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ROOTS OF BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY

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To My Father and Mother

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bulletin	Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie
M. F.	Mercure de France
M. M.	Revue de métaphysique et de morale
R. ph.	Revue philosophique

Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

As HENRI BERGSON became the most famous philosopher in the world, he was welcomed with hosannas; and he was roundly damned. It was a remarkable greeting. The fashionable world, and many among the thinkers of his time, saw in him a man of originality without parallel, one, at last, who could pronounce the "Open Sesame" that would swing wide the gates behind which truth lies hidden. William James, for example, praised him with far more than the usual Jamesian verve. "O my Bergson," he wrote on the appearance of *Creative Evolution*, "you are a magician, and your book is a marvel, a real wonder in the history of philosophy, making, if I mistake not, an entirely different era in respect of matter. . . . There is so much that is absolutely new that it will take a long time for your contemporaries to assimilate it." [1]

But there were those who raised a warning voice. Bergson's is a siren mysticism of which we must beware, they said. They also denied his originality. One critic accused him of refusing to acknowledge a debt to Guyau, to Ward, and to William James himself.[2] Another critic believed

[1] W. James, *The Letters of William James*, II, 290–91.

[2] F. Nicolardot, *A propos de Bergson*, p. 160; *Flore de Gnose*, pp. 112–18.

him to stem from Kant and a few later French philosophers.[3] A Frenchman and a German both argued that Bergson's descent from Schelling and Novalis was evident.[4] Finally, Albert Kann wrote in anger and italics that Bergson had plagiarized *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* from books he, Albert Kann, had published many years earlier.[5]

Generally speaking, none of these views on the novelty of Bergsonism,[6] whether favorable or unfavorable, has been sufficiently justified. No full, well-buttressed investigation has ever been made of the antecedents of his theories. True, the histories of recent French philosophy by Parodi, Gunn, and Benrubi, have uncovered the pyramid of thought that has its apex in the philosophy of Bergson; but anyone who wishes to trace the genealogy of Bergson's leading ideas, especially in relation to the intellectual background from which they have emerged, will find these books inadequate.

If we expect our inquiry to end with an unqualified statement that Bergson comes from one or two previous philosophers, say, Schelling and Novalis, or Royer-Collard and Ravaisson, we shall be disappointed. In the first place, the very quest for such an origin would show little appreciation of the complicated way in which a man's intellect grows. In the second, the statement would hardly be prudent without the evidence of Bergson's correspondence and a greater intimacy with his life than we possess. Bergson was erudite. A visitor who entered his study would

[3] G. Dumesnil, "La Sophistique contemporaine," *Amitié de France*, 1912.

[4] J. Benda, *Revue de Paris*, CXII (May 15, 1915), 187. C. Dryssen, *Bergson und die deutsche Romantik.*

[5] A. Kann, *Henri Bergson und meine Ideen.*

[6] The term "Bergsonism" has sometimes been used to refer to certain literary, artistic, or political movements. It has no such meaning here.

invariably see books piled high on his desk.[7] Time and again we shall note that he spent years studying a problem, determined that his conclusions should issue from the evidence, not from some predisposition of his own. We shall try to lay bare what traces there are of immediate parentage; we are more interested, however, in cultural ancestry.

So far as the present author is concerned, it was a long time before the facts ripened enough to permit harvesting. The culture I write of is not mine, which may give me clear sight from one point of view, and dim sight from another. To a French student of philosophy whose memory extends well back into the past century, what I shall say may seem misconstrued or obvious. Certainly it is incomplete. A physicist, a biologist, a psychologist, all will find gaps and slurrings-over, for it is with all their specialties that we shall have to deal.

Some of this limitation is deliberate. Taproots of Bergsonism have grown from the nourishing Hellenic soil, and others from the strata of the Middle Ages. Yet these sources will be ignored, or, at most, mentioned in a cursory way. Even the German romantic philosophers — to leap over the intervening years — may be treated more cavalierly than their intrinsic importance merits. Their influence was exerted on Bergson through the agency of Frenchmen.

We shall limit ourselves, then, to the immediate scientific and philosophic environs of Bergsonism. That is to say, we shall inhabit the vague territory, still less well defined half a century ago than today, that lies between philosophy and science, because this was the territory in which Bergsonism flourished. We shall study the men of science, principally

[7] E.g., J. Morland, "Une visite à M. Bergson," *L'Opinion*, Aug. 19, 1911; quoted in *M. F.*, XCIII (1911), 413 ff.

the biologists and psychologists, who were influential in France shortly before Bergson and during the time in which his thought was being shaped. And together with the philosophy of the scientists, we shall probe the science of the philosophers, as well as philosophy that no longer deserves the honorary rubric, "Science."

Since we shall describe the environs of Bergsonism, our study may be reproached with disregard for the human factors underlying the abstractions of speech and print. It would be easy, with the aid of histories and with casual quotation from periodicals, to reconstruct a social background, to recount the historical forces that canalized the attitudes of Frenchmen in 1875, or in 1900. But without very extensive historical research, and the full knowledge necessary to illuminate the delicate relations of physical with intellectual history, such a background could be no more than the canvas and show-paint of the theater, all surface and no substance. It might be otherwise if I were privileged to visit France and talk with people who have lived through the decades just gone by.

The sociological factors that may be called roots of Bergson's philosophy are therefore left to a different, a more comprehensive work, which will have to dwell on politics, customs, beliefs, art, and literature. We shall not have the chance to consider some of the writings of Bergson himself, his popular *Laughter*, for instance. Our analyses will converge on the five broad-cut facets of his thought, his view of time, his theory of intuition, his psychology, his biology, and his morality or religion.

Two additional prefatory remarks, and then we shall begin. It has become almost a habit for writers who wish to be fair to describe their philosophic dispositions at the beginning of any work they undertake, in the hope that the

reader will discount their bias. It may often happen, in contrast with their expectation, that the persuasiveness of a book is destroyed by forewarning. A reader whose opposition is immediately aroused can hardly follow a line of reasoning with due sympathy. In other words, the author of this book will try not to disclose whether he is a full-hearted disciple of Bergson, or an angry antagonist, or a phlegmatic balancer of "faults" and "virtues."

After we have reviewed our information, and before we answer the decisive question, "Wherein is Bergson original?," then we shall pause half a moment to ask how one mind impregnates another and a philosophy is generated. At present, to assuage those who remember that according to Bergson's own principles a philosopher cannot be understood by means of analysis, we may recall what he said of philosophic intuition:

> In the problems the philosopher has posed, we recognize the questions that are agitated around him. In the solutions he gives them, we expect to find, arranged or disarranged, but scarcely modified, the elements of preceding or contemporary philosophies. Such a view must have been suggested to him by one philosophy, and such another by another. With what he has ready, heard, learned, we shall doubtless be able to recompose the greater part of what he has done. We then set to work, we return to the sources, we weigh the influences, we extract the similarities, and we end by seeing in the doctrine what we seek in it: a more or less original synthesis of the ideas in the midst of which the philosopher lived. . . . Without this preliminary effort to recompose a philosophy with what it is not and to connect it with what has surrounded it, we might perhaps never attain to what it truly is; for the human spirit is so fashioned that it cannot begin to understand the new until it has tried everything to lead it back to the old.[8]

[8] Bergson, *L'Intuition philosophique*, pp. 809–10. (Throughout this study, translations not credited to another translator are mine.)

Chapter 2

THE ROOT IN TIME

IN THE CITY of Clermont-Ferrand, surrounded on three sides by hills, behind which lie the mountains, Henri Bergson was one day taking his usual walk after lecturing at the lycée. He was troubled. He had been explaining the paradoxes of Zeno, true paradoxes so far as he could see. They had no clear flaw, yet it was as if the demon of Socrates were whispering into his ear: "Impossible! . . . Impossible because a certain experience, confused perhaps but decisive, speaks to you in my voice." [1] While he meditated, there struggled into consciousness a luminous point of thought, from the wellspring of his being, it seemed. It was the idea of *durée*, which came to him long before its companion idea of intuition.[2]

Let us follow Bergson's development up till then in his own words:

I studied first at Condorcet, during the period when that lycée would change its name in accord with the fluctuations of

[1] Bergson, *L'Intuition philosophique*, p. 811. Cf. J. Desaymard, *La Pensée de Bergson*, p. 11; J. Desaymard, *M. Bergson à Clermont-Ferrand*. J. Chevalier, *Bergson*, adds that Bergson had Zeno's paradoxes specifically in mind.

[2] "The theory of intuition, which you stress far more than that of duration, did not come to my mind until rather long after the latter, from which it derives, and through which alone it can be understood." From a letter to Harald Höffding, in Höffding's *La Philosophie de Bergson*, p. 161.

politics. For my part, I saw these changes take place three times: Condorcet was changed to Bonaparte, then to Fontanes, only to return to the original name. Little schoolboys though we were, we already could meditate on the instability of human affairs. . . .

And it was at Condorcet that I experienced the first and perhaps the only hesitation of my life. I was attracted equally by science and by letters; I felt an equal aptitude for mathematics and philosophy. But I had to choose. And then, when I had decided for letters [i.e., the Ecole Normale des Lettres], my teacher of mathematics came and made a scene before my parents, telling them I was about to commit an irremediable act of folly.

Thereafter, in 1881, tranquil days passed at normal school, where I had Jaurès and Mgr. Baudrillard as classmates. Jaurès was already a marvellous orator! He improvised superb speeches, full of metaphors. . . . How shall I put it? . . . of flowery metaphors. . . . Yes, Jaurès was flowery, and we were then a thousand miles from thinking that he would rush into politics.

After normal school, the years of teaching. I remember with pleasure my stay at the lycée of Angers, in that prosperous country of the West, where one lets oneself live with so much enjoyment.[3] A great deal of music is made at Angers.[4] It is a truly artistic city. Then I was named to Clermont-Ferrand. The transition was abrupt, from the opulent scenery of the Loire to the stark scenery of the Auvergne. Ah well! And yet it is there, amidst the mountains, the extinct volcanoes, the countryside of bright grass in which villages with black houses are set, it is there that my thought collected itself, gathered itself up, concentrated itself. The object of my first meditations was to define the notion of time, which seemed incomplete and lacunary to me. And since then I have simply worked. I have

[3] Bergson's first serious doubts began at Angers. Chevalier, *Bergson* (French ed.), p. 50.

[4] Bergson, whose father was a musician, makes many striking comparisons of duration with the flow of music; e.g., *Time and Free Will*, p. 105, *Durée et simultanéité*, p. 55.

worked with all my strength, without interruptions, without being obliged to change the rigorous method I have imposed on myself since the beginning.

Traditional philosophy is always systematic. I have wanted to create a different kind. By no means have I an answer to everything. I do not know to what conclusions my premises are going to lead. I have constant recourse to scientific documentation, and it is certain that my previous mathematical studies have been of great help to me.[5]

This influence of mathematics did more than urge rigorous method on Bergson. The geometries of Lobachevski and Bolyai had been translated into French in 1866, and when the dissertation of Riemann was published one year later, a new era in the development of mathematics had been well inaugurated. A problem arose: what relation has Euclidean geometry, or any geometry, to sense data; how far is mathematics conventional? The age-old hope that reality might be caught in geometrical and algebraic formulae became attenuated.[6] For example, Jules Tannéry, in 1875, could sharply criticize the belief that sensations can be represented by mathematical symbols.[7] About the same time, Jules Lachelier argued that all causality is subordinate to purpose, and therefore to contingency; and Bergson called Lachelier his teacher.[8]

Considerations like these, and others we shall mention in

[5] Report of a visit of M. Grémil to Bergson, *M. F.*, CVIII (1914), 397.

[6] G. Lechalas, *Etude sur l'espace et le temps.*

[7] J. Tannéry, *Science et philosophie*, 3d ed. First published in *Revue scientifique*, March 13, April 24, 1874.

[8] ". . . I have not had the pleasure of being his pupil, but I should nevertheless consider him as my teacher. I have been devoted to him since my earliest youth, and throughout my whole career I have cherished a fervent admiration for him together with a profound gratitude. I was still, in fact, on the college benches when I read his thesis on *The Basis of Induction* (*Le Fondement de l'induction*). . . ." From a letter of Bergson, *Bulletin*, XXXI (1931), p. 123.

later chapters, made plausible the enterprise of Boutroux in *The Contingency of the Laws of Nature.* Boutroux was Bergson's teacher for two years at the normal school. Although he was teaching only history of philosophy at the time, and in an objective way,[9] it was the direct influence of his book that caused Bergson to doubt science.[10]

It is in place here to note the universe Boutroux visioned, one "not made up of elements equal to one another, susceptible of being transformed, like algebraical quantities. . . .[11] Deductive science [he said] is radically abstract. It determines the relations of things, once it is granted that their nature remains immobile or fixed. . . .[12] Homogeneity and permanence demanded by the category of quantity [are] . . . accidental and relative. . . .[13] The great error of Determinism is its belief in the omnipotence of the mathematical method." It was not long before Poincaré, in an article that followed *Time and Free Will* by two years,[14] and in the subsequent *Science and Hypothesis*, made a classic formulation of the way in which mathematics is relative to human convenience.

Sometimes this mathematical discussion leaves the clearest of marks in *Time and Free Will.* In endeavoring to prove the genuine importance of time, Bergson makes an assumption: If "a mischievous genius, more powerful than

[9] J. Chevalier, *Bergson* (French ed.), pp. 46–47.

[10] Parodi, *La Philosophie contemporaine*, p. 259. The statement may be too positive, but Parodi's work was read and approved by Bergson (see the Foreword to Gunn's history). Chevalier, a friend of Bergson, acknowledges the influence of Boutroux, but less forcefully (*Henri Bergson*, p. 47).

[11] E. Boutroux, *The Contingency of the Laws of Nature*, p. 158.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Revue des sciences*, Dec. 15, 1891, p. 774. Quoted in Lechalas, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

the mischievous genius conjured up by Descartes," decrees that all motion in the universe be doubled in speed, so that everything happens twice as fast and lasts half as long as before, we should then have no objective manner of measuring the speed-up. Nevertheless, says Bergson, the genius would fail; we should recognize the impoverishment of our conscious states.[15] The problem, called by Renouvier "The Problem of Similar Worlds," was common in discussions on mathematics and convention, for everyone was puzzled over how absolute size and velocity might be proved.[16]

As we have already pointed out, the origin of Bergson's theory of time is to be found in divergence from opinions he had previously held. Now Bergson had been a Spencerian, and he had early wished to complete Spencer where Spencer had been more ambitious than knowing, in mechanics.[17] Why had he been attracted to Spencer? Because the latter, in consonance with the advance of a new age, "announced a doctrine of evolution, in which the progress of matter toward perceptibility would be traced together with the advance of mind toward rationality, in which the complication of correspondences between the external and the internal would become the very substance of things." [18]

But the Spencerian substance was only a shadow, as even Spencer told his readers. Matter must be either infinitely

[15] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 193.

[16] In his *Etude sur l'espace et le temps* (1896), Lechalas devotes a chapter to the discussion during the period we are treating. Incidentally, Lechalas thinks the argument of Bergson weak, because if *all* processes are hastened in the correct proportions, there can be no diminution in richness of experience (pp. 121–22). Bergson might answer that inner duration is not strictly commensurable with material process, and therefore not compressible together with it. See *Matter and Memory*.

[17] Bergson, *La Pensée et le mouvant*, p. 8.

[18] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 363.

divisible or ultimately indivisible; yet both cases are beyond human conception.[19] Thinking is the process of relating, and no thought can go beyond relations. How can intellect, our organ of converse with phenomena, pierce through them? [20]

Bergson accepted this admission, one common to Nietzsche as well: "Purely logical thought is created by life, in definite circumstances, to act on definite things"; by what power can it "embrace life, of which it is only an emanation or aspect?" [21] Are we able to escape the dilemma, which introspection and movement seem to belie or transcend? If we start with what is fundamental to it, the theory of time, we may find an error.

First we must notice, with Spencer, how closely our ideas of Time and Space are related, their relationship being proved by our speech forms. "In the phrase 'a great space of time,' a magnitude of one serves to denote a magnitude of the other. Conversely, the tourist in Switzerland whose inquiries regarding distance are answered in *stunden*, or hours; and the savage who, in common with the ancient Hebrew, has a place described to him as so many days off; find times used to express space." [22] Uncivilized men express Space in terms of Time, civilized men, the reverse. But though we use coexistences in place of sequences,[23] we should not confuse time with the way we measure it, for time is irreversibly sequential.

Time is a relation between elements of consciousness.[24]

[19] From Kant via Mansel and Hamilton.

[20] H. Spencer, *First Principles* (ed. 1910), pp. 107–8.

[21] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. x.

[22] H. Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (2d ed.), II, Part I, 207, para. 336.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 208–9.

More generally, it is "the abstract of all relations of position among successive states of consciousness . . . the blank form in which these successive states are represented; and which, serving alike for each, is not dependent on any." [25]

The abstraction of general time occurs thus: A certain estimated time-distance away from passing states of consciousness, one sensation is present, then another, until the "place" is separated from particular sensations and kinds of sensation. When the whole series of places more or less remote from the focus of consciousness has been abstracted, it comes to be "aggregated into a consciousness of Time, considered as the blank form of all relations of sequence," a real counterpart of Space and coexistence.[26]

As we consider the foregoing with Bergson, we agree in good measure:

> Duration is always expressed in extensity. The terms that designate time are borrowed from the language of space. When we evoke time, it is space that responds to the appeal.[27]

There is a real space, without duration, in which phenomena appear and disappear simultaneously with our states of consciousness. There is a real duration, the heterogeneous moments of which permeate each other; each moment, however, can be brought into relation with a state of the external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process. The comparison of these two realities gives rise to a symbolical representation of duration, derived from space. Duration thus assumes the illusory form of a homogeneous medium, and the

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 210, para. 337.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 210–11.
[27] *La Pensée et le mouvant*, p. 9. The introduction to this group of essays is Bergson's account of his philosophic development.

connecting link between these two terms, space and duration, is simultaneity, which might be defined as the intersection of time and space.[28]

In what do we agree with Spencer? Once we grasp Space and Time as homogeneous forms, we are unable to keep them separated, the pressure of practical life forcing us to reduce one to the other.[29] But space and time are both real, so that the reduction, by which we, as civilized men, delegate space to represent time, must be no more than symbolical. In what do we disagree? Spencer to the contrary, time is neither a relation of elements nor a homogeneous medium.[30]

In this, Bergson disagrees not alone with Spencer, but with the whole powerful modern tradition stemming from Kant. That is to say, Bergson accepts something of Kant, modifies a part, and draws strength together with individuality from opposition to him. We must observe, for it is

[28] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 110. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 98. That practical pressure forces us to make space of time is repeated so often that we need give no references. There is a very strong expression of this idea in *La Pensée et le mouvant*, p. 43.

[30] A minor similarity between Spencer and Bergson is their admission of different times for different individuals. Spencer notes that the rhythms of our vital functions and of our locomotion determine the sense of time we have. Therefore, time is different for different species, and to a certain extent is varied by individual experience (*Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 213–14). In Bergson's terms: "It is possible to imagine many different rhythms, which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness, and thereby fix their respective places in the scale of being" (*Matter and Memory*, p. 275). This distinction becomes the basis of *Creative Evolution.*

If Bergson's concept is wider, deeper, there is still no reason to belittle the similarity. The one (Spencer's) is more influenced by scientific psychology, the other by introspection. It is not wholly unlikely that the first was the germ of the second. When we come to study *Matter and Memory*, we shall see that it too was the result of reflection on scientific psychology, but of the French, not the German variety.

important, that in his first book Bergson adopts Kant on space. These are his words:

We have assumed the existence of a homogeneous Space and, with Kant, distinguished this space from the matter which fills it. With him we have admitted that homogeneous space is a "form of the sensibility": and we understand by this simply that other minds, e.g. those of animals, although they perceive objects, do not distinguish them so clearly either from one another or from themselves. This intuition of a homogeneous medium, an intuition peculiar to man, enables us to externalize our concepts in relation to one another, reveals to us the objectivity of things, and thus, in two ways, on the one hand by getting everything ready for language, and on the other by showing us an external world, quite distinct from ourselves, in the perception of which all minds have a common share, foreshadows and prepares the way for social life.[31]

[31] *Time and Free Will*, p. 236. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson makes additional distinctions. "Certainly," he says, "it would be a chimerical enterprise to try to free ourselves from the fundamental conditions of external observation," according to which extensity is concrete, continuous, diversified, and organized (pp. 244–45). Yet we are able to free ourselves from the infinitely divisible, "amorphous and inert space which subtends it. . . . It might, then, be possible, in a certain measure, to transcend space without stepping out from extensity" (p. 245).

We may ask the question, if materiality is loss of tension, as is held in succeeding pages of *Matter and Memory*, and amorphous space the limit of tension-loss just as pure quality is the limit of tension-gain, why should not amorphous space or inert matter (pretty nearly the same as Bergson describes them) be an inevitable mode of human experience? Not that one mode of experience should usurp the other; but even if science goes beyond geometry (pp. 259 ff.), how we can escape geometrizing Bergson does not make clear, although he qualifies, "it might be possible in a certain measure." He ascribes the sharpness of our distinction of objects to motor reactions and habits (e.g., p. 280). the need for which will presumably never disappear. The problem is also dealt with in *Creative Evolution* (pp. 202 ff., 211 ff.).

There is an allied difficulty with regard to Bergson's relation to idealism and realism. In the introduction to *Matter and Memory*, he calls himself frankly dualistic (p. vii), and throughout the book he insists that the object of experience is very similar to our perceptions but is not entirely

It is quite otherwise with time. Let us take Renouvier's analysis to begin with, for it was he, after all, who represented Kant in France, especially in his early writings. According to Renouvier, "The synthesis of the interval and the limit, or of the instant and time, is *duration*. . . .[32] Duration is thus the synthesis of the interposition of possible instants between two given instants. . . . Under this relation (of container to content), duration is a quantity, duration is composed of durations, and can be measured by means of a certain duration taken as unity, if one succeeds in fixing the latter in representation in some way. Finally, continuity appears to us as the indefinite divisibility of duration." [33] As for the measurement of time, "it is obtained through movement, on the principle (or synthetic judgment) that equal durations correspond to equal spaces traversed by two identical moving bodies under the same conditions and in the same circumstances." [34]

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constituted by them. Nevertheless, when he maintains that the perceived is itself pure quality alone, with objectivity consisting in multiple internal "vibration" (p. 270), it becomes hard to differentiate Bergson from an objective idealist. In *La Perception du changement*, the phrase occurs: "Change has no need of any support. . . . Movement does not imply something mobile." This, together with the description of God in *Creative Evolution*, and of an all-pervasive duration in *Durée et simultanéité*, tend to confirm the classification we have made of him.

Again, Bergson's statement in *Durée et simultanéité* (p. 62) that duration "implies consciousness; and we put some consciousness at the basis of things by the very fact that we attribute to them a time that endures," sounds just like the argument of an objective idealist. But his phrase is tinged with caution by the ambiguous "de," which may be meant to stress "some," in "de la conscience." Later, toward the end of his life, Bergson said he was closer to realism than idealism (Maritain, *Ransoming the Time*, p. 66). I do not understand what he meant.

[32] He employes the same word as Bergson, *durée*.

[33] C. Renouvier, *Essais de critique générale. Premier essai* (1854), pp. 125, 137–38.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 208. Afterward, in *La Nouvelle Monadologie*, Renouvier defined the laws of time as "the general relation of the *before* and *after* to the present that has the instant as limit. . . . Instants are merely the

To Bergson there *is* time of the nature described by Spencer and Renouvier; but there is another time beneath it, a living time:

We can think of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished from it except by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space.[35] But, familiar with the latter idea, we introduce it unwittingly into our feeling of pure succession; we set our states of consciousness side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, no longer in one another, but alongside of one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain the parts of which touch without penetrating one another.[36]

To speak with fuller accuracy, Renouvier had already taken a step in the direction of Bergson's analysis. Space, he held, is an intuitively given form of phenomena, but "time is more particularly a form of the facts of empirical

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limits or ends of a *duration*, or stretch of time" (pp. 8–9, quoted in Gunn, *Time*, p. 152). Bergson cites Renouvier, though in a different connection, in *Time and Free Will* (p. 237). Renouvier begins to sound very much like Bergson in *Le Personnalisme* (1903). Time, he there says, is flowing and variable, linked with the essential characteristics of individuality. All the same, we identify time with uniform movement, and uniform movement with space. "Thanks to scientific abstraction, duration has had number applied to it by the interposition of extensity" (p. 371).

[35] Lionel Dauriac, a Renouverian, had made the same assumption of a "pure spirit freed of all relation with space, subject to the sole form of time" seven years before Bergson. Such a being, said Dauriac, could have no conception of number and extensive quantity, because our states of mind are heterogeneous and interpenetrative (*La Critique philosophique*, Vol. II, 1882). See Lovejoy's *Some Antecedents*. Like Tannéry, Dauriac depreciated psychophysics.

[36] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 101. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

consciousness and of memory." [37] But try as we may to diminish the contrast between Renouvier and Bergson, it stubbornly resists.

This, then, is the salient innovation in what Bergson teaches: there are two kinds of time, the one rich, heterogeneous, indivisible, the other poor, homogeneous, divisible, spatial. Had Bergson's characterization and division ever been anticipated?

In our answer we shall first refer briefly to Fichte and Hegel, then to:

Ravaisson (1838)[38]	William James (1886)
Balmès (1846)	James Ward (1886)
Cournot (1851)	Fouillée (1883–)
Delboeuf (1865)	Guyau (1885)
Lotze (1878)[39]	

Of course the group is not exhaustive, but if there is any striking analogy with the Bergsonian innovations, we are likely to find it here. If Bergson's theory was a current in the stream of contemporary discussion, we should expect, with the help of a modicum of hindsight, to discover the current and its direction.

The German romantic idealists exerted a lasting influence on French philosophy, of this there is no question. We shall postpone a discussion of the extent of the influence to another occasion, yet it should be recalled that although these German systems culminate in timelessness, en route they often pass or transcend or synthesize a conception

[37] Renouvier, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

[38] The date refers to the work under discussion.

[39] Lotze's *Metaphysik* of 1841 was quite a different work. The English translation of *Matter and Memory* (p. 50) gives the reference to the book of 1878, which contains the passage in question.

closely related to Bergson's. For instance, Fichte, before attaining the summit of Faith, is drawn into a Heraclitean scepticism: "There is nothing enduring, either out of me, or in me, but only change." [40]

Bergson prefers to emphasize the difference between himself and the Germans. Spinoza's "Substance," he maintains, Fichte's "Ich," Schelling's "Absolute," Hegel's "Idea," Schopenhauer's "Will," all are emptied of meaning as soon as their authors apply them to the whole of things. If we identify duration with the essence of the perceived, which is obviously both repetitious and necessary, spontaneity commingles with mechanism in an impossible fashion.[41]

But Bergson's denial contains an unspoken admission, for in saying that meaning disappears as soon as the conceptions are applied to everything, he admits that before that uppermost of heights is gained they do have significance; and it is the nature of the German systems to rise through stages.

When we search, for example, through the coils of the Hegelian world, we find in them a number of suggestive ideas. Patently complex, the system contains at least five kinds of time: abstract logical process or time, abstract sensuous or natural time, temporal development, which becomes life, which in turn develops from individual into universal history. The first two kinds of time are lacking, in the Bergsonian sense, that is. Referring to the second, Hegel says: "Because things are *finite* they are in time; they do not perish *because* they are in time; rather, things themselves are the temporal – to be so is their objective vocation

[40] J. G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*, Part II, p. 89.

[41] *La Pensée et le mouvant*, pp. 59–60. Only here, to my knowledge, does Bergson devote more than a casual mention to the Germans with whom he is often affiliated.

(Bestimmung).[42] The process of real things itself makes time, therefore; and just as time is called all-powerful, so is it also all-powerless [*Wenn die Zeit das mächtigste genannt wird, so ist sie auch das ohnmächtigste*]." [43] Time as mathematics is external, paralyzed of life.[44] And material nature, Hegel often affirms, is only repetition.[45] Therefore, vital time begins in a dramatic difference. It "preserves itself by and through its separation from . . . inorganic nature, and by the fact that it consumes . . . inorganic nature. Life in the universal fluid medium [inorganic nature], quietly, silently shaping and moulding and distributing the forms in all their manifold detail, becomes by that very activity the movement of those forms, or passes into life *qua Process*." [46] The life of the living individual "is not identical Being in a state of repose, but, on the contrary, represents origination, alternation, mediation with an other." [47]

The end of the last sentence, which reads, "though it is mediation that returns to itself," illustrates the deceptiveness of the preceding section. Hegelianism, to be sure, has the facility of thriving on paradox. Since it differs so vastly from Bergsonism, almost any comparison is likely to be half-spurious; but not necessarily more than half-spurious. Even if there were no historical tie between German objective idealism and French spiritualism, the fact alone that Nietzsche could develop from the former would demonstrate at least a potential likeness between the forebears of

[42] My italics. I am not acquainted with any good account of the varieties of Hegelian time.

[43] G. W. Hegel, *System der Philosophie* [*Encyclopaedie*], Part II, para. 258.

[44] *Ibid.*, paras. 254–58.

[45] Bergson writes of "pure homogeneity, that pure *repetition* by which we define materiality" (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 63).

[46] Hegel, *Phenomenology* (trans. Baillie), pp. 221–23.

[47] Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion* (trans. Speirs and Sanderson), III, 323.

Nietzsche and Bergson, since the resemblance of these two descendants cannot be mistaken (nor, parenthetically, can their difference).

The historical tie we are speaking of connects Schelling with Félix Ravaisson-Mollien.[48] Ravaisson's attitude toward science is instructive: "Science, work of the understanding, traces and constructs the general outlines of the ideality of things. Nature alone, in experience, gives the substantial integrity of experience. Science circumscribes under the extensive or mathematical unity of logical form. Nature, in intensive unity, constitutes the dynamics of reality." [49]

We already have a Bergsonlike division of science and understanding from nature, intensity, and dynamism. Just how dynamism is to be conceived, Ravaisson goes on to tell: "Since there is nothing in distinct consciousness except under the general condition of movement, and since movement is in time, the general condition, the being of consciousness is being in time. Time is the primary law and necessary form of consciousness. Everything that is in consciousness is therefore a change having its duration in a subject that endures and does not change at all." [50]

The rather abstract wording of this quotation – "distinct consciousness . . . general condition . . . being of consciousness . . . necessary form" – has the ring of German idealism and sounds alien to Bergson; it is. But beyond the phraseology, there is essential likeness. Above all, there is the near-equation of consciousness with movement with time.[51]

[48] The indebtedness of Ravaisson to Schelling is discussed in Chapter V, where the relation of Bergson with Ravaisson is also taken up.

[49] J. Ravaisson, "De l'habitude," *M. M.* (1894), p. 34.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[51] As the next chapter will show, Maine de Biran thought very simi-

From Ravaisson we go to the Spanish ecclesiastic, Jaime Luciano Balmès, who published *Filosofia Fondamental* in 1846. Translated into French by Manec (*La Philosophie fondamentale*), it contains in its seventh and eighth books a conception of time pertinent to the one we are trying to clarify.

Balmès begins with a difficulty. How can time be distinguished from things, duration from the enduring, succession from what succeeds? To conceive a self-existent time "it is necessary to conceive it as actual, and, for that, to grasp it as an indivisible instant; but this instant is not time at all: it does not imply succession; it is by no means a duration in which one can find a *before* and an *after*." [52] Wholly abstract time "has no real existence; to separate it from beings is to destroy it." [53] On the other hand, and independently of bodies, life is revealed to us in the successive and changing states of our soul. If we unite the two species of time, time becomes the succession of things from an abstract point of view. Following Kant, succession is the alternation of the being of things and their non-being, a process we really perceive.

In the summary of Lechalas, Balmès's theory amounts to this: "Simple relation of being with non-being, the pure idea of time, abstract time, admits of no measurement at all; but measurement becomes possible if the pure idea combines with the phenomena of the experimental order. To form this measure, in the midst of the flux and reflux of internal

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larly. Still before him, Condillac had a Bergsonian idea of time (cf. R. Berthelot, *Un Romantisme utilitaire*, II, 152).

[52] Quoted by Lechalas, *op. cit.*, p. 165. The account of Balmès's theory is summarized from Lechalas, pp. 164–69.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 166. Obviously, this is the time described by Hegel as powerless.

or external existence, two things are necessary to us: a sensible phenomenon and the idea of number; and the measurement of time consists precisely in the enumeration of the mutations of this phenomenon." [54]

When we mention the "pure idea of time," we speak with a Kantian tongue. Nevertheless, we should recall Bergson's pure externality, "concrete extension, continuous, diversified, and at the same time organized," which becomes susceptible of measure with the aid of abstract geometry (Balmès's "idea of number") and perception.[55] To Balmès, one needs actual experience of phenomena before one can "form the measure" of time; to Bergson, one needs practical experience to excite geometrizing into being. Regardless of the difference between the vocabularies of Balmès and Bergson, the former seems almost to represent a Bergsonian Kant.

Antoine Augustin Cournot even speaks like Bergson (and Guyau as well), although the full extent of the similarity will not be apparent until we discuss the biology of Bergson. It is not Cournot's opinion, as it is Bergson's, that all things are fundamentally continuous. But surely vital forces are,[56] and, in general, one may say that "the human spirit is forced, by its organization and by the form of the instruments it employs, to substitute habitually for the continuity inherent in things an artificial discontinuity, and in consequence to mark degrees, to break up lines, to trace compartments according to artificial and up to a certain point arbitrary rules. . . . It is the very act of movement that originally gives to the animal a perception of space, suitable to the functions the animal must fill." [57]

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[55] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 244 ff.
[56] A. Cournot, *Essai*, Vol. I (1851), para. 188.
[57] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, paras. 205, 139. In the opinion of Cournot, the extended

Cournot on continuity and discontinuity is not unlike Bergson. But when we examine J. Delboeuf's *Essai de logique scientifique*, the analogues become astonishing.

Quoting the German thinker, Hermann Ulrici, who wrote in opposition to Herbart's denial of the mobility of real being, "Delboeuf says: "Activity, movement, purely as such, is an entirely simple notion, as simple as our first immediate perceptions of colors, of sounds, which are equally indefinable. It cannot be separated into moments or parts because it has none of them." [58] Space and time imply movement, not vice versa, and movement is defined by the primitive idea, force.[59]

No matter if Ulrici's method of proof is in the German rationalistic vein. What he proves enables Delboeuf to go further: "We shall then say that the ordinary idea and the scientific idea of time ought to be distinguished." Delboeuf pauses to cite Balmès, and continues:

The duration all the moments of which are considered as equivalent is no longer properly duration; it is an extended line drawn in space, and whose different parts are traversed by the eye; it is, so to speak, a *fourth dimension of space.*[60] In this fictitious duration the moments are neither past, nor present, nor future. In time as commonly understood, on the contrary, every moment is conceived to be distinct from all the moments that precede and follow it in being big with the future. . . . Time, change . . . this it is that gives to things their eminent character of reality. But then, how does one construct a science? One tries as far as possible to eliminate this inconvenient factor

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is the object of immediate intuition, whereas duration must be represented artificially before it can become so. Therefore, "the idea of space . . . is necessary to us for the representation and clear intuition of time" (*Traité* (1861), I, 33).

[58] H. Ulrici, *Compendium der Logik*, p. 77; quoted in J. Delboeuf, *Essai de logique scientifique*, p. 220.

[59] J. Delboeuf, *op. cit.*, pp. 283–84.

[60] My italics. The reader will see why I use them when we discuss Guyau (p. 41).

of time, which would give all our results the unscientific character of something variable and passing; one tries as far as possible to lay down laws, true not in all times, as is occasionally said, but outside of time, above change.[61]

At what could Bergson take umbrage? Bergson protests against a simultaneous or successive assumption of the impulsive effort of time, and of absolute regularity and mathematical pre-existence.[62] But Delboeuf, in the name of the "common idea," allows time variability and heterogeneity.[63] Nor does Delboeuf split time or movement into component parts, for he approves Ulrici. And "bigness with the future" calls to mind the time of *Creative Evolution*, "which gnaws into the future and swells as it advances." [64]

Like Bergson, Delboeuf thinks a time of homogeneous moments is incompatible with the "push" of time. After recalling that in mechanics we do not attend to generation of phenomena but range them in a linear, spatial series like "the trees of a promenade," he continues: "Thus, to take an example, if I consider the trajectory of a body from one point to another, I am not occupied with the passage of this body from one point to another, a phenomenon that falls under the law of real time, but I regard the different points of the trajectory as immobile and *potentially animated* [*animées virtuellement*] with a given force." [65]

Delboeuf's likening of spurious scientific time to a line

[61] Delboeuf, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–53.

[62] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 215–16.

[63] Delboeuf, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

[64] Page 4. Bergson does not admit the definite pre-existence of the future in the present. Delboeuf might be taken to do so, unless, that is, we have read more of him than has been quoted.

[65] Delboeuf, *op. cit.*, p. 153. Delboeuf is emphasizing, in a slightly non-Bergsonian tone, how a preceding state excludes the simultaneity of a succeeding one by the very fact of the latter having evolved. This stage of thought is like Bergson's early view as revealed in *La Pensée et le mouvant* (p. 8). Delboeuf reveals somewhat greater philosophical

drawn in space and derived from the trajectory of a moving body is particularly striking, because it is a likeness Bergson exploits on occasion after occasion. We have already recalled one such passage from *Time and Free Will*; and in *Matter and Memory*, in one of a large number of passages, he says movement "describes in space a trajectory which I may consider, for the purposes of simplification, as a geometrical line. . . . But we must not confound the data of the senses, which perceive the movements, with the artifice of the mind, which recomposes it." [66] Movement leaves a trail like the fiery trail of a falling star, so he says in *Durée et simultanéité*,[67] which contains an extensive analysis (later to be summarized) of how true time becomes linear and measurable.

The same opposition to the time-line is voiced in the *Metaphysic* of Hermann Lotze.[68] It is difficult to arrive at the exact meaning of Lotze, who is both careful and hesitant.[69] But of the inadequacy of the time-line he is certain:

The character of direct perception attached to our idea of Time is only obtained from images which are borrowed from Space and which, as soon as we follow them out, prove incapable of exhibiting the characteristics necessary to the thought of Time. We speak of time as a line, but however large the abstraction which we believe ourselves able to make from the properties of a line in space in order to subsume Time under

punctiformity than Bergson. The latter, by the way, cites Delboeuf on psychophysics in *Time and Free Will*.

[66] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 101; *Matter and Memory*, pp. 249, 247.

[67] Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité*, p. 63.

[68] Although we discuss Lotze at this point, it should be remembered that the first, quite different version of his metaphysics appeared in 1841, even before that of Balmès (1846). The work of 1878, which Bergson read (*Matter and Memory*, p. 50), falls into proper chronological order here.

[69] Cf. J. A. Gunn, *The Problem of Time*, pp. 131 ff.

the more general conception of the line, it must certainly be admitted that the conception of a line involves that of a reality belonging equally to all its elements. Time however does not correspond to this requirement. Thought of as a line, it would only possess one real point, namely, the present. From it would issue two endless but imaginary arms, each having a peculiar distinction from the other and from simple nullity, viz. Past and Future. The distinction between these would not be adequately expressed by the opposition of directions in space.[70]

These "two endless and imaginary arms" are highly reminiscent of Bergson's refutation in *Time and Free Will* of the usual conceptions of freedom. Bergson even prints a diagram to show that when equated with lines, past and future are just such "endless and imaginary arms." [71] As Lotze says: "Past and future are *not*, and the representation of them both as dimensions of Time is in fact but an artificial projection, which takes place only for our mind's eye, of the unreal upon the plane which we think of as containing the world's real state of existence." [72]

Time, adds Lotze, can be neither an empty stream nor an a-priori form of the mind,[73] though it is a creation of our "presentative intellect." [74] At this point he turns his back on Bergson.[75]

[70] H. Lotze, *Metaphysic* (ed. Bosanquet), I, 313.

[71] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 182.

[72] Lotze, *op. cit.*, p. 335. I do not think the judgment, "past and future are *not*," excludes Bergsonian persistence of time gone by. Bergson himself says, "The past is essentially that which acts no longer" (*Matter and Memory*, p. 5). Gunn (*Time*, p. 250) argues that this conflicts with another statement of Bergson, that we desire, will, and act, with our entire past (*Creative Evolution*, p. 5). The contradiction can be mitigated or resolved by pointing out that the true character of a person is not revealed in every-day, habitual responses, but at moments of crisis and deep moral decision. In every-day life we use the part of our memory that is illuminated by consciousness for practical ends. See pp. 64, 108, below.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

[75] He is dealing in thin distinctions when he differentiates himself from

For the most part, we have been working without much guidance from Bergson. At times he was explicit, however. In 1905 he wrote to the *Revue philosophique*:

My dear *Director*:

The article that Mr. Gaston Rageot has devoted to the congress of Rome [the International Congress of Philosophy of the preceding year] in the last issue of the *Revue philosophique* contains the following lines: "It was at first and principally under the inspiration of Ward, and a little under the influence of William James, that the author of *Time and Free Will* was led to his famous conception of inner flow."

. . . The theory of the inner flow, or rather of "real duration," to which Mr. Rageot makes an overkind allusion, could not have been formulated under the influence of Ward, for I knew nothing of this philosopher, not even his name, when I wrote *Time and Free Will*. It was some time after the publication of my book that I read the article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in which James Ward expounded his psychology. . . . There is only a very distant resemblance between real duration, as I conceive it, and the "presentation-continuum" of Ward.

I come now to what concerns Mr. William James, a philosopher for whom I shall never be able to express my love and

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Kant. At the end of his treatment of time he suggests, and in later books (*Drei Bücher der Metaphysik* and *Grundzüge der Religions-philosophie*) he clearly says, that for us, finite creatures, time is real, but God is timeless.

By "creation of our presentative intellect," Lotze refers to the analogue to his famous theory of space-perception, namely, that our idea of space results from the relation by movement of the various qualitative *local signs* of sensation. Likewise, there are *temporal signs*, which need not originate in real time, and through the agency of which we arrange objects successively. Lotze does not thereby deny a vague, inherent, Kantian necessity to perceive spatially and temporally. In the *Metaphysic* he tends both to deny time its reality (p. 343) and to affirm that time is no mere appearance (p. 356). Bergson, in *Time and Free Will*, discusses and discards the theory of local signs (p. 93), and in *Matter and Memory* he quotes Lotze's scepticism of the doctrine of the "specific energy of nerves" (p. 50).

admiration sufficiently. His *Principles of Psychology* appeared in 1891. My *Time and Free Will* was elaborated and written from 1883 to 1887, and published in 1889. I did not then know anything of William James but his fine studies on effort and emotion (I did not know the article that appeared in *Mind* of January 1884, in which there already is found part of the chapter on the "stream of thought"). That is to say, the theories of *Time and Free Will* cannot be derived from the psychology of James. I hasten to add that the conception of "real duration" developed in *Time and Free Will* coincides in many points with the description James gives of the "stream of thought." [76]

The disclaimer sounds entirely plausible. Yet Firmin Nicolardot, writing to indicate that Bergson was influenced by a book called *L'Univers*,[77] shows that in *Mind* of 1886 there was an article on Ward, and in 1887 one by him; and Ward was also mentioned many times in the *Revue philosophique* between 1882 and 1887, as was William James.[78] Bergson cites James's "What Is an Emotion?" which appeared in *Mind* of 1884;[79] he must have been reading the periodical then. As for the *Revue philosophique*, Bergson was a contributor to it in 1886. Nicolardot therefore allows himself a caustic jibe at Bergson:

[76] *R. ph.*, LX (1905), 229–30.

[77] *Laggrond, Pellis et Bergson. L'Univers*, published in 1884, is different in theme from *Time and Free Will*, though a large number of subsidiary conceptions are similar. Since the date is 1884, and the book was obscure, and since we have shown and shall continue to show influential earlier views on which Bergson drew or might have drawn, there seems no need to speculate on his possible borrowing from *L'Univers*. Nicolardot's earlier *Un Pseudonyme bergsonien?* was an attempt to show that Bergson had written *L'Univers* pseudonymously. Bergson denied authorship or knowledge of the book, and Nicolardot was later convinced that its authors were two Swiss.

[78] F. Nicolardot, *Pellis, Laggrond et Bergson*, p. 116. Mention of Ward in the *Revue*: XIV (1882), 4; XVI (1882), 332; XXIV (1887), 206. Mention of James: XVII (1884), 235; XIX (1885), 348; XXIV (1887), 670, 207.

[79] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 29, note 2.

"One must conclude that chance, during a whole succession of years, very exactly deprived him of meeting in his professional reading, whether of *Mind* or of the *Revue philosophique*, just that which would have been of a nature to interest him most." [80]

What shall we say to this charge? We know that Bergson was reading the *Revue philosophique* in 1884.[81] In February of that year, the magazine carried a rather long summary of James's *Mind* articles (1883, 1884) entitled, in the French summary, *Sur quelques omissions dans la psychologie d'observation intérieure*.[82] It was one of the summarized articles that Bergson denied having read. Part of the French summary went as follows:

> The current of our consciousness does not flow in an even flux: it rather resembles the path of a bird that successively flies and perches. The places of rest are usually occupied by relatively stable sensations and images; the places traversed by flight are represented by thoughts or relations, static or dynamic, between the points of repose. We thus have substantive parts and "transitive parts." . . . If we represent the subjective current by a continuous line, every part that we isolate can be represented by a cut; but these cuts do not exist in reality; they are artificial, and the natural function of each segment of the line is to lead in a continuous way to another segment.[83]

We do not doubt Bergson's honesty, even though it seems likely that he read a reference to James or Ward on the subject of time. The important thing to remember, a little discomfiting to the Anglo-Saxon ego, is that it does not

[80] Nicolardot, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–18.

[81] Bergson, "De la simulation inconsciente," *R. ph.*, XXII (1886). Bergson refers to an article by Richet in the *Revue* of Dec., 1884.

[82] *R. ph.*, XVII (1884).

[83] I apologize for practically retranslating James's vivid English. But this represents what Bergson might have read.

matter. Whatever Bergson might have taken from James had been explained lucidly by numerous predecessors of both, save for James's theory of emotion.

The letter of Bergson to the *Revue* makes the matter still clearer, for he adds that the stream of consciousness has a psychological origin and import, whereas the theory of duration is a criticism of the homogeneous time of philosophers and mathematicians. When he wrote *Time and Free Will*, Bergson had not yet made an extensive study of psychology, at least not of professional psychology. His antagonism had been aroused by the claims of exact science and philosophy, and he had been stimulated by current French thinkers whose attitude resembled his.[84]

We are now in the years during which Bergson was writing his initial work. For that reason alone they are especially significant. Of all prominent philosophers of the time whom we have not mentioned, it would appear that Fouillée and his stepson Guyau influenced Bergson most. If we do not care to prejudge their influence on him personally, we can say that their attitude was in many respects like his, a notable fact in any case.

During the seventy-four years of his lifetime (1838–1912), Alfred Fouillée wrote about thirty-seven books on

[84] What is true for James is also true for Ward. Ward wrote in *The Realm of Ends* (p. 306), referring to the eleventh edition of his *Psychology*: "In 1886, three years before publication of Professor Bergson's *Données* (i.e., *Time and Free Will*), I had written a long paragraph on this topic, containing *inter alia* the following: – 'Thus . . . there is an element in our concrete time-perception which has no place in our abstract conception of time. In time, conceived as physical, there is no trace of intensity; in time, as psychically experienced, duration is primarily an intensive magnitude.'" We have seen that this theory was more elaborately stated, and in more Bergsonian language, long before the eleventh edition of Ward's *Psychology*. Bergson disliked talk of "intensive magnitude."

philosophical problems. He was clear and individual in the main, despite his belief that philosophy should be a reconcilement of all systems.[85] In his doctoral thesis, *La Liberté et le déterminisme* (1872), he taught that the idea of liberty has the inherent power of growth and self-implementation.[86] It is not alone an idea, but an idea-force, the existence of which is corroborated by the psychologists.[87] In *L'Evolutionnisme des idées-forces* (1890),[88] Fouillée compared ideas to nuclei like the stars and astronomical systems, where the force that lights and moves the world is concentrated and tries to draw everything to itself.[89]

By idea, Fouillée always means a conscious idea. Therefore, consciousness "is the immediate presence of reality to itself and the internal unrolling of its riches."[90] Mechanism "is precisely the most impoverished and most fragmentary conception of the world. A conception of the world founded on the phenomena of internal life, on the contrary, envelops additional elements: it envelops qualities, a spontaneous activity, a mode of reciprocal connection other than that which is familiar to us in the sphere of pure mechanism. . . . It is the material that gives reality a *quantity*, but it is the mental that gives it a *quality*."[91] The difficulty is that representation has a kind of discontinuity separating consciousness into moments and parts, making

[85] A. Fouillée, *Histoire de la philosophie* (1875), p. xii. Quoted by Parodi, *La Philosophie contemporaine* (2d ed.), p. 41.

[86] A. Fouillée, *La Liberté et le déterminisme* (3d ed.), pp. 230 ff.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

[88] Large parts of the book were printed as magazine articles between 1883 and 1890. Augustin Guyau says it was written in 1888 and 1889; he obviously means the major portions (*La Philosophie et la sociologie d'Alfred Fouillée*, p. 79). There is hardly any question of Bergson having influenced the book, but only something of the opposite.

[89] A. Fouillée, *L'Evolutionnisme des idées-forces*, p. xciii.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

them reproducible, associable, classifiable. "On the one hand we have *immediate consciousness* of the subjective, that is to say, of *action* and of *feeling*, of their individual qualities and their diverse degrees of intensity, which introduce into it a beginning of differentiation; but we have of it neither true science nor ignorance; on the other hand we do have knowledge and ignorance of the objects of our sensations and *representations.* Finally, we can also have the science of *effects* produced by action and feeling on the quality, the quantity, the *succession* and the duration of our representations; and it is by this indirect means that actions and feelings return to the domain of psychological science." [92]

These views were enlarged further in *La Psychologie des idées-forces* (1893),[93] which is markedly anti-intellectualist. A quotation will illustrate what we mean:[94]

Deceived by the artifice of reflective analysis and of language, most psychologists consider in consciousness and memory only the *determined* and *definite* states that appear one after the other: white, blue, red, sound, odor, — so many pieces artificially cut out of the internal stuff; therefore, they do not admit that one has consciousness of transition itself, of the

[92] *Ibid.*, p. xliv.

[93] Parts of the book appeared in magazine articles from 1885 to 1892. The ideas are consonant with Fouillée's earlier writings, so the likelihood of a Bergsonian influence is still small. On page 109 of Vol. II, Fouillée says: "Since the preceding pages have been written [presumably the chapter on time], Mr. Bergson has also proposed a theory of time that has common traits with that of Guyau." He then marks the similarities and disapproves the departures. Fouillée's *L'Avenir de la métaphysique fondée sur l'expérience*, issued in 1888, though dated 1889 (cf. Fouillée, *La Pensée*, p. 205), has the same opposition to mechanistic philosophers, to abstraction and spatialization, and the same praise of "radical experience" and heterogeneity as *La Psychologie.*

[94] Fouillée was often dubbed intellectualist. To distinguish his voluntarism from the Bergsonian, he later called his own an "intellectual voluntarism" (*La Pensée*, p. 404).

passage from one term to another [*d'un terme à l'autre*],[95] of that which corresponds in spirit to movement and to spontaneous innervation.[96] . . . The grasping of duration becomes impossible. How, in effect, explain the feeling of duration if consciousness is a line in which the diverse perceptions exist one outside the other and one after the other, like the lifeless words of a phrase, without our feeling the passage itself from one perception to another and their continuity? . . . We here let ourselves be duped by the imagination, which never considers anything but readymade and principally visual images; let us not be duped similarly by pure intelligence, which cannot easily apply itself except to ideas of definite contour, expressed by definite and immutable words. There are instantaneous photographs of the waves of the sea in storm, and these photographs are as immobile as the sea of ice of Mount Blanc: such would be consciousness if it had not the sense of change; a succession of photographs in repose would not give it the feeling of *πάντα ῥεῖ*, if it felt its terms alone, without relations. But it is not so at all: when we enjoy, suffer, wish, we have the feeling of the current of life.[97]

This is Bergson's duration; or as close as we can get to Bergson's view with an allowance for "terms" and "relations" — Fouillée would never concede absolute heterogeneity. As in *Time and Free Will* (p. 132), it is the word that freezes duration. Still more striking, because of the time-sequence, are the similes of the photograph, the "lifeless words" of a fragmented phrase, and the blending of one

[95] The word "term" may be regarded here either as "termination" or as "stopping point."

[96] The reader will see, in the chapter on intuition (p. 45, note 6), that there was a connection between Fouillée and James. James read Fouillée, and Fouillée, James. James also wrote an article on the work we are discussing (Beaucoudrey, *La Psychologie et la métaphysique des idées-forces*, p. 535, note 28). Fouillée, by the way, had read Ward (*L'Evolutionnisme*, p. xliv).

[97] A. Fouillée, *La Psychologie des idées-forces*, II, 84–85.

into another color, all of which are to play a major part in the yet unwritten *Introduction to Metaphysics.*[98]

Fouillée uses the same argument as Bergson against Zeno,[99] and against the intellectualist theories, whether of rationalism or of associationism, for they are atomistic.[100] How can we wonder if Fouillée, in *La Pensée et les nouvelles écoles anti-intellectualistes* (1911), claims precedence over Bergson? In a letter to Augustin Guyau, son of his own philosopher stepson, he once more defines his relation to Bergson:

> Before Nietzsche and Mr. Bergson, I had recognized that movement alone is real, that rest is illusory, and that there is nothing really immobile, except for the geometrical figures imagined by us. . . . That which we call immutable substance is a representation borrowed from the material appearances that solid bodies afford us: There are only *actions* and active *thoughts* [pensées *en acte*], and it is in *time*, in *duration*, not in *space*, that we grasp the act of thinking and of existing, the desire or the want.
>
> But here Mr. Bergson parts from me, to say that our internal reality consists uniquely in a "duration" and that this duration is constituted by a pure *change* of *quality*. I certainly recognize, as has been seen, the essentially qualitative character of internal life; but I do not admit that the succession of heterogeneous qualities, by itself, can form duration. The latter supposes in addition *intensity*, *force*, which is inherent in the will and gives it the character of tension, of tendency, of effort, of desire. "Pure duration" is a concept-limit, not an object of "intuition"; we have direct consciousness only of present alteration of consciousness, with its qualitative nuance, and we do not conceive time except by abstraction, in recalling the past and having a presentiment of the future. Duration, as Guyau

[98] Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 5, 28, 13.
[99] Fouillée, *op. cit.*, II, 86.
[100] *Ibid.*, II, 33; I, vi.

had shown, is *appetite* tending toward the future and preserving the image of the past, which it ends by projecting more or less into space. A philosophy of pure duration seems to me the pendant of pure extension, advocated by Descartes, in which bodies are uniquely formed of extension. "Extensions" as bodies and "durations" as spirits, these are realized entities.[101]

Taken together, the philosophy and manner of philosophizing of Fouillée are different enough from Bergsonism. Aside from the two letters quoted in Chapter VI, there is no strong evidence of the immediate influence of Fouillée on Bergson.[102] But whether through such influence, or through an aura exhaled into French philosophy, or through the common possession of certain philosophic attitudes, Bergsonism is an historical continuation of Fouillée-ism.

Fouillée's remark that the Bergsonian theory of time is like Guyau's invites consideration. The famous little essay written by Guyau, *La Genèse de l'idée de temps*, appeared in the *Revue philosophique* of 1885; it was republished by Fouillée in an expanded form after five years more had passed and its author had been dead two years. Soon after its second appearance, Bergson criticized it in the *Revue*, from the standpoint of his own recent *Time and Free Will*.[103]

First, says Bergson, the method is wrong. It is applicable to many psychological problems, but to ask how we come to know time is to suppose the method invariable, in some way external to consciousness. Duration is a ceaseless flow and inexistent except for consciousness and memory. We cannot synthetically reconstitute the evolution of the sense

[101] A. Guyau, *La Philosophie et la sociologie d'Alfred Fouillée*, p. 212.
[102] E. G. de Beaucoudrey, *La Psychologie et la métaphysique des idées-forces chez Alfred Fouillée*, pp. 536–37.
[103] Bergson, "Review of 'La Genèse,'" *R. ph.*, XXXI (1891), 185–90.

of time. On the contrary, we should analytically dissociate pure intuited duration from the discursive concepts that envelop it, whereupon time will be seen not as distinct moments, but as moments prolonged into one another. Finally, Guyau, while understanding that "conscious" time is a translation of duration into space, does not see how the translation is made, why it is possible, or what real time is.[104]

The perspective is different from Bergson's. Look at the chapter headings: The Period of Primitive Confusion; The Passive Form of Time and Its Genesis; The Active Depth [*fond actif*] of the Idea of Time and Its Genesis; Space as a Means of Representation of Time; Time and Memory; The Remembrance and the Phonograph;[105] The Normal and Pathological Illusions of Time. The book is not an effort at metaphysical analysis, but rather an effort to show the psychological generation of the civilized man's idea of time. Bergson makes a not dissimilar analysis. His attitude is metaphysical, however: given true duration, how does it come about that we so distort it? Guyau still tends toward an evolutionary compounding in the English empirical tradition; Bergson has in mind to show the "devolution" or degeneracy of our temporal experience.

Here is the problem Guyau sets himself to solve: "If . . . everything is present in consciousness, if the image of the past is a sort of illusion, and if the future, in its turn, is a simple projection of our present activity, how do we come to form and organize the idea of time, with the distinction of its parts, and what is the evolution of this idea in human consciousness?" [106]

[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 188–89.

[105] Bergson uses the analogy of the phonograph on p. 41 of *Mind-Energy* (in "The Soul and the Body").

[106] M. Guyau, *La Genèse de l'idée de temps* (2d ed.), p. i of author's Introduction.

The answer, briefly, is this: The passive and reproductive imagination furnishes the immobile body of time, its *form*; motor and will-activity furnishes the "living and moving *depth* [*le* fond *vivant et mouvant*] of the idea of time. The two elements reunited constitute the *experience* of time." [107] The tentative answer and its sequel exhibit several influences: Kantianism, some will-full doctrine like Schopenhauer's, English empiricism, and the philosophy of Fouillée.

Originally, the world presents to the child a blooming, buzzing, timeless confusion. Among animals, space perception develops first, for it is a spatial memory or automatic association of sensual images that directs their going, coming, eating, drinking, and mating. Even instinct is such an association, without clear disengagement of past and future. And since space is connected with perceptions, it precedes temporal order, which depends on imagination and representation.[108]

If everything were to flow in us like the waters of a river, our thoughts would lose themselves in fleeting sensation. To know is to discriminate. Everything coexists in our early discrimination: visual and tactual sensations spontaneously take on an imprecisely dimensioned spatiality. Within us we begin to feel, also imprecisely, the stirrings of time: "Every change . . . produces in the spirit a sort of luminous train analogous to that left in the sky by falling stars.[109] On the contrary, a fixed state always appears with the same clarity, like the great stars of the sky." [110]

The animal, the primitive, the child, all practice the

[107] *Ibid.*, p. iii.

[108] *Ibid.*, Chapter I.

[109] This is just the simile used by Bergson, in a somewhat different connection, in *Durée et simultanéité* (p. 63). We have also noticed it in Delboeuf.

[110] Guyau, *La Genèse*, Chapter II; quotation, p. 26.

philosophy of Maine de Biran. The future to them is a striving toward, the past something receding out of sight. We abstract motor effort, with the aid of mathematics discover the *true* momentary present, and we begin to feel temporal procession; the series of indistinct terms becomes better and better defined as it approaches the present, where it acquires an effortful pointing into the future. And just as the future is desire, the past becomes an interior crystallization of our feeling and thought, like the successive layers of salty deposit left by evaporating ocean water. Like the idea of space, the idea of time is empirically the result of the adaptation of our activity and desires to the same unknown environment. Summarized, "it is movement in space that creates time in human consciousness. . . . The idea of movement goes back to two things: force and space; the idea of force goes back to the idea of activity, the idea of space to a mutual exclusion of activities, which therefore resist one another and range themselves in a certain manner," acquire distance, are in space.[111]

Time, of course, implies memory. "Once memory is formed, the self is formed. Time and movement are derived from two essential factors: outside, the unknown, and inside, a certain activity, a certain energy unrolling itself." [112]

We can conclude from the foregoing that time is a product of evolution, measured spatially, but not truly reducible to space.[113] Life and consciousness are various; variety engenders duration; time is the provision of an identical medium for the reproduction of these different effects; time is the abstract formula of change that introduces order in what otherwise would be chaos.[114]

[111] *Ibid.*, Chapter III; quotation, p. 47.
[112] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[113] *Ibid.*, Chapter IV.
[114] *Ibid.*, Conclusion.

Guyau's time is a composite, a "living and moving depth" or "course," a tenseness and transition, pure change, the elemental variety of life, as opposed to the "passive" and "reproductive" form that is the "bed" of time. This is essentially like Bergson. There are even verbal near-identities. For example, Guyau writes that regular time is in the beginning "a fourth dimension of things that occupy space." [115] In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson uses the same words, which recur again in *Durée et simultanéité*.[116]

Bergson laid the similarities to Fouillée. He said the latter had been inspired by *Time and Free Will* to add them to Guyau's essay before publishing it in complete form.[117] Now we have had sufficient faith in Bergson to stop our ears against the suspicion that he lyingly denied his sources. We cannot without evidence impugn the honesty of Fouillée, who was a devoted step-father and a sincere philosopher. He cherished the memory of Guyau so much that he would not have published anything falsely under his name. In Fouillée himself, and in many of his predecessors, as we have been pointing out, there was enough suggestion and elaboration of the themes to which we refer. As for the identical verbal formula in question, Delboeuf, in 1865, called "fictitious" duration "a fourth dimension of space."

Bergson's conception of time did not remain static (after all, nothing can, so Bergson teaches us). He had praised modern physics for escaping the discontinuities of New-

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 73–74.

[116] Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (*Time and Free Will*), p. 83. Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité*, p. 78.

[117] V. Jankélévitch, "Deux philosophes de la vie," *R. ph.*, XXVII (1924), 422–23.

tonian physics, and modern mathematics for following motion from within.[118] When Einstein's theory of relativity took all minds in thrall, Bergson was tempted to compare it with the theory of duration. *Durée et simultanéité* (1922) expresses his decision that the paradoxes of relativity are only apparent, and that the theses of Einstein begin to prove the natural belief of men in a unique and universal Time, at which Bergson had hinted in *Creative Evolution.*[119]

Although there are many different time-tensions, says Bergson, all human minds perceive in the same way, and therefore live something of the same duration. Implicitly, we imagine human minds throughout the universe, close enough to be consecutive, and having the extremity of their fields of experience in common. Looked at from another vantage point, the many consciousnesses form one rhythm. Then we eliminate the human minds that served as relays for thought-movement, and only an impersonal and universal time remains,[120] which must have the nature of consciousness.[121]

We measure time through movement, which, as muscular sensation, is part of inner life, and, in visual perception, describes a spatial trajectory. "Every one of us traces an uninterrupted movement in space from the beginning to the end of his conscious life. . . . All his history rolls itself out in a measurable time." [122] Substituting for our voyage that of any other person, then any "contemporaneous" trajectory whatsoever,[123] we arrive at a measure of time ac-

[118] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 265–66; *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 70–72.

[119] Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité* (2d ed.), p. viii.

[120] *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[123] Two "voyages" are contemporaneous when they are indifferently perceptible by a consciousness as two, or, when our attention is undivided, as a unique flux (p. 66).

cepted by society – for example, the rolling of the earth.

Instantaneity therefore implies two things: duration, or real time, and spatialized time, "a line described by a movement and thereby become symbolical of time." [124] Spatialized time is a fourth dimension of space, enabling us to control experience by emptying its content into a past, present, and future, which give – these last are my words – an additional and indispensable symmetry to the objects we wish to control.[125]

The fundamental resemblance between this analysis and Guyau's need not be enlarged on.

For the moment, we have come to the end of our tether of analogy and quotation. Our purpose should not be misconceived. Until we raise the problem of Bergson's originality as a whole, it should not be forgotten that we have been isolating analogies from systems with an all-over color different from Bergsonism. Yet without prejudicing the judgment we shall eventually pass, we may say that despite the sudden glimmering in Bergson's mind of the idea of duration one Auvergnian afternoon, it was no cataclysmic insight for French philosophy. In different guises, it had already long endured when Bergson composed *Time and Free Will* between 1883 and 1887. Was the same true of his theory of intuition?

[124] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Chapter 3

THE ROOT IN INTUITION

FOR ALL its unity of theme and tone, *Time and Free Will* is like a path that shows the footsteps of travelers who have already come and gone. We learn at the very beginning that joy is an orientation toward the future, an enrichment of sensation, while sorrow faces the past, for it is impoverishment of sensation and idea.[1] This is the footstep of Guyau, for whom the eager pressing forward into life, the wealth of sensation and thought accumulated by the living man, is joy itself; and inertia, the worst of crimes, is poverty, sorrow, death.[2]

Nor had Guyau alone walked the way of Bergson: the latter's definitions of pleasure and pain are like those of James. "The attraction of the pleasure is nothing but this movement [toward its object] that is begun, and the very keenness of the pleasure, while we enjoy it, is merely the inertia of the organism, which it [the inertia] immerses in it [the pleasure] and rejects every other sensation. . . . In the moral as in the physical world, attraction serves to define movement rather than to produce it." [3] Likewise, we

[1] *Time and Free Will*, pp. 10–11. "Wherever there is joy," says Bergson, "there is creation; the richer the creation, the deeper the joy" ("Life and Consciousness," *Mind-Energy*, p. 29).

[2] J.-M. Guyau, *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*, pp. 12–30.

[3] *Time and Free Will*, p. 38.

should "define the intensity of the pain by the very number and extent of the parts of the body which sympathize with it and react, and whose reactions are perceived by consciousness." [4]

Attraction is movement toward an object, keenness of pain and pleasure are immersion in bodily reactions – one sees the famous man who saw the bear and ran, and was afraid. Furthermore, "it seems indeed improbable that nature, so profoundly utilitarian, should have here assigned to consciousness (of pain and pleasure) the merely scientific task of informing us about the past or the present, which no longer depend upon us." [5] What may be called the utilitarianism of Bergson was thus not without a link with Pragmatism.[6]

Having something of the same temperament as James, as well as the need to prove consciousness incommensurable, Bergson, too, depreciated psychophysics, which to many seemed to promise a truly scientific psychology. Fechner had claimed to measure the magnitude of sensation. But he had had to assume the equality of all *just noticeable differences* of sensation, and was attacked on that score. Delboeuf countered by showing we can judge directly whether the distance between two sensations is more or less than, or equal to, another distance between two sensations. Thereby,

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[6] Bergson cites James's "What Is an Emotion?" (*Mind*, 1884) on p. 29 of *Time and Free Will*. He also admits the influence of the article on the Bergsonian theories of effort and emotion (see the letter on James in Chapter II, above). James, interestingly, had read Fouillée's *La Liberté et le déterminisme* and *La Critique des systèmes de morale contemporains*, in which it is held that pleasure, pain, sensation generally, and thought, have as primary aim the guidance of the effort of the organism to maintain life (Beaucoudrey, *La Psychologie et la métaphysique d'Alfred Fouillée*, p. 535, note 28).

he reasoned, we can construct a sensation scale free of arbitrary assumptions. It would certainly have compromised Bergson's case to admit that quality can be measured, so he used the argument of Jules Tannéry.

> Without doubt [wrote Tannéry to the *Revue scientifique* in 1875] a sensation can be more or less intense, but is that enough to make the sensation a quantity? A quality, beauty, for instance, can also be more or less great. The only *magnitudes* that one might measure directly are those of which one can define equality and addition, and such magnitudes do not seem to be met with except in the domain of abstraction, of pure mathematics. In reality, we do not measure the things themselves, we do not observe them, we do not know anything of them, we measure only lengths whose variations have, together with the variations of things, a complex and unknown connexity. . . . I can conceive neither the sum of two sensations, nor their difference: when a sensation grows it becomes entirely different, and what has come to modify it, of which I have no idea, does not seem to me of the same nature as the original sensation.[7]

The effort to measure sensation was the kind of rationalism Bergson fought whenever it had metaphysical ambitions. A mathematical psychology would substitute quantity for quality, mechanical reasoning for insight. If the substitution were made, how could we account for the drama of human discovery and progress, when all of the great discoveries are the result of "an immediate intuition, and as such the work of an instant, an *apperçu*, a flash of insight. They are not the result of a process of abstract reasoning, which only serves to make the immediate knowledge of the understanding permanent for thought by bringing it under

[7] J. Tannéry, *Science et philosophie* (3d ed.), pp. 130, 140. Originally published in the *Revue scientifique*, March 13, April 24, 1875. Bergson duly acknowledges his debt to Tannéry (*Time and Free Will*, p. 67).

abstract concepts, i.e., it makes knowledge distinct, it puts us in a position to impart it and explain it to others." [8]

The voice is the voice of Bergson and the words are the words of Schopenhauer, who further says:

Only the worst knowledge, abstract, secondary knowledge, the conception, the mere shadow of true knowledge, is unconditionally communicable. If perceptions were communicable, that would be a communication worth the trouble; but at last every one must remain in his own skin and skull, and no one can help another. To enrich the conception from perception is the unceasing endeavour of poetry and philosophy. However, the aims of man are essentially *practical*; and for these it is sufficient that what he has apprehended through perception should leave traces in him, by virtue of which he will recognize it in the next case; thus he becomes possessed of worldly wisdom. . . . Wisdom proper is something intuitive, not something abstract.[9]

We continue in the words of Cournot:

Plato came before Aristotle: for it lies in the nature of the human spirit that the intuitions of the philosophers precede the organization of positive science, whose deepest questions the philosopher arrives at in a trice, questions which are in reality the most fundamental, and to which the savant returns later for the coordination and explanation of patiently accumulated facts.[10]

We continue in the words of Bergson (now the voice and words are one):

Our intelligence . . . can place itself within the mobile reality, and adopt its ceaselessly changing direction; in short, can grasp

[8] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, I, 27.

[9] *Ibid.*, III, 248, 249. Compare Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, where he speaks of the "clairvoyant intuition" (I, 114) and the discovery and creation of the beautiful, which originate in unconscious processes (*ibid.*, p. 291).

[10] A. A. Cournot, *Traité*, Vol. I (1861), para. 226.

it by means of that *intellectual sympathy* which we call intuition. . . . *To philosophize, therefore, is to invert the habitual direction of the work of thought.* . . . A profoundly considered history of human thought would show that we owe to it all that is greatest in the sciences, as well as all that is permanent in metaphysics. . . . But metaphysics, which aims at no application, can and usually must abstain from converting intuition into symbols. Liberated from the obligation of working for practically useful results, it will indefinitely enlarge the domain of its investigations.[11]

This concern of Bergson with introspection and intuition came after he had seen true time with the eye of the spirit.[12] But intuition was so closely allied with time and so fundamental that he could say: "I consider the very center of the doctrine to be: the intuition of duration. The representation of a heterogeneous, qualitative, creative duration is the point from which I have departed and to which I have constantly returned. It demands a very great effort of the mind, the breaking of many frames, something like a new method of thought (for the immediate is far from being what is easiest to perceive)." [13]

It was hard for Bergson to find a term in which to express his way of introspecting:

"Intuition" is . . . a word before which I hesitated a long time. Of all the terms that designate a mode of knowing, it is

[11] Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 69, 70, 71.

[12] "I penetrated . . . into the domain of internal life, in which I had been uninterested until then" – i.e., until after the finding of duration (*La Pensée et le mouvant*, p. 10).

[13] Letter to Höffding, in his *La Philosophie de Bergson*, p. 160. Bergson's doctrine may well be compared with Schelling's praise of artistic intuition in the *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*. Philosophic intuition is higher than artistic intuition to Bergson, because artistic intuition, he says, begins in images and does not penetrate as deeply. Hegel places phlosophy above art for the same reason – that philosophy dispenses with sensuous images.

still the most appropriate; and yet it lends to confusion. Because a Schelling, a Schopenhauer and others have already made appeal to intuition, because they have more or less opposed intuition to intelligence, it might have been thought that I was applying the same method. As if their intuition were not an immediate quest for the eternal! As if, on the contrary, the matter were not first, as I see it, to rediscover true duration. Many are the philosophers who have felt the powerlessness of conceptual thought to attain the depths of spirit. Many, in consequence, those who have spoken of a supra-intellectual faculty of intuition. But, since they have thought that intelligence was operating in time, they have concluded that the surpassing of intelligence consists in emerging from time.[14]

Bergson was undoubtedly right in contrasting his philosophy with the German. Yet the fear that the two would be confounded was also justified, because they contain affinities of thought and temperament, as we have noted and shall continue to note.

The new method had its French root in Maine de Biran. According to Biran, our life is heterogeneous and often streamlike: "Our existence is sometimes severed by sharply divided epochs, and sometimes its diverse periods succeed one another insensibly and go on, intermingling with a gradation that makes the transition imperceptible. It is certain that our successive existence does not have two like instants. Man, carried by a swift current from his birth until his death, finds no place where to cast anchor." [15]

We sense the flow of life by internal experience (*ex-*

[14] *La Pensée et le mouvant*, p. 33. This quotation is important in that it shows that Bergson was occupied with the German idealists at the time he was defining his thought.

[15] Maine de Biran, *Œuvres* (Tisserand), I, 74. The similarity to James's "flights and perchings" of the previous chapter scarcely needs to be pointed out.

périence intérieure), by an intimate sense (*sens intime*) identical with our sense of effort: "I shall from now on characterize this intimate sense in a more expressive way by the name of *Sense of Effort*, the cause or productive force of which becomes *self* by the sole fact of the distinction it establishes between the subject of this free effort and the limit [*le terme*] that offers immediate resistance by its own inertia," that is, the body.[16]

We get all our knowledge of externalities, says Biran, from this immediate knowledge of the self. Félix Ravaisson agrees emphatically. We act and through action perceive nature from the outside. "In consciousness, on the contrary, it is the same being that acts and sees the act, or rather the act and the view of the act intermingle. The author, the drama, the actor, the spectator, are but one. It is here alone, then, that one can hope to surprise the principle of the act." [17] In descending into ourselves we discover the source of being.

Ravaisson's essay, *Of Habit* (1838), foreshadowed spiritualism. His *Report on Philosophy in France in the Nineteenth Century* (1867) was its fount. Bergson wrote in tribute to the last prophetic pages of this work: "Twenty generations of students have known them by heart. . . . The influence the *Report* has exercised over our university philosophy [is an] influence whose precise limits one cannot determine, nor measure its depths, nor even describe its nature exactly, not any more than one could restore the inexpressible color that sometimes suffuses the whole life of a man with a great enthusiasm of first youth." [18]

[16] *Ibid.*, VIII, 179.
[17] J. Ravaisson, "De l'habitude," *M. M.*, XII (1894), 10.
[18] Bergson, "Notice sur la vie et les oeuvres de M. Félix Ravaisson-Mollien," p. 694.

The final pages of the *Report* begin with a prediction: "Many signs make it . . . permissible to foresee as little distant a philosophic epoch whose general character will be the predominance of what one might call a spiritualist realism or positivism, having for generative principle the spirit's inner consciousness [*la conscience que l'esprit prend en lui-même*] of an existence – nothing other than its own action – that it recognizes as the source and support of every other existence." [19]

Bergson knew he was a descendant of Ravaisson, whose intuitionism he called a "powerful effort of mental vision to pierce the material envelope of things and then to read the formula, invisible to the eye, that unrolls and manifests their materiality." [20]

Jules Lachelier, whose influence on Bergson we have noted in the previous chapter, was the second great progenitor of French spiritualism. To him also the progression of thought as revealed in self-consciousness was the universal principle. And although he was no intuitionist – he followed "the dialectical progress of thought" by "construction" and "synthesis" [21] – a feeling he once recorded shows how close in spirit he was to Bergson's kind of intuition:

It seems to me when I am at Fontainebleau that I sympathize with all my might with the powerful vitality of the trees that surround me. As to reproducing their form in myself, I am without doubt too encrusted in my own for that; but, on reflecting well over it, it did not seem to me unreasonable to suppose that all the forms of existence sleep more or less buried

[19] J. Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au xix^me^ siècle* (ed. of 1885), p. 275.

[20] Bergson, "Notice," p. 677. For a brief discussion of other influences on Ravaisson, principally that of Schelling, see p. 90, note 74.

[21] J. Lachelier, *Œuvres*, I, 218.

in the depths of each being; for under the well-fixed traits of the human form in which I am clothed, a somewhat piercing eye should recognize without difficulty the vaguer contour of *animality*, which veils in its turn the still more floating and indecisive form of simple *organization*: that is, one of the possible determinations of organization is *tree-ness*, which engenders *oak-ness* in its turn. Then *oak-ness* is hidden to some extent in my depths, and is, perhaps, sometimes tempted to issue from them and to appear, *dias in luminis oras*, although humanity, which has taken precedence over it, would forbid it and would bar the way.[22]

This half-Platonic fancy that every being hides within itself every other was also held, though without the Platonic terminology, by Bergson. "The matter and life that fill the world," he wrote, "are in us as well; we feel in ourselves the forces that work in all things; whatever is the inmost essence [*essence intime*] of that which is and happens, we partake of it."[23] Bergson could surely ask no stronger effort of sympathy than that Lachelier describes.

From Ravaisson and Lachelier – and from Schopenhauer, who had also affected Lachelier[24] – the current flowed to Fouillée.[25] When Bergsonism had become powerful, Fouillée fought against the kind of intuition it advocated; to that extent Fouillée was an intellectualist. All the same, his doctrine bears the earmarks of close relation to

[22] *Ibid.*, I, xviii-xix. Transcribed by Léon Brunschvicg.

[23] Bergson, "L'Intuition philosophique," *M. M.*, XIX (1911), pp. 823–24. Also in *La Pensée*. See Chap. V, below, for further discussion of this side of Bergsonism.

[24] I. Benrubi, *Les Sources et les courants de la philosophie contemporaine en France*, II, 595, 610.

[25] Fouillée was an eclectic. In addition to French philosophers, his teachers were Leibnitz, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Plato. As early as *La Liberté et le déterminisme*, he believed in "a point at which we feel our existence immediately . . . concrete and immediate possession of an existence that feels its action precisely" (2d and 3d eds., p. 203).

intuitionism: "When we speak of conscious life we designate by it not *formal* thought alone with its cold and colorless mechanism; no, it is the totality of internal experience, which is the revelation to self of the real existence of things; it is experience as *feeling* and *action*, and as *thought* at the same time, which give us a place among real things and thereby also makes these things exist for us." [26]

Fouillée shows a real resemblance in spirit to Bergson, but his stepson, Guyau, described philosophic intuition in a way startlingly like Bergson's: the two doctrines are not only in the same genus and species, but even in the same family; they are brothers fully capable of standing side by side.[27]

Guyau:[28] Besides this method that proceeds externally, there exists, we believe, another that more than one historian has already known how to use, but which has not been clearly enough formulated until now. This method strives, not to give . . . the geometric projection of every system, but to reproduce its very development and evolution, to mark all the degrees of this evolution, to accom-

Bergson:[29] There would not be place for two manners of knowing, philosophy and science, if experience did not present itself to us in two different aspects, on the one side in the form of facts juxtaposed to facts, which almost repeat one another, which are almost measured by one another, which in fine display themselves in the sense of distinct multiplicity and spatiality . . . on the other, it [conscious-

[26] A. Fouillée, *L'Evolutionnisme des idées-forces*, p. 279.

[27] Guyau's work, later published in two volumes as *La Morale anglaise contemporaine* and *La Morale d'Epicure*, was "crowned" by the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in 1874, when Guyau was nineteen years old. The part we quote is from the preface to the second book. For this comparison I have to thank V. Jankélévitch, who noted it in his article, "Deux philosophes de la vie: Bergson, Guyau," *R. ph.*, XXVII (1924), pp. 402–49.

[28] J.-M. Guyau, *La Morale d'Epicure* (6th ed., 1917), pp. 4–5.

[29] Bergson, *L'Intuition philosophique*, p. 823.

pany the thought of the author in all its steps; for human thought is moving and living, and there is not, as one says, a *fixed* system of it; on the contrary, every system, when the author remains the same, changes and transforms itself perpetually, goes from principles to consequences, from consequences returns to principles by a perpetual movement of expansion and concentration that recalls the very movement of life. The ideal aim of our method would thus be to replace the artificial divisions and subdivisions by the natural evolutions.

For that, the first thing to do is to find and grasp the chief idea [*idée maîtresse*] of the doctrine one wants to expound. This idea or these ideas (for there are sometimes several of them entering more or less into one another) truly give a system its personal character, its unity and life: they are the central point where everything comes to be connected and to which it is necessary to penetrate at the

ness] re-enters into itself, repossesses itself and deepens itself. In thus sounding its own depth, it penetrates much further into matter, life, reality in general. Having in effect left the curve of his thought to follow straight up the tangent, he [the philosopher] has become exterior to himself. He re-enters into himself in returning to the intuition. From these departures and returns are made the zigzags of a doctrine that "develops itself," that is to say, that loses itself, finds itself, and corrects itself indefinitely.[30]

. . . To the extent that we try to install ourselves in the thought of the philosopher instead of traveling around it, we see his doctrine transfigure itself. Then the parts enter one within the other. Finally everything collects around a unique point, of which we feel that one could approach it closer and closer though one must despair of attaining it.[31]

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 812.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 810. In his "Notice sur la vie et les oeuvres de M. Félix Ravaisson," Bergson uses the words *idée maîtresse* (e.g. p. 678). Of course, the intuition is ineffable, while the "chief idea" is the closest verbal approximation to it.

very start. One should not then leave the chief idea on the same plane as the others, to confound it with all the secondary ideas that derive from it and which it precedes in order of thought as it probably preceded them in order of time. One must place it in relief: it will be like the light that illuminates all the rest of the picture, it will be the very soul of the doctrine.

Once the historian thus possesses and strongly holds the principles, the deduction of consequences will gradually be made. To deduce from the chief idea everything that it already includes, it will be enough for him to place it in the historical environment in which it was born and which the analysis of texts will reveal to him. . . . In this resistant medium, he will then see it disengage itself and develop itself all at once. He will see the thought advance to recede and recede only to advance again, by a movement of undulation analogous to that which is produced in the physical world and to which modern science attributes all the other movements. . . . The problems already posed, the solutions that have been furnished for them, the philosophy and science of the time in which he lived, have been, for every great thinker, the matter he was obliged to use in order to give a concrete form to his thought.[32]

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 812.

Placed thus in some wise within the system, he will see it being born and growing little by little by an evolution similar to that of a living being. To create life, in effect, nature does not proceed artificially by assembling all the parts of a body and welding them; it is on one or more cells that all the others engraft themselves. It is likewise thus that human thought proceeds, creating one or more ideas, vague at first, then developing them, impregnating them by their contact with other ideas, and arriving thus at the making of a system, that is to say a basically harmonious whole, an organism. It is this work that the thought of the historian, to be truly faithful to its task, must strive to accomplish a second time.

In the same way that the impulsion given to embryonic life determines the division of a primitive cell into cells that divide in their turn until a complete organism is formed, so the characteristic movement of every act of thought leads this thought, by a growing subdivision, to display itself more and more on the successive planes of spirit until it attains that of utterance.[33]

And if we make an effort to imitate this attitude, or, better, to insert ourselves into it, we shall see again, in so far as possible, what the philosopher has seen.[34]

Close though they are, the intuitionism of Guyau and of Bergson are not identical. In the essays under consideration, Bergson plays down the continuous evolution of thought. Philosophic progress is De Vriesian in the main, advancing by mutations, by sudden leaps, by intuitions. Our eternal philosophizing is no more than a placing of signposts with directions to the fluid essence of life. Whereas Guyau relies on a continuing evolution of thought, with intelligence as mainspring, Bergson puts his trust in mysticism.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 821.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 811.

An important reason for the mysticism of Bergson was his belief in a "depth psychology," which aided him to develop his intuitionism and expand its consequences. We have therefore gone full circle in this chapter, having begun with the influence of psychologists such as James and Delboeuf, and returned to the scientific psychology from which Bergson drew sustenance.

Chapter 4

THE ROOT IN PSYCHOLOGY

THE NAME of Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus Paracelsus von Hohenheim, Paracelsus or Theophrastus Hohenheim for short, might well stand at the head of this chapter.[1] His belief that humans have magnetic connection with the stars and that magnets influence us by their emanation was a foreshadowing of Mesmerism. Present-day hypnotism comes directly from Mesmer's round oaken *baquet*, to which chains of patients were attached by protruding iron rods.

From that time on, through the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the study and practice of hypnotism, whether charlatanry or science, never flagged.[2] The early study was mainly nonconsecutive. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the science proper began to be developed. Charles Richet wrote a favorable article in 1875, and in 1884 maintained in the pages of the *Revue philosophique* that one person could influence another near-by person through thought alone.[3] Two years before, the Society for Psychical Research had been founded in England; and within eight years, the *Revue de l'hypnotisme*

[1] If we were willing to forego the picturesque name and return to the beginning of things as we know them, we might start with Thales.

[2] There is an extensive account in Binet and Féré's *Animal Magnetism*. See also Boring's *History of Experimental Psychology*, Chapter VII.

[3] Binet and Féré, *Animal Magnetism*, p. 64.

and the *Zeitschrift für Hypnotismus* were established. But the most notable event was the creation of Charcot's school at Salpétrière. Alfred Binet and Pierre Janet were both Charcot's pupils.

The fourth article young Bergson wrote was on "Unconscious Simulation in Hypnotism," in 1886.[4] As an introduction, he recounted how he had been drawn to conduct several experiments:

About two months ago I learned that an inhabitant of Clermont, Mr. V., . . . was devoting himself to experiments on hypnotism of young persons from fifteen to seventeen years old, with whom he was obtaining remarkable effects of mental suggestion. Thus, on opening before their eyes a book of which they saw only the cover, he managed to have them divine or read the number of the page he was looking at, even to see words, entire lines. In the cases, rare, moreover, in which the answer was inexact, it was enough to order the subject to read number by number or letter by letter for him to rectify his error. Mr. V. . . . wanted in vain to make me witness to these experiments, at which I was present in company with Mr. Robinet, assistant at the Faculty of Sciences of Clermont. We ascertained that Mr. V. . . . was working with remarkable sureness and in entirely good faith; we resolved nevertheless to repeat the experiments ourselves.[5]

The two experimenters decided that the words were reflected on the cornea of the experimenter and read by the hypnotized subjects, whose hyperesthesia was so great that they could perceive almost microscopic objects when it

[4] The three previous ones were "Le Rire: de quoi rit-on? pourquoi rit-on?" (1884); the "Introduction" to *Extraits de Lucrèce* (1884); "La Politesse" (1885).

During his years at Clermont-Ferrand, Bergson was a frequent spectator of experiments in hypnosis (G. Maire, *Bergson mon maître*, p. 28).

[5] Bergson, "De la simulation inconsciente dans l'hypnotisme," *R. ph.*, XXII (1886), p. 525.

was suggested that the objects were large. The conclusion drawn was that the subject, in good faith and unconsciously, was lying in accord with the command of the experimenter, and with the use of means unconsciously suggested to him by the latter.[6] Bergson also recalled articles by Richet and Pierre Janet, and the experiments of the Society for Psychical Research.[7]

It should not be thought that philosophy had lagged behind psychology in concern with the unconscious. Maine de Biran, employing ideas of Leibnitz, Cabanis, and Bichat, had been perhaps the first to delineate the unconscious clearly. According to him, the unconscious is the feeling of life, with all its affective, representative, and motor "components," when determined by movements originating in organic life rather than in the supraorganic self (the true focus of our spiritual personality).[9]

Anyone perusing the *Report* of Ravaisson[10] will see in it references to work on hallucination, madness, dreams, phrenology, instinct, and so on, all a part of the psychology we have been discussing. But Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, published in 1868 and soon translated into French, was a powerful new impetus coming from philosophy itself, narrowly so called for the years in which the book was written.

Hartmann noted that Fichte had preceded him, though incoherently, that Hamann, Herder, and Jacobi had also

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 531.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Maine de Biran, *Œuvres*, V (1925), 17.
[9] *Ibid.*, Vol. I (1920), Preface by P. Tisserand, pp. ii-iii.
[10] *Rapport sur la philosophie en France*, pp. 178 ff., 202 ff. Of course, Ravaisson thought psychology in the domain of philosophy.

prefigured him vaguely, but that Schelling had understood fully how "in all, even the commonest and most everyday production, there co-operates with the conscious an unconscious activity." [11] Put in a metaphor, Hartmann's hope was that philosophy "would seek the golden treasure in the mountain's depths, in the noble ore of its rocky beds, rather than on the surface of the fruitful earth." [12]

How real was the influence this hope of Hartmann exerted on the French psychologist we glimpse when Ribot, probably the foremost among them, refers to Hartmann for an encompassing proof of his own theory of the unconscious.[13] The reference was made just five years before *Time and Free Will.*

This influence, together with that of the psychologists, is present very strongly in the writings of Guyau.

> We should recognize that consciousness embraces a quite small portion of life and of action. Even the acts that are completed in full self-consciousness generally have their principle and their first origin in the insensible instincts and in some reflex movements. Consciousness is then only a luminous point in the great obscure sphere of life; it is a small lens grouping several rays of sun into pencils of light and imagining that its focus is the very focus from which the rays diverge. The natural energy of action, before appearing in consciousness, must already have acted beneath it, in the obscure region of instincts.[14]

Appearing in the same period, and motivated in part by the same interests, *Time and Free Will* had a similar doctrine

[11] Schelling, *Werke*, I, Part III, 624; quoted in E. von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, I, 25; see also p. 24.

[12] E. von Hartmann, *op. cit.*, I, 2.

[13] T. Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité* (5th ed.), p. 14. Ribot also cites (p. 99) James's *Principles of Psychology* on the transitiveness of thought.

[14] *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*, p. 10. In the same

of a "superficial ego" and a "deeper self." [15] The superficial ego is culture-created, stable, impersonal.[16] Consciousness is fluid.

> Not all our ideas, however, are thus incorporated in the fluid mass of our conscious states. Many float on the surface, like dead leaves on the water of a pond: the mind, when it thinks them over and over again, finds them ever the same, as if they were external to it. Among these are the ideas which we receive ready made and which remain in us without ever being properly assimilated, or again the ideas which we have omitted to cherish and which have withered away.[17]

It is to be noted that the deeper stratum of self is to Bergson something recoverable; it was that to Guyau also, as we shall see when we discuss morality. To point out how this intuitionism was furthered by contemporary psychology, it is necessary to review some of the ideas of Ribot and Binet.

Théodule Armand Ribot declared the independence of psychology from philosophy in a pioneer review, *English Psychology* (1870).[18] Psychology is "the pure and simple study of those facts that can constitute an independent science." Metaphysicians, by contrast, "are poets, whose aim is the reconstruction of the synthesis of the world." [19]

Ribot rejected Biranian spiritualism with scorn:

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book (pp. 44–45), Guyau refers to posthypnotic suggestion as revealed by Charcot and Richet.

[15] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 125.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 135. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[18] It is a commentary on the close relation of French psychology with philosophy that Ribot himself established the *Revue philosophique* in 1876. The magazine had very many psychological articles, side by side with the philosophical ones.

[19] T. Ribot, *English Psychology*, pp. 15, 14.

I am not ignorant that of late years it has been repeated, after Maine de Biran and Jouffroy, that "the soul knows itself, lays hold on itself, immediately." But not only have these psychologists passed twenty or thirty years in study before they discover this *immediate knowledge* (which is sufficiently surprising), — the *discovery* does not seem to advance us much; because when we have long and scrupulously sought what this intimate essence thus revealed is, we succeed only in finding such vague expressions as "absolute activity," "pure spirit outside of time and space," whence we may conclude that still the clearest part of our knowledge consists in phenomena.[20]

Hearing this scorn, and knowing that Ribot rejected introspection as insufficient,[21] for he considered consciousness to be no more than an "inessential accompaniment of a nervous process," [22] we might be tempted to think him at the opposite pole from Bergson. We should then be badly mistaken.

At the basis of Ribot's work was a conception of process:

The idea of progress, of evolution, or of development, which of late has become preponderant in all the science, has been suggested by the double study of natural sciences and of history. The scholastic ideas of the immutability of the forms of life, and the uniformity of the epochs of history have given place to a contrary conception. *The doctrine of Heraclitus has been revived and confirmed by the experiences of twenty centuries; all melts, all changes, all moves, all becomes.*[23]

Habit, memory, heredity, causality, these temper the universal flow. As in the universe, so in the individual, "Nothing that has been can cease to be." [24] (A principle of

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
[21] Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité*, p. 7.
[22] Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, p. 6.
[23] *English Psychology*, p. 25. My italics. *English Psychology* preceded *Time and Free Will* by 26 years.
[24] Ribot, *L'Hérédité psychologique*, conclusion.

Bergsonism, of course.) How this is true for memory is dramatically shown by the way in which a drowning man swiftly recalls the whole of his life, even to the smallest details. (Bergson, citing Ribot and others, uses the same instance as proof.)[25] Now psychic memory is itself not something independent of the body, but "the highest and most complex form of organic memory,"[26] which is a partial resultant from the invariable prolongation of perception into movement. (Bergson quotes Ribot on this point.)[27] The connection is "registered," and we gain recognition or habit. Here, as we have before said, consciousness, while useful because of its ability to condense the past,[28] is a spectator, not an actor; the body perceives and responds by taking an attitude; we consciously attend – that is, we are conscious of the attitude our body has taken. (Bergson regards this view of Ribot as correct.)[29]

By and large, Bergson accepts Ribot's formulation. The difficulty he finds is that it leaves something out.[30] It explains organic memory or habit-memory, but this form is not really self-sufficient, because it needs the collaboration of another form, which we may call "pure memory," which is always unique and absolutely retentive. Pure memory is also unconscious. Consciousness is an organ of choice, a *present* accompaniment of *present* action, which it helps to direct by drawing on pure memory,[31] by leading that memory up through the different planes of awareness to merge with activity.[32] We recall that in *Time and Free Will*

[25] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 200.
[26] Ribot, *Diseases of the Memory*, p. 202.
[27] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 111.
[28] Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité*, pp. 18–19.
[29] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 122 ff.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 195–97.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 319.

the "fluid mass of our conscious states," our true selves, seemed, by comparison with the account we have just given, rather easily recoverable; it was topped only by a superficial layer of "dead leaves." The truth is that *Matter and Memory* came after an intense study of the newer psychology and embodied a far more developed idea of *unconscious psychical states*,[33] which Bergson had long considered self-contradictory.[34] If we refer once more to Ribot, we see with what materials the mature idea had sustained itself.

In Ribot's opinion, states of consciousness are discontinuous one with another, each state being limited and individual, and therefore associable. (This point Bergson makes many times in *Matter and Memory*.) Consciousness is also discontinuous in the sense that "one does not always think." [35] But psychic phenomena are continuous, "thanks to a deep, hidden substratum, which must be searched for in the organism. In truth, a personality with no other base than consciousness would be a highly precarious one." [36]

Every state of consciousness represents only a very feeble portion of our psychic life, because it is at every instant sustained and so to speak pushed by the unconscious states. [Bergson reverses this: it is conscious intelligence that illuminates or "pulls out" the unconscious states.] Every volition, for example, plunges to the deepest depth of our being; the motives that accompany and apparently explain it are never anything but a feeble part of the real cause. [Bergson asserts this plunge for exceptional and moral acts.][37] The same for a great number of our sympathies, and the fact is so clear that the minds

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[34] "Le Parallélisme psycho-physique," *Bulletin*, I (1901), 46.
[35] Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité*, p. 8.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[37] See Chapter VI, where the conception of Bergson and a similar one of Renouvier are dealt with at length.

most destitute of observation are often astonished at their inability to account for their hatreds and their loves.[38]

Bergson says this last very plainly: "Just in proportion as we dig below the surface and get down to the real self, do its states of consciousness cease to stand in juxtaposition and begin to permeate and melt into one another, and each to be tinged with the colouring of all the others. Thus each of us has his own way of loving and hating; and this love or this hatred reflects his whole personality." [39]

The psychology of Ribot is a depth psychology, and Bergson incorporated a variant of it with his spiritualism and intuitionism. In fact, intuitionism had a kind of analogue in the theories of multiple personalities, perhaps the most radical of which was Binet's:

We have said that forgetting is often purely relative, true only of a particular mental condition, and not for a different mental condition; we have equally seen that unconsciousness exists only with regard to a certain personality, and ceases for another synthesis of phenomena. In a word, there can be in a single individual a plurality of memories, plurality of consciousnesses, plurality of personalities; and each of these memories, of these consciousnesses, of these personalities knows only what takes place in its territory. Outside of our consciousness, conscious thought that we ignore may be produced in us; to fix the nature, the importance, the extent of these consciousnesses seems impossible for the moment; it is possible that consciousness is the privilege of certain of our psychic acts; it is also possible that it is everywhere in our organism; it is even possible that it accompanies all the manifestations of life.[40]

The equivalent of intuition would be the successful effort to pierce through a personality wall to a hidden self. And

[38] Ribot, *Les Maladies de la personnalité*, p. 13.
[39] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 164.
[40] A. Binet, *Les Altérations de la personnalité*, pp. 322–23.

the possibility of the accompaniment of all life manifestations by consciousness is the equivalent of saying that latent within us is everything we have ever experienced. Most significant of all, here is the suggestion of a plurality of memories, a suggestion preceding the publication of *Matter and Memory* by four years.

We have still been remiss in two things, in delineating the face of the new psychology, and in rendering the theme of *Matter and Memory*. We begin with the second, and in the words of Bergson, which give both a notable example of his method of working at a problem and an emphasis that may not emerge as clearly from the book as might be wished (except in the 1910 preface to the English edition).

I had proposed to myself — some twelve years earlier — the following problem: "What do present-day physiology and pathology teach on the ancient question of the relations of the physical and the moral, to an unprejudiced mind determined to forget all the speculations it has made on this point, determined also to neglect everything in the assertions of scholars that does not have the pure and simple verification of facts?" And I set myself to study. I perceived rather quickly that the question would not be susceptible of provisional solution or even of precise formulation unless it were restricted to the problem of memory. In memory itself I was led to bound an area I had to narrow more and more. After confining myself to the memory of words, I saw that the problem thus formulated was still too big, and that it is the memory of the sound of words that poses the question in its most precise and interesting form. The literature of aphasia is enormous. I took five years to scrutinize it. And I came to this conclusion, that there must be between a psychological fact and its cerebral substrate a relation that does not answer to any of the ready-made concepts philosophy puts at our service. It is neither absolute determination of one

with respect to the other, nor complete indetermination of one with respect to the other, nor the production of one by the other, nor simple concomitance, nor rigorous parallelism, nor, I repeat, any of the relations that can be obtained *a priori* by handling abstract concepts and arranging them one with another. . . .

Given a psychological state, the part of this state that can be *activated* [*la partie* jouable], that might translate itself by an attitude of the body or by an action of the body, is represented in the brain: the rest is independent of it and has no cerebral equivalent. The relation is such that to the one and same given cerebral state there can correspond many psychological states, but not *any* psychological states. They are psychological states all of which have in common the same "motor schema." The same frame can hold many pictures, but not all pictures. Whether a thought be elevated, abstract, philosophic, we do not conceive it without joining to it an imaged representation that we place beneath it. We do not represent this image to ourselves, in its turn, without supporting it by a scheme that sums up the main lines. We do not imagine this very scheme to ourselves without imagining and thereby sketching certain movements that reproduce it. It is this sketch alone that is cerebrally represented. . . . Cerebral activity expresses only the motor articulations of the idea.[41]

In allowing Bergson to speak for himself, we have been able to grasp that he drew above all on the study of aphasia. The study of aphasia and its related phenomena had also had a long tradition in France. We can return to Maine de Biran, who suggested: "Nothing could better shed light on the nature and reciprocal influence of the two substances that compose us than well-made observation on the diseases of the mind, like madness and dreams, which are perhaps

[41] "Le Parallélisme psycho-physique," *Bulletin*, I (1901), pp. 51–52. There is another exposition of this idea in "The Soul and the Body" (*Mind-Energy*).

only a momentary madness. Only a physiological metaphysician can undertake it. . . . It is thus that the irregularities of nature are more instructive than its regular ways. One can see by the state of madness how far the state of reason is independent of the will!" [42] Bergson was almost the "physiological metaphysician" for whom Biran called, and the program might fit *Matter and Memory* if we were to modify it thus: "One can see by the state of insanity and aphasia how far the state of reason is independent of the memory!"

A reference to Ravaisson's *Report* [43] will be enough to show that the study of psychiatry continued in France. During the 1860s, to go outside the *Report*, many accepted the cases of loss of speech shown by Broca in persons with definitely placed lesions as proof of cerebral localization.[44] But then and afterwards, there were many who denied strict localization. The most notable was Hughlings Jackson.

Jackson, whose research covers the period from 1864 to 1893, noted that "destructive lesions never cause positive effects, but induce a negative condition which permits positive symptoms to appear." [45] He observed that words are not really lost, but that the ability to use them for propositional thinking appears to be lost. A woman patient who cried "Fire!" when she saw a fire in the street must have

[42] Maine de Biran, *Œuvres*, I (1920), 234.

[43] See pp. 178–79. He there records the establishment in 1843 of the *Annales médico-psychologiques, journal de l'anatomie, de la physiologie et de la pathologie du système nerveux, destiné à recueiller tous les documens relatifs à l'aliénation mentale, aux névroses et à la médicine légale des aliénés.*

[44] For a historical account of the study of aphasia see Weisenburg and McBride's *Aphasia*, Chapter II.

[45] Quoted in T. Weisenburg and K. E. McBride, *Aphasia*, p. 12. Bergson thought that lesions destroy the ability to guide oneself in life and permit latent, positive, previously censored conditions to appear.

retained far more than the word alone.[46] To summarize, the "faculty of language" cannot be localized "anywhere except in the whole brain or whole body." [47]

Jackson came close to Bergson's idea that "that which is commonly held to be a disturbance of the psychic life itself, an inward disorder, a disease of the personality, appears to us, from our point of view, to be an unloosing or breaking of the tie which binds this psychic life to its motor accompaniment, a weakening or an impairing of our attention to outward life." [48] Jackson also anticipated Bergson's denial of localization of memory images of words.[49]

Vladimir Jankélévitch, a Bergsonian evidently well-versed in psychiatry, recognized Jackson's anticipation of Bergson, but wrote, what is true, that Jackson's work was obscure until 1914.[50] Nevertheless, both Fouillée and Ribot, in books Bergson certainly read, give note to Jackson.[51]

Whatever the case may be, and there is no need to press it, it is worth noticing that of all sciences treated by Bergson, neurobiology has come closest to accepting like views.[52]

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 13. "When the cerebral lesion is severe, and the word-memory is deeply affected, it may happen that a more or less vigorous stimulus, an emotion, for example, will suddenly bring back the recollection which had seemed lost for ever" (Bergson, "The Soul and the Body," *Mind-Energy*, p. 65).

[47] Weisenburg and McBride, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[48] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. xiv–xv (Introduction of 1910).

[49] Bergson puts the denial very explicitly in *Matter and Memory*, pp. 131 ff.

[50] V. Jankélévitch, "Bergsonisme et biologie," *M. M.*, XXXVI (1929), 254.

[51] A. Fouillée, *La Liberté et le déterminisme*, p. 233 (3d ed., 1890); Ribot, *Diseases of the Will*, p. 115. Cf. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 150, note 1.

[52] V. Jankélévitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–65; Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, Introduction of 1910, p. xv. Cf. Jankélévitch, *Bergson*, pp. 115 ff.

In the foregoing analysis we have *not* maintained:

(1) That Bergson was a hypnotist and therefore untrustworthy;

(2) That among psychologists Ribot was almost the exclusive influence (the footnotes to *Matter and Memory* are sufficient refutation);

(3) That Bergson plagiarized from Jackson.

We *have* maintained:

(1) That Bergson's concern with hypnotism had a powerful effect on his philosophy;

(2) That the depth psychology evident in *Time and Free Will* and doubly evident in *Matter and Memory* are an almost direct result of Bergson's interest in French scientific psychology, in which Ribot was a pathbreaker;

(3) That Bergson's conclusions on the body-mind relation, later to find wide sympathy, were not unanticipated.

Chapter 5

THE ROOT IN BIOLOGY

BERGSON had always felt that "without a prolonged contact with a new order of facts" he would be unable to draw the consequences of his fundamental insight.[1] After he had studied the relation of the brain to memory, thought, and action, biology drew him on. Not only had he been following it into psychophysiology, but a living vitalistic tradition was pointing out his way.

This tradition is old, *uralt* in the happy German word, for it began with the first animist who called a stone his brother, and the first tribe that acquired a totemic animal. We can only hint at these beginnings, and span the intervening time with silence, from then to Hegel and Schelling.[2]

Hegel and Schelling often spoke of a life force struggling upward against the refractoriness of "matter" and embodying itself in increasingly spiritual beings. A biologist like Lorenz Oken, to whom Galvanism was the principle of life, was affected by Schelling. The same influence of romanticism is discernible in the theory of Johann Friedrich

[1] Interview, reported in *M. F.*, XCIII (1911), 413.

[2] For accounts of Vitalism in biology see Hans Driesch, *The History and Theory of Vitalism*, translated by C. K. Ogden; or Erik Nordenskiöld, *The History of Biology*, translated by L. B. Eyre. O. Dastre, *La Vie et la mort*, has a different account. In a letter to Höffding, Bergson places himself among the vitalists (H. Höffding, *La Philosophie de Bergson*, p. 161).

Blumenbach, who explained embryological development, growth, regeneration, and reproduction, as the result of *nisus formativus*. Ludolf Treviranus, who did important work on plant cytology, thought that behind body and spirit alike there lies an unconscious formative power. Then the famous physiologist, Johannes Müller, explained the development of living things from an "organic creative force" different from intelligence. The creations of this *primum movens* take on increasing specificity. Müller also opposed the theory of localization of ideas in the brain. In a sentence reminiscent of some modern theorists he said, "Loss of brain substance never results in the loss of definite ideational complexes, but in the diminution of the clearness of all ideational activity." [3] There were also many other vitalists among the biologists, while among philosophers, Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann were notable.

All this time, there had been a correlative growth in France. According to Lamarck, for example, all life is motion and the evolution of animals caused by their inner effort for perfection. At approximately the same time, Paul Joseph Barthez decided that all manifestations of life are to be explained by a general life principle. Somewhat later, Bichat, who thought that life in its essence is unknown, could nevertheless enunciate a kind of vitalism in his well-known definition of life as "the sum of the functions that resist death."

"Since the time of Bichat" – to continue in the words of Ravaisson – "organicism, making use of the name of this great physiologist, has reigned almost uncontested in the school of medicine of Paris, and vitalism, erected into a system by Barthez, in that of Montpellier; organicism,

[3] Quoted in Driesch, *History and Theory of Vitalism*, p. 118.

which explains life by the properties of the organs; vitalism, which explains it by a special principle different from matter, and none the less from spirit." [4] The vitalistic physicians of Montpellier had a hand in the shaping of Maine de Biran's philosophy,[5] and Biran, in his turn, may well have influenced them.[6] Through him, these physicians affected Ravaisson, who noted them, together with Bichat and Barthez, in his *Report* and in his essay, "De l'habitude," the importance of both of which we have already stressed. French spiritualism derives in part from them; and even Claude Bernard, who opposed vitalism, admitted a kind of arrangement in the animate body, a "legislative force" differentiating it from the inanimate.

We cannot follow the growth of vitalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, though it contains many views suggestive of Bergson's. One need only leaf through the pages of the *Année biologique* from 1895 through 1907 to see how the problems central to vitalism were being agitated.[7] In the one year of 1895, for example, there were twenty-seven books and articles on regeneration, fifty-five on the inheritance of acquired characteristics – "the question that has by far most preoccupied the naturalists" [8] – and twenty on general theories of biology. In 1898 the numbers were respectively forty-seven, forty-two, and forty-seven; and so on. It might be learned in this magazine that the science of biology studies only abstractions, mecha-

[4] Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie*, p. 180.

[5] R. Berthelot, *Un Romantisme utilitaire*, II, 96 ff.

[6] H. Delacroix, "Maine de Biran et l'école médico-psychologique," *Bulletin*, XXIV (1924), 52.

[7] Bergson read this periodical; witness his citation of summaries contained in it on pages 18, 60, 124, and 176 of *Creative Evolution*.

[8] *L'Année biologique*, I (1895), 461. For number of articles published annually see respective chapter bibliographies in *L'Année*.

nisms, phenomena;[9] or that the theory of evolution is no more than a hypothetical assemblage of data that are not understood, for it ignores the question of how the energy of development provokes the formation and differentiation of organs;[10] or that "by the side of the idea of the struggle for existence, which explains the mechanism by which adaptations are realized, one must recognize another, that of an *effort toward life*, which manifests itself with regard to all the organs of living beings";[11] or that the biological studies of Aristotle and Cuvier are "static," of Haeckel and Darwin are "cinematic" – showing continuous and successive positions – and of Lamarck are "dynamic";[12] or that in nature there is a sort of esthetics.[13] It was also said in the *Année biologique* that without the "idea of vital spontaneity one cannot understand how the conflict of organism with physical environment has made new functions, always better localized in distinct organs, spring up from age to age";[14] and that adaptation supposes a spontaneous activity allied with instinct,[15] consciousness and spontaneity being two aspects of the same reality.[16] It might be learned, in addition, that "there is in nature an ideal that can be defined as the development and perfection of spirit in the form of higher and higher individualities. . . . The living world is no more than an always progressive concentration of psychic energy, diffused everywhere 'as the organizing energy of the universe' ";[17] . . . the origin of functional

[9] *Ibid.*, I (1895), 682 (O. Schmitz-Dumont).
[10] *Ibid.*, I (1895), 683–84 (Driesch).
[11] *Ibid.*, V (1899–1900), 644 (C. Richet).
[12] *Ibid.*, VI (1901), 550–52 (F. Houssay).
[13] *Ibid.*, VII (1902), 603 (D. Laloy).
[14] *Ibid.*, VII (p. 606) (G. Richard).
[15] *Ibid.*, VII (p. 607) (G. Richard).
[16] *Ibid.*, VII (p. 608) (G. Richard).
[17] *Ibid.*, VIII (1903), 441–42 (A. Sabatier).

adaptations is in "the continued effort of the will of the animal." [18] Here was grist enough for the mill of any philosopher in Bergson's frame of mind.

During this period, in 1894 to be exact, Gustav Wolff made an experiment to determine if Darwinism or teleology is true. He extracted the lens from the eye of a water newt, technically *triton taniatus*. The newt grew another lens from the iris, although the lens had originally developed from skin tissue. Therefore adaptation was "proved" to be purposeful, and Darwinism absurd.[19] Bergson appeals to this experiment, and to similar ones inspired by it, to show there must be "some inner directing principle . . . to account for this convergence of effects," which does not seem possible on the theory of Darwin or of De Vries.[20]

Soon thereafter, Hans Driesch found that any part cut from the blastula of a sea urchin will regenerate into a complete embryo: a half-egg will become a half-sized larva, not a half-larva. Bergson took this and similar experiments to prove that latent in any part of an organism is the impulse from which the whole was produced.[21] Driesch had already drawn the same conclusion, and had built upon it a difficult theory of vitalism. Central to his theory was the entelechy, an individualizing supervisory force, which "carries its purpose within itself" and makes of the organism more than an aggregate. His ideas took strong hold in Germany. As might be foreseen, Boutroux and Bergson struck his sympathy.[22]

[18] *Ibid.*, VIII (1903), 448 (C. Marey).
[19] H. Driesch, *The History and Theory of Vitalism*, pp. 174–76.
[20] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 75–76.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
[22] G. Bohn, *Le Mouvement biologique en Europe*, pp. 47–49. Bergson lists several of Driesch's books approvingly in *Creative Evolution* (p. 42, note).

In 1904 it even seemed as if German vitalism might become powerful in France.

> The German scholars had just published a series of manifestoes in favor of an effort of conciliation between vitalism and physico-chemical determinism. The International Congress of Philosophy was about to meet at Geneva. The occasion was good, the environment entirely favorable, thanks to an equivocation, to try to gain triumph for the old idea of "vital forces." The organizers of the Congress confided this task to the botanist of Kiel, Reinke, "the grand-priest of neo-vitalism." The Genevese welcomed his ideas most sympathetically. . . . [But other scholars protested against Reinke's theories. The eminent French biologist Giard opposed them at the Congress.] Since then there has no longer been talk of neo-vitalism in France, at least outside of Montpellier, which has always been a home of reaction.[23]

Bergson was present at this Congress, even presided over one of its sessions. It may be worth while to look somewhat more closely into the discussion of Reinke and Giard.

It is stupid, said Reinke, to try to reconstitute our sense organs with the purposeless workings of chemical elements. In Voltaire's words, "Is it not the worst folly that has ever befallen the human mind to affirm that the eye is not made for seeing, nor the ear for hearing, nor the stomach for digesting?" [24] Living bodies and their organs are no more a chemical problem than a great painting or a sonata by Beethoven are mechanical problems.[25] Life is neither an assemblage of elements, a chemical compound, nor a clock-like organization.[26] Just as a machine must have a source of energy, so is life maintained by a stream of energy that

[23] Bohn, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–56.

[24] *Proceedings* of the Congrès International de Philosophie (Geneva, 1904), p. 146.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.

flows from the sun and is stored as potential energy in green plants, from which nonchlorophyllian plants and animals get their sustaining energy. And just as a machine must have a human guide, so must living bodies have guiding, energy-directing forces or "dominants." [27] These, in man, are the psychic forces, conscious and unconscious. Among the latter are the instincts, manifested by an unconscious intelligence, and developed through inheritance and need like physiological functions and their instrumental organs. We therefore ask if an unconscious intelligence does not preside over the whole of evolution.[28]

It is entirely obvious how Bergson might have been stimulated by these ideas, though he must have met many of them, perhaps even all, in previous years. Certainly he lists three of Reinke's books in *Creative Evolution*.[29] Giard, too, who disagreed with Reinke, saw in Darwinism no shadow of an explanation of the primary causes of evolution; Lamarck, fundamentally, was right.[30]

Evolutionism in general, dating in France from Schelling and Hegel, had long been a weak tendency there.[31] Darwinism proper never became powerful in France;[32] and when the controversy had grown strong, the French Society of Philosophy spent a session discussing the proposition that Darwinism is not Evolutionism, and affirming the renaissance of Lamarckism.[33]

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 155.

[28] *Ibid.*, summary of Giard; or Giard, *Œuvres diverses*, I, pp. 190–92.

[29] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 42, note.

[30] A. Giard, *Œuvres diverses*, pp. 104–5, 125. Giard was read by Bergson. See *Creative Evolution*, p. 84, note.

[31] C. Renouvier, *Histoire et solution des problèmes métaphysiques*, p. 430.

[32] Bohn, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–66. *The Origin of Species* was translated into French by C. Royer in 1865. The translation of Spencer by Cazelles, Ribot and Espinas was begun in 1871.

[33] *Bulletin*, April 6, 1905, pp. 249–76.

Despite the congeniality of Lamarck to French biologists, Bergson never received general acceptance among them.[34] He did, however, gain some professional adherents outside of France. In 1911, d'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, in his presidential address before the zoologists of Great Britain, lauded the French philosopher, saying, "The hypothesis of the vital principle . . . has resurged as a real and urgent question, as the greatest question that can present itself to the biologist."[35] Another distinguished professor, J. A. Thomson, speaking to the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, held that the entrance of Bergson into biology spelled progress for the biologists themselves.[36] James Johnstone's *Philosophy of Biology* (1914) was Bergsonism (and Driesch-ism) in a more technical form than the Frenchman had given it.[37]

From these so-to-speak professional antecedents of Bergsonism we turn to the biological and cosmological speculations of the philosophers. First we shall note parallels to several of the leading ideas expressed in *Creative Evolution*, following which we shall turn to views that show a general structural likeness to the Bergsonism of Biology.

Even Spencer, represented by vitalists as their arch-enemy, had become a kind of agnostic vitalist. He said:

[34] V. Jankélévitch, "Bergsonisme et biologie," *M. M.*, XXXVI (1929), 253.

[35] Retranslated from R. Morgue, "Néo-Vitalisme," *M. M.*, XXV (1918), p. 419.

[36] d'A. W. Thompson, "Les Grands Problèmes de la biologie," *Revue scientifique*, March 29, 1913. J. A. Thomson's address, delivered on Oct. 28, 1912, is in the *Proceedings* of the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, XIX (1912–15), 79–92.

[37] Incidentally, Johnstone admits (pp. 234–35) that Bergson's example of convergent evolution in the eye of the mollusc and of man is a poor one, for the function of the mollusc's "eye" is unknown.

"We are obliged to confess that life in its essence cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms. . . . We find it impossible to think of Life as imported into the unit of protoplasm from without; and yet we find it impossible to conceive it as emerging from the cooperation of the components. . . . But . . . our surface knowledge continues to be a knowledge valid of its kind." [38]

Spencer's agnosticism had been self-defeating. Others delineated the vital force more or less clearly, and with ample precedents, whether the love of Empedocles, the fire-tension of the Stoics, the conatus of Spinoza, or the will to live of Schopenhauer. Since we have been considering the biologists, let us listen a moment to Claude Bernard:

If it were necessary to define life in one word that expressed my thought well, showing in relief the only characteristic that, according to me, distinguishes biological science eminently, I should say: life is creation. . . . What characterizes the living machine is not the nature of its physico-chemical properties, complex though they may be, but rather the creation of this machine that develops itself under our eyes under the conditions that are suitable to it and according to a definite idea that expresses the nature of the living being and even the essence of life. . . . In every living germ there is a creative idea that develops and manifests itself through organization. Throughout all its duration the living being rests under the influence of this same vital creative force, and when it can no longer realize itself death arrives. Here as everywhere, all derives from the Idea, which, alone, creates and directs.[39]

Bergson would object to the teleological tinge of Ber-

[38] H. Spencer, *The Principles of Biology* (rev. ed., 1898), pp. 120, 122–23.

[39] C. Bernard, *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865), pp. 151 ff.; quoted in Renouvier, *Essais de critique générale. Troisième essai* (ed. 1892), p. 219.

nard's summation,[40] but when, in 1899, he implied that a true evolution could bear no necessity within itself,[41] he was thinking, of course, of the creativity of life in much the same way as Bernard or even as Sully-Prudhomme, to whom it was "potential energy in all its internal complexity that constitutes the principle of universal evolution," [42] a doctrine aimed against finalism. The very expression *élan vital*, made world-famous by Bergson, was used in a similar connection by Lalande, a predecessor Bergson had read.[43] Lalande wrote: "The living being is characterized by a course of development absolutely without example in the inorganic: embryonic germ, differentiation of tissues, adult state, senility and death. It struggles for life, it deforms itself more or less in this struggle. And according to every appearance, the species behave in this like the individuals, having a modest start, an *élan vital* that tends to multiply them without limit, finally a triumph more or less complete followed by regression and decadence." [44]

If we follow this *élan* back into its cosmic beginnings we find, metaphorically speaking, "an immense reservoir of life" that jets out unceasingly, and whose jets condense into worlds and fall back, while the persistent impulse pushing

[40] Bergson was well aware of Claude Bernard's views; the text of an address on Bernard, made by him in 1913, is in *La Pensée et le mouvant*. See, especially, p. 262.

[41] *M. M.* (1899), pp. 660, 663.

[42] The statement was made in 1902; quoted in Giard, *Œuvres diverses*, I, 173. Bergson uses a similar formula in *Two Sources*, where he says that life is essentially "a slow accumulation of potential energy to be spent suddenly in free action" (pp. 243–44).

[43] A. Lalande, *La Dissolution opposée à l'évolution* (1899) is called "rich in facts and in ideas" in a footnote to *Creative Evolution*, pp. 246–47. Bergson goes on to reject Lalande's thesis that opposed to evolution there is an inexorable "devolution" toward homogeneity and death.

[44] A. Lalande, *La Dissolution* (ed. 1899), p. 399.

against them gives rise to the evolution of living species. From a closer range, life is a fragmenting shell whose particles themselves explode without end, push fiercely against the resistance of their containing matter.[45] More specifically, the animal is enabled to move by its ability to release energy suddenly, energy derived from solar radiation and stored in plants.[46]

This is Bergson's expression. It might be traced back to Neo-Platonism, in which matter is diffusion of reality.[47] Not to go so far back into history, we may begin with the poetic expression of Schopenhauer and Hartmann.[48]

Every glance at the world, to explain which is the task of the philosopher, confirms and proves that *will to live* . . . is the only true expression of its inmost nature. Everything presses and strives toward *existence*, if possible *organized existence*, i.e., *life*, and after that to the highest possible grade of it. In animal nature it then becomes apparent that *will to live* is the keynote of its being, its one unchangeable and unconditional quality. Let any one consider this universal desire for life, let him see the infinite willingness, facility, and exuberance with which the will to live presses impetuously into existence under a million forms everywhere and at every moment, by means of fructification and of germs, nay, when these are wanting, by means of *generatio aequivoca*, seizing every opportunity, eagerly grasping for itself every material capable of life. . . .

[45] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 247, 98.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 115 ff., 253 ff.

[47] R. Berthelot, *Un Romantisme utilitaire*, pp. 98–99, 122.

[48] Schopenhauer's *Le Monde comme volonté et comme représentation* appeared, in the translation of Burdeau, about 1870. Hartmann was promptly translated into French. It is only fair to add that Bergson thought the "will to live" an "empty concept" when true duration was neglected (*Two Sources*, p. 105), and that Schopenhauer's theory of time was all that Bergson was combating. Nevertheless, an abstract view of time hardly diminishes the likeness of Schopenhauer's "will" to Bergson's *élan*, and even on the subject of time Schopenhauer vacillated (*cf.* Gunn, *The Problem of Time*, pp. 121–27). Bergson had read Schopenhauer, at least on dreams, by 1901 (*Mind-Energy*, p. 91).

In vain do we seek by contemplating her [nature] for an end of this restless striving, this ceaseless pressing into existence, this anxious care for the maintenance of the species.[49]

If we shift a moment to the vocabulary of Hartmann, we can see why it is that the creative force materializes itself:

It might appear to the superficial observer as if the resistance which the Unconscious finds in inorganic matter to its organising activity were an instance against the all-unity of the Unconscious. This is, however, by no means the case. We have seen above that the strife and struggle of the individualised natural forces or formations of the Unconscious is a necessary condition for the coming to pass of the objective phenomenal world and for the origin of consciousness in particular; here occurs only a special case of this general truth. . . . The Unconscious must, therefore, previously create a matter in order to be able to create organisms, and, moreover, a matter subjected to exceptionless laws, because only in such is the setting up of accessory mechanisms possible, which always perform the same task. That, however, such a matter, comporting itself according to its own laws, which of itself does not tend to the formation of organisms, opposes a certain resistance to the activity of the Unconscious, is self-evident, and it is no wonder that this resistance can under certain circumstances assume such proportions that the Unconscious, interested only in the universal, not in the single case, forbears to master the difficulties that present themselves, since it more easily attains it by a different path, or attains indeed at other places, often enough for the purposes of the whole process, the same end.[50]

In this paragraph it sounds, indeed, as if the Unconscious were quite consciously reasoning to itself. Yet whatever the guise, it is not difficult to see in the process Bergson's *élan*,

[49] A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (trans. Haldane and Kemp), III, 107, 108.

[50] E. von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (trans. Coupland), II, 293, note.

working in various directions through self-created and resistant matter toward freedom, although some of its forms may crystallize or even retrogress.[51] As a matter of fact, Hartmann even has an analogue to Bergson's theory that each of the lines of evolution must continue to diverge more and more from the others[52] – the laws of "dichotomy" and "twofold frenzy" in the new wording of the theory in *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.[53]

This is the analogue: "The Unconscious must (apart from its continuous interposition in every organic formation, thus also in all generation) display a direct activity in the progressive development of the organisation: on the one hand, in order with the new germs to *call forth* the variations that do *not accidentally* arise; and, on the other hand, to preserve from being *again obliterated* by crossing the variations that have arisen, which belong to its plan, but do not aid the *competition* of the organism in the *struggle for existence*."[54] The increasing variety of life, in other words, is not a mere matter of utility, but also of divergence, to fulfill the urge of the *élan* to diversify itself incessantly as it tries to gain embodied freedom.

We are forgetting the Frenchmen. Hartmann wrote the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* in 1868; Renouvier had finished the first edition of his *Essais de critique générale* four years earlier, including in them an account of the "radical" and jetlike spontaneity of life: "The first spontaneity, the energy, really, that bears and produces itself at the origin of time and in the nothingness of space, whatever nature it takes on, into whatever multiplicity of relations

[51] See *Mind-Energy*, p. 25.
[52] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 103 ff.
[53] Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, pp. 283 ff.
[54] Hartmann, *op. cit.*, II, 330.

and effects it breaks up at first, whether, finally, it shoots forth already very complex and above the perfections we can conceive, or whether it arises . . . in a very humble form and grows from the jets that rejoin it . . . , this radical and irreducible spontaneity should not surprise the philosopher." [55]

To E. Préaubert, things had their origin in a primitive vital vortex, which threw off other vortices. These vortices, evolving in their respective fashions, became species as we know them. And the excess of liberated force augmented the mutual attraction of its centers; that is, gravitation and denseness came into the world.[56]

To Lalande, "the powerful inequality of solar and terrestrial temperature is the first impelling force of all plants and animals. The plants, economical, almost immobile, treasure in their tissues the energy they receive, and are capable of restoring it later little by little; the animals, prodigal, active, expend what they have just received, and often expend more; but animals and plants alike get all their differentiation from the existence of a great cosmic inequality, the diminution of which furnishes them all their forces and sets the limit to these forces." [57]

The third chapter of *Creative Evolution* cites Lalande's book (p. 246), and, like it, discusses the principle of Cournot – although the pessimistic conclusion of a universe running down is not drawn – and works out the relation of plant to animal as Lalande presents it.[58]

[55] C. Renouvier, *Essais de critique générale. Troisième essai* (2d ed., 1892), p. 75.

[56] E. Préaubert, *La vie* (1897), pp. 261, 298–300.

[57] A. Lalande, *La Dissolution*, p. 402.

[58] The same analysis is also present in Chapter II of *Creative Evolution*. A. Laggrond's *L'Univers, la force et la vie*, referred to above in note 77, Chapter II, has a notably earlier interpretation of animal movement as

But death, seen in its true light, argues Bergson in opposition to Lalande, really represents a triumph of life. "The death of individuals does not seem at all like a diminution of 'life in general,' or like a necessity which life submits to reluctantly. . . . Everything is *as if* this death had been willed, or at least accepted, for the greater progress of life in general. . . ."[59] Life [Bergson underlines] is like a current passing from germ to germ through the medium of a developed organism."[60]

Bergson reminds us in this of Schopenhauer. But his temper is optimistic, wherefore he reminds us still more of Guyau:

> Life and death are relative and correlative ideas: life in one sense is a death, and yet death is a triumph of life over one of its particular forms. . . . Every form is for nature only a sleep, a passing death, an arrest in the eternal flow and unseizable fluidity of life. *Becoming* is essentially formless, *life* is formless. Every form, every individual, every species marks only a passing torpor of life: we do not understand and we do not grasp nature except in the likeness of death. And what we call death — mine or yours — is only a latent movement of universal life, similar to the vibrations that agitate the germ during its months of apparent inertia and prepare its evolution. Nature knows no other law than eternal germination.[61]

We have now found the *élan* and followed it into the world. To know it well, we must ask why it is so nearly transparent to instinct, although so opaque to intelligence.

When Bergson was twenty-three, he made a speech on

resulting from the "explosion" of stored solar energy. For examples see Nicolardot, *Laggrond, Pellis et Bergson*, pp. 119–21.

[59] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 247, note.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[61] J.-M. Guyau, *L'Irréligion de l'avenir*, pp. 458–59. This is almost pure Hegel, of course.

"specialization" in which he contrasted human intelligence with animal instinct. The bee has solved one problem in trigonometry, but cannot solve another, he said. Instinct is intelligence that has atrophied and become specialized.[62]

The same distinction is familiar in the later writings of Bergson, but there is no hint in the speech that instinct penetrates life more deeply than intelligence does. He may have got the hint from Boutroux's *Contingency of the Laws of Nature*, the first book to stir the spirit of philosophy in Bergson.

Boutroux thought that "the spontaneity of the lower beings, however blind and incapable of mediate tendencies, undergoes, far more than does that of man, the reaction from the very being it generates; it is determined, limited, absorbed in things to an extent of which human habit gives but a faint idea. Animal instinct, life, physical and mechanical forces, are, as it were, habits that have penetrated more and more deeply into the spontaneity of being." [63]

It was Schelling who said that the touchstone of a genuine philosophy is its theory of animal instinct.[64] Schopenhauer was also interested in the phenomena of instinct, and urged that it be not confused with understanding and reason.[65] Instinct, he said, gives the rule of application, intellect the application itself. Furthermore, intellect can be set in motion by widely different motives and proceed to its end by the use of indefinitely varied means. Instinct, relatively automatic, does not need the same brain development as intellect.[66]

[62] Bergson, *La Spécialité*. Cf. Algot and Ruhe, *Henri Bergson*, pp. 4 ff.
[63] E. Boutroux, *The Contingency of the Laws of Nature*, p. 192.
[64] F. W. J. Schelling, *Werke*, I, 455; quoted in Hartmann, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
[65] Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, I, 29–30.
[66] *Ibid.*, III, 97–98.

Probably any discussion of instinct would touch upon these points, phrased in one or another way; certainly Bergson's discussion does. But Hartmann deviated from the near-truisms:

Instinct is not the result of conscious reflection — not a consequence of bodily organisation — not mere result of a mechanism founded in the organisation of the brain — not the effect of a dead, and essentially foreign mechanism, externally adhering to the mind — but the individual's *own* activity, springing from his inmost nature and character. . . . The end of the instinct is in each case unconsciously willed and imagined by the *individual*, and the choice of means suitable to each special case unconsciously made. . . . Instinct is the inmost core of every being; that it really is so is shown by the impulse of self-preservation and race-maintenance, which pervades the whole creation, by the heroic spirit of sacrifice, with which the well-being of the individual, nay, life itself, is offered as a sacrifice to instinct.[67]

Some of Hartmann's spirit, its romanticism tempered, was in Charles Dunan, who, after telling how the body keeps and heals, even regenerates itself, added: "Thus one can say without any exaggeration that the organized being is itself the creator of its organism. . . . And if we examine the vital *process*, what do we see in it? An absolute unconsciousness of the end toward which the organic activity in the living animal tends, and of the means by which the end is realized, that is, to be precise, just the essential characteristics of instinct. Thus instinct is found in its entirety in the spontaneous activity by which life creates itself, maintains itself and repairs itself: the vital *process* is really a *vital instinct*." [68]

[67] Hartmann, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 113, 114. The second half of the statement is Schopenhauer's view too, of course, whether or not he calls the "will to live" *instinct*. [68] C. Dunan, *Cours de philosophie*, p. 304.

Hartmann's is the princely view of the dominion of instinct, Dunan's the peasant's view of the cottage, the immediate residence, of instinct. Both views were assimilated by Bergson. When taken in conjunction with his intuitionism, it is easy to see how they might have heightened the contrast between the infallible contact of instinct with life, and the geometrical superficiality of intellect. Lalande had also insisted that reflective thought is "dissolving," [69] and the result of blocked action.[70] And the famous mechanistic biologist, Le Dantec, had held before *Creative Evolution* that our logic is a logic of solids, our intelligence a "cinematographical" instrument provided for our welfare.[71] Was it wonderful, then, that we should seek light in the darkness of instinct? Perhaps we might enlist instinct to aid "the broad current of consciousness" that is trying to find release from materiality.[72] Perhaps we could regain our intensity, for, in the words of Guyau, "Life, by its very evolution, tends to engender consciousness; the progress of life confounds itself with the very progress of consciousness." [73]

In this chapter, we have until now been comparing single ideas. But there are some philosophies with general contours like those of Bergsonism – we refer more especially to biology. Which to choose calls for somewhat arbitrary preference, though there can be not the slightest doubt that Ravaisson's essay, "De l'habitude," was a beginning of

[69] A. Lalande, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[71] F. le Dantec, "La Biologie de M. Bergson," *La Revue du mois*, IV (July–Dec., 1907), 230–41. Bergson's reply is in the issue of Sept. 10, 1907, pp. 351–54. Both are in Le Dantec, *Science et conscience*, Chapter VI.

[72] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 181 ff.

[73] J.-M. Guyau, *L'Irréligion de l'avenir*, p. 437.

spiritualist philosophy, of Bergson's philosophy in particular.[74] It enclosed the germ of spiritualist metaphysics and cosmology. In Bergson's own summary: "Our internal experience shows us an activity in habit that has passed by insensible degrees from consciousness to unconsciousness and from will to automatism. Should we not then picture nature to ourselves in the form of an obscured consciousness and dormant will? Habit thus gives us the living demonstration of the truth that mechanism is not self-sufficient: it is, so to speak, only the fossilized residue of a spiritual activity." [75]

Let us turn for the moment to Ravaisson himself:

The whole series of beings is nothing other than the continuous progression of the successive powers of one and the same principle, which envelops them one and all in the hierarchy of the

[74] First published in 1838. Reprinted in the *M. M.*, Vol. XII, 1894. The reader will find an exposition of Ravaisson's indebtedness to Schelling and to Aristotle in Volume II of R. Berthelot's *Un Romantisme utilitaire*. Bergson rather depreciates the former's influence: "One finds in the work of Mr. Ravaisson more than one page that could be compared, for direction of thought as for allure of style, to the best writings of the German philosopher. Perhaps there was less influence than natural affinity, community of inspiration, and, if one cares to speak thus, preestablished accord between two spirits who, both of them, soared high and encountered one another on certain summits. Moreover, conversation between the two philosophers was rather difficult, the one knowing French poorly, and the other speaking German hardly at all" (*Notice sur la vie . . . de Ravaisson*, p. 682).

Among the notable stimuli of Ravaisson's thought were Maine de Biran, Aristotle, Leibnitz, and Leonardo da Vinci. In a review of Hamilton's *Fragments of Philosophy*, Ravaisson upheld Biran, Fichte, and Schelling, against empiricism and phenomenalism (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, XXIV, Nov. 1, 1840; cited in Benrubi, II, 589).

As late as 1912, Bergson himself knew nothing of Schelling, presumably at first hand; so he told Georg Jäger, who recorded it in *Das Verhältniss Bergsons zu Schelling* (p. 15). It would be rather curious if Bergson denied the influence of Schelling on Ravaisson before having read Schelling. Neither Parodi nor Benrubi nor Gunn, the historians of recent French philosophy, doubt the strong indebtedness of Ravaisson to Schelling.

[75] Bergson, "Notice sur la vie et les œuvres de M. Félix Ravaisson-Mollien," p. 686. Also in Bergson, *La Pensée et le mouvant*.

forms of life, which develop in an inverse sense within the progression of habit. The lower limit is necessity, Destiny, if one wishes, but within the spontaneity of nature; the upper limit, Freedom of the understanding [*Liberté de l'entendement*]. Habit descends from one to the other; it draws these contraries together, and in drawing them together reveals their intimate essence and necessary connection.[76]

Habit is the common limit or last term between will and nature, between the practicality of understanding and the sureness and perfect spontaneity of instinct.[77] The obscure or immediate intelligence that reaches reflection through habit is a "true intuition joining real and ideal, being and thought." [78]

Here we have first the theory underlying Bergson's evolutionism, and secondly the feeling that the juncture of intelligence with profound life is through the "habits" of nature.[79] No coat of arms and genealogical parchment could make the descent of Bergson from Ravaisson more clear than the following words:

> Science, the work of the understanding, traces and constructs the general contours of the ideality of things. Nature alone, in experience, gives their substantial integrity. Science circumscribes within the extensive unity of logical or mathematical form. Nature constitutes in intensive unity the dynamics of reality.
>
> Between the last depths of nature and the highest point of reflective freedom there is an infinity of degrees that measure the development of one and the same power, and, to the extent

[76] Ravaisson, "De l'habitude," *M. M.*, XII (1894), 28.
[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[79] Matter proper is not yet capable of habits ("De l'habitude," p. 3), for its changes do not endure, as they cannot in any infinitely divisible and homogeneous existence (*ibid.*, p. 4). Though life is superior and triumphant over matter, it must to a certain degree submit to material coercion.

that life ascends, extensity, condition of science, is also augmented, together with the distinction and separation of contraries. It is like a spiral whose principle dwells in the depth of nature, and which achieves expansion in consciousness.

It is this spiral that habit redescends, and of which it teaches us the generation and origin.[80]

Antoine Augustin Cournot is likewise worth expounding for the similarity of his theory of life and evolution to Bergson's.[81]

There is in life, he argues, an organic and creative force that is the first cause of organic beings; it exists in the germ before any organs are formed and persists in the adult without being "chained" to any organ. The instinct of animals is also a revelation of this force that works without consciousness, but according to rational laws.[82] Such instinct coördinates living beings in space and time: the organization of the foetus is appropriate both to its present and to its future activities; the bird instinctively gathers nest materials before it lays eggs.[83] Put in another way, the living body is a union in which each part is contained in the whole, whereas inert particles are exterior to one another.[84]

The acts of a living being may be called spontaneous not because they have no outward stimulus – of such spontaneity we have as yet no evidence – but because the effect

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[81] Cournot's biology is to be found in the *Essai sur les fondements de nos connaissances* (1851), Vol. I; *Traité de l'enchaînement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et les arts* (1861), Vol. I; *Matérialisme, vitalisme, rationalisme* (1875), in the main a summation of his previous thought.

[82] A. A. Cournot, *Essai*, Vol. I, paras. 285–86.

[83] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, para. 131.

[84] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, para. 131. Bergson applies this not only to the single body but also to the presence in one living particle of all the tendencies exhibited by others, though the presence may be very obscure.

is so vastly greater than the external stimulus.[85] The "plastic force and vital energy" cause the rudimentary organs of the embryo to meet and associate, tissues to reproduce, organs to regenerate.[86]

Development, maturity and regeneration, senescence and death, are the history of every individual and species, within which there are successive periods of languor and activity, depending upon the changing rhythms of the life principle.[87] These rhythms are not arranged in a linear series, for the different branches of evolution often follow divergent paths: "The great *branches* of the animal kingdom present such diversities of plan that *it would be absurd to wish to range them in the same series.* There are molluscs more perfect than others in their organization, and insects of an organization higher than that of other insects: but how judge the relative perfection of the type of the mollusc and of the type of the insect?" [88] The same is true of plants;[89] and it is ridiculous to think them created for animals.[90]

Bergson had more courage, or perhaps rashness, than Cournot. Having a criterion, he could decide on the relative perfection of plants, insects, and animals. But when Bergson emphasizes that "the cardinal error, which, from Aristotle onwards, has vitiated most of the philosophies of nature, is to see in vegetative, instinctive and rational life, three successive degrees of the development of one and the same tendency, whereas they are three divergent directions of an activity that has split up as it grew," [91] he could not

[85] Cournot, *Traité* (ed. 1911), p. 278.
[86] Cournot, *Essai*, Vol. I, paras. 129–30.
[87] Cournot, *Traité* (ed. 1861), Vol. I, paras. 207, 179.
[88] *Ibid.*, para. 282.
[89] *Ibid.*, para. 12.
[90] Cournot, *Essai*, Vol. I, para. 66.
[91] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 135.

have meant to indict Cournot. Cournot had already seen the point.

The spontaneity of life could further be proved by the case of an organ like the eye. True, the eye atrophies without light, but it is ridiculous to conclude that the mere action of light on the organism has caused the appearance of the eye. Nor is the eye the successful result of an infinite number of adaptations. All those advances toward the complex perfection of vision that were nevertheless insufficient for clear vision were of no benefit in the struggle for existence. How, then, could they have been maintained and coördinated? [92] The Darwinians and the Lamarckians are both wrong. It is the inner plastic force that creates and harmonizes.[93] Furthermore, the use of the same organ for different purposes and of different organs for the same purpose in the passage from species to species shows it is not the function that creates the organ, but an inner force, which changes function or adapts organ as changing conditions may require.

The argument against finalism and mechanism may, naturally, have occurred to Bergson without his having read Cournot. We are not arguing against the personal inven-

[92] Bergson makes precisely the same argument a focal point of the whole first chapter in *Creative Evolution* (see pp. 65 ff., 74 ff., 84 ff.). Incidentally, this argument of Bergson's against Darwin and Darwinism makes it seem that he did not know the former's writings well. In the *Origin of Species*, Darwin stipulates that variations to be kept must be profitable. In *Animals and Plants under Domestication*, II, 357–404, he has a long exposition of "pangenesis," to explain how wounds are healed and organs regenerated, and himself gives remarkable instances of regeneration. Bergson, speaking of iris regeneration, says, "Such convergence does not appear possible on the Darwinian, and especially the neo-Darwinian, theory of insensible accidental variations" (*Creative Evolution*, p. 76). See George Hookham's article, "Professor Bergson as a Critic of Darwin," in the *National Review*, LIX (1912).

[93] Cournot, *Essai*, Vol. I, paras. 60, 63; *Vitalisme*, pp. 163–64.

tiveness of Bergson. The coincidence is nevertheless most striking and tends to dull his shining reputation for originality, whether we will or no.

A close consideration of two articles by J. Delboeuf, "Déterminisme et liberté," and "La Matière brute et la matière vivante," published in the *Revue philosophique* of 1882 and 1883, respectively, might also have a corrosive effect, although less markedly so.

The universe, Delboeuf wrote, must have implied consciousness and liberty from its beginning. The beginning was heterogeneity guided by intelligence and evolving toward thought.[94] Dead matter could not have engendered life, and

> the laws called fatal are the residues of primitively free acts.[95] In time, habit or law pervades the universe, giving each of the new organic aggregates a greater freedom, since instincts and reflexes are liberty embodied.[96]
>
> . . . The animals . . . are probably . . . the creators of their own organs. For liberty fixes itself in habits and instincts, and, in consequence, in the organism. . . . The organisms we see today are therefore products manufactured by intelligence and liberty. Not only do the free beings fashion terrestrial matter to their own use, but they are, so to speak, their own creators. They have created themselves. Such is the power of this tool that time puts at the disposal of free beings. . . . The world moves toward thought.[97] [And freedom lies in deliberation, because] to act freely is to suspend one's activity.[98]

[94] J. Delboeuf, "La Matière brute et la matière vivante," *R. ph.*, XVI (1883), 337.

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 339; cf. p. 359. The reader will remember that this is Ravaisson's statement almost verbatim.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 360. Cf. "Déterminisme et liberté," *R. ph.*, XIV (1882), 165, 167.

[97] Delboeuf, "Déterminisme et liberté," pp. 180, 186, 184.

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 188. Bergson: "A nervous system . . . is a veritable *reservoir of indetermination* (*Creative Evolution*, p. 126). Lalande: "It is with

The evolvement toward freedom results in the establishment of a vast hierarchy. Plants fix carbon for energy; animals make use of the stored energy for locomotion; men destroy or domesticate animals. Thereafter, men begin to understand their origin and superiority.[99]

One further source for the biology of Bergsonism before we shall turn elsewhere. This is an important source, for Bergson agrees that the article we refer to, by F. Marin, was an anticipation of his own view.[100]

Marin begins with a question: "What is a species, and above all a fixed species, in this moving continuity (of life)? The term instantly loses its significance and becomes purely ideal: it is a type fixed by the mind at an arbitrarily chosen moment; it is an immobilized frame [*cadre*], marked out in the perpetual change of the individual. . . . In the mobile continuity of the real we see for the first time this scientific activity of the intelligence at work, which consists of grasping the continuous in the form of successive discontinuous phases alone." [101]

Marin, writing in 1901, was applying Bergsonism to biology before Bergson himself had done so. He continued that there is in the universe an effective resistance, a purely

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powerlessness that thought comes. . . . The idea is an act that tends toward accomplishment and that, when stopped by some obstacle before its realization, finds in this arrest a new form of reality (*La Dissolution*, p. 166). Bergson: "The consciousness of a living being may be defined as the arithmetical difference between potential and real activity. It measures the interval between representation and action" (*Creative Evolution*, p. 145).

[99] Delboeuf, "La Matière brute," p. 361.

[100] "This view of adaptation has been noted by M. F. Marin in a remarkable article on the origin of species" (*Creative Evolution*, p. 102, note).

[101] Cournot also protested against rigid classification by species (*Traité*, Vol. I, para. 266). Bergson notices the difficulty of defining an individual (*Creative Evolution*, p. 12).

negative and brutal environment.[102] "The resistance to development should be greater in proportion as the development is already more advanced, and thus one conceives that of two organisms the one least differentiated is the more capable of transforming and perfecting itself." [103]

Although environments differ widely, identical organs are produced in them, which demonstrates the superiority of the internal impulse over the material environment.[104]

The essence of the organism is in an ascendant, progressive development pursued incessantly and everywhere. Likewise incessant, resistances oppose themselves to its movement; it complicates itself materially, corporeally. The adaptation lies in the special material organizations that it gives itself in order to triumph over these resistances it meets or may meet; for the sake of economy, it also tends to make the organizations uniform, as we have already observed. And adaptation, for the given resistances, is multiple, diverse, ingenious.[105]

Since heredity is repetition, it is equivalent to inertia, sterility; variation alone is the characteristic of life, variation that is "fecund, creative, organizing, is movement, effort, becoming." On the road to liberation there are left behind residual substances condemned to fixity; the resistances have overborne them.[106] "The problem of the origin of species is just that of our spiritual activity." [107]

[102] F. Marin, "Sur l'origine des espèces," *Revue scientifique*, 4th series, XVI (1901), p. 580.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 580.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 581. This is the second time we have met the suggestion that development of identical organs in different environments proves the impulsion of the *élan*. Marin applied it to different individuals of the same species, Cournot, like Bergson, to individuals of highly divergent species.

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 582.

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 585. Bergson gives some examples on page 102 of *Creative Evolution*.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 588.

Bergson's biology was not, we see, a palm-green oasis in a desert of mechanism and Darwinism. There is not one important phase of Bergson's evolutionary theory that cannot be duplicated among the biologists and philosophers of France who were active before him or during his time. The duplication may be imprecise, but usually unmistakable, for we are at the moment concerned with leading ideas, not with nuances, amplifications, enrichments, delicacies and graces of imagination, half-transforming though they may be.

Can the verdict on Bergsonian morality be as strict? Let us first modify the word "strict." We are not opposing Bergson or controverting his worth. We are merely being stern with those Bergsonolaters who say that until Bergson there were never such ideas as his. To qualify still further, our business, fundamentally, is not to be stern, but rather to explain.

Chapter 6

THE ROOT IN MORALITY AND RELIGION

BERGSON lived on into his eighties. Pursued by ill health, he had become more and more retiring, and his last book represents a victory over pain. When he died, soon after an act of courage, his will was found to contain a request (which was observed):

"My reflections have led me closer and closer to Catholicism, in which I see the complete fulfillment of Judaism. I would have become a convert had I not seen in preparation for years a formidable wave of anti-Semitism which is to break upon the world.[1] I wanted to remain among those who tomorrow will be persecuted. But I hope that a Catholic priest will consent, if the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris authorizes it, to come to say prayers at my funeral." [2]

Until we know the family of Bergson, we can never appreciate how deep a transformation was signalized by this last request. Bergson's great-grandfather, Samuel Zbitkower, was a rich Warsaw Jew, with typical beard and earlocks, and dressed in a long silken cloak gathered in by a woven girdle. Zbitkower – the name means "from Zbitkow" – was a merchant who later turned to selling

[1] The will is dated 1937.
[2] Quoted from J. Maritain, *Ransoming the Time*, p. 101, note.

grain, which he shipped by raft down the Vistula to Danzig. Given the official "privilege" of dwelling in localities otherwise forbidden to Jews, his wealth increased: he established sawmills, bought houses, estates, and forests. As befitted his position, he was a benefactor to his poor fellow Jews.

Bergson's grandfather, Berek son of Samuel, was born in 1764. Also a privileged Jew, he even increased his father's wealth. Like Samuel, and in accord with the prevailing custom of rich Jews, he was rich in charity. It is recorded that he gave Torah scrolls to all the synagogues.

Berek had three sons, Berek-sons, or Bergsons, Jacob, Leopold, and Michael. Michael's son was to become the famous philosopher. Leopold's son, also named Michael, was to become the upright and hard-working leader of the Warsaw Jewish community.

Bergson's father was born in 1818. He loved music, Chopin's above all, and was himself a composer. He was, in fact, the first to popularize the compositions of Chopin in Europe, carrying them to France, Italy, Belgium, and England. For many years he was head of the Conservatoire in Brussels. He married an English Jewess, Katherine Levinson, and in his old age he settled in London, where he died in 1898, leaving his widow to survive him by many years. The brother of Henri Bergson was an English author of little fame who lived in London and wrote anonymously. Henri, born in France, was a Frenchman, even if always close to England.[3] When he had become famous, lauded, and attacked, some of his detractors in France of 1910 ac-

[3] I have been able to find the details of Bergson's ancestry in one book alone, a Hebrew one called "*Ishim*" (*Personalities*), by Nahum Sokolow (III, 170–79). There is a genealogical chart in C. Lehrmann's *Bergsonisme et judaisme*, p. 23. According to the chart, it would seem that Soko-

cused his philosophy of Jewishness. "I am a Jew," he said, mimicking them, "and my ideas are condemnable because they are Jewish. I should willingly admit them to be such, but the misfortune is that I am not at all sure of it. Or rather, I am certain of profound obligation to only two or three philosophers, none of whom is Jewish: Plotinus, Maine de Biran, and somewhat to Ravaisson." [4]

Two years later, when Bergson was queried about the Jewish problem and Zionism, he gave the typical answer of an assimilated French Jew (most Jews born French were assimilated) when he said: "To us French people this question seems paradoxical. We are so completely assimilated. If there were a new Zion I do not think many Jews would go there. . . . I believe the Jewish question will be solved when the Jewish people will have attained equal rights in the countries where they have been persecuted. And the sooner that is attained the better for the Jews of course, and also for the countries where they live." [5]

From complete assimilation to Catholicism the step was perhaps not so great; but from Samuel Zbitkower or from Berek, it was tremendous. Bergson's deep Jewish roots may help explain his final concern for the Jews. These roots may also be visible in the praise he gives the Prophets of Israel, even though he subordinates them to the Catholic mystics. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, published in 1932, made it plain that he was very favorably disposed toward Christianity. Yet there was no hint of desire for

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low had made some omissions. But we have kept to his account, for he knew many members of the family well.

[4] From the reminiscences of Gilbert Maire, in his book, *Bergson mon maître* (p. 222).

[5] From an interview by Herman Bernstein, held in 1912, and recorded in his collection, *With Master Minds* (pp. 105–6).

conversion to Catholicism, which would have been doubly surprising of a writer listed in the Index.

It is now our task to trace the development of Bergson's thought, from its initial affirmation of freedom until its final glorification of Christian mysticism, and even beyond the glorification, to near-union with Catholic thought. The burden we want to shoulder is really much too big. Here more than anywhere else, we must recall the disclaimer made at the beginning of our study, that although social conditions were reflected in philosophy, we could not undertake to reveal that reflection; nevertheless, in this instance it becomes so bright, so intrusive, that we cannot disregard it entirely.

There is another factor that makes discussion of the origin of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* rather difficult, despite the simplicity of its theme. Some twenty-five years had intervened after the appearance of *Creative Evolution*, whereas there had been only seven years between *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*, and eleven years between the latter and *Creative Evolution*. In other words, the effort to connect Bergson's last book with contemporary discussion becomes more difficult, if, that is, we expect particular sources of particular ideas.

In each of Bergson's successive books, the facts are preponderantly drawn from a new science, physiological psychology in *Matter and Memory*, biology in *Creative Evolution*, and sociology or ethnology in *Two Sources*. In the last-named, he discusses Lévy-Bruhl, Westermarck, Van Gennep, and a few others. He preserves freedom from dogmatic reaffirmation of their theses, and is careful to call many of his own decisions on matters of ethnology hypothetical, for example in his treatment of *mana*.[6]

[6] Pages 124 ff. The whole discussion is pitched in the conditional

While we cannot summarize the views of all the French sociologists, on whom he draws, their number was rather limited, making a choice somewhat easier.[7] For example, Gabriel de Tarde's *Les Lois de l'imitation* was a landmark that may well have directed Bergson. Tarde's work is based upon social suggestion, not alone in the ordinary sense, but also as unconscious, hypnoticlike, leaving the socialized individual with the illusion that his ideas are spontaneous. As a matter of fact, Tarde held that within some ten years of his suggestion of this hypothesis, the importance of which we have already stressed for Guyau and Bergson, it had become the most common of opinions.[8]

Although extra-sensory suggestion is to Bergson a hope for future society more emphatically than an omnipresent reality (he also affirms the latter), he quite accepts the importance of social imitation in the limited sense: "It is society that draws up for the individual the programme of his daily routine. . . . A road has been marked out by society; it lies open before us, and we follow it; it would take more initiative to cut across country."[9] Tarde and Bergson alike saw the irrational overlays in group imitation, and regarded

tense, as is common throughout the book. This is also a device to increase persuasiveness, but Bergson was always far from presuming to dogmatize on matters of fact, even when they might appear to favor his thesis. His lack of presumption is absent to a degree in some of the sociologists who furnish him with background.

[7] For a clear summary and sane discussion of the whole group see Lowie's *History of Ethnological Theory*. There is a full summary in Benrubi, *Les Sources*, Vol. I.

[8] *The Laws of Imitation*, p. 76, note 1. The idea was rare in 1884, says Tarde, and widely held in 1890 or 1895 (the dates of the two editions of his work).

[9] *Two Sources*, p. 11. For the irrational, stultifying results of limitation see *Two Sources*, p. 127. Tarde, giving the broadest possible meaning to imitation, tends to emphasize its progressive side more. For example, novelty is often possible only because it cloaks itself in an imitative form, in the form of a renascence (*The Laws of Imitation*, pp. 361 ff.).

It is certain that Bergson read Tarde with approval. He wrote an enthusiastic preface to a book of selections from Tarde (Benrubi, I, 344).

human progress as resulting from the inventiveness of a few rare individuals.

A substantial thematic similarity was carried over from Tarde into the writings of Emile Durkheim, almost the father of French sociology and ethnology, for it was he who founded the *Année sociologique* in 1898, and furnished a basis for innumerable later speculations with his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912).

Bergson gives comparatively extensive attention to Durkheim, opposing him, though, as we shall see, Bergson's opposition gives no hint of the positive likeness between him and the scholar against whom he argues. Durkheim holds it axiomatic that "society is a reality *sui generis*; it has its own peculiar characteristics. . . . The representations which express it have a wholly different content from the purely individual ones." Such an axiom is a puzzling exaggeration in Bergson's eyes: institutions, language, and customs are social deposits, true; but they must be prolongations of individual minds and prefigured in them; the individual is made for social life.[10]

So far the disagreement; but very much of Bergson's analysis of moral obligation and closed morality is at the least conceived like obligation and society in their Durkheimian outlines. According to these outlines, public opinion is as much inside as outside us: we are human because each one of us contains humanity. Most fundamental in our internal humanity are the religious beliefs, something belonging to the group and constructive of it. "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one

[10] *Elementary Forms*, p. 16; *Two Sources*, pp. 94–95. Bergson makes

single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." [11]

As Bergson says, "Each of us belongs as much to society as to himself. . . . We are in continuous contact with other men whom we resemble, and united to them by a discipline which creates between them and us a relation of interdependence. . . . Social solidarity exists only in so far as a social ego is superadded, in each of us, to the individual self. To cultivate this social ego is the essence of our obligation to society." [12] The Kantian "categorical imperative" is really the quintessence of social solidarity as reflected in habits of obedience, so that it may truthfully be said that half of our moral obligation is social pressure. (The other half, better not called "obligation," has the impulsive, leaping flames of emotion within it, or at least the warm ashes left by the flames.) And because religion is so largely social, the discipline of repeated exercises, the rites and ceremonies, react on and strengthen the beliefs that inspire them. This disciplinary, ritual religion, static religion, "is a defensive reaction of nature against what might be depressing for the individual, and dissolvant for society, in the exercise of intelligence," against death, that is, against little-availing initiative, and egotism. The greater part of our strength, steadiness of effort, and unbroken tension of energy flow from society.[13]

In order to see how close Bergson's definition of "static religion" is to Durkheim's, we must push the comparison

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the usual criticism of Durkheim's work, that it ignores individual psychology too much.

[11] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 17, 43, 47 (definition).

[12] *Two Sources*, pp. 6–7. Like Durkheim, Bergson recognizes that our memory, imagination, and language are society in us.

[13] Bergson, *Two Sources*, pp. 15–17, 41, 190, 194 (definition), 7.

somewhat further. According to Durkheim, social ways of action reflect in each individual mind the added vigor derived from many minds.[14] A believing man gains strength to endure and conquer trials of existence; his faith, the strength of his strength, comes from the cult. "There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments." [15]

We may conclude, if we keep our conclusion from implausible refinement, that Bergson's conception of moral obligation and "static religion" was drawn from Durkheim or his school, which was the dominating school, perhaps the only one, in France. We must not forget, however, that Durkheim well knew "those hours of creative effervescence, in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulae are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity." [16] Yet while Bergson preferred to believe that religious progress rests in mysticism and escapes science, Durkheim believed, on the contrary, that religious progress is a synthesis created by society and embedded in its individuals.[17]

Although sociology sets the tone for *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, the psychology of which we have earlier spoken also touches the moral speculation of Bergson

[14] Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p. 416.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 417, 425, 427 (quotation).
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 428.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 446–47.

at many points. Charcot's experiments at Salpétrière had convinced many that mysticism was a form of hysteria.[18] In any event, the two appeared similar, and among the psychological case studies instances from the history of religion were frequent. Thus Ribot carefully described the ecstasy of St. Theresa in *The Psychology of Attention*, and Pierre Janet compared the mental condition of hysterics with that of the saints, deciding that the one could not be reduced to the other.[19]

It appears likely, then, that Bergson's interest in psychology led him to consider mysticism with more attention. His whole theory of the "depths" of an individual, and the plumbing of these depths by intuition, gave him a feeling of sympathy for the mystics. His sociology is differentiated from the Durkheimian by his psychology and mysticism.

In *Time and Free Will* there is a clear example of how Bergson would take an older conception, of personal freedom in this case, and assimilate it to the ideas he drew from the new psychology. The conception he used was Renouvier's:

It is true that the importance of the effects of liberty should not be judged by the small place its own decisions occupy in the world: necessity charges itself to cling to the act once

[18] See G. Fonsegrive, *L'Evolution des idées dans la France contemporaine*, pp. 35 ff. Bergson treats the question on pages 217–18 of *Two Sources*. He says: "What is only abnormal may be accompanied by what is distinctly morbid. . . . So we must not be surprised if nervous disturbances and mysticism sometimes go together." Durkheim had previously said: "It is certainly true that religious life cannot attain a certain degree of intensity without implying a psychical exaltation not far removed from delirium. That is why the prophets, the founders of religions, the great saints, in a word, the men whose religious consciousness is exceptionally sensitive, very frequently give signs of an excessive nervousness that is even pathological" (*Elementary Forms*, p. 226).

[19] T. Ribot, *Une Extatique*, Paris, 1901; cited by Fonsegrive, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

aroused by the will, to attach to it series of an incalculable extent, in the agent and outside the agent; but those series are above all moral, and it is morally that they are great; now, from the moral point of view itself, the agent capable of contraries does not cease from being circumscribed within a static or dynamic order of relations.[20]

Bergson rephrased the thought:

The moments at which we thus grasp ourselves are rare, and that is just why we are rarely free. 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 upon rather than act ourselves. . . . Renouvier has already spoken of these voluntary acts which may be compared to reflex movements and he has restricted freedom to moments of crisis. But he does not seem to have noticed that the process of our free activity goes on, as it were, unknown to ourselves, in the obscure depths of our consciousness at every moment of our duration . . . and that without this heterogeneous and continuous duration, there would be no moral crisis.[21]

Maine de Biran, whom we saw as an originator of the theory of the unconscious, had something of the same attitude. He did not, that is, look on the will as only rarely manifesting itself, but he did see it as a hyperorganic force,[22] independent of the body and of bodily instinct, and ruling over them like an emperor over his often unwilling subjects:

As to the will of man or the power of effort, it remains inde-

[20] C. Renouvier, *Essais de critique générale. Deuxième essai* (ed. 1859), p. 466; II (ed. 1912), 90.

[21] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 231, 237–38, note 1. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[22] Maine de Biran, *Œuvres*, VIII, 199.

pendent in the *internal conscience*, beyond every injury and excitation from the outside. Neither the enticements of pleasure, nor the goad of pain are able to overcome it completely. . . . Nothing depicts this superiority of an energetic will, or the perefct identity of this will and the *self*, better than the remarkable trait of a great captain who, feeling himself tremble involuntarily at the moment of a decisive battle, seized his trembling body and brusquely challenged it thus: "You tremble, feeble carcass! If you knew where I were going to lead you, you would tremble all the more!" [23]

Lachelier spoke in a very similar tone: "We are free only because we are a *self*, or [because] there is in us something anterior to perception and to the laws that govern it. . . . The will . . . is free because it is of its own essence to will itself and to be cause of itself. . . . The will is the principle and the hidden centre [*fond*] of all that exists." [24]

This was very much Fouillée's constant point, to which he added: "The problem of individual liberty is none other than that of *individuation*: one cannot hope to resolve it theoretically and metaphysically with certitude; it takes scientific form only in the following formula: 'Until what point and by what series of middle-terms can we individualize ourselves?' " [25]

Compare the character of freedom according to Bergson: "We are free when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work." [26]

So far, Fouillée and Bergson appear to agree that freedom is maximum self-expression, but when the former wrote,

[23] *Ibid.*, VIII, 185 (including note 1).
[24] J. Lachelier, *Psychologie et métaphysique*. *Œuvres*, I, 198, 195.
[25] A. Fouillée, *La Liberté et le déterminisme* (3d ed.), p. 92.
[26] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 172.

"The dynamic result obtained by the idea of liberty is not merely the conservation of itself, but its growth," [27] meaning that the very idea of liberty tended to generate and effectuate itself, Bergson protested that the idea of freedom could not itself be a motive.[28] Yet he himself implied that Fouillée's basic concept of *idée-force* was correct: "If molecular movements can create sensation out of a zero of consciousness, why should not consciousness in its turn create movement out of a zero of kinetic and potential energy, or by making use of this energy in its own way?" [29]

There is a still clearer instance of Fouillée's influence in the conviction Bergson expressed that "the evolution of humanity is certainly influenced by the accord of tenacious wills. . . . There are no possibilities that the human will cannot come to modify." [30] Fouillée repeated this innumerable times, for example: "Far from excluding the reaction of the idea on the fact to come, determinism as we have rectified it presupposes this reaction. . . . Far from thinking that it would be impossible and even contradictory to represent the future to oneself in thought, we believe that it is only in representing our future to ourselves that it is possible for us to make it exist *for ourselves*." [31]

But are we not supposing too blithely that a likeness in idea proves an influence? Not at all. In 1905, Bergson

[27] Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

[28] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 159–60.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 152. Bergson is opposing the first hypothesis, molecular movement creating consciousness, and insinuating the second, consciousness creating molecular movement. A lecture of his, "The Soul and the Body" (1912), contains the following passage: "I quite agree that, if the will is capable of creating energy, the quantity created may be so small that it would not affect sensibly our instruments of measurement. Yet its effect might be enormous, like that of the spark which explodes a powder-magazine" (*Mind-Energy*, p. 44).

[30] Report of a conversation with Bergson. *M. F.*, CVIII (1914), 398.

[31] Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

wrote to Fouillée of a book on morality the latter had published a short while before: "I have read your work from one end to the other with an always growing interest. It is, in a seductive form and in a language of which you have the secret, a very strong and penetrating critique of the moralities called *scientific*." [32]

Bergson grew still more enthusiastic on the publication of *La Morale des idées-forces* in 1907: "How rich in ideas, suggestive, and strong your new work appears to me! . . . It is indispensable, as you so well show, to take account of all the given, of *integral* experience, internal as well as external, — and not alone of that which is, but of that which *tends* to be. Your conception of the *idea-force* without doubt comprehends the solution of many difficulties. And your analysis of consciousness, in establishing the solidarity of the consciousness of everyone with that of others, demonstrates how the whole essential of morality is *preformed* in *nature*." [33]

The phrase, "solidarity of the consciousness of everyone with that of others," is peculiarly significant, for it is the kernel of Bergson's morality. Long before, Maine de Biran had urged a "mystical life of enthusiasm," a life in which the soul unified itself once more with its source.[34] Ravaisson's ideal was similar, an ideal of "the wholly active and therefore wholly spiritual nature of complete or absolute existence, nature from which it follows that the object and the subject of thought, of will, of love, are none but a sole and single thing, which is thought, will, love, themselves;

[32] Augustin Guyau, *La Philosophie et la sociologie d'Alfred Fouillée*, p. 115.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 116. On the evidence of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson means that the souls created have pre-existed in the *élan vital* (*Creative Evolution*, pp. 269–70).

[34] Maine de Biran, *Œuvres inédites* (ed. Naville), III, 541, 571.

a flame without material support, so to speak, that nourishes itself. Such is the unique conception in which the contraries, separated everywhere else, will mingle in a living and luminous unity." [35]

In the same tradition, Gabriel Séailles closed his *Essai sur le génie dans l'art* [36] with the exhortation to deliver ourselves "to the spontaneous movement that carries the soul toward beauty . . . and, uniting with nature, given drink at its source of fecundity, drunk with its intoxication, to accept all of life, to become penetrated with sunlight, and to extend the light by reason." [37]

On the historical side, this is a French-German ideal. But instead of halting here, as we have in other chapters, let us return to Fouillée, in whom Bergson found an impressive variant. Better still, let us go further to Guyau, who accentuated the tendency of his stepfather.

The two irreducible factors of life are fecundity and sympathy:

Life is fecundity, and reciprocally, fecundity is life to the full, is true existence. There is a certain generosity inseparable from life, and without which one dies, one dries up inside. One must flourish; morality, disinterest, is the flower of human life.

Charity has always been represented as a mother who gives her breast swollen with milk to her babies; charity is really identical with overflowing fecundity: it is like a maternity too expansive to stop with the family. The breast of the mother has need of avid mouths that drain it;[38] the heart of the truly

[35] Ravaisson, *Rapport*, p. 277.

[36] Praised by Bergson in *Creative Evolution* (note, p. 29).

[37] G. Séailles, *Essai sur le génie dans l'art*, p. 313; quoted in D. Parodi, *La Philosophie contemporaine en France*, p. 295.

[38] "The mother beholding her child is joyous, because she is conscious of having created it, physically and morally. . . . If, then, in every domain the triumph of life is creation, must we not suppose that human life has its goal in a creation which, unlike that of the artist and philosopher,

human being also has need of making itself gentle and helpful to all.[39]

Consciousness has dissolving force, so it is necessary to find a principle that will unify consciousness with the spontaneity of unconscious instinct. The principle is that of the most intensive and extensive possible life, taking account of the urgent need of vital energy to expend itself, and of the essential sociability of men.[40]

As men grow more sociable, they take greater pleasure in thought; "the idea is a sort of contingent common to all human heads; it is a universal consciousness in which the individual consciousnesses are more or less reconciled. The part of the idea grows in the life of everyone, the part of the universal augments and tends to predominate over the individual. The consciousnesses then become more penetrable." [41]

If the interpenetration were to increase,

fusion would thus be possible, there would be mutual penetration so intense that . . . one would come to live at the very heart of another. . . . In fact, one can imagine much more subtle and direct means of communication and sympathy than exist today between different individuals. The science of the nervous and cerebral systems has only just begun; as yet we only know the unhealthy exaltations of this system, the sympathies and suggestions of hypnotism; but we already foresee a whole world of phenomena in which . . . a communication of consciences tends to produce itself, and even, when the

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can be pursued always by all men – creation of self by self, the growing of the personality by an effort which draws much from little, something from nothing, and adds unceasingly to whatever wealth the world contains?" Bergson, "Life and Consciousness," *Mind-Energy*, pp. 29, 30–31.

[39] J.-M. Guyau, *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*, p. 24.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

mutual wills consent to it, a sort of absorption of personalities one within the other.[42]

Under these conditions, immortality becomes possible, for the living will retain an increasingly vivid memory of the dead, until the retained image is virtually the prolongation of the consciousness whose body has died.[43]

The expressions of Bergson, though tending to greater caution, reach a similar conclusion from a similar interest in psychiatry. As early as 1886, in the article on "unconscious simulation" we have previously referred to,[44] he expressed a deep interest in psychical research and confidence in mental suggestion. The English Society for Psychical Research noted the article and corresponded with Bergson, its future president. In 1901 he again said he attached great importance to the observations of the Society.[45] By the time of *Creative Evolution*, he was suggesting that the "interpenetrating potentialities" of the "rising wave" of consciousness might enable us to overcome even death.[46] He spoke with conscious vagueness, but with unmistakable similarity to Guyau. This similarity was equally marked in his presidential address before the Society in May of 1913, when he told the assembled members:

> . . . If the mind is attached to the body only by a part of itself, we may conjecture that for the other part of the mind there is a reciprocal encroachment. Between different minds there may continually be taking place changes analogous to the phenomena of endosmosis. . . .[47]

[42] J.-M. Guyau, *L'Irréligion de l'avenir*, p. 470.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 471.

[44] Bergson, "De la simulation inconsciente," *R. ph.*, XXII (1886), 531.

[45] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, p. 33 ("Dreams"). For correspondence with the Society, cf. Algot and Ruhe, *Henri Bergson*, p. 31.

[46] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 269–71.

[47] The simile, a favorite one with Bergson, is another example of the lasting effect of his biological study.

The more we become accustomed to this idea of a consciousness overflowing the organism, the more natural we find it to suppose that the soul survives the body. Were, indeed, the mental moulded exactly on the cerebral, were there nothing more in a human mind than what is inscribed in a human brain, we might have to admit that consciousness must share the fate of the body and die with it. But if the facts, studied without regard to any system, lead us, on the contrary, to regard the mental life as much more vast than the cerebral life, survival becomes so probable that the burden of proof comes to lie on him who denies it rather than on him who affirms it.[48]

The Two Sources of Morality and Religion ends in a hope that Bergson pointedly associates with the enlightenment we gain from psychical research: If only a glimmer from the unknown immensity were to become visible to the eyes of our body, we should be certain of life everlasting, and our pleasures would "pale like our electric lamps before the morning sun." [49]

We have shown, then, that the Bergson of *Two Sources* was prefigured in French spiritualism, and in the psychological interest that fortified and deepened his belief in a vital all-engulfing current. Yet between his earlier and his last writings a great new interest had intervened, more fundamental than ethnology. To explain the interest we must speak a moment of the influence of Bergsonism on French religion.

Shortly before the beginning of the twentieth century, a grave religious crisis that had long threatened seemed about to come to fruition. On the one side were the old teachers of Catholicism, who taught a mixture half scho-

[48] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, pp. 96–97 ("Phantasms of the Living").
[49] Bergson, *Two Sources*, pp. 305–6.

lastic, half Cartesian;[50] and the young priests who smiled down superiorly on abstract knowledge and the powerlessness of "conceptual reason." [51] On the other side were the enthusiastic scientists and their enthusiastic followers, the friends of Comte; the suave, regretful irony of the Renans; and the Naturalism, the fervor of the Zolas and the Brieux's. There seemed to be no question on whose side the victory would lie. But the Catholic Church proved strong in its crisis.

The philosophic weakness of Catholicism was countered by the order of Pope Leo XIII to draw on the principles of Saint Thomas; Alfred Loisy and other Modernists adopted and adapted to Catholicism the "higher criticism" of Bible students; and a whole vigorous group of Catholic playwrights, poets, novelists, and essayists sprang up.[52] Although the Pope condemned Modernism in 1907, the Catholic renascence was already well established, and Neo-Thomism about to make its voice heard.

An impressive phenomenon of the renascence was the number of conversions to Catholicism. One of the converts, later to become a foremost exponent of Neo-Thomism, has told us something of his history. Bergson's book, *Matter and Memory*, using the results of science to affirm liberty, was a direct factor in the conversion of Jacques Maritain, as it was also of Joseph Lotte.[53] Bergsonism appeared to young Catholics to be a powerful and true metaphysics in an arid land of intellectualism, and they seized on it more and more, both for its own attraction, and for the oppor-

[50] G. Fonsegrive, *L'Evolution des idées*, p. 105.

[51] J. Maritain, *La Philosophie bergsonienne*, pp. xvi–xvii.

[52] A Catholic account of this renascence may be found in George Fonsegrive's *De Taine à Péguy, L'évolution des idées dans la France contemporaine.*

[53] G. Fonsegrive, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

tunity it gave for apologetics, and for defense of dogma and miracle.[54] When *Creative Evolution* appeared, the young Catholic thinkers began to divide. Lotte afterward said, "I shall never forget the emotion with which *Creative Evolution* transported me. I felt God on every page." [55] Le Roy also continued to support Bergson; but Jacques Maritain was uneasy. In the fields neighboring Heidelberg, where he was staying at the time, he and his companions tried to reconcile the Bergsonian criticism of concepts with Catholic dogma. They failed.[56]

The reasons for the failure are recorded in Maritain's *La Philosophie bergsonienne*, originally published in 1913, one of the first lay manifestations of Neo-Thomism. Since Bergson denied that intelligence had the ability to grasp the essence of selfhood, and insisted that reality was constituted by change, then all that was left was to yield to the phenomenalists, those who held the real for us to be our associated states of consciousness.[57] What right had Bergson to compare the accidentally mutilated consciousness with the precious instrument God gave man, whom He created in His image? Because to Bergson there was no substance that changed, there could be, for him, no God. Briefly, what Maritain called the "Bergsonism of fact" was wrong, though the "Bergsonism of intention" was praiseworthy.

[54] J. Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. xvii. It is well known that Bergson also influenced French literature and politics. Through Sorel he made an especially noticeable contribution to Syndicalism (see R. S. Jaques's rather inadequate article, and Benrubi, II, 862–71). Bergson himself took no particular stand in French politics, and refused to acknowledge the theories proclaimed in his name (Maire, pp. 220 ff.).

[55] J. Lotte, *Un Compagnon de Péguy*; quoted by G. Fonsegrive, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[56] J. Maritain, *op. cit.*, pp. xiv ff.

[57] *Ibid.*, Chapter I.

Joseph de Tonquédec, a Catholic thinker, though not a Neo-Thomist, also criticized *Creative Evolution*, primarily because there was in it no clear doctrine of God as absolute and absolutely distinct Creator.[58] Like Maritain, Tonquédec knew that *Two Sources* came far closer to Catholicism than *Creative Evolution*: "Despite everything, the recent book of Mr. Bergson marks an advance over *Creative Evolution.* The discovery and estimation of Christian mysticism is a new and significant fact. And then, the ardent research undertaken by the author on the moral and religious terrain, with indisputable sincerity and integrity, his philosopher's conscience, so exacting, his patient, serious, laborious effort, so different from the unreflecting lightness of so many others, the height of his intelligence and the nobility of his soul permit us to hope for new and more decisive steps on his part in the direction of the total truth." [59]

The new and the most significant fact was Bergson's discovery of the Christian mystics. When and how did it occur? He has left a number of traces. In 1905 he wrote to Fouillée that he was dissatisfied with both the "scientific" and the Kantian ethics: "The difficulty for me is to find something intermediate between this ['scientific'] morality whose insufficiency you have so well demonstrated and the *a priori* morality of pure obligation. I well sense that the truth should be between the two, but I disentangle them only confusedly, and the moral problem is one of those for which I have not as yet arrived at an even approximate solution that satisfies me." [60]

[58] J. de Tonquédec, *Sur la philosophie bergsonienne*, pp. 50 ff. ("M. Bergson est-il Moniste?" Published originally in the *Etudes* of 1908 and 1912).

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 219 ("Le Contenu des 'Deux Sources.'" Published originally in the *Etudes* of 1933).

[60] A. Guyau, *La Philosophie et la sociologie d'Alfred Fouillée*, p. 116.

In 1912, Bergson summed up what he had and had not as yet formulated in his morality:

The considerations explained in my *Time and Free Will* tend to illuminate the fact of liberty; those of *Matter and Memory* point clearly, I hope, to the reality of spirit; those of *Creative Evolution* present creation as a fact: from all this there clearly emerges the idea of a free and creative God, at once generator of life and of matter, and whose effort of creation is continued, side by side with life, by the evolution of species and by the constitution of human personalities. From all this there emerges, in consequence, the refutation of monism and of pantheism in general. But in order to make these conclusions still more precise and to say more of them, it would be necessary to touch on problems of an entirely different kind, moral problems. I am not sure of ever publishing anything on this subject; I shall not do it unless I arrive at results as demonstrable or as "displayable" ["*monstrable*"] as those of my other works. Everything I might say in the interval would be on the borderline, and even outside, of philosophy as I conceive it.[61]

But even in 1906, he had already been speaking of Saint Theresa, maintaining that philosophy should become a little more mystical and mysticism gain philosophy, and this at a time when the defense of mysticism was still looked on as the worst of benightedness.[62]

By 1916, Bergson was already well at work, saying of God: "I have not really touched on this problem in my works; I think it inseparable from moral problems, in the study of which I have been absorbed for several years; and

[61] J. de Tonquédec, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60. First published in the *Etudes* of 1912. A lecture of 1911 ("Life and Consciousness") shows that the direction Bergson was to take was in part already fixed: "It is the moral man who is a creator in the highest degree, – the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and, itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity. The men of moral grandeur . . . are revealers of metaphysical truth" (*Mind-Energy*, p. 32).

[62] J. Maritain, *Ransoming the Time*, p. 85.

the few lines of *Creative Evolution* . . . have been put there as a stepping-stone." [63]

In Bergson's conception of mysticism there is a characteristic and rather unusual emphasis, the dynamic quality of true absorption in God. The question now is, was the emphasis present as far back as the time we have just mentioned, or did it impose itself on him later through influences we have not yet touched on?

Of the three philosophers, Plotinus, Maine de Biran, and Ravaisson, to whom Bergson acknowledged his deepest conscious obligation, we have not yet spoken of the first; and while we have renounced the effort to find the roots of Bergsonism that grew from Greek and medieval times, we must perforce, even if simply and too briefly, show wherein the emphasis of Bergson's mysticism derives from Plotinus.

The relevant Plotinian beliefs may be put in a series of brief quotations: (a) "Sense-Perception, Discursive-Reasoning and all our ordinary mentation are foreign to the soul. . . . 'If we mean to discern the nature of the Soul we must strip it free of all that has gathered about it.' "

Bergson could have compared the encrusted self to the sea-god Glaucus, just as Plotinus did in this connection. It is in part the beauty of sight and sound that enable us to discover the God beneath his seaweed-mantle. But imagery is insufficient to do more than attend and foreshadow truth: (b) "In sum we may safely gather that while the Intellective-Act may be attended by the Imaging Principle, it is not to be confounded with it."

Like Bergson, Plotinus thought the true self would reveal itself through spontaneous moral action rather than through

[63] H. Höffding, *La Philosophie de Bergson*, p. 158.

deeds springing from ratiocination: (c) "In a feat of courage there can be no sense either of the brave action or of the fact that all that is done conforms to the rules of courage. . . . So that it would even seem that consciousness tends to blunt the activities upon which it is exercised, and that in the degree in which these pass unobserved they are purer and have more effect, more vitality."

Bergson could have been pointing to nothing very different in the statement that we are free when our acts spring from our whole selves. Such acts are unencumbered with materiality — or spatiality, as Bergson would more often say: (d) "What enters into Matter ceases to belong to itself, comes to belong to Matter."

Plotinus added that Matter, the Measureless, is evil. Bergson would call it the Measured, but in his strictures against infinity of division he expressed a similar attitude, for, like him, Plotinus regarded "matter" as the concept-limit of spiritlessness: (e) "Matter . . . cannot come under the name of an Existent. . . . It is merely a phantom or shadow of space. . . . It is a ghostly thing incapable alike of staying or going since it has drawn no force from the Divine: and, so, all its pretense of existence is a lie." [64]

Although the First Existent of the Trinity is so strict a unity that it cannot be said to have any quality, the Intellectual-Principle, second member of the Trinity, is inexhaustibly creative: (f) "It overflows, and this overflowing is creative. . . . Imagine a spring which has no commencement, giving itself to all the rivers, never exhausted by what they take, ever tranquilly its full self."

[64] Compare Bergson's note on Plotinus, *Creative Evolution*, p. 210: "The relation that we establish in the present chapter between 'extension' and 'detension' resembles in some aspects that which Plotinus supposes (some developments of which must have inspired M. Ravaisson) when

The third member of the Trinity, the All-Soul, makes up the universally present and compresent forms of life, in a somewhat Bergsonian way (and in just the same way as Lachelier): (g) "The universe is very varied. . . . It is a being awake and alive at every point. . . . Each thing has its own peculiar life in the All, though we, because our senses do not discern the activity going on inside wood and stone, deny the life."

It is life and sympathy that draw us all together: (h) "We share each other's feelings; if we see another in distress we suffer with him; we are irresistibly impelled to form friendships."

This union is a kind of inner soul-radiance, like fire admitting no contamination or cooling, and penetrative of all else: (i) "And one that shall know this vision – with what passion of love shall he not be seized, with what pang of desire, what longing to be molten into one with This, what wondering delight!"

It is Plotinus who lit the flame by which Ravaisson and Bergson were enkindled, and probably Guyau too.[65] Bergson admitted that Plotinus looked "upon the promised land." But Plotinus "did not reach the point where, as contemplation is engulfed in action, the human will becomes one with the divine will." [66] Plotinus was not an "active" mystic.

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he makes extension not indeed an inversion of original Being, but an enfeeblement of its essence."

[65] Plotinus, of course, had predecessors. No implication to the contrary is meant.

[66] *Two Sources*, p. 210. The preceding quotations from Plotinus come from: i, 1, 2 (Ennead, Tractate, section); i, 1, 12; i, 4, 10; i, 4, 8; ii, 6, 7; v, 2, 1, and iii, 8, 9; iv, 4, 36; iv, 9, 3; i, 6, 7. They are from the first volume of McKenna's translation, i.e., the First Ennead and the Preller-Ritter extracts.

Everything we have learned of Bergson would tend to demonstrate that only active mysticism, mysticism he might relate with the vivifying intuition, could appeal to him. But he calls attention to his indebtedness in this respect to two writers, Henri Delacroix, and Evelyn Underhill.[67]

The first took it upon himself, in *Etudes d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme* (1908), to follow up the generalizations of the psychological school with careful and objective studies of the life history of several Christian mystics.[68] Above all, he found it axiomatic that the great mystics were creative: "If it is true that the great mystics have not escaped neuropathic defects, which stigmatize almost all exceptional organizations, there is in them a creative power of life, a genius, in a word, that is truly the essential one. . . . The great creative and inventive mystics, who have found a new form of life and have justified it are rarer [than the more passive ones]: but despite their weaknesses, they join the great 'simplifiers of the world' on the high summits of humanity." [69]

Bergson asks us to "think of what was accomplished in the field of action by a St. Paul, a St. Teresa, a St. Catherine of Siena, a St. Francis, a Joan of Arc, and how many others besides!" [70]

Evelyn Underhill, after asserting that the Western mystics take precedence over the Eastern ones because of greater dynamism, a point Bergson establishes over many pages,[71] states the idea with less concision than Bergson, and with more eloquence:

[67] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 216, note 2.
[68] H. Delacroix, *Etudes d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme*, p. i.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. iii.
[70] Bergson, *Two Sources*, p. 216.
[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 213–16.

No temperament is less slothful than the mystical one; and the "quiet" to which the mystics must school themselves in the early stages of contemplation is often the hardest of their tasks. The abandonment of bodily and intellectual activity is only undertaken in order that they may, in the words of Plotinus, "energize enthusiastically" upon another plane. Work they must: but this work may take many forms — forms which are sometimes so spiritual that they are not wholly perceptible to practical minds. Much of the misunderstanding and consequent contempt of the contemplative life comes from the narrow and superficial definition of "work" which is set up by a muscular and wage-earning community.[72]

When we look at the lives of the great mystics, the true initiates of Eternity — inarticulate as these mystics often are — we find ourselves in the presence of an amazing, a super-abundant vitality: of a "triumphing force" over which circumstance has no power. "The incessant production of work, work" seems indeed to be the object of that Spirit, by Whose presence their interior castle is now filled.

We see St. Paul, abruptly enslaved by the First and Only Fair, not hiding himself to enjoy the vision of Reality, but going out single-handed to organize the Catholic Church. We ask how it was possible for an obscure Roman citizen, without money, influence, or good health, to lay these colossal foundations: and he answers, "Not I, but Christ in me."

We see Joan of Arc, a child of the peasant class, leaving the sheepfold to lead the armies of France. We ask how this incredible thing can be: and are told "Her Voices bade her." A message, an overpowering impulse, came from the supra-sensible: vitality flowed in on her, she knew not how or why. She was united with the Infinite Life, and became Its agent, the medium of Its strength, "what his own hand is to a man."

We see St. Francis, "God's troubadour," marked with His wounds, inflamed with His joy — obverse and reverse of the earnest-money of eternity — St. Ignatius Loyola, our Lady's

[72] E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, pp. 209–10.

knight — incurably romantic figures both of them — go out to change the spiritual history of Europe.

. . . In each a character of the heroic type, of great vitality, deep enthusiasms, unconquerable will, was raised to the spiritual plane, remade on higher levels of consciousness. Each by surrender of selfhood, by acquiescence in the large destinies of life, had so furthered that self's natural genius for the Infinite that their human limitations were overpassed.[73]

Perhaps we have quoted Underhill at too great length for scholarly purposes, but her spirited belief carries us along, as it carried Bergson,[74] on the crest of its current. In so far as Bergson's theory of *active* mysticism had a single source, this is it.

To recapitulate, French spiritualism disposed Bergson to a morality of freedom and union with others. Fouillée accentuated his natural belief in a dynamic will, and Guyau pushed on to all-embracing fecundity, interpenetration of souls, and immortality. Both to Guyau and Bergson these views came easily because of the revelation of the subconscious by psychology, with all the associated theories of hypnotism, suggestion, and hysteria.

About the beginning of the twentieth century, sociology and ethnology began to gain attention in France, and it is the tinge these sciences give Bergson's last book that distinguishes it from the others. In some conformity with the psychological theories, Durkheim emphasized the group mind, and from him Bergson seems to have drawn the conception of static religion and closed society that were the last entries in a column of partial negatives, beginning with

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 514–15.

[74] Bergson calls the book "remarkable" (*Creative Evolution*, p. 216, note 2).

mathematics and science generally. In the column of positives, Bergson entered free will, perfect memory and free thought, intuition, the *élan vital*, and finally, open society and dynamic or mystical religion.

His theory of intuition and his psychological interests had drawn the mystics to Bergson's especial attention. Even though he often found Plotinus a convenient foil for the theory of duration, he acknowledged the Neo-Platonist one of his few masters.

For a long time, however, Bergson formulated no morality. When he came to do so, it was half under the influence of a Catholic revival he had helped to start. Even after *Two Sources* had been completed, he continued to draw closer to Catholicism.[75] But if we stop with his last book, Bergson seems almost to have come to rest in a Christian, a transvalued Nietzscheanism.

The Two Sources of Morality and Religion is thus an amalgam of several tendencies, especially of two: the sociological and the voluntarist. Comte and Spencer had broadcast a doctrine, radical in its day, of the law of necessary progress. Even if the Durkheimian school modified the doctrine, its description of the social mechanism stems from these philosophers. In time, the sociological outlook became conservative, because those who held it considered institutions to be the indispensable mechanism of the conservation of values. The sociological explanation was accepted by Bergson, but as an explanation of one source alone of morality and religion. The second "school," which fur-

[75] Maritain also testifies to this approach (*Ransoming the Time*, pp. 86–90). Maritain adds that Bergson did not place action above contemplation, but said only that true mystical contemplation finds its natural outlet in action (*ibid.*, pp. 108–9). Bergson's stress on creativity would seem to have been diminishing.

nished Bergson with the second source, found its French philosophical expression in men like the spiritualists and Guyau (though he too drew much on sociology), and its political expression in the emotional leftists of public life. It is no accident that the intuition, creativity, active will, and mysticism promoted by Bergson were so congenial to the syndicalists. In fine, he was able to conceive two conflicting strands of current French political thought, the positivistic conservatism and the syndicalistic activism, as the eternal complementary forms and sources of the moral life.[76]

[76] The substance and much of the wording of this paragraph were suggested to me by Professor H. W. Schneider of Columbia University.

Chapter 7

IS BERGSON ORIGINAL?

BERGSON doubtless saw himself as a link in a long French tradition. The character he gives that traditional philosophy is precisely what distinguishes his own. According to him, if we except twenty or thirty years in the latter half of the nineteenth century when some French thinkers were under foreign influence, French philosophy has always spoken to the people at large, under the assumption that every philosophic idea, no matter how deep or subtle, can and should be expressed in the tongue of every man.[1] But affinity with science is the defining trait of French philosophy:

> It is of the essence of French philosophy . . . to depend upon science. With Descartes, the union of philosophy and mathematics is so close that it is difficult to say if his geometry was suggested to him by his metaphysics or if his metaphysics is an extension of his geometry. Pascal was a profound mathematician, an original physicist, before being a philosopher. French philosophy of the eighteenth century recruited itself principally from among the geometers, the naturalists and the doctors (d'Alembert, La Mettrie, Bonnet, Cabanis, etc.). In the nineteenth century, several of the greatest French thinkers, Auguste Comte, Cournot, Renouvier, etc., came to philosophy through mathematics; one of them, Henri Poincaré, was a mathematician of genius. Claude Bernard, who gave us the

[1] Bergson, *La Philosophie française*, p. 251.

philosophy of the experimental method, was one of the creators of the science of physiology. The self-same French philosophers who devoted themselves to internal observation during the last century felt the need to search outside themselves, in physiology, in abnormal psychology, etc., something that would assure them they were not surrendering to a mere play of ideas, to a manipulation of abstract concepts: the tendency is already visible in the great initiator of the method of deep introspection, Maine de Biran.[2]

Bergson continues that French philosophy, scientific yet introspective, follows along both the internal and external contours of reality with care. It therefore shuns a Kantlike or Hegellike system,[3] preferring the more difficult work of modulating thought with scientific knowledge, which is always penetrating further. French philosophy is supple, living, and human.[4]

So judged, the whole of French thinking becomes tinctured with Bergsonism. It can be judged quite otherwise, as Julien Benda, most indignant of the anti-Bergsonians, made clear in an estimate of Bergson's conception.[5] Benda does not deny that French philosophy has been allied with science. He does not insist, however, that "following the contour of inner reality" is a mystical intuitionism imported by Bergson from the German romantics, and that the trademark cannot be erased.

A just appraisal of the contribution of these Germans is hard to make. The French philosophers set the highest of values on the German philosophical classics. If we had limitless patience and knowledge, we should examine mi-

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[3] Bergson was intensely patriotic, and this review was written during the World War for the San Francisco Exposition of 1915.

[4] *La Philosophie française*, p. 254.

[5] J. Benda, *M. F.*, CXII (1915), 187–88.

nutely the life and writings of every Frenchman we have believed important to our case. But we must be content with something less, with the statement that when Bergson began to write, the regular way of formulating a thesis was to ask how Kant had approached it and how Kant's theory might be surpassed.[6] Naturally, therefore, *Time and Free Will* shows evidence of Kantianism.

We are able to draw on some of the recent French philosophers who have expressed an opinion on the antecedents of their own countrymen. Paul Janet prefers to emphasize the "natural historical tie" to Maine de Biran, though he recognizes the kinship between French spiritualism and Fichte.[7] On the other hand, a qualified observer like Renouvier dates the beginning of the evolutionary attitude in his country, so characteristically assumed by the spiritualism we have studied, not from Lamarck and Darwin, but "from the importation of the philosophy of Schelling and Hegel."[8] It would seem that Renouvier is right. Introspection is indigenous to France, although philosophical commerce with England never ceased; the romantic temperament, in so far as it issues from one man, comes from Rousseau; the sense of mighty movement pervading the whole of nature and forcing it upward is German in origin.

When the more particular problem regarding Bergson was broached in 1906 at the French Society of Philosophy, Dwelshauvers thought him indebted to three sources: the

[6] A. Thibaudet, *Le Bergsonisme*, Vol. II, Chapter XVI. Bergson says the same thing of the period when *An Introduction to Metaphysics* was written (published in 1903). See the note on pp. 201–2 of *La Pensée et le mouvant*.

[7] Paul Janet, *Principes de métaphysique et de psychologie*, p. 544.

[8] C. Renouvier, *Histoire et solution des problèmes métaphysiques*, p. 430.

Platonic idealism of Fouillée (we have not characterized Fouillée's thought thus), the mechanistic evolutionism of Spencer, and the German romanticism [*sic*] of Spencer, Fouillée, and Ravaisson.

René Berthelot put his opinion differently: Ravaisson owes to Schelling

> the doctrine according to which the principle of all things is a free spiritual activity that is at once love and esthetic activity, whereas matter and logical and mathematical ideas have only an incomplete reality; which leads to a rejection of empiricism and Platonic or Kantian idealism one and all.
>
> The role of Ravaisson was to combine the metaphysics of Schelling with the psychology of Maine de Biran; the essential thesis of Maine de Biran is not, in effect, without analogy to that of Schelling; according to this thesis it is in the immediate consciousness of activity, of effort, that one can seize the real, the principle of psychological life and of all existence. . . . Thus, although the influence of Schelling was exercised at the same time on Guyau and Bergson through Ravaisson, the difference between the theories of Guyau and those of Bergson is explicable in part by the more imperious, more exclusive character the influence of Ravaisson had on Bergson.

Nor should we forget men like Ward and James, who influenced the psychologism of Bergson.[9]

Berthelot's estimate apart, there are several reasons why the direct influence of the Germans on Bergson should be doubted. In 1912, we recall, he had still not read Schelling. He mentions the German romantics rarely, and then only

[9] *Bulletin*, VI (1910), 76–78; also in Berthelot, *Evolutionisme et platonisme*, pp. 232 ff. Berthelot adds detail and scope to his argument in *Un Romantisme utilitaire*, Vol. II, Chapters V–VII. Albert Thibaudet, in *Le Bergsonisme*, Vol. II, Chapter XVI, criticizes Berthelot and provides an estimate more sympathetic to Bergson. He also interprets in a general way the varying influence of Bergson in different countries.

to exclaim on their emptiness. His style and vocabulary are the antithesis of their ponderous manner and abstract terminology, at least so far as their nonpopular books are concerned. Ravaisson and Lachelier, to whom he acknowledges a heavy debt, are excellent intermediaries.[10]

The shortcoming of all these evaluations is their simplicity. Their authors wished to isolate only the few philosophers who had influenced Bergson most. The aim was quite limited; and the conclusions cannot be adequate for us, because thought in a thoughtful person is nourished from many sources.

We have tried to round out the evaluations, first by showing how the controversy on time, inspired in part by creation (or discovery, if you will) of non-Euclidean geometries, impressed its method and matter on young Bergson. Encouraged again, there were many who stressed the hypothetical nature of science, who showed that free will and deity were not mere inheritances from a savage past. The names of the men to whom Bergson owes so much of his theory of time make an impressive roll call: Spencer, Renouvier, Boutroux, Ravaisson, Balmès, Cournot, Delboeuf, Lotze, Fouillée, and Guyau. It is immaterial if one or two of them were not direct stimuli, for Bergson made use of the thoughts they express.

Then vitalistic biology, child of a long tradition, began to approach closer to maturity. Philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Ravaisson, Cournot, Delboeuf, and Lalande, were seconded by a large group of scientists. The experiments on regeneration were particularly arousing,

[10] We must remark that Lachelier was influenced more by Kant than by the romantics; and we do not mean to imply that the Germans were the exclusive sources of Lachelier and Ravaisson. But we have touched on the problem elsewhere.

and from them sprang the doctrines of the botanist Reinke and the biologist Driesch. The grandiose poetry of *Creative Evolution* is rooted, clearly and deeply, in philosophic and scientific vitalism.

Ever since the outset of his career, Bergson had studied hypnotism, suggestion, the unconscious. From them it was only a brief step to physiological psychology. *Matter and Memory* bears the imprint of Hartmann, Charcot, Ribot, and others, as of the intutionists from Maine de Biran to Guyau. With the evidence drawn from psychology and the idea from the spiritualists, he grew to believe that community of all men in great psychical currents is the *sine qua non* of moral progress.

How could this union be achieved? Science was trying to fathom hysteria and mysticism, but always left the depths unsounded. Bergson had long felt a kinship with Plotinus, and now he saw that the Christian mystics were the true exemplars of the intuitionism he had always preached. In the midst of an art and a literature half-saturated with the several forms of mysticism, he felt the power of a Catholic revival to which he himself had contributed. It was only a desire to stand in the forefront of the moral battle, and perhaps an unexpressed reluctance to loose Jewish ties the centuries had knotted, that kept the old and suffering philosopher from conversion.

Through the whole complex evolvement there ran the guiding lines of French spiritualism.

It is no wonder that Bergson, even in his earlier days, was charged with being a mystic to whom "life, like the porcupine when not ruffled by practical alarms, can let its fretful quills subside. The mystic can be happy in the dron-

ing consciousness of his own heart-beats and those of the universe." [11]

When we remember Bergson's emphasis on the activity of a mystic, the charge is immediately seen to be unfair. It made him indignant. He would answer:

> Mathematics . . . is a real grasp of the absolute. I attribute . . . the same absolute value to the physical sciences. . . . Ideally, physics attains the absolute, and in the measure that it advances, it approaches closer and closer to this ideal limit. I should like to know if there exists among the modern conceptions of science a theory that sets positive science higher. Most of them regard all of science as relative to human intelligence. I think on the contrary that the mathematical and physical sciences tend to reveal reality in itself, absolute reality. Science does not begin to become relative, or rather symbolical, until it attacks the problems of life and consciousness from the physico-chemical standpoint. But, here too, it keeps all its legitimacy. It only needs to be then completed by a study of another kind, which is metaphysics.[12]

Bergson was asked if he was a mystic. He replied: "If one understands by mysticism (as one almost always does today) a reaction against science, the doctrine I uphold is nothing from one end to another but a protest against mysticism, for it proposes to reestablish the bridge (broken since Kant) between metaphysics and science. This divorce between science and metaphysics is the great evil from which our philosophy suffers. . . . But now, if one understands by mysticism a certain appeal to internal and profound life, then all philosophy is mysticism." [13]

[11] G. Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, p. 13.

[12] A. Binet, "Une Enquête sur l'évolution de l'enseignement de la philosophie," *L'Année psychologique*, XIV (1908), pp. 229–30.

[13] "Le Parallélisme psycho-physique et la métaphysique pure," *Bulletin*, I (1901), 63–64.

Bergson's tone was changed by the period of *Two Sources* (he would not have admitted that *all* philosophy is mysticism), but even in his last published book, *La Pensée et le mouvant*,[14] he wrote with pride that many of his conceptions – of intellectual effort, attention to life, the unconscious, and the like – originally viewed as paradoxical, were now commonplace in psychology. He also reprinted without notation the remark he had made toward the end of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*: "One does not obtain an intuition from reality, that is to say, an intellectual sympathy with what is deepest within it, if one has not gained its confidence by a long comradeship with its superficial manifestations."

Yet say what he will, Bergson is an irrationalist. His brilliant words may be compared with the sunset minutes when the day breaks into spectral colors, which glitter, then fade into night. His phrases glitter, but, as he often remarks, they blind us, they lighten only enough of the darkness for the darkness to become visible, and for a vague guidance toward the God who is Creation. And if existence is pure mobility, we must look upon science, from the vantage ground of metaphysics, as an inferior occupation. In any case, Bergsonism, depending on its wielder, can cut one or another way: either it sets up anew the absolute validity of science in many of its concerns or it makes of science an unesthetic and unphilosophical food-grubbing activity. The second, more spectacular result has predominated.

Our interpretation of Bergson, and our sympathy with the doctrine as thus interpreted, may warp our judgment of his originality. But without reference to originality, it

[14] The introduction, of which we are speaking, is dated 1922, however.

is certain that he made a harmonious "system." His philosophy as a whole appears far less heterogeneous than that of his closest predecessors, like Delboeuf, Fouillée, or Guyau. Whether one agrees or disagrees with him, he is all of a piece. The very fact that we have had to look here and there in order to assemble what is amalgamated in Bergsonism, which nevertheless has unusual integrity, indicates a terminal system, one that characterizes a trend in the history of thought. Whether the author is a great innovator or not – and Bergson is not – scarcely matters, as long as his philosophy is the final result of a convergence of ideas. This holds all the more when he is able to filter the whole tradition through a poetic personality.

Bergson once warned the historian of philosophy, Benrubi, against research of the kind we have conducted: "I believe one runs very great risks in wishing to reconstitute the influences an author has undergone, by relying on the external resemblances of his doctrine with others. When precise indications, coming from the author himself, permit us to discover once again what has been effectuated in his mind, we frequently perceive that the path he has followed is very different from what it would have appeared to us natural to suppose." [15]

No valuation we can make of the originality of Bergson is as important as an understanding of the spirit and science, French and European alike, concentrated in his thought. But surely, as we address ourselves even to the more subjective estimate, we do not wish to deserve the reproach of Bergson. Wherein did *he* think himself original?

[15] J. Benrubi, *Les Sources et les courants de la philosophie contemporaine en France*, II, 741.

It seems to me that if what I offer contains something of novelty, it is that there is *one* philosophic problem, but an infinity of particular questions, which must be separately resolved, and which cannot possibly be reduced to a single one. . . . My course [he was speaking of his teaching] is of such a nature that I am astonished at the importance assigned it. I have only got rid of a certain number of ready-made ideas; I deserve no great credit for it [*J'ai seulement écarté un certain nombre d'idées toutes faites; je n'y ai pas grand mérite*]. I have tried to develop the taste for introspection. But I have no system.[16]

Bergson was a modest and perceptive man. He knew his virtue to lie in method, in an ability to follow the never-ending variations of experience, and yet to draw on what is – for a philosopher bred in philosophy – an astonishing knowledge of science. That is virtue enough. And to the question, "Is Bergson original?" he seems to have answered, "Not very."

In truth, the judgment of philosophic originality resembles the judgment of a work of art. Man is an imitative creator. Before he can produce, he must assimilate. A rich philosophy is the organization of a multitude of experiences, of notions and facts, a stringing together of the bright ideas we steal, wittingly or not, as we go along. Even Beethoven remarked in joke that one of his best quartets was "an assemblage filched from one place or another [*zusammengestohlen aus verschiedenem diesem und jenem*]." Having imitated, he could transform. When Bergson says a philosopher has a few simple insights, which he clothes according to the fashion of his day, and which would be the same no matter what their dress, he is both right and wrong. Right because so far as philosophizing rests on temperament, on the sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic

[16] *M. F.*, XCIII (1911), pp. 414, 413.

humors the medievals enumerated, it very nearly repeats itself along the course of time. Wrong because the hue of a "system" depends also on the manner and the subtlety and the science with which it is expounded. The Democritean theory of atoms was a triumph of imagination, an uncanny prefigurement of the modern hypothesis, yet no one would be bold enough to maintain that there is no major difference between the theories of Democritus and Dalton. We cannot agree with Emerson that "Plato is philosophy and philosophy is Plato," nor repulse Bergson by saying, "Heraclitus came before you."

There *are* relatively new ideas. But Bergson had no great share in originating any of the points he considered focal, except perhaps in *Matter and Memory*. His "originality" is a gift for synthesizing the theories of other persons. Although most of his followers would regard this as a paradox, because they have learned to prize the fertile intuition, he stands out chiefly as a summary and a symbol. His thought mirrors the culture that was its source, as the clear river mirrors the land in which it rises and through which it flows.

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