrasted with the "reality" of social impotence, often not only in the reader's mind, but in the narrative world itself. Puny and weak Peter Parker (a proxy for the reader's reality) is transformed into Spider-Man (a proxy for the reader's fantasies), casting aside his own lack of agency and potency for the superheroic role that allows him to take on the "great responsibility" to change

the world for the better. Likewise, Clark Kent plays the Prufrockian role of ineffectual nebbish, incapable of protecting himself or gaining a date with Lois Lane, while Superman both saves the world and is irresistibly attractive to Lois.

The peculiar nature of superheroes also reveals the inherent link of agency to ethics, thus far unexamined here. While critics often focus on the "power fantasy" element of superheroes, perhaps equally important is the consistent notion that such heroes are in the moral right.[20] Certainly, while readers may fantasize about being powerful, superhero stories also remind the reader that power can be used for good or ill (thus the existence of super villains), and that "heroes," by definition, must always use their power for the greater good. As the origin story of Spider-Man illustrates, one will ultimately be judged "heroic" for the ethics of the actions one takes, and not simply for the power one possesses. When Spider-Man refuses to stop a thief because he is not being paid to do so, the reader not only envies his power, but also judges him to be unethical or immoral. When the same robber kills Peter's Uncle Ben, the series of events serves to prove Spider-Man wanting, prompting him, in the future, to vow to henceforth shoulder the ethical burden that comes with "great power." Importantly, ethics, power, and agency are linked here. We cannot find Spider-Man's behavior unethical if he does not have the *power* to stop the robber, or the agency to make the decision to do so. Likewise, we cannot judge anyone ethically if they have no choice in their actions, or if they have no power to change them. If Spider-Man did not have his super powers, he could not have stopped Uncle Ben's killer, and it is only on the basis of this power that he gains agency, the power to choose and affect the future. Because of this power to choose, his actions can be considered from an ethical perspective. As Jacques Derrida asserts, "One will not say of a being without freedom, or at least of one who is not free in a given act, that its decision is just or unjust."[21] Ethics (and justice) only make sense in the context of free will.

Superhero comics are often justifiably criticized for their tendency to conflate "might" (power) and (the morally and ethically) "right," but it is useful to remember that a certain amount of power and agency *is* necessary to take any action, whether right or wrong, and so the idea of "rightness" does, to some degree, *depend on* power, though the two are not equivalent. To return to Bergson, then, it is necessary to see time as flow, or as "pure duration," if it is to be possible to make ethical judgments. If time is spatialized and the future is "always already there," then none of us have the power to change it, no matter how "super" we may be.[22]

It is for this reason that I wish to turn briefly to Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's superhero comics masterpiece, *Watchmen* (1986–87). *Watchmen* is certainly among the first and most prominent comics to thoroughly thematize the medium's formal predisposition for spatialized time and to consider the ramifications for power, agency, and ethics: superhero comics' typical preoccupations. In some ways, then, it seems like a belated contributor to modernism itself. Like *Ulysses*, it is a book clearly meant to be re-read, as it is filled with formal patterns, visual cues, and symbolic references that can only be fully appreciated once the entirety of the story's narrative trajectory is completed. Likewise, despite being a superhero story, its protagonists are largely lacking in agency, with that lack itself linked to spatialized time, both formal and physical.

On one hand, *Watchmen,* like so many other superhero narratives, insists upon agency and ethics, not only for its characters, but for its readers. Its hero/villain, Adrian Veidt (a.k.a. Ozymandias), kills millions of New Yorkers in a faux alien invasion that is part of an effort to force the U. S. and the Soviet Union into a rapprochement that will save the world from what he believes to be inevitable nuclear destruction. With this action, the reader is pushed quickly into the position of ethical judge. As with Harry Truman's decision to drop the A-bomb on Japan,[23] Veidt chooses to sacrifice the "few" (millions) to save the many (billions), using his power and agency to shape the future. While most of the other masked adventurers in the story choose not to expose Veidt, claiming the action is "too big" (12.20) for them to judge, one of the other heroes, Rorschach, refuses to play along, applying a more starkly binary ethical code to find Veidt in the wrong.[24]

While Rorschach is killed before he can reveal Veidt's machinations, he has already sent his suspicions in the form of a journal to the publisher of *The New Frontiersman*, a right-wing magazine. The graphic novel then closes with a red-haired overweight "everyman," Seymour, attempting to decide whether to publish the journal, without being aware of its contents. The editor tells Seymour to "make a decision for once in your life" and tells him, in the last lines of the book, "I leave it entirely in your hands" (12.32) (See Figure 16.5).

Seymour is clearly a proxy for the readers who must themselves decide if Veidt's actions *should* be revealed. While the reader cannot make any decisions about what will occur in the fictional world of *Watchmen,* both because the book is already written and because it has now come to a close, they can make ethical judgments about events in their own (including government leaders' decisions to kill innocents for the "greater



Figure 16.5 Seymour in Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (1986–87)
Source: © and ® DC Comics

good"), and *Watchmen* refuses to make those judgments for us. It is now "in our hands" to decide if it is ethically tenable to sacrifice millions to save billions.

Watchmen insists upon the agency of the reader in more tangible ways as well. Ordinary citizens of the graphic novel's New York spray graffiti that reads, "Who Watches the Watchmen?" on the walls of a variety of buildings. This phrase, from Juvenal's *Satires*, is an injunction to ordinary people (both in the book and in our own world), to not allow those in power to make decisions for them. In the book, it is a reminder to ordinary people to not abdicate the responsibility for their own lives to the superheroes that "watch over" and protect them. If such responsibility *is* abdicated, of course, then who will watch the superheroes (like Veidt) to ensure that their actions are ethical? In our real world, the reminder applies not to these "super powers," but to the political "Super Powers" of the Cold War, the governments of the U. S. and the Soviet Union whose actions and decision-making may lead the two nations to the brink of nuclear Armageddon without being held to account by the populace they supposedly serve.

In all of this, *Watchmen* works largely as an inversion of typical superhero narratives. Rather than fantasizing about the power and agency individuals *might* have if made "super," Moore reminds his readers of the powers they *do* have: to monitor the actions of their political leaders, to hold them accountable, to make ethical judgments, and to "help each other" (11.20). When Veidt "superheroically" tries to save the world, it then functions more as a usurpation of human agency than as a fantasy of what might be accomplished if our power were increased. If anything, *Watchmen*, *á la* Michel Foucault, expresses an antagonism towards power as that which deprives us of agency, rather than endowing us with it.

The book is a good deal more complex than that, however, thanks to its engagement with problems of spatialized time. *Watchmen* is obsessed with time from beginning to end, as evidenced both by its title and by the depiction of a clock ticking inexorably toward midnight on the back cover of each of its monthly installments. The clock itself, while representative of temporal progression, also paradoxically plays with notions of spatialized time and paralyzed agency. It is a "doomsday clock," and the reader "knows" that when it hits midnight, in the context of the narrative, nuclear war will commence. Since the progression of time, the ticking of the metaphorical clock, is itself an inevitability, its progression implies that nuclear conflict too is inevitable. The reader cannot help but visualize this future even before it comes, suggesting that it, as in *Gasoline Alley*, is always already there, and we are powerless to prevent it.

This link of impotence and spatialized time is solidified by one of the book's superheroes, Daniel Dreiberg (a.k.a. Nite Owl II), who fails to rise to the occasion when attempting a sexual encounter with Laurie Juspeczyk (a.k.a. Silk Spectre II). In trying to explain the cause of his lack of performance, he immediately invokes spatialized time, or an inevitable future: "It's the war, the feeling that it's unavoidable. It makes me feel so powerless. So impotent" (7.19). With his genitalia cut off by the panel borders, Dreiberg is both literally and figuratively emasculated (See Figure 16.6). This emasculation is, however, tied to temporality, as he, like the readers watching the



Figure 16.6 Dreiberg's impotence in Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (1986–87)
Source: © and ® DC Comics

doomsday clock, feels that the future is "unavoidable" and that his own role in creating it, his agency, is therefore compromised.

Conversely, Rorschach's power and agency come precisely from his own confidence in the existence of temporal progression. After executing a child kidnapper, Rorschach emerges "reborn," insisting, "existence is random. Has no pattern save what we imagine after staring at it for too long. No meaning save what we choose to impose. This rudderless world is not shaped by vague metaphysical forces. It is not God who kills the children. Not fate that butchers them or destiny that feeds them to the dogs. It's us. Only us." (6.26) While this monologue reads as a model of overheated existentialism, emphasizing the meaninglessness of existence and the "morally blank world" that results, it also allows for the exertion of the individual will in Nietzschean fashion. In discarding the notion that the world (like the comics page) has a pattern and predetermined meaning, rejecting "fate" and "destiny," Rorschach (like Bergson) emphasizes the central role humans play in shaping their own lives. Despite Rorschach's own compromised ethical standing, it is perhaps his rejection of a future which is "already there" that spurs him to later challenge Veidt's decision to kill "half New York." Despite the fact that the deed is already done by the time he knows about it ("thirty-five minutes ago," 11.26), Rorschach insists on seeing the future as open to his imprint, lacking a fate, or predetermined pattern.

In the contrast between Dreiberg and Rorschach, we see two men with different "feelings" about the nature of time. Dreiberg feels as if the future is predetermined and thus loses his sense of his own agency (though he does later regain it). Rorschach, by contrast, feels time to be durational and thus is imbued with feelings of power and agency. In this, they encapsulate Bergson's insistence that we must not be fooled by our analogies of time to space. If we are to retain our free will, creativity, and agency, Bergson insists, we must remain in touch with the "real self" who views time as pure duration. Insofar as *Watchmen* offers us these two choices and encourages the reader to both ethically judge Veidt's actions and to take responsibility for the state of affairs in our reality, the book seems positively Bergsonian in its outlook. In fact, both the reader and Dreiberg turn out to be wrong about the supposed inevitability of a nuclear holocaust. Here, and in a variety of other "failed predictions," the book seems to suggest that we *do* have the power to dictate the future, as long as we stay true to the "real self" of pure duration and do not allow our "shadow selves" to dictate our present.

None of this takes into account, however, the book's most overt engagement with spatialized time, in the personage of Dr. Manhattan (formerly Jonathan Osterman). Manhattan, the one superhero with actual superpowers, is the victim of a nuclear test accident, becoming nearly omnipotent by human standards. At the same time, his accident reorients his consciousness so that he sees spacetime as a four-dimensional solid, or as a single comics page, experiencing past, present, and future as if they are "given all at once." In this, he is like Dr. O'Connor, Tiresias, and Benjy Compson. Also like Benjy, he narrates one chapter, speaking of past, present, and future in the present tense: "Two hours into my future, I observe meteorites from a glass balcony, thinking about my father. Twelve seconds into my past, I open my fingers. The photograph is falling . . . It's 1945. I sit in a Brooklyn kitchen, fascinated by an arrangement of cogs on black velvet. It is 1985. I am on Mars. I am fifty-six years old" (4.2). Accompanying this narration, each panel depicts a different moment in time (as in all comics), and if the reader views the page as a unified whole, they, like Manhattan, can see multiple times at once. Manhattan's four-dimensional consciousness is then a self-reflexive commentary on the comics form, but it also provides a fundamental challenge to notions of agency, as one might expect. While Manhattan seems to have residual human notions of temporal progression (referring here to past and future), it is also clear that such concepts are problematic when viewed from Manhattan's perspective. If he experiences all times at once, what can it mean to say that one happens "before" another or in "the past." For Bergson, the *experience* of time is the ultimate arbiter of its nature, but Manhattan experiences time as if Einstein, not Bergson, is right.

When Manhattan reveals his perspective to other characters, they are faced with the preordained nature of their own lives and their own lack of agency. In one scene, Laurie talks to him on Mars, attempting to convince him to come back to Earth and avert nuclear war. Laurie complains that she cannot take his "predestination trip," to which Manhattan observes, "We're all puppets . . . I'm just a puppet who can see the strings" (9.5). He follows this by making predictions about their conversation, all of which come true despite Laurie's objections. When he says, "We shall go up on the balcony" to see the "Gordii Mountains," Laurie objects, "Well what if I don't . . . What happens

if I just stay down here and screw all your predictions, huh?" (9.5). Almost before the end of her sentence, however, she is ascending the staircase to the balcony (See Figure 16.7). Manhattan is not a puppetmaster who *makes* her follow his predictions, but his ability to see the four dimensions of spacetime allows him to know that she *will* come. To him, her ascent is already visible, as if it is merely in an adjacent comics panel that he can see peripherally.

All of this affirms Manhattan's claim that "Time is simultaneous, an intricately structured jewel that humans insist on viewing one edge at a time, when the whole design is visible in every facet" (9.6). This claim seems reassuring in reference to the past, implying that things we may have forgotten are in fact "still there" in spacetime and we can, perhaps, call them forth in ways that exceed the limitations of faulty memory (as Laurie eventually does at Manhattan's insistence). However, the notion that the future too is always already there is less reassuring, implying that

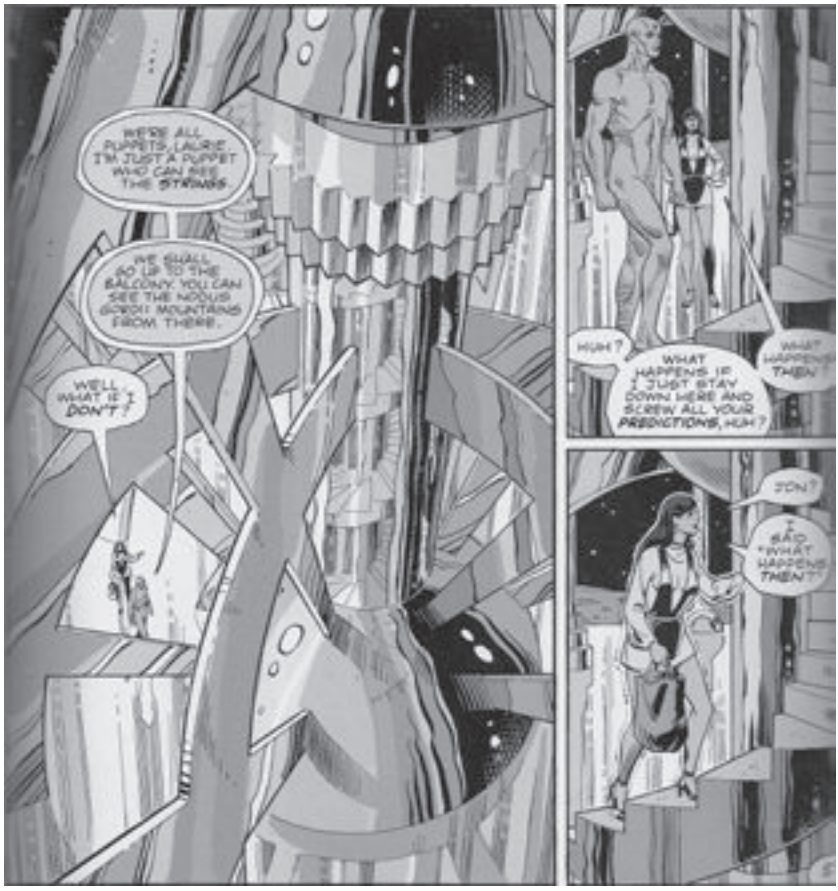

Figure 16.7 Laurie ascends in Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, *Watchmen* (1986–87)
Source: © and ® DC Comics

we do not have the power to create or change it. Indeed, despite Manhattan's own tremendous superpowers, his agency is revealed to be nonexistent because of his perception of time. While Manhattan *could*, with his powers, dissolve or destroy the nuclear arsenals of both the U. S. and the Soviet Union, instead he merely serves as a nuclear deterrent for the U. S. government. Why Manhattan allows this to be the case is never explicitly discussed, but it does become clear that he never feels as if he has any control over his actions. In a flashback to the close of the Vietnam War that Manhattan wins for the U. S., we see Edward Blake (a.k.a. The Comedian) gun down a Vietnamese woman who is carrying his unborn child while Manhattan looks on. When Manhattan tries to morally censure him, Blake immediately responds, "Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Pregnant woman. Gunned her down. Bang. And you know what? You watched me. You coulda changed the gun into steam or the bullets into mercury or the bottle into snowflakes! You coulda teleported either of us to goddamn Australia . . . But you didn't lift a finger" (2.15). Manhattan does not act, not because of any moral or intellectual failure, it seems, but simply because he is "destined" not to. His inaction in the scenario is part of the intricate structure of Manhattan's slice of spacetime, the puppet show over which he has no control. Indeed, Manhattan (as Osterman) seems predestined to lack agency even before his nuclear accident. As he observes to Janey Slater, his first lover, "other people seem to make all my moves for me" (4.5).

Traditionally in superhero comics, power is a prelude to agency, giving the reader the *feeling* that we could determine our future if we were only given the right set of tools. In *Watchmen*, however, spatiotemporality trumps power, as Manhattan, the most conventionally powerful being in the universe, experiences a "practical futility" that links him to his modernist analogues (Tiresias, O'Connor, Benjy Compson), thanks to his knowledge and simultaneous experience of a predetermined future. Far from the recommendation of self-determination that *Watchmen* seems elsewhere to offer, Manhattan's experience suggests that we can do nothing that is not already done, that agency is a perspective illusion. As Manhattan muses, "Which of us is responsible? Who makes the world? Perhaps the world is not made. Perhaps nothing is made. Perhaps it simply is, has been, will always be there" (4.27–28). The multitemporality of "is, has been, will always" suggests not that Manhattan is mulling over the impact of his own life on a forward-moving series of events, but that he contemplates the fundamental lack of impact he, or anyone, has: that the choices we make are not choices at all.

From the perspective of spatialized time, the book's preoccupation with ethics also collapses. Veidt's "decision" to kill half of New York is not a decision at all, but merely a necessary part of the pattern of the universe. As such, we cannot ethically judge him, nor can we judge Edward Blake for his rape of Sally Jupiter or the killing of his Vietnamese lover. With a reorientation of vision, these decisions become not ethical cruxes, but necessary steps in a preordained "plot." Manhattan, in this way, becomes a proxy for re-readers of *Watchmen*. Like them, he knows how it will end and must read its interlocking parts as an "intricate jewel," not as a series of causes with (ethical) effects.

If Manhattan's vision of spacetime were merely a metafictional reference of this kind, reminding us that *Watchmen is* a book that can be read from outside, we might be able to see Manhattan's lack of agency as an instructive contrast to our own empowerment. While he is part of a comic, and a book, whose end is determined, perhaps this merely serves as a reminder to us that our future does not have the same status, is open to our imprint, and is "in our hands." Certainly, such a reading is Bergsonian, since it warns us against *perceiving* time as space, against becoming our "shadow selves," when that is not the phenomenological truth of temporality.

At the same time, *Watchmen*'s link of Manhattan's view to science and the relative "objectivity" of theoretical physics discourages us from seeing Manhattan's perspective as merely self-reflexive commentary. Manhattan's uncanny ability to predict what will happen both to himself and others in the future, suggests, with Einstein, Minkowski, and Wells, that human consciousness itself is faulty, and that the intuition of time as flux which Bergson so valued may well be a product of human limitation. Instead, as Bergson fearfully imagines, "the trajectory of the mobile T [time] is given at once, and . . . the whole history, past, present, and future, of the material universe is spread out instantaneously in space" (*CE*, 367). That is, contrary to Bergson's argument, in *Watchmen* (and elsewhere in Moore's *oeuvre*), four-dimensional perspective seems to be defined as "real," while temporal progression is the illusion.[25]

All of this is, of course, linked to Einstein, whom Osterman "heard lecture" (4.4) at Princeton. If we accept Einstein's science, as *Watchmen* seems to do, all of the concepts Bergson treasures, the fundamental reality of phenomenological experience, free will, and the ethics that result, collapse. It is no surprise, then, that Bergson took the fight to Einstein, and indirectly to both modernism and comics, in *Duration and Simultaneity* and in their well-publicized debates. If we wish to see ourselves as anything other than impotent puppets, however, it is somewhat disturbing that, in the eyes of the world, Bergson lost those debates.

Notes

I would like to thank two former students of mine for ushering this essay into being: Paul Ardoin for inviting me to participate in this book (and for being patient with my various drafts) and Rob Jones for inviting me to give a talk at Florida Atlantic University that produced the first draft. Small portions of this essay were presented at the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) conference in 2008, a transcript of which is now available online.

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (original French, 1896; repr., New York: Zone Books, 1988).
2 Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," in *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 31–66.
3 Alan Moore (writer) and Dave Gibbons (artist), *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, Inc., 1986–87).
4 Ephraim Gotthold Lessing, *Laöcoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. E. C. Beasley (London: Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853).

5 Qtd. in W. J. T. Mitchell, "What Is an Image?" in *New Literary History* 15.3 (Spring 1984): 516.
6 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (1983; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
7 Albert Einstein, *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*, trans. R. W. Lawson (1920; repr., New York: Penguin, 2006).
8 Paul Davies, *About Time: Einstein's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1995), 73.
9 See Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 10–17.
10 Frank King, "*Gasoline Alley* August 24, 1930," in *Masterpieces of American Comics*, ed. J. Carlin, P. Karasik, and B. Walker (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 63.
11 Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity: With Reference to Einstein's Theory*, trans. Leon Jacobson (original French, 1922; repr., Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965).
12 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (original French, 1889; repr., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959).
13 Edwin Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884; repr., New York: Penguin, 1998), 102–3.
14 C. Howard Hinton, *Speculations on the Fourth Dimension: Selected Writings of Charles H. Hinton*, ed. Rudolph von B. Rucker (1884; repr., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980).
15 H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, ed. Patrick Parrinder (1895; repr., New York: Penguin, 2005).
16 Bergson himself uses a related medium to critique time as space in *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (original French 1907; repr., New York: The Modern Library, 1944). There, Bergson accuses those who view time as space of thinking "cinematographically" (371). While film might be seen to be a "time-art" (á la literature), like literature, its temporality is somewhat deceptive. As Bergson notes, film is actually just a series of "still" photographs "unrolled in space" (on a strip of film) (371). Running it through a projector works to deceive the viewer into believing that the events on it are unfolding in time, but, in face, each still shot is separate, dividing irremediable flux into a series of arrested instants (as in comics or chronophotography). Likewise, our knowledge that this is how a film is made may deceive us into believing that the "flow" of time *is* divisible into separate and distinct moments, a fundamental error in Bergson's view.
17 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 80.
18 I am uncomfortably aware of the male bias of my examples here. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar discuss (in *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol 1: *The War of the Words* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989]), social breakdown in modernism is often metaphorically expressed (especially by male authors) in terms of (male) sexual impotence, and this may well be, as they suggest, linked to a fear of the feminine whose origins perhaps lie in women's increasing social and political power (see Gilbert and Gubar, 35–6, for a more extensive list of impotent modernist protagonists). This reading may not, however, be completely divorced from my own claims here about spatialized time. The feminine principle and/or women's equality may itself be articulated as an

"inevitable future" that men fear and, as such, may well overlap with the idea of spatial time. The fact that Frank's primary example is Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* also suggests that spatialized time and a lack of agency is not limited to male-authored texts.

19 William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury: The Corrected Text* (1929; repr., New York: Vintage International, 1984).

20 For the best discussion of the importance of ethics to superhero narratives, see Ben Saunders, *Do the Gods Wear Capes?: Spirituality, Fantasy, and Superheroes* (New York: Continuum, 2011), especially 72–103 for a closer look at Spider-Man's origin story and its aftermath.

21 Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," in *Acts of Religion,* ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2001), 228–98, 251.

22 The same issue comes into play, for instance, in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. M. Y. Hughes [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1957]), wherein it is questionable whether or not Adam and Eve can sin, be judged sinners, and be punished as such, in the context of a God who stands outside sequential time and knows from the beginning what their actions will be. God rhetorically separates foreknowledge from predestination in the poem, claiming that Adam and Eve *did* have a choice in eating the apple, and that God merely knew what that choice would be (3.116–7). In doing so, He preserves His right to judge them ethically, linking their agency to their justifiable punishment. This Miltonic preoccupation with the relationship of fate and free will is, of course, a staple of Christian theological philosophy, including that of Augustine, who discusses God's atemporality in the *Confessions* (trans. Garry Wills [New York: Penguin, 2008], 282) and its relationship to free will in *On Free Choice of the Will* (trans. Thomas Williams [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993]).

23 The analogy to Truman is made explicit in *Watchmen* itself in comments by young Walter Kovacs, who later becomes the vigilante Rorschach. Ironically, given Rorschach's unstinting opposition to Veidt's plan, Kovacs supports Truman uncritically (6.31).

24 Readers of *Watchmen* will recognize irony in Rorschach's opposition to Veidt. Like Veidt, but on a smaller scale, Rorschach consistently takes justice and morality "into his own hands," killing the few (the criminals he perceives to be guilty) to defend the many (those he unilaterally perceives to be innocent). For more on Rorschach's compromised morality, see Aeon J. Skoble, "Superhero Revisionism in *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*," in *Superheroes and Philosophy: Truth, Justice, and the Socratic Way*, ed. T. Morris and M. Morris (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2005), 29–41.

25 Moore becomes increasingly interested in four-dimensionality post-*Watchmen* and nearly all of his subsequent work expresses that interest in some capacity. *From Hell* (with Eddie Campbell) engages with the concept explicitly, quoting Hinton among others. His forthcoming (prose) novel, *Jerusalem*, is also substantially invested in the idea, as discussed in interviews like the 2009 conversation with Alex Musson ("The *Mustard* Interview: Alan Moore," in *Alan Moore: Conversations*, ed. E. L. Berlatsky [Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012], 182–206). There, he notes that "life might just be a third-dimensional facet of a fourth-dimensional structure" and that this would mean "that we don't have free will" (188). While Moore seems unbothered by this possibility (preferring to focus on its possible

positive ramifications), there is little doubt that Bergson would not be so sanguine. For further critical discussion of four dimensions in Moore's work, see Sean Carney, "The Tides of History: Alan Moore's Historiographic Vision," in *Imagext* 2.2 (2006); Sara Van Ness, Watchmen *as Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2010), 77–100; M. Bernard and J. B. Carter, "Alan Moore and the Graphic Novel: Confronting the Fourth Dimension," in *Imagext* 1.2 (2004); Christopher M. Drohan, "A Timely Encounter: Dr. Manhattan and Henri Bergson," in Watchmen *and Philosophy*, ed. M. D. White (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2009), 115–24; Arthur Ward, "Free Will and Foreknowledge: Does Jon Really Know What Laurie Will Do Next, and Can She Do Otherwise?" in Watchmen *and Philosophy*: 125–36; Andrew Terjesen, "I'm Just a Puppet Who Can See the Strings: Dr. Manhattan as a Stoic Sage," in Watchmen *and Philosophy*: 137–53; and Annalisa Di Liddo, *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 63–101. Only Drohan raises Bergson as an important intertext, though not in the context of the denial of free will that I discuss here. Another Moore interview that deals with the issue at length is Dave Sim's "Correspondence from Hell," in *Alan Moore: Portrait of An Extraordinary Gentleman*, ed. G. Millidge and smoky man (Leigh-on-Sea, UK: Abiogenesis Press, 2003): 307–45.

17

The Joys of Atavism

Claire Colebrook

> *"A single duration will pick up along its route the events of the totality of the material world; and we will then be able to eliminate the human consciousness that we had at first laid out at wide intervals like so many relays for the motion of our thought: there will now only be impersonal time in which all things will pass."*
>
> Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity*[1]

Every living being borders on death; or perhaps it might be more accurate to say that every being has one side turned towards the nonliving. If there were to be something like pure life, then it would be akin to Bergson's "pure perception": in its purest mode perception would be an unmediated capture of what is given, without the distinguishing and forming marks of memory:

> we ask that perception should be provisionally understood to mean not my concrete and complex perception—that which is enlarged by memories and offers always a certain breadth of duration—but a *pure* perception, I mean a perception which exists in theory rather than in fact and would be possessed by a being placed where I am, living as I live, but absorbed in the present and capable, by giving up every form of memory, of obtaining a vision of matter both immediate and instantaneous.[2]

"Pure life" would be something like an unimpeded becoming, a bursting forth of energy, or what Bergson describes in the beginning of *Creative Evolution* as a force of explosive power that is not yet divided into an exploding or differentiated power and an exploded matter that is differentiated. But a living being is never "pure life," for a living being closes itself off, to some extent, from the world's energies; a being is in part its open engagement with the world, but also a certain refusal of the dynamic life of the world, a selfsameness that remains unto itself and limits relations and stimuli. To say that every being borders on the nonliving is to acknowledge a certain inertia that

is intertwined with what it means for a being to become. Life can be considered as a double tendency, an explosive power of creative difference, and a counter-tendency of resistance:

> it is probable that life tended at the beginning to compass at one and the same time both the manufacture of the explosive and the explosion by which it is utilized. In this case, the same organism that had directly stored the energy of the solar radiation would have expended it in free movements in space. And for that reason we must presume that the first living beings sought on the one hand to accumulate, without ceasing, energy borrowed from the sun, and on the other hand to expend it, in a discontinuous and explosive way, in movements of locomotion.[3]

But, like "pure perception," this pure life of explosive/exploded force is speculative: what we encounter are mixtures, which we can intuit by seeing each composed being as in part dynamic and open, in part closed and stable. Rather than refer to this counter-tendency of resisting creative difference as death, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the condition of any ongoing sameness is some capacity to resist the differentiating fluxes of time—a certain nonliving or material fixity. This way of thinking about the fold between life and nonlife would allow us to think about texts and their relation to a counter-vitality without assuming that texts were living beings. Today, more than ever, it is probably fruitful to mark a distinction between texts and life, for there is currently an efflorescence of theories seeking to explain writing and other technical systems as extensions of the living organism's will to survive. Various evolutionary Darwinisms have reacted against the modernist insistence on the force of writing and disembodied voices and have sought to see literature as primarily adaptive and cognitive.[4] Insisting on a certain and necessary lifelessness in all beings, including texts, is perhaps one of the great ideas we can take from a Bergsonian/Deleuzian tradition of modernism. On the one hand we would need to insist on a certain lifelessness of the letter, but to do so would not be to mark a simple binary distinction between texts and living bodies, but to see all bodies as both living and nonliving (and perhaps at their most alive when exposed to annihilation).

Perhaps a text, to be a text (or to be read), must at least in part be considered alive. When John Milton made a case for allowing books to circulate freely, he suggested that one would destroy *more* life (or spirit) by annihilating a book than would be lost by murdering a human:

> unlesse warinesse be us'd, as good almost kill a Man as kill a good Book; who kills a Man kills a reasonable creature, Gods Image; but he who destroyed a good Booke, kills reason it selfe, kills the image of God as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the Earth; but a good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a life beyond life.[5]

A book has the capacity to extend the spirit or sense from which it emerged well beyond the author's life; but it is also because of that afterlife that a book is always potentially dead, not only because it lives on by taking a material form that could be destroyed but also because that same materiality has a force of its own that cannot be contained by the organic life of authors, readers, or even the world from which it emerged. The condition for any being's survival, its "living on," is that it take on some distinct and repeatable form: but it is that very distinction, ipseity, or separateness that also cuts the text or body off from an ongoing life that will necessarily outlast the living. If there can be something like "a" life, then this is only because there is a difference and distinction between a specified being and the milieu from which it draws its sustenance. In the case of literary texts: a book can survive and be read if it is incarnated or given a material support that is not reducible to the animating intention of author or reader, but it will also therefore have a life or force distinct from any animation or sense.

In the case of literary modernism we can be even more specific: modernism could emerge and have being only because it made a claim *to life*, but this claim was destructive of life in its actual self-maintaining modes and appealed to another life, beyond organic survival. Key to this joyous atavism was a disdainful attitude towards the textual archive, alongside a recognition of deep archival forces. As a literary movement, modernism needed at once to regard the textual archive as so much noise and dead weight; at the same time, modernism could only take hold *not* by producing more literary life but by deadening the textual corpus that was at its disposal. One would read texts *not* as extensions or expressions of life, but as detached fragments with an odd afterlife. There is, I will argue, something to be gained—today more than ever—by reading modernism not as vitalism but as murderous textual annihilation. Further, this counter-vital modernism of the dead letter is best read through that supposedly vitalist work of Henri Bergson. If modernism were to be reread not as a lament on the infertility and deadening of the west, with the implied goal of revitalization of the word, but as a creatively destructive movement of willed extinction, then several consequences would follow. First, we would need to rethink both postmodernism and post-structuralism, given that both these movements are rendered possible by a certain response to modernism. Second, a new sexuality of modernism would emerge that would be essentially queer. (That is, it would be by deflection, divergence, deviation, and dehiscence—and not reproduction—that modernist writing would operate: at once destroying the archive while allowing new archival forces to emerge.) To make this second point more clear and specific, I'd like to begin with the counter-thesis of modernism as a vitalism, with the underlying sexual (and racial) normativity that any vitalism or privileging of life would entail.[6]

Modernism and vitalism: responding to the mechanized, industrial, rationalized, quantifying, capitalist, and reifying forces of an increasingly reductive world of homogeneous time and space, modernism sought to inject life into a desiccated western tradition by giving blood to the voices of the past. Descending into Hades where all the voices of history and becoming had been reduced to so much noise, the modernist artist would once again experience the opening or genesis of culture, retrieving life's original, animating, and fertile voice. (Pound's first Canto begins with just such due homage to

the prophetic souls of the past, with the task of finding voices other than the "impetous impotent": "Poured we libations unto each the dead/ . . . I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead,/Till I should hear Tiresias.")[7] Such a theme of revitalization could be figured in profoundly sexual, and intensely heterosexual, terms. Joyce's *Ulysses* returns to the murmur of Molly Bloom's body—ironically distancing itself from the novel's long series of feminine/maternal oceanic motifs (such as Stephen's early figurations of his mother's image as "Ghoul! Chewer of corpses," or Bloom's recollection of Palestine as the "grey sunken cunt of the world"[8]). Although *Ulysses* is like so much of modernism in its series of failed and infertile sexual encounters, it nevertheless ends with an affirmative, fluid, embodied, feminine, and open return to life. It is as though the novel's narrative trajectory, from Bloom's urination and defecation, through the city of Dublin and a funeral—interspersed with the disembodied voices of newspapers, advertisements, fragments of the past, and Stephen Dedalus's scholarly musings—can be opened towards a future, however fragile and ironic, of purely potential (not yet embodied or actualized) life. It is possible to read the canonical texts of literary modernism as all addressing the problem of an infertile archive by imagining some act of (hetero) sexualized and unselfconscious redemption. Such a claim is easy to make in the case of Yeats, Lawrence, Pound, and Eliot. Yeats's "Leda and the Swan" presents the involuntary and inhuman event of sexual coupling as a violently creative force, and this could be contrasted with the personal and immobilizing passions that are elicited by women caught up in the petty and historical plays of politics. ("The Circus Animals' Desertion" laments: "I thought my dear must her own soul destroy/So did fanaticism and hate enslave it."[9]) Lawrence also contrasted a dark, disruptive, and counter-bourgeois sexual force with the "human, all too human" (paralyzingly infertile) love of marriage. In "The Ladybird," Count Dionys tells the very English Daphne: ' "The true living world of fire is dark, throbbing, darker than blood. Our luminous world that we go by is only the white lining of this.' "[10] Eliot's *The Waste Land* diagnoses the inertia of the modern city by contrasting the mechanical and neither voluntary nor violent sex between "the typist" and the "young man carbuncular" with the absent and mourned softly flowing Thames. Pound situates bankers, journalists, and homosexuals in the same infertile circle of hell. Like the other modernists, redemption is not gained by something like a romantic "spousal verse," and classic muse figures are, if anything, ironized—but there is something like a distant oceanic feminine that would seem to offer life beyond the limits and disenchantments of actual women. That this nonreified, flowing, dynamic, and presystemic life is feminine is clear in literary modernism (and would then allow the artist in turn to be something like a creator giving form to the formless).

There is a tension then in the vitalist strategy itself: on the one hand, a critique of already actualized and bounded forms (and so an implicit drive to overcome already constituted norms of "man" and gender); but on the other hand, a highly sexualized metaphorics of the force of life infusing passive matter. The vitalist philosophers of modernism—including Bergson—would seem to be so focused on a critique of human and bounded figures of life that nothing like a gendered or sexual normativity could be valorized. And yet if we take the accepted reading of Bergson as a vitalist critical of "man" into account, then it seems hard to avoid the problem

of sexual difference in two senses: Bergsonism would be set against a static norm of man and yet would affirm all those masculine figures of active, forceful, creative, incisive, penetrative, and productive life.[11] Why, we might ask, has sexual difference been such a rigid and persistent figure in questions of life? Apart from narrowly psychoanalytic answers, which have their legitimacy, it seems obvious that questions about life would take their cue from the image of the living being, and that sexual reproduction—despite being one mode among many of reproduction—would be a ready figure for considering not only the emergence of bounded living forms from an otherwise not-yet-specified matter, but also the living being's relation to the life that it expresses. What psychoanalysis contributed to the understanding of the imaginary conditions of life was that the border between living and nonliving was sexual. That is, the living being, in order to live, must be open to what is not itself—must bear a relation of desire (or of attaining what is not yet the case) towards its milieu. Life must be open to influx from the outside. But in order to be a living *being*, the organism must also close itself off, in part, from the full force of the life from which it emerges: full overcoming of desire or difference would annihilate the being's individuation. Sexual difference figured as gender allows this strange border between living being and life to be negotiated imaginatively or (following Bergson) intellectually, for the intellect is that faculty that allows the complexity of life to be managed through concepts that reduce intensive difference. Life would be imagined as some fluid, oceanic, maternal plenitude from which the bounded form of a distinct and representing body would emerge. To think of mind as a camera that cuts the world into assimilable units of information: this, according to Bergson, is how the intellect manages and imagines itself. An "image of thought" is formed in which mind is a picturing machine. This capacity of the intellect to reify itself via some image of detached mind could only be countered by retrieving an intuition of life that would be at odds with all our figures of "man."

In many ways this Bergsonian appeal to life beyond the bounds of the already formed organism is in line with a broader modernist critique of the figure of man as a Cartesian subject. Anti-Cartesianism generally has proceeded by appealing to images that had once been figured as feminine but that now seem to offer ways of thinking about the vital order as such. Life would not be rational, bounded, logical, efficient, and progressive, but dynamic, open, fluid, and affective. One would move from gender—or older motifs of man as subject relating to formless but potential matter—to sexual difference: fecund, creative, explosive, fluid, unbounded, potential, and intensive life would be that from which the desiccated and disenchanted intellect would emerge. All those predicates that had once been attributed to a chaotic femininity opposed to male reason would now characterize life as such, and the modernist vitalist critique of the subject would be a critique of man. Man would, through an intuition of life, destroy the gendered binary that had locked him into an affectless, lifeless, disembodied, Cartesian prison; he would become one with—and not simply the medium for—all that had been projected onto the feminized figures of life. Whereas other modernists used scenes of *jouissance* to overcome the miserable pleasures of bounded male-female coupling, figuring a form of un-self-conscious depersonalization achieved through

sexual boundlessness, Bergson contrasted the joy of transcending intuition with the self-serving consumption of bourgeois pleasure:

> There is a difference of vital tone. Those who regularly put into practice the morality of the city know this feeling of well-being, common to the individual and society, which is the outward sign of the interplay of material resistances neutralizing each other. But the soul that is opening, and before whose eyes material objects vanish, is lost in sheer joy. Pleasure and well-being are something, joy is more. For it is not contained in these, whereas they are virtually contained in joy. They mean, indeed, a halt or a marking time, while joy is a step forward.[12]

Bergson's vitalism—like modernism more generally—could be considered as a passage to impersonality via something like "becoming-woman." Not surprisingly, then, Bergson's way of thinking about thought's overcoming of its own imprisonment in the image of man takes on a phallic mode: penetrating what is not itself, emerging with ever more nuanced, distinct, differentiating, and dynamic forms (Hill, "Phallocentrism").

Imagine, though, another Bergsonism, another modernism, and—in turn—another twenty-first century (another way of proceeding after modernism that would not be the usual—if multivalent—postmodernism). What if modernism were not a vitalism? How would a different reading of Bergson create a different present, after a different, nonvital, and essentially queer modernism? Before exploring what this might mean I want to put forward the following claim: postmodernism, especially as it ceases to theorize a dynamic relation to modernism and becomes a form of proclaimed post-humanism, becomes an ultra-humanism. This is especially so if we take note of the turns towards affect, literary Darwinism, and cognition, all of which seek to explain complexity and systems as *extensions* of life rather than pursuing Bergsonian notions of splitting, bifurcation, and the branching out into differences in kind. If we reverse today's vitalisms and then trace a genealogy of a counter-vital postmodernism, we can find another Bergsonian modernism. Such a historical move would be in accord with a Bergsonian method of retracing the path of evolution in order to explore certain bifurcations, at once finding an explosive origin that would yield the force from which distinction emerges, while also finding a more profound difference. To revisit a tired question: what then is/was modernism, and how did postmodernism mark its difference from the former?

Modernism—against notions of revivification and the vitalist critique of technology—can be considered as a profound attention to the force of *the dead*. We should not, I would suggest, see James Joyce's most explicit presentations of the dead voice—the newspaper lines, malapropisms, clichés, and mechanical voices—as points of inertia to be overcome by the life of writing. We could consider a transition from the paralysis of *Dubliners*, where the dead letters of cliché and script seem to immobilize life, such that the absence of expression leads to a detachment between bodies and their desires, to a liberation of proliferating voices in *Finnegans Wake*. But I would suggest that there is already a counter-vital, counter organic, and lifeless (pro-paralysis) celebration of the word in *Dubliners*. Consider, here, Bergson's theory

of both laughter and dreams. For the most part, the body's energies are organized towards survival, focused on the efficient and productive present; when that organization breaks down, the body convulses in laughter.[13] Similarly, when the body is asleep, no longer oriented to tasks at hand, the images of dreams surge forth. In *Dubliners*, it is the functional, embodied, practical, and seemingly expressive relation to language that operates through a unified, rigid, and organic image of life. In the "easy" flows of conversation and banter, life moves on, steadily, progressively, automatically—and it is perhaps this ongoing life that is the real paralysis of *Dubliners*. By contrast, it is when language appears as dead, when the body is no longer given expressive passage to the word, that there is a break with the line of time; something like the perception of "time in its pure state" emerges. It is, for example, when writing is seen as a proper and personal extension of the self—when writing is organic—that Joyce describes the same dull round of suburban normality: it is only when writing is liberated from life, when one no longer grounds systems of inscription on the supposedly self-maintaining organism, that one disrupts the normalizing figure of bodily life.

Bergson laid the grounds for formulating a counter-vitalist approach to system and techne. Consider his key thesis of creative evolution: in the beginning is an explosive force of differentiation, with no distinction yet between differentiating force and differentiated matter. If this original explosive power or potentiality *to differ* could be considered to be life, then we would have to redefine life beyond its bounded forms, and beyond organic notions of self-maintenance. Certain vitalist moralisms would have to be rethought. We could not, for example, hold the standard narrative that begins with an organism or relatively stable form, with bodies then becoming enslaved to those same systems; nor could we conclude with the resulting imperative to retrieve the *raison d'être* of maximizing or extending life from which all systems emerged and towards which they ought to return. Reading Bergson and modernism against this normalizing mode would open a new counter-politics.

It is no surprise, perhaps, that Derrida—commenting on Heidegger's theory of time—makes a brief remark pertinent to today's renewed interest in Bergson and life: the problem, Derrida argues, with *any* attempt to avoid a "vulgar" (spatialized, quantified, punctuated) notion of time is that in order to think about time or have a concept of time we must have some notion of *time in general*. The very nature of cognition or conceptualization must render any supposedly proper, fluid, pre-articulated, or originating temporality into some repeatable mode. In so far as one thinks and experiences time *as time*, there will always be a reduction of time to what cannot be considered as some pure temporality of difference. For Derrida, then, Bergsonian notions of intuition or of creating a concept adequate to every perception would be typical of a logocentric metaphysics of presence.[14] Rather than appeal to a proper temporality before the "fall" into techne, language, and quantification, Derrida argues that one can think forward to the promise of the concept. It is not the case that there is some proper origin or life belied by language; for it is the idea created by language that offers something like a time "to come," a future beyond any of the actualized forms of the present. This yields a politics of futurity—for we do not look back to a lost life, a lost democracy, a belied justice, or a mourned origin. We are offered

"justice to come," "democracy to come," and a messianic opening without the full body of the messiah.[15] Not surprisingly, then, Derrida reverses a Marxist ethics of alienation and the proper: it is not the case that one could "exorcise" all the phantoms and ghosts that have deflected life from its original and purposive striving. The condition of "life"—some ongoing self-sameness—is death: some technical system that is not the body itself allows for a stable bounded form. The lived body is possible because of systems of labor, action, language, society, and relation that are not its own. Thus, Derrida's "Marxism" focuses on the double bind of spirit: on the one hand, the future, reading and "living on" require some notion of spirit, of what life would or should be beyond its already actualized forms; at the same time, that appeal to spirit will always haunt and alienate the very life it supposedly fulfils.[16] Not surprisingly, Derrida, exploring the difference and distance of the "letter" from anything like a bodily or originating life increasingly focuses on the "word" in modernist writing, especially the writing of Joyce. Whereas in his early work,[17] Derrida had questioned the Joycean project of the book and its claims to equivocity—adopting all the languages of the world and time—he increasingly celebrated Joyce and literature as offering a mode of deconstruction and democracy. The word in Joyce would not be grounded in sense, and—as in all literature—the detachment of word from the presence of voice would allow the word as such, in itself, to circulate freely in a democratic opening that would not anchor language back to some putative origin.

One might say, then, that post-structuralism is indebted to a certain counter-organic vitalist reading of modernism: the word is not an extension of the body, and cannot be returned back to the living voice without remainder, for the word itself has force or life, creating relations and events that are neither generated by bodies nor subjects. Close to this post-structuralist counter-organic vitalism of the word or trace—and yet importantly different—would be an attention to the power (if that is the correct word) of explosive destruction or atavism. Recall that Derrida's philosophy is, on his own insistence, radically open and futural. It is the power, not of life, but of the word, trace, concept, or idea that generates an open promise: there can be no actuality that can exhaust the idea or concept of justice, and it is the force of the concept—as that which would insist on a sense above and beyond any actual instance—that will yield a "justice to come," allowing us to conclude that deconstruction "is justice." For Bergson, rather than moving from the ideal promise of the concept to an open future, intuition would destroy what has come to be assembled by concepts. Intuition of differential movements would fracture ongoing sameness and the forward movement of concepts and would "retrace" the path from which concepts emerged. This would ultimately allow for the emergence of ever finer differences that would be destructive of the word and would explode the forward propulsion of organic striving. Life is at war with itself: it is at once an explosive differentiation that would preclude anything like a line of time in which a past would be retained in order to organize a future, while it also harbors a tendency towards quiescence that diminishes the force of the differential for the sake of self-sameness.

Bergson's criticism of organicism traces a different path from what would become the post-structuralist elevation of writing, not only in Derrida but also in Foucault.

Despite Deleuze's celebration of Foucault's corpus, he criticized Foucault for focusing on language as the locus of deterritorialization[18]: yes, literary writing would detach writing and the word from "man" as a reasoning and communicating animal, but one could also imagine life, not just writing, in a deterritorializing mode. Here, Deleuze cited the force of silicon to produce syntheses that would not be organic. We can look at the genealogy of this remark to assess its consequences for thinking about Bergson and modernism. First, looking back we can see that Deleuze (unlike Foucault, Derrida, and other post-structuralists) took his departure not only from phenomenology but from Bergson. Whereas for Husserl the thought of time would require us to think of something like pure synthesis, not a subject *who synthesizes* but synthesis as such or a transcendental subjective power, Bergson would regard subjects as effects of an impersonal, dispersed, and synthetic power that would have various rhythms and tendencies ranging from the matter of rocks to the expansive memory of the minds of saints and mystics. Derrida, always more in the phenomenological tradition than Deleuze, would extend this insight on the syntheses of time to see language itself as a power to create syntheses or ideas beyond intentionality and life. Not surprisingly, then, Derrida would turn frequently to Joyce, the futural force of the word, the promise of spirit along with all the ghosts, hauntings, and spectres that could not be grounded in anything like life.

The modernism of this post-structuralism would be critical of the closed efficiency of the organism, and would focus on the release of the word into a future that could be neither contained nor regarded as an extension of life as it actually is. One could cite, here, beyond the free indirect and stream of consciousness styles of Joyce (and the tendency of the word to operate beyond intentionality and to open up networks and systems of its own), the mournful mode of Eliot's *Waste Land*, where the bourgeois self-interest of bodies is at odds with the fragments of literary tradition and where words indicate a lost lyricism or deeper meditative time in contrast with urban efficiency. One could also include Pound's emphasis on the machinic qualities of texts, on nonphonetic script, on the autonomy of the image and the *force* of text. By contrast, although he was also indebted to phenomenology, Deleuze took up Bergson's task of intuition and—though he referred to a modernist range of texts including Joyce—made more of the work of Woolf and Lawrence. If one does not focus on the synthetic and futural force of concepts and their power to open up to an ideality that cannot be grounded in life, and if one does not regard time as tradition or history (as a panorama or wasteland of dead voices) but takes up Bergson's challenge of destroying concepts to go back to the explosive power of life, then this might open up the importance of pre-linguistic forces and a radically geological atavism.

Bergson allows us to think of a modernism that is pre-linguistic, but this is so not because language is returned to organic or vital life but because, for Bergson, vitality is only one of the tendencies of life. Other tendencies, such as those in conflict with the organism, are not found in concepts—which are thoroughly organic and synthesizing—but in intuitions or the tendency towards pure perceptions, which are fragmenting and dispersing. It is true that Bergson wrote of a human potential of spirit to open life beyond the closed forms of "man." If morality is enabled by bodies

gathering together to maintain themselves against others, then one can take that capacity for bodies to extend their interests into communities and moral groupings, release that capacity from any actual body and open an intuition of what it might be to act selflessly as such—not self-sacrifice now for the sake of gain later, but self-sacrifice or self-annihilation (becoming-imperceptible as such).[19] Contrast, again, with Derrida: Derrida recognizes that if we can operate with a comportment of justice or ethics towards this other here and now, then this is because there is something like the concept of "the other" in general, which might be opened by a face to face encounter but always exceed that presence.[20] The concept of the other in general, of hospitality in general, or democracy in general would liberate thought and the power of the trace in order to move beyond actuality towards futurity. By contrast, even though Bergson (*TSMR*) does write of the saint or mystic who can think beyond any actual "humanity" towards spirit in general, this power is *not* achieved through language, and it is the same power that will operate in the smallest of intuitions. It is neither a futural move nor a nostalgic return but an explosive atavism that then allows for an inhuman future—*not a post-human future, which would be man's capacity to think beyond himself, but a thought of a world without man that is released from the orbit of evolving time.*

Here I would suggest that we take our cue from Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Woolf and Lawrence in *A Thousand Plateaus* in order to open a modernism of inhuman time—not a modernism of either stream of consciousness or text.[21] This atavistic modernism might in turn allow for a re-reading of other modernists and postmodernism. Rather than posit something like tracing, marking, writing, text, *differance*, or the word that would disperse and fragment any supposed grounding life, Bergson makes a direct claim about life as that which creates difference. Life is neither psyche, nor organism, and certainly not an inchoate chaos that is repressed by the order of psychic and organic wholes; life is an organizing power that operates in part by reducing the proliferation of intensive difference to allow for ongoing selfsame wholes, but life operates also by creating complexities and relations that cannot be contained by the human logic of organic efficiency.

Consider Lawrence's poem, "The Shadow of Death," which opens with a description of the earth's movement ("again," so that we are already adopting a planetary duration). The point of view is initially not that of any human observer; a space, rhythm, and "seeing" that is nonhuman—"the sun stands up to see us"—precedes the poetic "I," and when the "I" enters, it is as though the human is an emergence and intrusion from a far deeper time:

> The earth again like a ship steams out of the dark sea over
> The edge of the blue, and the sun stands up to see us glide
> Slowly into another day; slowly the rover
> Vessel of darkness takes the rising tide.
> I, on the deck, am startled by this dawn confronting
> Me who am issued amazed from the darkness, stripped
> And quailing here in the sunshine, delivered from haunting

The night unsounded whereon our days are shipped.
Feeling myself undawning, the day's light playing upon me,
I who am substance of shadow, I all compact
Of the stuff of the night, finding myself all wrongly
Among the crowds of things in the sunshine jostled and racked.

The human voice, far from being the word through which the world is mediated, seems to be nothing more than a deathly silence, incapable of viewing what is other than itself other than in terms of death ("What are they but shrouds?"):

I with the night on my lips, I sigh with the silence of death;
And what do I care though the very stones should cry me unreal, though the clouds Shine in conceit of substance upon me, who am less than the rain.
Do I know the darkness within them? What are they but shrouds?

As in most of Lawrence's poetry, there is a transition from a sense of deathly struggle with a world of inhuman forces, towards a sense of the perception of inhuman durations followed by a joyous sense of the minor resistance or rhythm of one's own existence at odds with a complex time of the planet:

The clouds go down the sky with a wealthy ease
Casting a shadow of scorn upon me for my share in death;
but I Hold my own in the midst of them, darkling, defy
The whole of the day to extinguish the shadow I lift on the breeze.

The defiance of voice emerges as perception overcomes the sense of haunting and disjunction to intuit a "virility" of life that is not that of man—and more importantly—gives itself in the form of a "bright" "living darkness":

And I know the host, the minute sparkling of darkness
Which vibrates untouched and virile through the grandeur of night,
But which, when dawn crows challenge, assaulting the vivid motes
Of living darkness, bursts fretfully, and is bright.

The poem then shifts from the relation between perceiving speaker and perceived world, to a perception of a "conflict" of light, as though intuition had somehow passed from point of view and observation to something like the force of life as light:

Runs like a fretted arc-lamp into light,
Stirred by conflict to shining, which else
Were dark and whole with the night.
Runs to a fret of speed like a racing wheel,
Which else were aslumber along with the whole
Of the dark, swinging rhythmic instead of a-reel.

> Is chafed to anger, bursts into rage like thunder;
> Which else were a silent grasp that held the heavens
> Arrested, beating thick with wonder.
> Leaps like a fountain of blue sparks leaping
> In a jet from out of obscurity,
> Which erst was darkness sleeping.
> Runs into streams of bright blue drops,
> Water and stones and stars, and myriads
> Of twin-blue eyes, and crops
> Of floury grain, and all the hosts of day,
> All lovely hosts of ripples caused by fretting
> The Darkness into play.[22]

If there is a vitality here, it is not one of self-furtherance and homeostasis, but one of splitting, bifurcation, recombination, and multiple paths. From here it follows that concepts do not open life to some ideal and nonactualized future, but anchor perception into known forms; those forms can, though, be pulverized beyond human recognition and point of view, to achieve something like a "fretting" of Darkness. It is as though our usual notion of perception as illuminating representation passes over into illumination as a fleeting "fretting" of a deeper geological plane of darkness.

The waning of light and the increasing absence of human conceptual order is not regarded as some descent into lifeless chaos, for the absence of light as we know it—as cognizing illumination—gives way to light as the play of darkness, as though this perceived illuminated world were a fragment of a broader life, time and cosmos beyond the man of reason. Lawrence takes the great motif of man's gaze into the cosmos ("wonder") and attributes it to the heavens, "arrested, beating thick with wonder." Far from this inhuman world being a negation or absence of life and order, the poem discloses rhythms ("swining rhythmic"), durations, and even "myriads/Of twin-blue eyes."

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* also describes a familial, gendered, historical and thoroughly archived world in the first section: Mr. Ramsay and his philosopher friends are concerned both with "'subject and object and the nature of reality'" and with their possible legacy and reputation in the maintained tradition of philosophy.[23] Mrs. Ramsay is caring, nurturing, primarily concerned with overseeing the marriages of the next generations and largely devoted to maintaining social cohesion. In this first section of Woolf's novel, Lily Briscoe aims to paint Mrs. Ramsay, even though she is told by Charles Tansley (an aspiring philosopher) that women can neither paint nor write.[24] At the level of narrative, this section of the novel, "The Window," ostensibly concerns whether or not a journey towards light—a trip to the lighthouse—will be permitted. As in the first stages of Lawrence's poem, a human world of love and filiation is set over against a world of what can broadly be referred to as climate—forces that play havoc with human intentionality and cannot be mastered by either a philosophy of subjectivism or an art of representation. Accordingly, the middle section, "Time Passes," shifts away from a human temporality of expectation and calculation to the

falling of darkness. Here the point of view shifts from the novel's characters, with their desires and expectations, to rhythms, durations, and interactions of the earth's forces entering the house. Narrated in third person, the subject of the journey through the house is not even the single personified wind, but "airs" that question the stability and steadfastness of the human world (again, an inversion of the human observer looking into a cosmos):

> Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dining-room or on the staircase. Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) crept round corners and ventured indoors. Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall? (Woolf, 337)

These "airs" interacting with the human world of objects are directed by "some random light" (Woolf, 337). Eventually the narration moves towards what I would refer to as the geological sublime: a sublime that is *not* that of the world appearing *as if* in accord with our intentionality, a world that is *not* that of harmonious order, but that is destructive of the anthopomorphic sense we make of things:

> The nights now are full of wind and destruction; the trees plunge and bend and their leaves fly helter skelter until the lawn is plastered with them and they lie packed in gutters and choke rain pipes and scatter damp paths. Also the sea tosses itself and breaks itself, and should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach an answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude, throw off his bedclothes and go down by himself to walk on the sand, no image with semblance of serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul. The hand dwindles in his hand; the voice bellows in his ear. Almost it would appear that it is useless in such confusion to ask the night those questions as to what, and why, and wherefore, which tempt the sleeper from his bed to seek an answer. (Woolf, 339)

Here, in conclusion, I would suggest that we take our line of thinking from Woolf's Bergsonian modernism—destructive of concepts, order, and any notion of a single illuminating light of reason—towards Deleuze and De Man. De Man, discussing the sublime, insisted that going beyond the order and human harmony of beauty would allow for a thought, always resisting figuration, of a blank and inhuman materiality: "The dynamics of the sublime mark the moment when the infinite is frozen into the materiality of stone, when no pathos, anxiety, or sympathy is conceivable; it is, indeed, the moment of a-pathos, or apathy, as the complete loss of the symbolic."[25] Deleuze, writing on Bergson, also focused on the power of intuition to arrive at inhuman durations: "To continue Bergson's project today, means for example to constitute a metaphysical image of thought corresponding to the new lines, openings, tracings,

leaps, dynamisms, discovered by a molecular biology of the brain: new linkings and re-linkings in thought."[26]

That is, to be after Bergson's modernism would be to continue the two tendencies of life: both the durations of matter and the capacity—from those durations—to produce "a metaphysical image of thought." Art and writing in their human modes are neither mutations of a single archive of man (for the archive is in concert with times and rhythms not its own), nor would art and writing be simple extensions of the planet's rhythms. Art and writing are pulsations that are irreducible to the cosmos, but also in vibration with the cosmos—the chaosmos. Those modes of writing, today, that are responding to the new rhythms of the earth—writing that aims to imagine what it might be to perceive a world without humans—are provocatively postmodern. I would conclude, then, by contrasting various post-humanisms that aim to imagine one life of interweaving and interacting powers—where man overcomes his distinction to merge with digital technologies, animal life, or the ecology of the planet—to a more radical atavism, suggested by Bergson, where humans intuit rhythms that are distinct, inhuman, and beyond the time of the present. A postmodernism of this mode can be discerned, not only in a range of texts that are concerned with life after the end of humans, but also in new modes of writing that aim to take point of view beyond that of man as a speaking animal.

One example might be Don DeLillo's *Point Omega*, which takes the novel form but adopts the point of view of a man viewing an art installation (Douglas Gordan's *24 Hour Psycho*), with the art installation, in turn, being a slowed down scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. It is as though DeLillo is at once writing in language in the genre of the novel and yet tracing the temporality and distributed rhythms of nonliterary visual and cinematic forms. Just as Woolf concludes her novel *To the Lighthouse* with Lily Briscoe painting a single dark line down the center of a canvas, DeLillo opens *Point Omega* with sentences that follow the path of an eye following the slowed down frames of a section of film. DeLillo writes of the movements of light and the display of unseen images before turning to the perceiving eye and its relation to the screen, as well as the screen's capacity to produce cadences that alter the relation between eye and cognition. Eyes, screens, light, and images: all harbor their own tendencies, and yet all enter into contingent relations, generating distinct rhythms and lines of becoming. The sentences of the novel's opening double the repetitive rhythm of the gaze and the different angles the screens are able to produce of the same scene; the simple syntax and shift to present tense empties the point of view of any mental content, affect or interiority—"Anthony Perkins is turning his head":

> The gallery was cold and lighted only by the faint shimmer on the screen. Back by the north wall the darkness was nearly complete and the man standing alone moved a hand toward his face, repeating, ever so slowly, the action of a figure on the screen. When the gallery door slid open and people entered, there was a glancing light from the area beyond, where others were gathered, at some distance, browsing the art books and postcards . . . .

> The man at the wall watched the screen and then began to move along the adjacent wall to the other side of the screen so he could watch the same action in a flipped image. He watched Anthony Perkins reaching for a car door, using the right hand. He knew that Anthony Perkins would use the right hand on this side of the screen and the left hand on the other side. He knew it but needed to see it and he moved through the darkness along the side wall and then edged away a few feet to watch Anthony Perkins on this side of the screen, the reverse side, Anthony Perkins using the left hand, the wrong hand, to reach for a car door and then open it.
>
> But could he call the left hand the wrong hand? Because what made this side of the screen any less truthful than the other side?
>
> The slightest camera movement was a profound shift in space and time but the camera was not moving now. Anthony Perkins is turning his head. It was like whole numbers. The man could count the gradations in the movement of Anthony Perkins' head. Anthony Perkins turns his head in five incremental movements rather than one continuous motion. It was like bricks in a wall, clearly countable, not like the flight of an arrow or a bird. Then again it was not like or unlike anything.[27]

It is true that Bergson regarded the cinematic camera as the ill of the modern eye: we carve the world into so many snapshots, and then regard the world as nothing more than a collection of unified images, forgetting that the frozen image is a lesser cut in a complex and intensive "open whole" that cannot be reduced to a collection of distinct atoms or moments. But DeLillo's style here takes a certain strand of modernism and carries it forward into the perceptual power of the machine; the slowed down frames of Hitchcock's *Psycho* allow the human eye to experience durations and angles not its own. That perceiving eye, in turn, allows for a mode and style of writing that is not the linear narrative of a novel, but closer to a haiku, as if composed forces yield a certain meter that allows writing to form. If Bergson's modernism challenged the human point of view of subjects representing objects and did so by suggesting that intuition might find other durations, he also opened a tradition of writing that would not rest easily with its own structures and systems but would—through encounters with other perceptions—strive to think, from within language, of rhythms beyond language.

Notes

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2 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 26.
3 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 115–16.
4 See Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) and Lisa

Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

5 John Milton, *Areopagitica*, ed. C. W. Crook (London: Ralph Holland, 1905), 9.
6 Donna V. Jones, "Bergson and the Racial *Elan Vital*," in *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
7 Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (London: Faber and Faber), 2002.
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9 W. B. Yeats, *Selected Poems and Four Plays*, ed. M. I. Rosenthal (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 212.
10 D. H. Lawrence, *The Fox, The Captains Doll, The Ladybird: Volume 2 of the Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Dieter Mehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 180.
11 Rebecca Hill, "Phallocentrism in Bergson: Life and Matter," in *Deleuze Studies* 2 (2008): 123–36.
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13 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (London: Macmillan, 1911).
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15 Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anee Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 86.
16 Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).
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18 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
19 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton (London: Macmillan, 1935).
20 Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 102.
21 Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 278.
22 D. H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 132–3.
23 Virginia Woolf, *Selected Works of Virginia Woolf* (London: Wordsworth, 2007), 271.
24 Woolf, *Selected Works*, 287, 314, 331, 360, 383.
25 Paul De Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. A. Warminski (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 126.
26 Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 117.
27 Don DeLillo, *Point Omega* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 1.

Part Three

Glossary

18

Bergson on Art and Creativity

Mark Antliff

Central to Bergson's philosophy was an instrumental conception of the intellect and an attempt to define intuition as a mode of cognition informing both artistic and scientific endeavor. In Bergson's philosophy, artistic perception "has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially acceptable generalities" to enter into immediate communion with things and ourselves.[1] This dual form of immediacy caused Bergson to equivocate over the relative merits of various arts and the degree to which they should be expressive or imitative in their aims. He repeatedly privileges our sense of hearing above sight, describing the latter faculty as a perceptual tool serving utilitarian needs. This predilection is most obvious in his comparison of *durée* to a melody, and his deprecation of our recourse to images in describing duration, a habit, we are told, which usually succeeds in dividing and "intellectualizing" temporality.[2] Our intellectual association of visual images with the unbroken melody of duration causes us to divide it into "befores and afters," a "juxtaposition of distinct notes."[3] Thus auditory perception is naturally attuned to the soul's inner music, and vision to the intellect's divisive biases.

Bergson implies that music is superior to the plastic or literary arts by virtue of its focus on pure duration, describing musicians in contrast to poets or painters as delving "deeper still" to grasp "certain rhythms of life and breath that are closer to man than his own feelings." Unlike the artist who "applies himself to colours and forms" or poets who reveal an emotional state "by the rhythmical arrangement of words," musicians delve "beneath these joys and sorrows which can, at a pitch, be translated into language [to] grasp something that has nothing in common with language," namely those "rhythms of life" previously mentioned (*Laughter*, 157–61).

Bergson described our personality as continually developing throughout the entire existence of consciousness, asserting that we not only retain everything in our conscious or unconscious memory, we prolong the past into our present through our actions.[4] Thus our personality has two essential aspects: memory "taking in the whole scope of our unconscious past" and our will, animated by an internal impulse "continually straining towards the future" (*Mélanges*, 1063). Our intellect routinely filters these memories with a view to immediate action for pragmatic ends: in such instances our personality is given less scope for expression. By contrast when we act creatively, we bring more of our personality to bear in our ongoing activity, and our

actions are more closely attuned to the durational *élan vital* of which we are a part. It is artists who possess the greatest capacity for self-expression and intuitive perception, and as such their actions are more creative.

This willed ability to create, states Bergson, is unique to humanity, and the internal impulse driving our personal development is itself an expression of a larger evolutionary process. "Each personality," states Bergson, "is a creative force; and there is every appearance that the role of each person is to create, just as if a great Artist had produced as his work other artists" (*Mélanges*, 1071). However in our everyday existence most of us are still held captive by our intellect and its utilitarian concerns. Bergson's intuitive method is designed to free us from such limitations, so that we too can unleash our own creative force and become the productive agent of novelty in the world.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Laughter*, in *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher (1956; repr., Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 162.
2 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (1911; repr., New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 237–8.
3 Bergson, "The Perception of Change," in *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 174, 176.
4 Bergson, *Mélanges* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 847–75.

19

Bergson on *Durée*

Rebecca Hill

The task of thinking real time—*durée*—is fundamental to Bergson. This is difficult, however, because the structure of the human intellect has evolved to work in homogeneous space, a form of thinking that is incapable of representing the continuous change that is duration's very essence.[1] Bergson's deduction of *durée* thus begins negatively. To obtain an intuition of duration, all forms of spatial symbolism must be put out of play.[2] He is not anti-space *per se*. Homogeneous space is the medium of practical human knowledge (what he calls the intellect), and the intellect is indispensable to the demands of practical life and to science. It is particularly useful for comprehending matter. Homogeneous space functions as an immobile medium in which matter can be readily measured, juxtaposed, and divided (*CM*, 133). The problem is that homogeneous space has become such a habitual form of human knowledge that the metaphysical tradition has failed to notice the way in which it is used to translate real time into symbols that are predicated on the exclusion of the change specific to duration.

The disfiguring influence of space is perhaps most pronounced in the intellectual description of the time of consciousness. The changes of psychic life are represented as a succession of states. When psychic life is symbolized as a succession of states, change would seem to reside in the passage from one state to another. But change is far more radical than the intellect acknowledges. The self is nothing but change; it consists of a continuous flow of duration.[3] To conceive of the self as a succession of discontinuous states is to pulverize consciousness into a powder of equivalent moments that are readily reducible to number. Number cannot account for the continuously evolving quality of the self's duration, and in order to identify the succession of states as a particular consciousness, this quantitative multiplicity must be posited as a unity. The intellectual thinker is thus compelled to construct a "formless ego," which holds all of the states of consciousness together (*CE*, 3–4). For Bergson there is no "formless" spatial ego, and consciousness does not consist of a collection of states. The inner life of the self is an uninterrupted passage of duration. The continuity of consciousness as duration must also be understood as heterogeneous. The word heterogeneous should not be read in spatial terms. It refers to the qualitative alteration of enduring consciousness in relation to itself. The heterogeneity of the self as duration has no affiliation with number or

space. It is an evolving whole, whose aspects do not externalize themselves. It is purely qualitative (*TFW,* 104).

Bergson presents the duration of consciousness as the hyphen or connecting link that brings the past into the future (*CE*, 22). Enduring consciousness is the threshold of emergence that brings into being what did not exist. In his first major work, *Time and Free Will*, the self as duration is celebrated as the very condition of qualitative difference, the threshold of invention that introduces free acts into the world.

In *Creative Evolution* Bergson extends duration beyond human consciousness to all that lives. Life "corresponds to an inner work of ripening or creating" (*CE*, 11). Insofar as inert matter is bound up in the duration of the universe, it also endures. For example, if sugar is mixed in a glass of water, the observer cannot speed up or draw out the process of the sugar melting. The observer's impatience is not something thought, such as the measurable time of the physicist; it corresponds to something lived. Waiting for the sugar to melt is not relative because the parts of time cannot be unfurled at will. It is absolute. The whole universe has a particular, irreducible rhythm of duration that is something like a consciousness (*CE*, 10).

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Citadel, 1992), 15.
2 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (1913; repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2001), 180.
3 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 1–2.

20

Bergson on *Élan Vital*

Paul Douglass

Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907) argues that mechanistic ideas of the universe cannot explain change or creativity, both of which he regards as self-evident aspects of the world. Neither mechanism nor finalism (the idea that the universe is meant to reach a preordained end) can explain the radical processes of change that characterize existence. What can?

Bergson answers that an evolutionary power—protean, self-initiated change—lies at the origin of the universe. He calls this power the *élan vital*. Evidently, Bergson subscribes to the Big Bang theory of the universe. He imagines it as a creative explosion, a vital impulse (or spirit), and he describes the universe as "merged . . . in growth,"[1] asserting that "reality is global and undivided growth."[2] In a developing creation, we can never know what is until we learn what it becomes. What is true of the universe is also true for human beings: "For a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly" (*CE*, 7).

Bergson's universe is self-creative, but it is also self-destructive. The *élan vital* divides, as its energy devolves into static forms, spirit slumping into matter. Bergson likens the universe to a teakettle whose steam condenses into droplets (*CE*, 247), or alternatively he likens it to the earth, whose molten core is extruded into rock on its surface.[3] Human beings are also caught in this struggle of energy and evolution against entropy and devolution. So the *élan vital* implies not only pure energy and creation—something "unceasingly creating and enriching itself"—but also something "continually unmaking itself or using itself up."[4] Life means "endlessly continued creation" and "pure mobility," but any "particular manifestations of life accept this mobility reluctantly, and continually lag behind" (*CE*, 128, 178).

If the universe is both creative and destructive, nonetheless its original and fundamental nature is the creative act implied in the phrase *élan vital*. Thus, Bergson argues that the vital energy of life is perpetually struggling to overcome materiality (or "matter"). The universe always seeks a return to its origin in pure energy and protean, radical change. "[T]o cease to change would be to cease to live," Bergson believes, and "the fundamental law of life . . . is the complete negation of repetition" (*Laughter*, 32). Or again, he says, "life, like conscious activity, is invention, is unceasing creation" (*CE*, 23).

Bergson gave a lot of thought to the reasons why the true nature of existence is not more readily apparent to most human beings. He believes this failure to understand the nature of reality stems from evolutionary forces unleashed by the *élan vital*. The intellect itself evolved as a survival mechanism that obstructs our understanding of the nature of the universe. Reality is merged in unpredictable, radical change, and "against this idea of the absolute originality and unforeseeability of forms our whole intellect rises in revolt" (*CE*, 29). The difficulty of understanding and explaining the truth of the *élan vital* caused Bergson to originate other concepts in his philosophy, like those of the self, memory, philosophical intuition (*intuition philosophique*), and duration (*durée*). He admitted that "free acts are exceptional," because "our living and concrete self gets covered with an outer crust" just like the earth itself.[5] Nonetheless, he asserted, the protean inner self that participates in the original creativity of the *élan vital* is always available to us, if we are prepared to devote the time and energy needed for introspection and openness.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 241.
2 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), 112.
3 Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 159.
4 Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. W. Carr (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), 23.
5 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1910), 167.

21

Bergson on Evolution

Claire Colebrook

Bergson's concept of evolution, like most of the concepts formed in his philosophical project, pulls in two directions. (Bear in mind that Bergson criticizes the usual mode of philosophical concepts for being too general, and for reducing difference and complexity. He suggests that we ought to aim to form a unique concept for each singular event,[1] which would mean that philosophy remained forever open to its own differential evolution, branching into greater and greater degrees of difference.) *Creative* evolution is Bergson's concept for thinking about life's two tendencies that are both outcomes of duration. We might say something like the following about duration: something *endures* when time is intrinsic to its identity, and that identity is not something remaining the same but a mode of continual difference in which each difference is a response to the future based on what has occurred in the past. I am different from you because we will not ask questions the same way because we have different histories. The temporal order is intensive rather than extensive: in an extensive sequence, any point on the line is the same (I can choose any product on an assembly line), while in an intensive sequence all the points are different and carry each of the other within themselves (each work of literature bears some relation to the literary past, and to the literary future, and it matters very much when I read Shakespeare that I have already read T. S. Eliot, and that I read T. S. Eliot knowing that he had read Shakespeare and would be read by Conrad). In the case of inert matter, I can place a chair in front of or behind a table, and this does not alter what the chair is. By contrast, the humans who are born in the twenty-first century carry within them the genetic and environmental history of the species, at once being neurally plastic because of the development of the brain, while also harboring certain tendencies because of a hunter-gatherer past that is no longer present. If I could teleport Shakespeare into the present, he would not be "Shakespeare" because any human writing *after* Milton and Blake becomes a new individual with a new effect on the temporal whole.

It is a mistake to see evolution as the relation between a body and some supposed general notion of "fitness" with its environment. For if this were all that were involved in evolution, outcomes would be calculable. But if an individual faces its environment with the whole of the past also persisting virtually, then any number of paths might be taken. If evolution were a question of *extensive* quantities, such as the capacity for a body to produce as many offspring as possible, then it might be the case that

the line of time would be fairly unified and continue in a single line of efficiency. But evolution is intensive: time unfolds into the future along multiple and unpredictable paths. The future is not the selection from a number of possibilities but the continual creation of unforeseen and diverging trajectories. (This is why one could write any number of histories of art or histories of the French revolution, or any number of stories regarding the genesis of the human species.) It is the complex and virtually laden existence of a past that enables multiple evolutionary trajectories. It may be that the human species evolves by developing the rapid eye movements and short-attention spans of a hunter-gatherer past that we thought we had left behind; it may be that we become less neurally responsive and more developed as linguistic or moral animals. We have no way of knowing which of our past (virtual) tendencies will unfold into the future. Evolution is creative and is split by the virtual existence in the present of a number of potentially transformative tendencies, but this does not mean that the future is random. For creativity evolves and is always in relation to a whole of life of which it is only a part. The fact that various species have responded to the problem of light by developing vision is at once evidence that evolution is not the outcome of statistical survival. Created complexities such as the eye, such as human language, such as the displays of feathers or bright colors for sexual attraction, do not emerge through random variation with weaker variants being outbid in a war of reproductive numbers.

To say that duration is creative or that life, as duration, evolves, is to say that in addition to the present milieu there is also is the virtual present of every other variant, such that life can work its way down multiple paths, always drawing on previous variants and divergences. If every human, today, managed to free themselves from the past—from all inherited prejudices, assumptions, superstitions, linguistic biases, and received ideas—then what would be left would not be a blank slate of pure reason but a monotonous silence from which (one hopes) variation and divergence might emerge. There can be a future, or a divergence from the present, only with the retention of the past. The same applies to the evolving organism: if each being in the present were simply presented with the problem of survival, and if evolution were to act only in terms of efficiency, then we might have a single species that developed capacities only in response to present exigencies. But this is not the case: the world (at least for now) is biologically diverse because certain paths have developed, including animal instinct, which retains enough of the past for each organism to develop efficient hunting or foraging methods, and human intelligence in which various technologies (including language) allow for the formation of other technologies (such as computers and screens) and which then enable various modes of neural evolution and complexity.

We qualify evolution (or the determination of life along certain paths of efficiency) by stressing *creativity*: there is no single efficient path, because each line of life carries the virtual memory of previous paths that will initiate multiple trajectories. We qualify all forms of creativity, including the experience or perception of any present, by placing it within an evolving and open whole. One does not simply write or speak with a blank page, but with a complexity that carries and transforms all of human history. An

organism's genetic tendencies are not a question of calculation between a present set of possibilities and an efficient outcome, but a past of multiple potentials that could at any moment be actualized in the present.

Note

1 Henri Berson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Kensington Publishing, 1946), 129.

22

Bergson on Free Will and Creativity

Rex Gilliland

Like the existentialists, Bergson elevates creativity to a central philosophical issue and examines its implications for free will. This helps to explain why his conception of free will and so many other aspects of his metaphysics are unorthodox and difficult to situate within mainstream debates. Like the libertarians, Bergson maintains that freedom is a form of spontaneity and contrasts it with mechanism. But he rejects the claim that freedom is a type of causation, one that selects between preexisting possibilities—a common assumption made by libertarians and determinists alike. Instead, he maintains that freedom is the creation of new possibilities.[1] Bergson's conception of creativity is easier to classify: he defends intuitionism, the view that creativity is a mysterious, nonconceptual form of apprehension. Intuitionism has roots in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romanticism, though unlike Bergson the romantics tend to conflate creative intuition with the mimetic variety of intuition found in Neoplatonism. In his critique of psychological associationism—intuitionism's historical rival—Bergson argues that conceptual understanding is unable to produce anything new because it merely rearranges or dismembers existing entities. As a result, it overlooks the features of the world that are holistic and dynamic, features that can only be grasped intuitively. Intuition operates on the level of emotion, apprehending novel affinities between the entities captured in our memories; it melds unconscious memories into organic wholes that are indivisible and radically novel.[2] In contrast with conceptual understanding, intuition provides insights that transform and enliven existing entities.

In Bergson's view, conceptual understanding remains at the superficial level of inanimate, mechanical nature and the habitual activity of living beings (which includes our everyday, practical endeavors), whereas creative intuition is able to provide insight into the nature of the world and the self. However, intuitions vary in their depth, their degrees of freedom and creativity: For example, Bergson claims that the invention of mechanical devices and luxury goods is relatively superficial. But it is much more common than the discovery of profound affinities between things because the deeper an insight is, the greater effort it requires (*CE*, 137–9, *TSMR*, 298). One of the distinctive features of Bergson's conception of free will and creativity is that he ascribes them to all living beings, not merely humans: "The impetus of life . . . consists in a need for creation" (*CE*, 251). However, the scope of this ability to "feel" affinities between different entities varies from species to species. Bergson even suggests the existence of a

group consciousness, which grows stronger as individuals are gradually fused together into a single organism (*CE*, 259–61, *TSMR*, 104f, 268, 311f). But creative evolution works simultaneously in two directions, producing a multiplicity of novel, qualitatively heterogeneous entities at the same time that it draws existing things closer together by bringing out their affinities.

Few of Bergson's predecessors were as attentive to the issue of creativity as he was. But having noted Bergson's critique of psychological associationism, it would be unfair to neglect the difficulties faced by intuitionists: if creativity is separated from conceptual understanding and logical reasoning, and novelty is defined as a difference in kind—something indivisible that is incommensurable with whatever precedes it (*CE*, 29 fn., 212) —doesn't this constrain our ability to explain them? Some may see this as a desirable consequence, but it seems to conflict with our ability to compare novel entities to other things and the fact that the creative process often involves careful reflection. Regardless, Bergson develops his account of creativity in much more detail than any of the romantics did, and he makes a number of other important contributions to the discussion.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper, 1960), 179–83; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 239; Bergson, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 118–20, 698. Heidegger develops a similar conception of freedom. See Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002): 205f.

2 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 200; Bergson, *Oeuvres*, 665, 1013f.; and see Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), 45f. In Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone, 1991), 42f., 70f., 92–4, Deleuze develops an associationist interpretation of Bergson's conception of creativity, arguing that despite Bergson's repeated assertion that novelty is indivisible, Bergson in fact believed that novelty consists in a set of parts and relations—the points of contact between memory and the present.

23

Bergson on Habit and Perception

Paul Ardoin

For Bergson, what we perceive is a mere fraction of what surrounds us, and this is a necessity for our way of life. We are creatures of action; "Life is action. Life implies the acceptance only of the utilitarian side of things in order to respond to them by appropriate reaction: all other impressions must be dimmed or else reach us vague and blurred."[1] It is for this utilitarian reason that our habitual perception is more a process of cutting out than a process of taking in. The very "brain seems to have been constructed with a view to this work of selection,"[2] in which "perception is merely cut, for the purposes of practical existence, out of a wider canvas" (*CM*, 113). We take the parts we need.

Perception, then, is a piecework recognition of the most useful bits of our surroundings. It is aided in this recognition by memory. Along "with the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience."[3] Our memories, in fact, aid in the carving out of what we recognize as useful to our own action: "In most cases these memories supplant our actual perceptions, of which we then retain only a few hints, thus using them merely as 'signs' that recall to us former images" (*MM*, 33). This means that what we "perceive" on an everyday basis is at best a kind of categorization and "a kind of contraction of the real," in which memory is "covering . . . with a cloak of recollections a core of immediate perception" (*MM*, 34). We notice of a thing "only one or two features that will make practical recognition easier . . . we do not see the actual things themselves," only "the labels affixed to them" by our memory (*Laughter*, 77). The result is that we are able to function in the day-to-day world, recognizing the useful elements of what is around us and harnessing them toward practical action. Our senses discern habitually because "life demands we put on blinders" (*CM*, 113). To do otherwise would be impractical and useless, for the mass of necessarily action-oriented individuals.

There are, however—Bergson reminds us—individuals who are not quite so oriented toward action. "For hundreds of years, in fact, there have been men whose function has been precisely to see and to make us see what we do not naturally perceive. They are the artists," and they "show us . . . things which did not explicitly strike our senses and consciousness" (*CM*, 112). They reveal to us all those gaps and spaces in our perception of reality that we never need to see. An artist is able to recognize and reveal these gaps because of an innate tendency to be "less preoccupied than ourselves with the

positive and material side of life. He is, in the real sense of the word, 'absent-minded,'" while those of us focused on action and living have "been obliged to narrow and drain" our view of the world (*CM*, 113). Bergson's perhaps counterintuitive claim here is that while the vast majority of us, as a matter of necessary habit, "perceive simply with a view to action," artists "perceive in order to perceive, –for nothing, for the pleasure of doing so." And "because the artist is less intent on utilizing his perception . . . he perceives a greater number of things" (*CM,* 114).

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 76.
2 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1946), 114.
3 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Paul and Palmer (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2005), 33.

24

Bergson on Idealism and Realism

Trevor Perri

According to Bergson, the classically opposed doctrines of realism and idealism essentially concern the question of the being of matter and its relation to consciousness. Whereas realists hold that matter exists independently of its representation, idealists argue that matter's existence is equivalent to the representation that one can have of it. Bergson sometimes traces these positions back to the writings of Descartes and Berkeley respectively, but he also acknowledges that one can give different interpretations of these texts and other definitions of these terms. For this reason, in "Brain and Thought: A Philosophical Illusion" (1904), Bergson writes that realism and idealism can be understood as "conventional terms" that refer to "two notations of reality, one of which implies the possibility, the other the impossibility, of identifying things with the representation . . . that they offer to a human consciousness."[1] More specifically, the realists that Bergson describes proceed from the perspective of science and argue that all the parts of the material universe exist in themselves and vary in a way that is strictly determined by physical laws. Further, according to Bergson, these realists argue that the perception one might have of a part of this closed system of matter need not resemble that which it represents. On the other hand, the idealists Bergson describes proceed from the perspective of consciousness and argue that the parts of the material universe exist only insofar as they are perceived (or perceivable) and vary in a way that reflects the perspective, movement, and practical interests of one's body.

The objective of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* (1896), the book that contains Bergson's most extensive and significant treatment of realism and idealism, is to show that both doctrines are "excessive" in their conception of matter and its relation to consciousness.[2] On the one hand, according to Bergson, realism goes too far when it considers matter as a thing that produces perceptions in us that are of another nature than it. On the other hand, idealism goes too far by reducing matter to the perception that we can have of it. While realism is not able to account for consciousness except by making it an inexplicable epiphenomenon that accompanies matter, idealism is not able to account for the truths of science. Bergson points out that both of these doctrines rely on the same premise—namely, the idea that our perception of the material universe involves an internal representation of an external reality. Aiming to refute both realism and idealism in one move, Bergson rejects this premise and argues that perception reaches directly to the objects that are perceived; "it is in them rather than they in

it" (*MM*, 229/*Oeuvres*, 359). Referring to *Matter and Memory*, Bergson writes in the second introduction to *The Creative Mind* (1934) that realism and idealism "fell to the ground with the illusion which had given them birth. It is not in us, it is in them that we perceive objects; it is at least in them that we should perceive them if our perception were 'pure.'"[3]

Aiming to avoid the excesses of both realism and idealism, Bergson argues that matter (what he terms image) has a mode of existence that is partway between what the realist calls a thing and what the idealist calls a representation. Specifically, Bergson argues that matter is like the realist thing insofar as it exists independently of the consciousness that perceives it, but also unlike the realist thing insofar as it is not entirely different in itself from the perception that one has of it. Further, Bergson argues that matter is like the idealist representation insofar as it exists just as it is perceived, but also unlike the idealist representation insofar as it is not reducible to what is perceived. Thus, although Bergson concedes to idealism that "every reality has a kinship, an analogy, or, finally, a relation with consciousness," he does not thereby state that the being of matter is reducible to what is actually perceived (*MM*, 229, trans. modified/*Oeuvres*, 360). That is, and this is where Bergson draws away from idealism back towards realism, the material universe also maintains an independence from consciousness insofar as it always exceeds the perceptions that we have of it. In short, matter is not essentially different than the perceived, but it is also always more.

In *Matter and Memory*, the question of the being of matter and its relation to consciousness is only considered insofar as it concerns the more specific question of the relation of the body to the mind. As a result of this focus, Bergson's discussion of the opposed doctrines of realism and idealism sometimes comes to merge with a discussion of the theoretically independent opposed doctrines of materialism and spiritualism. So, while Bergson is usually clear that the distinction between realism and idealism is separate from the distinction between materialism and spiritualism,[4] in *Matter and Memory*, he also sometimes crosses the distinctions and contrasts idealism to materialistic realism or simply to materialism.[5] In his 1910 introduction to the seventh edition of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson allows that such "mixing" (*enchevêtrement*) of problems introduces a certain complexity into the book, but he also claims that this is unavoidable insofar as the complexity that is introduced is the complexity of reality itself (*MM*, 16, trans. modified/*Oeuvres*, 167).

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, "L'énergie spirituelle," in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 962; trans. H. W. Carr as *Mind-Energy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 236, translation modified.

2 Bergson, "Matière et mémoire," in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 161; trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer as *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 9, translation modified.

3 Bergson, "La pensée et le mouvant," in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 1317; trans. M. L. Andison as *The Creative Mind* (New York: Citadel Press, 1946), 76.
4 See, for example, *MM*, 25 and 71.
5 See, for example, *MM*, 26 and 181.

25

Bergson on Image and Representation

Garin Dowd

The interrelationship of the image and representation is explored in Bergson's 1896 book *Matter and Memory*. His 1904 essay "Brain and Thought" develops some key themes of the former volume, while the later *Creative Evolution* (1907) returns to certain salient aspects, such as movement, action, and duration, as these relate to the quite distinct endeavor (the account of *élan vital*) of the later volume. The status of the image in Bergson's thought amounts to a radical departure from philosophical precursors such as Plato, Plotinus, and Leibniz. Perhaps the central novelty of Bergson's "image" is that, in his very selection of this term to name a concept designed to cast into doubt the hegemony of vision in philosophy, he requires us to adopt a counterintuitive understanding. The orthodox metaphorical role of the image in previous epistemological accounts is subject, in Bergson, to a radical reversal. Bergson insists that light is in things rather than projected onto them by the human observer; in so doing he distances himself from several philosophical traditions all constrained by a privileging of the eye in one form or another. His difference from his contemporary Edmund Husserl is especially apposite in this regard. While for Husserl all consciousness is consciousness *of* something, for Bergson all consciousness *is* something. This aspect of Bergson's thought often seems to draw him close to the idealism most closely associated with Berkeley. However, in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson explicitly describes his project as one which will challenge both idealism and realism, the former primarily associated with Berkeley, the latter with Kant. *Matter and Memory* sets out to propose an account of perception which will avoid the pitfalls of each.

Bergson begins to explain his understanding of consciousness by proposing a novel concept of matter and an idiosyncratic concept of the image. Whereas the idealist tradition had conceived of the world received by the human sensorium as the projected output of the human mind and the realist tradition had grounded perception in the human agent as transcendental field, Bergson places image and matter together. The material world, for Bergson, is equivalent to a "system of closely linked images"; matter is an "aggregate of images."[1] Rather than being apart, but, via a *deus ex machina*, somehow in communication, Bergson conceives of them as immanent and as occupying the same plane.

The first step therefore is to assert that matter *is* images. Having established this, Bergson needs to have an account of the status of the mind or the perceiving subject

compatible with this alleged equivalence. No longer the center, whether as projecting lumen or repository, the body is itself for Bergson an image, albeit a very special one. The body is, by consensus, the home to the brain. While the brain is operative in perception, Bergson asserts that the difference between "being and being consciously perceived" (*MM*, 37) is only one of *degree*, and not of kind. In this way the brain loses the privilege it maintains in both the idealist and the realist accounts.

It is in the effort to describe the relationship between the brain and the images (matter) that Bergson's specific understanding of representation is required. The "zone" or "centre of indetermination" is the name given by Bergson to the function of human perception. In its negotiations with the material world (which is a world of images) the zone is involved in *selection*. Faced with a material object of which I have a representation, it (the object) will always appear in itself as something different from what it appears to me, *qua* representation. This is because, according to Bergson, the representation entails the severance of the object from its continuum with its past and present, such that all that it will be in its appearance to me is a carapace. Whereas, by contrast, considered in the context of the continuum from which representation subtracts it, it is filled and emptied—and thus part of a continuum with its past and present (*MM*, 36).

The real thus remains an aggregate of images in fluid continuity. The zone, however, withdraws a section of the real, detaching it from its flow and from its interaction with the aggregates it forms with the universal. Thus, representation is subtraction; representation is only capable of a simulacrum of the real.

Bergson's recourse to metaphors derived from photography and cinematography has been the cause of much debate. In *Matter and Memory* photography is invoked, but by the time of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson's famous account of cinema is employed in order to attack the tyranny of the eye:

> Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic of this becoming itself. Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general . . . the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographic kind.[2]

This passage, Gilles Deleuze suggests, is not the final word of Bergsonism on the possibilities of the cinematographic image.

That many modernist authors were so drawn to Bergson's philosophy of perception, time, and memory serves indirectly to underline the fact that Bergson's theory of the image, and in particular its necessary nonequivalence to representation, is in fact a critique of the historical privileging of visuality. As Martin Jay has noted, "however much Bergson may have invoked images as an antidote to concepts, he did so by striving to minimise their linkages to the static, spatialising power of sight."[3] The pure

recollection of images of Proust's *Recherche* and Woolf's experiments with duration to some degree testify to this. The "image" with which Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* closes is arguably more a centre of indetermination than it is a "picture," while Proust's descriptions of the worlds which are opened out of the "closed vases" of time are always multisensorial. In the imagist work of T. E. Hulme, however, we find a Bergson in some respects restored to an occularcentric tradition from which he sought to take his distance. The imagist image may be "torn" from the world but the dominance of ekphrasis serves to ground it in the visual field. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* offers in its form a writing at least superficially attuned to the notion of cutting from the flow of urban life, which recalls Bergson despite its gravitation toward the final arrest of this flux.

In terms of philosophical heritage, the inspiration which Deleuze takes from Bergson in his account of the image regimes of cinema, in his books *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, has served to underline the immense significance of Bergson's concepts both for an understanding of movement and time in cinema and for neo-vitalist philosophy, or what Deleuze would conceive, under the inspiration of Félix Guattari, as "machinic" thought. Deleuze, both in the cinema books and in *Bergsonism*, emphasized the force of the concepts created by Bergson, notably the image, thereby cementing his legacy as the philosopher who caused philosophy to cast a critical light on one of its most enduring prejudices, namely in the shoring up of an image of thought grounded in representation.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 22, 31.
2 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 322–3.
3 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1994), 204.

26

Bergson on Instinct

Paul Atkinson

The term "instinct" is commonly used in biology to refer to innate, inherited behaviors that are involuntarily triggered by internal or external mechanisms. There is some variation in the expression of an instinct due to the difference in the nature of the trigger or the environmental context, but in each case the organism does not have conscious control of the particular form the instinctual response will take. In his most extensive examination of the nature of instinct in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson takes the biological definition of instinct as his starting point, but expands and modifies the definition by examining the role it plays in a broader processual empiricism.

In this work Bergson investigates the evolutionary and philosophical basis of instinct rather than taking the point of view of the biologist, who examines individual instincts in order to categorize the behavior of a particular species. Evolutionary biologists also examine instinct beyond the lifespan of an individual with respect to inheritance and adaptation, but Bergson's approach is distinct because he argues that there is a general instinctual movement that is transcorporeal and can be distinguished from individual expressions of instinct evinced in any one species. The aim of this philosophical approach to evolutionary theory is to sketch the contours of the instinctual movement and explain how it contributes to the continuous process of creation. Taking this broad evolutionary point of view, Bergson argues that instinct is a tendency, that is, a particular movement or disposition in evolution.

In *Creative Evolution*, instinctual tendency is contrasted with intelligence, and to a lesser degree with intuition. Intelligence and instinct are material actions that share an origin and are intertwined in the development of an individual and in the course of evolution. Bergson's approach is in many respects a genetic epistemology; an approach that was popular in French philosophy in the nineteenth century in the work of thinkers such as Jean-Marie Guyau and also in the twentieth century with Jean Piaget, André Leroi-Gourhan, and Gilbert Simondon. The genetic approach explains how particular practices, beliefs, and modes of cognition emerge in the development of an individual or a species. Bergson argues that instinct and intelligence have emerged in evolution through the accentuation of a basic dispositional difference. Intelligence has developed through the creation and manufacture of tools, which allow for a great degree of flexibility in its interaction with matter; instinct by contrast describes the evolution of complex behaviors and actions that are thoroughly grounded in the body

of the organism. Intelligence is suited to the manipulation of inanimate or disorganized matter, and increasingly comes to resemble it, whereas instinct remains aligned with the organism, the movement of life and the vital processes.

In Bergson's evolutionary epistemology, instinct is both a type of behavior and a type of knowledge. As behavior, it refers to a particular way of manipulating and organizing matter, and as a mode of knowledge, it describes a sympathetic understanding that has developed through an organism's contact with its environment and other living organisms. Instinct demonstrates knowledge of the material and living world that is fundamentally different to either thought or intelligence. Throughout *Creative Evolution*, Bergson uses the metaphor of touch to describe the specificity of instinctual knowledge and argues that instinct adheres to its object and is a type of feeling rather than thought. Touch is a useful metaphor because it refers to both the material contact between one organism and another, but also the continuity of contact over the long duration of evolution. Instinct is what motivates the organism to establish contact with its object, but it is also shaped by the continued contact with its environment in the life of the species and in the course of evolution. Bergson argues that most instincts are so complex that they cannot be explained by the acquisition of behaviors through natural selection. Instead, instinct should be regarded as a form of intimate knowledge that has been acquired in the continuous movement of evolution. The importance of the continuity of life in instinct is also evinced in the later work *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* where Bergson proposes that there is a "virtuality of instinct" in the mythmaking function which counterbalances the tendency towards fragmentation and materiality in intelligence.

Instinct provides knowledge of the living that rivals intuition and intelligence, but this is not often acknowledged because instinctual behavior is largely unconscious. It is knowledge that is invested in the body and in the performance of an activity and, unless it is subject to a disruption, does not lead to self-awareness. Despite this, Bergson argues in *The Creative Mind* that instinct is the primary means by which all living beings understand material difference. When a cow stoops to eat some grass or when an ant recognizes the scent trail of an invader, there is a foundational act of generalization in this extraction of a quality. For in responding in a similar way to a quality or object in its environment, an organism carves out from the heterogeneity of the material world those material differences that suit its interest. It is these instinctual identities that serve as the basis for generalization in thought.

27

Bergson on Intuition

David Scott

Bergson's method of intuition begins with his distinguishing two kinds of knowledge: on the one hand, there is "relative knowledge," which is derived from categorizing the "outside" of things by intelligence; while, on the other hand, there is "absolute knowledge," which intuition confers on thought by grasping a thing from the "inside."

Implicit in the opposition between these kinds of knowledge is the belief that philosophy must be genetic if it wishes to respect the temporality of the originary lived experience. On the one hand, there is the orientation beneficial for grasping the metaphysical reality of the immanent movement of becoming *internal* to the living individual. On the other hand, there is the orientation beneficial for a kind of knowledge that scientifically defines a presupposed reality by applying its prefabricated terms and concepts. Bergson's description of the role that must be accorded to intuition ultimately follows from the distinction he preserves between absolute and relative knowledge. In short, the former (the metaphysical-intuitive) intuitively generates for itself a basis for absolute thought by discovering it *within* the conditions that make a living thing possible, while, the latter (the scientific-analytic) remains analytically *outside* the object, applying *a priori* concepts to achieve, at best, a relative comprehension of reality.

Knowledge that presents reality in a relative (scientific-analytic) manner is "knowledge by composition," by analysis.[1] All analysis ultimately is the translating of a thing into language, formula, signs, symbols, and categories. Analysis is for this reason only ever incomplete, always imperfect and, thus, always in need of being completed by joining "elements to elements." Analytic thinking allows us to think what is simple, to break an object down into its most elemental fragments. Such an approach only ever presents a "false" image of the infinite,[2] predicated upon arresting movement or genesis by partitioning into representable symbolic and calculable immobilities.[3] It fixes and stabilizes genesis in the identity it provides for the object.[4] "It is understood that fixed concepts can be extracted by our thought from the mobile reality; but there is no means whatever of reconstituting with the fixity of concepts the mobility of the real" (*CM*, 189). Because of these characteristics, the concept can only ever provide an "artificial recomposition of the object" (*CM*, 167). The concepts created to grasp the properties of a thing, therefore, remain ill fitting, too general, and too abstract, with the intention of directing thought toward practical or utilitarian intentions.

In opposition to the analytic method, Bergson asserts that the starting point for philosophy must be "*sub specie durationis*" (*CM*, 129): the real being of the Absolute, the being of real Time, duration. Analysis operates on immobility; intuition, on the other hand, "is located in mobility or, what amounts to the same thing, in duration" (*CM*, 180). Bergson's philosophy of intuition is meant to be synonymous with absolute internal knowledge because it promises the grasping of duration: "intuitive knowledge attains the absolute" (*CM*, 192). The problem of knowledge from this point of view implies a metaphysical problem. For if metaphysics is possible, it is because intuition provides the means to place oneself immediately within the thing—in the *durée*—being studied, "through a dilation of the mind," in order to retrace a route "from reality to concepts and not from concepts to reality" (*CM*, 183). If one could sympathetically install oneself in the mobile reality of duration, intuitively grasping its movement, thereby "adopting its ceaselessly changing direction," it would come at the price of a kind of speculative-metaphysical violence brought against rationalist and empiricist habits of thought (*CM*, 190). The point is to overcome the static image bequeathed to us by concepts in which there is in effect a separation between who knows and what is known with another dynamic image, by immediate intuition, where the act of knowledge coincides with the generating act of reality.

The critical role intuition provides, strictly speaking, is to call into question the positivist stance presupposed by science, logic, and mathematics. As Bergson writes, the mind "must do itself violence, reverse the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories, or rather recasting them" (*CM*, 190). Bergson's target, therefore, is not merely the concepts themselves but more directly the imperatives directing knowledge, which are responsible for producing concepts whose role is to serve all too human practical desires. One must upset the entrenched habits of thinking that have been determined by the epistemology. If the metaphysical goal is to retrieve the sense of true time (*durée*) then intuition is for Bergson the means by which this is achievable: "How much more instructive would be a truly intuitive metaphysics, which would follow the undulations of the real!" (*CM*, 31). Intuition is posited as the means by which to "recapture" time in the form of the "flow of inner life." Intuition grasps the undulations of the real in the pure form of "real time." In this form, time is taken to be the indivisible and substantial continuity that constitutes the inner sense of a state of being. Thus, "to think intuitively is to think in duration" (*CM*, 34). Bergson's intuition is a specific mode of knowledge in tune with the affectivity of time.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, "Histoire De L'idée De Temps (1902–03)," in *Annales Bergsoniennes I: Bergson Dans Le Siècle*, ed. Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 35.

2 Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. L. Andison (New York: Citadel Press, 2002), 162.

3 "Soumettre une mouvement au calcul ce n'est pas saisir le mouvement, l'emprisonner dans une formule, c'est simplement déterminer, établir un certain nombre de simultanéitiés entre les positions du mobile et tel ou tel phénomène, qu'on prend comme mesure du temps. Donc, ici, encore la représentation des choses par un signe est, avant tout, orientée vers l'utilité" (Bergson, "Histoire," 60).
4 All three of these characteristics are fully outlined in Bergson's 1902–03 Collège de France lectures.

28

Bergson on Language

Laci Mattison

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson describes language as "[e]ssentially discontinuous, since it proceeds by juxtaposing words." In so doing, language spatializes "the movement of thought" by erecting "guideposts" that direct the listener or reader in a teleological journey toward an intended meaning;[1] thus, language, like Zeno's paradoxes, spatializes time, translating the (unsegmented) motion of thought into the segmentation of the space that motion transgresses. Bergson's dilemma is that, in writing of *durée* and the qualitative multiplicity of "real time," he likewise turns his "movement of thought" into representation. Bergson addresses this point in *Time and Free Will* when he describes the durational experience of our consciousness when several states "permeate one another": "but the very use of the word 'several' shows that I have already isolated these states, externalized them in relation to one another, and, in a word, set them side by side"[2]—and so exchanged the qualitative for a quantitative multiplicity. For all his critique of language as a habitual function of intelligence that codifies immanence into representation, Bergson must work within language, while also differentiating his philosophy from the old system of metaphysics that "conformed to the habits of language."[3] In so doing, Bergson offers a method for writing that opens spaces within language that are not reducible to representation and that thus remain outside the (habitual) language system.

This sort of language has more in common with music, with a Beethoven symphony, than it has with the communication of meaning(s). Bergson makes this parallel between Beethoven and the writer of philosophy (and the mystic) in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Of the composer, he writes:

> 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 there 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.[4]

If the writer is to revolutionalize philosophy or literature, s/he must write in this manner. A Bergsonian method of composition, then, requires a fluctuation between

the "intellectual and social plane" of habit and representation and the immersion in an undefined (or nonspatial) durational flux accessible only through intuition, which makes it possible to experience emotion(s) that cannot be contained within the parameters of language (*TSMR*, 253).

So, there are two practices of composition which align with the two types of multiplicity (quantitative and qualitative) that Bergson outlines in *Time and Free Will*, yet these two methods of writing, while "radically different," do not necessarily exclude each other and perhaps must work in tandem. The first type of writing utilizes the concepts "[s]ociety supplies," which have been "worked out by his [the philosopher's] predecessors and stored up in . . . language" (*TSMR*, 254). The philosopher "combines" these ideas "in a new way, after himself reshaping them to a certain extent so as to make them fit into his combination." Although "the work produced may be original and vigorous," it remains vested in the same currency of that which has preceded it—unless this first writing practice merges at points with the second "method of composition," which is "more ambitious, less certain" and requires an immersion in "a unique emotion, an impulse, an impetus received from the very depths of things." To follow this writerly impulse, Bergson states, "completely new words would have to be coined, new ideas would have to be created, but this would no longer be communicating something, it would not be writing. Yet the writer will attempt to realize the unrealizable . . . He will be driven to strain the words, to do violence to speech" (*TSMR*, 253–4). Gilles Deleuze later calls this a writer's "style," the "stammering" of language that necessitates "[b]eing like a foreigner in one's own language."[5] Although language as such translates the (intuitional) "thing-in-itself" into (intellectual) representation, and although (constructed) meaning cannot translate our lived experience of *durée*, Bergson does not wholly condemn language. He instead offers a practice of writing that is (paradoxically) not writing, a mode of composition that radically—even violently—refigures language in the service of expressing absolutely new ideas and experiences. As Jean-Jacques Lecercle, writing of Bergson's influence on Deleuze, affirms, "This is where the philosopher is naturally sympathetic to the poet, who, like him, is trying to take language to its limit."[6]

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 1896, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 159.
2 Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 1889, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 122.
3 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1907, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover, 1998), 13.
4 Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1932, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 252–3.
5 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, 1977, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 4.
6 Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 21.

29

Bergson on Memory

Heath Massey

Bergson's interest in memory develops alongside his attempts to resolve certain metaphysical problems by way of advances in psychology and biology. In *Time and Free Will*, he emphasizes the role of memory in the conscious experience of time, or duration (*durée*), which implies the preservation of past states and their permeation of the present.[1] The problem of freedom stems, in his view, from the confusion of duration with abstract time, in which moments are considered as separate and distinct rather than forming an organic whole as they do in consciousness. Bergson goes on in *Matter and Memory* to approach the problem of the relation between mind and body in terms of time by focusing on memory, "a synthesis of the past and the present with a view to the future,"[2] which he believes links them together. Bergson begins with a distinction between *habit memory* and *image memory*, and he concludes that "memory is something other than a function of the brain, and there is not merely a difference of degree, but of kind, between perception and recollection" (*MM*, 236). What he calls habit memory is the body's capacity to repeat past movements through motor mechanisms, as opposed to the mind's capacity to summon recollections (*souvenirs*), or images from the past. Bergson thinks the conflation of these two forms of memory is responsible for the view that memories are stored in the brain and that they may be destroyed as a result of injury. He criticizes this view by considering what happens when a person suffering from aphasia is unable to recognize familiar objects, faces, or words. Ordinarily, recognition occurs thanks to either bodily mechanisms that are triggered automatically or mental images of past experiences similar to the present situation. While a brain injury can make it impossible either to repeat the past in the form of coordinated movements or recall it in the form of images, it cannot destroy memories (*MM*, 108).

Bergson attacks the notion that memories are things stored in the brain by focusing on the movement by which memory informs perception and arguing for the existence of the past apart from its presentation to consciousness. He argues that *memory-images* are only one stage of a process that also involves *pure memory* (*MM*, 133). Memory cannot be understood as simply a less vivid or less intense version of perception because there is a fundamental temporal difference between them. Although in actuality they are always blended together, in principle perception is limited to the present, to an instantaneous view of action, and pure memory must be limited to

the past. Remembering requires us to detach ourselves from the present, from our attention to life, and place ourselves in the past. We may tend to think of the past as no longer existing, Bergson argues, but past states of consciousness are analogous to unperceived objects, which we think of as existing even when we are not conscious of them (*MM*, 145). "Pure" memory is the unconscious, virtual existence of the past apart from matter—including the brain and the body—while memory-images are actualizations of the past in the present.

Bergson describes a continuous double movement of memory using several diagrams, including a *cone of memory* positioned with its base on top and its point pressing down into the plane of experience or action (*MM*, 152–3). The point of the cone, symbolizing the body, is located in the present, where memory is *contracted* into images or movements. The base, hovering above the plane of action, symbolizes pure memory, the past *expanded* into all the details of events as they happened. Remembering carries us into the past, toward the base of the cone, and brings past events into focus in the form of more or less detailed images capable of being inserted into present perception. At various levels of the cone, we find not different periods of the past but "reductions of our past life" (*MM*, 169). Between dreams, at one limit, where memory is uninhibited by practical needs, and automatic reaction, at the other, lie various "tones" of mental life. Different degrees of tension in memory amount to different rhythms of duration, and freedom depends on a living organism's capacity to bring more of the past to bear on its choices (*MM*, 207–10). As Bergson explains in *Creative Evolution*, life as such is inventive and unforeseeable thanks to the preservation of the past in memory,[3] which he identifies with the vital impetus (*élan vital*) animating the evolutionary process. For a living being, each moment is new insofar as it includes the memory, conscious or unconscious, of all the moments preceding it. Life is neither mechanical nor teleological, but *memorial*, since it involves the continuous revival of past efforts.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1910), 100.
2 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 220.
3 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 1944), 4–5, 23.

30

Bergson on Movement and Spatialization

S. E. Gontarski

The preoccupation with motion has more traditionally fallen within the province of physics than metaphysics, but Bergson situates himself on the bridge between those disciplines, and thus his emphasis on motion undergirds and so coincides, overlaps, or intersects with the spirit of change, of evolution, of constant becoming, of time's flow, of *durée*; it is an embrace of natural law, life's vital force, an *élan vital*, an emphasis philosophy has all too often ignored, Bergson reminds us. The opening to the first of two "Introductions" that Bergson wrote specifically for his second collection of lectures and essays, these delivered or published between 1903 and 1923, *The Creative Mind*, is that "What philosophy has lacked most of all is precision"; that is, philosophy has tended to ignore natural laws and so would hold equally well in a world "where everything might just as easily go backwards and be upside down."[1] In this autobiographical opening, Bergson recalls his youthful infatuation with the Victorian theorist Herbert Spencer, who embraced an all-encompassing system of evolution, a philosophy that took account of the physical, biological world. It was Spencer not Darwin who coined the term "survival of the fittest" and hence natural selection. Spencer's was a synthetic philosophy that saw congruence not threat in what others saw as the polar opposites of scientific method and traditional, historical belief systems. Synthetic philosophy saw the unity of natural laws, human and non, alike. As influenced as he was by Spencerian synthesis to overcome more traditional dualities, Bergson was determined, however, to remedy much of what he saw as Spencer's tendency to dwell on "vague generalities" (*CM*, 10). Evolution thus led Bergson to what he calls "real time" and how it eludes mathematics because it flows: "not one of its parts is still there when another part comes along" (10). If this time that flows were measurable, it would "have the essence of non-duration" (11). Measurement, then, is "not carried out on an aspect or an effect representative of what one wishes to measure [in this case "Time"], but on something which excludes it" (*CM*, 11).

Such early focus on motion, change, evolution, and the flow of time leads Bergson to those classical philosophers who have seen change as an illusion, most notably Parmenides and Zeno, both Eleatics whose paradoxes were powerful statements against motion and hence against change. The debate extends into a sense of discontinuous being or the lack of fixity of any sort evident in the contretemps between Heraclitus and

Parmenides. Heraclitus emphasized a world of becoming, and such a liminal world in perpetual transition seems more consonant with Bergson's becoming than the monism of Parmenides and his main disciple Zeno. For Parmenides, founder of the School of Elea, our senses deceive us, the real world is apprehensible through logic alone. Everything that is, then, has always been, and being is unwavering and always complete, part of "the One," so that change is an illusion. Bergson takes on the most pervasive set of proofs for this position, the Eleatic Paradoxes, in almost every one of his works. In *Matter and Memory* (1896, 1911), for instance, he critiques Zeno's "proof" of the impossibility or the illusion of motion by pointing out that Zeno's famous paradoxes "consist in making time and movement coincide with the line which underlies them, in attributing to them the same subdivisions as to the line, in short, in treating them like that line."[2] Earlier, in the reworking of his doctoral thesis, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889, 1910), he focused on the paradox of the race course whereby, in Zeno's analysis, a runner could not traverse the course, might not, in fact, even be able to begin the circuit, since the course is infinitely divisible and so the distance from start to finish is subject to infinite divisibility.[3] Bergson counters that "The mistake of the Eleatics arises from their identification of this series of acts, each of which is *of a definite kind* and *indivisible*, with the homogeneous space which underlies them" (*TFW*, 113). That is, what Zeno takes as an inscription coeval with movement, Bergson sees as a metaphor, a representation of that movement. In some ways, admits Bergson, such reasoning represents common sense or what Bergson calls "an element of convention" (*CM*, 10), as Zeno "carries over to the movement the properties of its trajectories [that is, the divisible line or course]," but much of Bergson's analysis suspends such common sense whose aim is practical solutions to problems, scientific or philosophical. A decade after *Matter and Memory*, in *Creative Evolution* (1907, 1911), his critique of the Eleatics is even more explicit, calling the paradox an "absurd proposition that movement is made of immobilities,"[4] and so the Eleatic paradoxes "all involve the confusion of movement with the space covered, or at least the conviction that one can treat movement as one treats space, divide it without taking account of its articulations" (*CM*, 170). Bergson's thesis is startlingly simple: "If movement is not everything, it is nothing" (*CM*, 171). Denial of mobility is for Bergson not only a denial of motion but a denial of change itself. As Bergson recounts in the autobiographical "Introduction" to the last of his books, *The Creative Mind* (1919, 1946), this insight into the nature of time and its measurement was his initial, his primary, intuition as a student, on which he built an entire career:

> Ever since my university days I had been aware that duration [or simply time but not its measurement] is measured by the trajectory of a body in motion and that mathematical time is a line; but I had not yet observed that this operation contrasts radically with all other processes of measurement, for it is not carried out on an aspect or an effect representative of what one wishes to measure, but on something which excludes it. The line one measures is immobile, time is mobility. The line is made, it is complete; time is what is happening, and more than that,

> it is what causes everything to happen. The measuring of time never deals with duration as duration. (*CM*, 11)

Zeno's argument is further betrayed, Bergson tells us, "by language, which always translates movement and duration in terms of space" (*MM*, 191). On the contrary, movement, and hence change, for Bergson, "is an indisputable reality. We may not be able to say what parts of the whole are in motion; motion there is in the whole nonetheless" (193), and "[a]ll real change is an indivisible change," he notes in his second lecture on "The Perception of Change" (*CM*, 172).

One of the most profound literary encounters with such Bergsonism is found in Samuel Beckett's 1936 novel, *Murphy*, particularly the presentation of "Murphy's mind" in chapter 6.[5] Murphy slips past the mind's first zone of "forms with parallel" (111), to the second, the contemplation of "forms without parallel" (111), to the third, the dark, "a flux of forms, a perpetual coming together and falling asunder of forms." Such "dark [contains] neither elements nor states, nothing but forms becoming and crumbling into the fragments of a new becoming, without love or hate or any intelligible principle of change. Here there was nothing but commotion and the pure forms of commotion. Here he was not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom" (112).

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 9.
2 Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 191.
3 Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960).
4 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), 335.
5 Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957).

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Bergson on Multiplicity

Paul Atkinson

Qualitative multiplicity is a term that Bergson introduced in his first major work, *Time and Free Will*, to describe the relationship between the many and the one in consciousness, and it can refer to any multiplicity in which concrete time (*durée*) binds parts into a whole. The notion of a qualitative multiplicity illustrates how qualities can be combined into a whole without recourse to a physical or *a priori* conception of space. It is also a critique of how the concepts of multiplicity and unity have been used to divide consciousness into a series of discrete states, experiences, or sensations. This argument is extended to a critique of the overemphasis on number in understanding the concrete experience of time and qualitative difference in scientific and philosophical theories.

As with all of Bergson's concepts, qualitative multiplicity is the rearticulation of a philosophical concept, in this case multiplicity, with respect to duration with the aim of providing a better description of an empirical object. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson takes consciousness and its relationship to sensation and experience as his main object of investigation and, in line with his predecessors Félix Ravaisson and Maine de Biran, employs introspection as the mode of inquiry. Through introspection Bergson seeks to understand how psychic states are manifest in consciousness without reference to any external measures or objects. The main features that distinguish consciousness are that its parts are not extended, they are distinguished by quality rather than quantity, they interpenetrate, and they endure. As a whole, consciousness is comprised of a heterogeneity of states where an experience, thought, memory, or perception cannot be absolutely distinguished from another and where the past overlaps the present.

Bergson argues that consciousness is a qualitative multiplicity where there is a relationship between part and whole, but one in which each part changes over time, can affect any other part, and has the capacity to alter the constitution of the whole. A qualitative multiplicity is best suited to describing living organisms, and Bergson argues that the self, in the degree to which it can be identified with consciousness, is an "organic whole" where each part is defined by its capacity to interconnect with or dissolve into those around it. This is in contrast with a mechanical description of multiplicity where the parts are fixed in position and only have the capacity to interact with others through contact and efficient causality. In addition to consciousness, the term qualitative multiplicity could apply to other types of organic wholes, for example the functioning of the body where the parts, including cells and organs, are

interconnected and permeable. There is also an overriding temporal principle in the vital impetus which not only organizes the parts but is commensurate with the open-ended movement and direction of the organism.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson refers to qualitative multiplicity as an "inner" or "concrete" multiplicity, thus confirming the relationship to his introspective empirical investigation of consciousness, but it is most commonly described as a "continuous" multiplicity. The term continuous refers to the fact that the whole and the parts must be constituted in the continuity of time, which does not mean that each part is simply arranged in sequence but that temporal continuity is the very condition of interconnection and the expression of quality. This clearly distinguishes a qualitative multiplicity from other conceptions of multiplicity in which the parts are arranged in a logical space (e.g. set theory) or in a discrete physical space, as in materialism and mechanism. If time as duration is the very principle of organization, then each part must bear the mark of the time in which it appeared and the manner in which it endures. Furthermore, with the addition of each new part there is a qualitative change in the whole, unlike a quantitative multiplicity where any addition, provided that the parts are of the same type, can be adequately described by the simple numerical expression $n + 1$. Bergson uses the example of the experience of listening to music to illustrate this aspect of a qualitative multiplicity, for the duration of each note defines its quality, and no note can be added without changing the nature of the harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic series.

This qualitative reconfiguration of the concept of multiplicity also functions as a critique of those philosophical approaches that have the tendency to regard consciousness as a repository of psychic states and sensations. For Bergson, British empiricism sought to explain consciousness by isolating "extensive states" (sense-data), and experimental psychology followed in its wake by separating psychic states from consciousness though linking them to external events or stimuli. Other philosophies posited organizing concepts such as the ego, the synthetic *a priori*, or the will as a means of grouping together psychic states and sensations. The problem with all such accounts is that they seek to isolate the parts of consciousness from the continuity of time—where they are organized as identities in space—before recomposing the elements into what Bergson calls a discrete multiplicity. In doing so, the temporal relationship between the parts is elided as well as the very act by which the parts were first distinguished.

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Bergson on Organization and Manufacture

Scott Ortolano

In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson explains that life-forms evolve through open, reciprocal exchanges with their environment. This process, termed "organization," ensures that an entity is in harmony with the durational flows of its world. Opposed to organization is the human practice of "manufacture," which overcodes organizational development with specific, ends-based objectives that channel growth towards increasingly unbalanced and ultimately untenable states of being. These concepts resonate throughout Bergson's later work as they underwrite his theories about how entities of all types change over time. For example, in *The Meaning of the War: Life and Matter in Conflict*, a work of propaganda written to support France's role in World War I, Bergson uses organization and manufacture to critique the historical development of Germany. In the process, he reveals how these two modes of evolutionary development function in the broader spheres of social and political life.

In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson views organization as a process of decentralized, continuous (re)composition in which an organism's biological components (cells, appendages, internal organs, etc.) collectively and individually respond to environmental forces, enabling the larger organism to function and remain in a state of change (*durée*).[1] This process is universal and all-encompassing and explains the "unforeseeable variety of forms which life, in evolving, sows along its path" (*CE*, 96). Every organism remains engaged in this natural process of acquiring, losing, and (re)making its "self" so long as it maintains an open flow between itself and the environment.

As soon as an entity solidifies and attempts to hold its form, it enters a closed, limited, "unnatural" state of being. Bergson labels this unnatural mode of existence "manufacture." Manufacture is a human variation of organization that creates a static end and directs all available currents to it. Most notably, while organization "works from the center to the periphery," manufacture works "from the periphery to the center," forcing all material to bend to its single vision (*CE*, 92). Bergson sees this as a lesser process because manufacture's inability to shift its *modus operandi* makes it dependent on "the quantity of matter dealt with" (*CE*, 92). As such, the only way manufacture can avoid collapse is by continuing to acquire the resources that feed its current form.

Although Germany remained formidable and entrenched in France when he wrote *The Meaning of the War*, the natural laws governing the processes of organization

and manufacture led Bergson to confidently assert that Germany's strength would not endure. He identifies the "unnatural" crystallization of the German nation as *the* source of the nation's moral shortcomings, arguing that Germany had transformed itself from a durational, evolving amalgamation of nation-states into a centralized, materialist "machine." While Bergson concedes that Germany had been able to "grow in complexity and power" during the preceding years, he holds that such growth was derived from the nation's insatiable need to conquer (and acquire) new material. This made Germany's development unsustainable and hindered the growth of entities not essential to the manufacture process (e.g. religion and culture).[2] Simply put, because manufacture is a process of forced, directed development unconcerned with the limitations (and ignorant of the limitless opportunity) of the surrounding world, it will eventually exceed the resources available in an environment. Manufacture will then either cease altogether or occur through the forced acquisition of the material needed by the entity to maintain its current form—Germany, Bergson explains, chose the latter course. As a result, a symbiotic relationship quickly formed between the German military and the nation's economic-material interests: "the army and navy which owed their growth to the increasing wealth of the nation, repaid the debt by placing their services at the disposal of this wealth" (*Meaning of the War*, 25). The development of the German nation thus became ensnared in a positive materialist feedback loop that may have increased the nation's material but also limited the ways in which it could develop and interact with the world, transforming it into a powerful husk with no spiritual core. This critique of the German nation conveys Bergson's conviction that, regardless of whether one is discussing microbial life or nation-states, failing to exist in an organizational state of becoming cripples an entity's ability to viably exist in the world.

Notes

1 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998), 92–7.

2 Henri Bergson, *The Meaning of the War: Life and Matter in Conflict*, trans. H. W. Carr (London: T. Fisher Unlimited, 1915), 22.

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