

Reasonable Evolution

**On Bergson's Dualism and the Promise of Materialist
Dialectic**

**A thesis submitted to Goldsmiths University of London in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Masayoshi Kosugi, declare that the thesis entitled *Reasonable Evolution: On Bergson's Dualism and the Promise of Materialist Dialectic* and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:

To my parents

*The wisdom of the Buddha Dharma is based on two truths:
The truth of worldly veils, and the Ultimate truth.
Those who do not know the distribution of the two kinds of truth,
Do not know the profound point in the teaching of the Buddha.*

Nāgārjuna
Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

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Abstract

This thesis reconstructs a materialist dialectical logic through a novel reading of Henri Bergson's method of intuition. We argue that Bergson's theory of intuition is fundamentally double in nature and contains within itself both the *retrieval* of Kantian time as well as its transcendence by positing the *Other* of time through the theory of "duration." We call this Bergson's *Transcendental Dualism* and present a study of the materialist-phenomenological interrelation between time and duration as the key towards reconstructing a unique materialist dialectic that is neither naïvely positivistic nor nihilistic in nature. Our argument is that this dualism of intuition sits at the core of Bergson's philosophy and it accomplishes a reversal of idealism that makes possible *both* the critique/negation of the historical constitution of finite human subjectivity *as well as* the affirmation of the Absolute Self from a materialist standpoint. Our exposition will be laid out in two parts. In Part I, we examine the element of time as that which endows the method of intuition with the capacity for negation or critique in a way compatible with Marxist criticism of subjectivity. In Part II, we explore the aspect of duration in terms of intuition's capacity for affirmation. In contradistinction to that of time, it is our view that the theory of duration corresponds to Bergson's non-metaphysical way of apprehending the Absolute Self, not in terms of a belief in the supra-sensible Idea but as the pure, transcendental sensuousness given within one's actual intuition. Having established the duality of time and duration as the transcendental condition of intuition, this opens up a possibility for the becoming of human to be a free act of synthesis and leads towards what Bergson calls "reasonable evolution".

Index of References and Abbreviations

Works by Henri Bergson

The page numbers of Bergson's works cited first refer to English editions and then to the paginations of the *Œuvres*, l'édition du Centenaire, PUF. For instance, (TFW 30/120) refers to page 30 of *Time and Free Will* in the English edition and page 120 of the *Œuvres*.

- TFW** *Time and Free Will: Essays on the Immediate Data of Consciousness.*
Trans. F. L. Pogson. New York: Dover. [1889] 2001.
- MM** *Matter and Memory.* Trans. N. M. Paul, W. S. Palmer. New York: Zone
Books. [1896] 1998.
- CE** *Creative Evolution.* Trans. A. Mitchell. New York: Dover. [1907] 1998.
- ME** *Mind-Energy.* Trans. H. W. Carr. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[1919] 2007.
- TS** *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion.* Trans. R. A. Audra, C.
Brereton., W. H. Carter. Indiana: Univ. of Notre Dame Press. [1932]
1977.
- CM** *The Creative Mind.* Trans. M. L. Andison. New York: Citadel Press.
[1934] 1992.

Works by Immanuel Kant

- ID** *On the Form and the Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible
World [Inaugural Dissertation].* In *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770.*
Trans. D. Walford, R. Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
[1770] 2002. pp.373-416.
- CPR** *Critique of Pure Reason.* Trans. W. S. Pluhar. Cambridge: Hackett.
[1781, 1787] 1996.

- GMM** *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals*. In *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. M. J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. pp.43-108. [1785] 1996.
- CPrR** *Critique of Practical Reason*. In *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. M. J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. pp.139-271. [1788] 1999.
- CJ** *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. P. Guyer. E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. [1790] 2000.

Works by Plato

We will be following the traditional way of referencing individual dialogues by their respective titles and lines. For example, *Timaeus* 36a indicates *Timaeus*, paragraph 36, line a. We are consulting *Plato. The Complete Works*. Edited by John. M. Cooper, Cambridge: Hackett. 1997.

Introduction

Bergson and the Problem of Dialectic

True life is absent. We are not of this world. [...] Love must be reinvented.

Arthur Rimbaud¹

1. Why Bergson Today?

This thesis proposes to extract a unique materialist dialectical logic from Henri Bergson's method of philosophy, known as the method of intuition. In lieu of introduction, let us begin with the general question as to why Bergson's philosophy still matters for us today and what benefit we can expect from examining his thought in terms of the problem of dialectical logic. After all, is not Bergson's philosophy a thing of the past due to its generally recognised "apolitical" nature? Even if one admits that his thought has an important place within the general history of Western philosophy, has it not received this honorary place precisely because it is recognized as an *anti*-dialectical philosophy and is it not precisely because of such a characteristic that his philosophy has become a *passé*?

Henri Bergson was undoubtedly one of the most visible figures in philosophy not only in France but also worldwide at the beginning of the twentieth century. Besides the fact that he was one of the very few philosophers that received the Nobel Prize, his public lectures at the *Collège de France* attracted tremendous interest from the audience and his success at some point is said to have reached a height of "cult-like" zeal.² However, he quickly fell from public prominence after the First World War and was largely replaced by a strand of thought influenced by Alexandre Kojève's reintroduction of Hegel to France in the 1930s.³ A few decades earlier in England, where Bergson's fame was equally widespread at the time, Bertrand Russell had already come into prominence due to his harsh criticism of Bergson. In both cases, the name of Bergson quickly became

¹ Rimbaud, A., (2001). *Collected Poems*. Trans. M. Sorrell. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. p.229

² Lawlor, L. & Moulard, V., ([2004] 2016). "Henri Bergson." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [Online] Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/>. [Accessed 25 April].

³ Guerlac, S., (2006). *Thinking in Time: Introduction to Henri Bergson*. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press. p.3.

synonymous with the burden of “vitalist idealism” and “spiritualism” that relegated him on the bad side of historiography within the context of leftist politics. After the end of the Second World War, for such figures as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Max Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin, the denouncing of Bergsonism became a gesture equivalent to showing an allegiance to Marxism.⁴

What benefit, then, can we expect from delving into Bergson’s philosophy today? Why examine this figure that seemingly has no use for us anymore? Let us turn to the subject matter of dialectical logic, since it is through examining this problematic that our rationale for delving into Bergson first comes to light. Alain Badiou, who is one of the longstanding critics of Bergson’s philosophy, states:

The fundamental problem in the philosophical field today is to find something like a new logic. We cannot begin by some considerations about politics, life, creation or action. We must first describe a new logic, or more precisely, a new dialectics.⁵

Dialectical logic, according to Badiou, is that which comes *before* politics and its import for politics lies in this characteristic of being its *prior condition*. That is, as Hegel states in the *Science of Logic*, what an examination of dialectical logic has as its subject matter is the question of the “beginning of everything” [*Anfang aller Dinge*].⁶ The word “beginning”, which appears alongside the concept of Logic/*Logos*, is here to be understood as the *origin*, or the Greek *arche*, as it is used in the first sentence of the *Gospel of John*: “[In] the beginning was the Word” [*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος/Im Anfang war das Wort*]. Logic is therefore posed alongside the question of the “principle” or the question concerning the very nature of the *First* from which everything springs forth.⁷ If politics deals with more specific questions regarding what sort of collective existence we can create for ourselves and what particular practical actions we can undertake, a philosophical examination of

⁴ See John Heckman’s introduction to Jean Hyppolite’s *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Heckman, J., (1974). *Introduction*. In Hyppolite, J., ([1946] 1974). *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans, S. Cherniak, J. Heckman. Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press. p.xix. “For most of those who became interested in phenomenology (with the notable exception of Hyppolite), the question of breaking from Bergson was important, since it represented a break from idealism.”

⁵ Badiou, A., (2013). “Affirmative Dialectics: from Logic to Anthropology.” *International Journal of Badiou Studies*. Vol.2, No 1. p.1.

⁶ Hegel, G. W. F., ([1816] 1969). *Hegel’s Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller. New York: Humanity Books. p.67.

⁷ *Ibid.*

dialectical logic addresses upon what presupposition, or upon what foundation, our politics can be based in the first place.

Of course, just as the realm of politics is a continuous striving towards novel developments, philosophy's effort to grasp the beginning as such itself also undergoes an analogous struggle. As Deleuze states, "theory too is something which is made" and this something is certainly not "ready-made in a prefabricated sky".⁸ As always, the pressing task for philosophy today is to interrogate what kind of presupposition/foundation we are currently standing on and to speculate how it can be better articulated or even be improved for the benefit of our future collective existence. Historically speaking, whether one explicitly endorses its name or not, our era has no other philosophical theory of the beginning other than that of Marx's materialist dialectic which, according to latter, is the exact reverse of the Hegelian dialectic. In the 1873 Postface to the second edition of *Capital vol. 1*, Marx states:

My dialectical method is, in its foundation, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of the 'Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance [*Erscheinung*] of the idea. With me, reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.⁹

As "opposed" to the Hegelian dialectic, Marx famously states that his dialectical logic regards "the Material" rather than "the Ideal" to be the *Demiurge/creator* of the Real [*Demiurg des Wirklichen*]. But what have we gained from such a materialist reversal and what exactly does it mean to have this materialist dialectic as the foundation of politics?

To be sure, Marx's materialist reversal of dialectic has left us with a profound paradox internal to philosophy. In putting itself forth as a new kind of dialectical logic, and hence constituting itself as a philosophical theory of the beginning in its own right, materialist dialectic nonetheless seems to deny philosophy's access to the Truth of the beginning as such. That is, to reverse the

⁸ Deleuze, G., ([1985] 2009). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. H. Tomlinson & R. Galeta. London: Continuum. p.268.

⁹ Marx, K., ([1976] 1990). "Postface to the Second Edition." In *Capital. Vol. 1*. Trans. B. Fowkes. London: Penguin Books. p.102.

order between the Ideal and the Material and to designate the latter as the Demiurge of the Real is analogous to establishing philosophy's ultimate *alienation* from the real foundation of reality. Instead of philosophy immanently grasping the Logos through thinking, after Marx's reversal, we have the logos of Life or the *Life-process* [*Lebensprozeß*] that determines philosophy from without. In *German Ideology*, Marx states:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process [...] Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.¹⁰

Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by Life: this means that what philosophy once strived to lay claim upon – that is, Logic as the foundation of everything – is now seen as a mere secondary *result* of Life – a Life that which exists outside philosophy. The real foundation is now designated in terms of the material Life-process; what the logic now designates as the foundation is something that exists outside of philosophy.

Let us ask again: what have we gained from this reversal? We know that the materialist dialectic has been widely accepted within the disciplines of political economy, history, sociology, anthropology, geography, literary criticism, cultural studies, media studies, art and art criticism, largely through providing the former fields with the general framework of criticizing various forms of knowledge as the product of ideological consciousness.¹¹ Accordingly, the implication is that since the real foundation is now considered to reside outside of philosophy, the only thing philosophy can do is to provide the framework for *self-critique*. The latter is

¹⁰ Marx, K & Engels, F., ([1964] 1976). *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. p.42.

¹¹ Of course, "ideology critique" shows up under various terms depending upon individual theorists' takes (such as Derrida's "deconstruction", Foucault's "genealogy", *etc.*) and it does not mean exactly the same thing since each philosopher constructs his own conceptions sometimes in explicit disagreement with the generally received "Marxism" (structuralism, historicism, *etc.*). However, seen through the broader perspective of Marx's materialist reversal of dialectics, we can detect a general tendency to direct the effort of philosophical labor towards a critical *distancing* from all philosophical truths as *products* of material history.

expressed as the capacity to observe ourselves and to be aware of the real and irreducible existence of ideologies within our consciousness so that we can protect ourselves from being deceived into believing in the independence of our consciousness. Philosophy's function is thus circumscribed to protecting us from being passive contributors to the reproduction of ideologies.

However, if Life is to be seen as the true foundation and if we are to regard it as that which exists outside of philosophy, what does this mean for our consciousness? The consequence of accepting the materialist dialectic would seem to entail that philosophy's function of providing the framework of self-critique comes about by conceding that it is ultimately powerless in front of the true Logic of Life. Accordingly, the only conceivable end that philosophy can give to itself is to acquire and disseminate the self-consciousness of this powerlessness. Philosophy thus necessarily becomes an activity of thought that summons the "phantoms formed in the human brain" and, as such, even when it strives to grasp the foundation of everything, it can only do so through thinking as a means. Yet the new materialist logic has already established for us that thinking is alienated from Life and that our thought does not have the capacity to stand on its own and get in touch with Life. This inevitably places our consciousness within an inescapable circle of alienation. The attempt to move out of the circle and reach towards true Life would bring us right back to the starting point, which is exactly this very place of alienation; in other words, philosophy can only ever recognize its subordination under the primordial sways of Life as the true progenitor of human history.¹²

After Marx, then, the important question we must address in philosophy is: if philosophy is powerless in front of the true logos of Life, what gives the materialist dialectic its privilege of pronouncing the Truth of Life in the first place? For does the latter not employ thinking as the necessary means to do so? If this is in fact the case, what endows it with the exclusive right, as it were, to soar above

¹² For instance, Sartre profoundly points out in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* that:

The supreme paradox of historical materialism is that it is, at one and the same time, the only truth of History and a total *indetermination* of the Truth. The totalising thought of historical materialism has established everything except for its own existence [...] we do not know what it means for a Marxist historian to *speak the truth*. Not that his statements are false – far from it; but he does not have the concept of *Truth* at his disposal. In this way, Marxism presents itself to us, as ideologists, as an unveiling of being, and at the same time as an unanswered question as to the validity of this unveiling.

Sartre, J.-P., ([1960] 2004). *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Trans. A. Sheridan-Smith. New York: Verso. p.19.

the clouds of ideological consciousness and obtain the knowledge of the Real *via* thinking? Indeed, Marx was the thinker that based his own philosophy upon a criticism of the Hegelian “pantheistic mysticism.”¹³ Yet, if Marxism professes that Life is something that is located outside of philosophical consciousness, does not Marxism rather come to be a repetition of what it criticised in the first place?

This is an urgent question that concerns the condition of possibility for human freedom. If we fail to provide a sufficient answer to the above question internal to philosophy, it is our politics or the sphere of all practical action that must necessarily suffer in consequence. The paradox of materialist dialectic is that, in destroying the possibility of thought to grasp within itself the beginning of everything, it nonetheless constitutes itself as a new philosophical doctrine of the beginning. This means that the materialist reversal of dialectic does not necessarily allow us to flee from ideological philosophy once and for all and to engage in a genuine political action. On the contrary, the negation of the old dialectic is simultaneously a creation of a new dialectic (a determinate negation). As such, it cannot escape from the fate of establishing itself as a new philosophical foundation for politics. One cannot therefore simply do away with the philosophical question of the beginning due to Marx’s materialist reversal. The slogan of the “flight from philosophy” is the mask for a new philosophy and the belief in the absence of the real foundation rather constitutes itself into the new philosophical presupposition from which politics must begin.

To the announcement that philosophy has become nothing, all we have to do is to ask in turn: *on what ground?* On what ground has philosophy become nothing? It can only be that it is upon another philosophical ground that philosophy is proclaimed as nothing. It is not, therefore, anti-philosophy that has killed philosophy. Rather, philosophy has killed itself – it has made the *choice* to see itself as powerless in front of Life. Put simply, our problem today is the groundlessness as the ground, or the lack of foundation serving *as* the foundation beneath our feet. According to the materialist dialectic, we stand upon the presupposition that philosophical truths are the derivative products of Life. However, precisely because we strive to remain faithful to this presupposition, we do not know how to dwell within the True Life and instead treat it as a mere object

¹³ Marx, K., ([1975] 1992). *Early Writings*. Trans. R. Livingstone, G. Benton. London: Penguin Books. p.61.

of thought that one must distance oneself from. By conceding that Life is the true foundation, we lose the condition to uphold Truth except through criticizing it as *the supra-sensuous unknowable Idea*. Marx states that “[in] direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven.”¹⁴ But, how can we affirmatively know and possess the Truth of the so-called Earth after this reversal? If philosophy cannot provide the answer to this question, the new foundation remains an abstract Idea and “materialism” remains a mere name for another form of Idealism, which, lacking a firm foundation within itself, cannot protect itself from degenerating into relativism or nihilism. Either way, our politics is destined to be a mere farce. In other words, we could say, with Heidegger, that what the materialist reversal produces is a “fulfilment” [*Vollendung*] of metaphysics, or that the reversal of Idealism ends up producing another kind of Idealist Metaphysics despite of its promise to do the very opposite.¹⁵ The absence of true Life or the unavailability of the Absolute Truth to philosophy is thus not the novelty of the materialist reversal but a mere repetition of the history of Western Metaphysics. And if materialism does not succeed in going beyond Idealist Metaphysics, Life becomes a mere object of *belief* and materialism another form of *Theology*, which is just another name of nihilism.¹⁶

What happens to *our Life*? What happens to *us as Life*? Does not philosophy’s powerlessness in front of Life mean that we are powerless in front of *ourselves as Life*? If this is the case, our labour in life is fruitless labour. What can save us from this state of hopelessness except for abandoning the fundamental care for Life? We criticize philosophy for being derivative and blind, but we cannot find the way to rid ourselves from this perilous situation since this is what our philosophy in fact tells us: lifelessness is our life. We do not live but we are made to live *by* Life. The real question thus becomes: within such a situation how can politics derive its strength and a genuine sense of purpose? How can we live life if we are convinced, before we even begin, that we are mere products of the primordial sways of Life? The alienation and the nothingness of philosophy in front of Life are in fact our nothingness and alienation from our own Life – *true life is absent*, as Rimbaud says.

¹⁴ Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*. p.42.

¹⁵ Heidegger, M., ([1969] 1972). *On Time and Being*. Trans. J. Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Rowe. p.57.

¹⁶ Heidegger, M., ([1961] 1987, 1982). *Nietzsche Vol. 3 & 4*. Trans. D.F. Krell. New York: HarperCollins. pp.205-210.

Overall, the fact that the problem of the absence of true beginning besets philosophy ever since Marx's materialist reversal indicates that our era has not overcome the most fundamental stumbling block pointed out by the initiator of the modern idealist tradition, Immanuel Kant. In the preface to the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states:

Human reason has a peculiar fate in one kind of its cognitions: it is troubled by questions that it cannot dismiss, because they are posed to it by the nature of reason itself, but it also cannot answer, because they surpass human reason's every ability. Our reason falls into this perplexity through no fault of its own [...] for the principles that it employs go beyond the boundary of all experience and hence no longer acknowledge any touchstone of experience. The battleground of these endless conflicts is what we call metaphysics.¹⁷

As a preliminary to his *magnum opus*, Kant puts forth a prophecy: human reason is destined to dwell within the "battleground of endless conflicts" since the *principle* [*Grundsätze*] that it employs goes beyond the boundary of all experience. Kant's *Copernican Revolution* of modern philosophy is thus postulated upon an acknowledgement that metaphysics as such is alienated from the true principle and is thus destined to repeat the war between despotic dogmatism and skeptic anarchy, both of which are the products of the common failure of finding the true beginning within itself. As long as material Life or the Demiurge of the real is considered to be withdrawn from philosophical consciousness, we remain confronted with the infinite opposition, or the *endless conflicts*, between metaphysics as either dogmatism or scepticism as Kant states. Within this configuration, neither of them possesses the capacity to establish our life upon the actual knowledge of the *Good* and there can be no objective difference between the progress of life and its degeneration. As Foucault says, politics then has no other alternatives to envisage itself as "the continuation of war by other means", or, as Levinas puts it, "(i)ndividuals are reduced to being bearers of forces that command them unbeknown to themselves."¹⁸

Our rationale behind going back to the philosophy of Bergson through the problematic of the materialist dialectical logic stems from the need to overcome

¹⁷ CPR Avii–viii.

¹⁸ Foucault, M., ([1997] 2004). *Society Must be Defended*. Trans. D. Macey. London: Penguin. p.15.

Levinas, E., ([1961] 1969). *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. A. Lingus. Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press. p.21.

the above-mentioned problem of nihilism within philosophy. The fundamental question that motivates our project is: how can Bergson's philosophy prepare the ground for a genuine form of politics, or a genuine form of living after the materialist reversal of dialectic? How can our collective existence be based upon the genuine *Good* and not merely upon the self-consciousness of our alienation from this very *raison d'être* of politics as such? If, as Marx declared, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by Life", how can we live *our life* through philosophy? Our inability to find the true beginning after Marx's reversal of dialectic is equivalent to our inability *to make our own history* or to become active subjects able to exercise their power to determine their own destiny out of their own *freedom*. By conceding that true Life is outside philosophy, we are exposed to the seemingly unsurpassable distance between the freedom of Life and *our freedom* and nothing seems to be able to eliminate this distance and save our politics from degenerating into infinite despair and boredom.

Now, this lack of beginning in philosophy after the materialist reversal is coupled with a complementary symptom with regard to the problem of the end. Since philosophy lacks the power of finding the beginning within itself, it also lacks the power to find the end through its own means and effort. In other words, philosophy's alienation from the true beginning is, at the same time, its alienation from the end *with respect to which* it directs itself since every beginning begins for an end. We are reminded of Nietzsche here, who profoundly wrote that in nihilism: "[t]he aim is lacking: 'why' finds no answer":¹⁹ "Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking: the character of existence is not 'true,' is *false*."²⁰ Nihilism thus refers to both the fundamental lack of the beginning as well as of the end as its two complementary symptoms. If Marx was the philosopher who pointed out the lack of the true beginning in philosophy through the reversal of the material and the ideal *via* the self-proclaimed reversal of Platonism and the abolishment of the "true world", Nietzsche was the one who stressed the lack of the true end and uncovered the fictitiousness of the traditionally envisaged conception of the end located within the supra-sensuous realm. With Nietzsche, the end, which had been considered to reside in the world "above" or within the Ideal realm *behind* the world of appearance, no longer seems

¹⁹ Nietzsche, F., (1968). *The Will to Power*. Trans. W. Kaufmann., R.J. Hollindale. New York: Vintage Books. p.9.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.13. §12(A).

convincing to us. As Arendt notes, Nietzsche's famous statement "*God is dead*" refers to the death of "the traditional *thought* of God" that thinks of it as the bestower of world's order residing in the supra-sensuous world.²¹ The death of God thus refers to the death of the belief in the existence of the end of the world in the supra-sensuous realm.

Like Marx, Nietzsche presents us with the fundamental criticism of the Western metaphysical tradition that seeks the end of the world within the suprasensible realm of the Idea and instead interprets such ends as the by-products of material Life. However, having said this, we cannot be satisfied with this criticism of the suprasensible end alone since an overcoming of nihilism requires us to take one step further. That is, nihilism cannot be overcome solely through pointing out that the traditionally conceived end is a false projection stemming from our illusory belief in the world beyond or behind the sensuous realm. Although it is necessary, if the critique of the nihility of the supra-sensible end is left by itself and seen as the only thing that philosophy can do against the onslaught of illusion, this does not liberate us from the nihility of ends itself and secretly results in reinforcing nihilism. Unless the criticism is coupled with an affirmation of the true end, the consciousness of the falsity of the end turns against itself and ends up *idealizing* the abstract lack of the end as the new end in the manner of the idealist teleology. Ironically, the critical reversal of Platonism accidentally results in constituting itself into a *belief in Chaos/Non-Being* as the hidden concept of God. As Nietzsche famously says: "The true world is gone: which world is left? The illusory one perhaps? ... But no! *we got rid of the illusory world along with the true one!*"²² Again, the realization of the fictitiousness of the intelligible world alone does not itself succeed in liberating us from the nihility of the true world. Rather, the reversal of Platonism results in designating the world of appearance as the new "beyond"/"the True World", which is the newly established fictitious truth insofar as it is not given to our sensuous knowledge. The supposed disorderliness of the sensuous world now functions as the new moralistic order that imposes itself upon us humans from above. This, according to Nietzsche, is the

²¹ Arendt, H., (1971). *The Life of the Mind*. New York: Harbourt. pp.9-10.

²² Nietzsche, F., (2005). *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, The Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*. Trans. J. Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. p.171.

“fanatical faith” that “All is false” or that “*all* interpretations of the world are false”, which is nothing else than the “nihilism of action”.²³

In order to truly overcome nihilism, we must take a step further. Along with the criticism of the intelligible world, we must be able to affirm the truth of the sensible world in a non-idealistic manner so as to find a different conception of the end. That is, instead of accidentally giving rise to a novel *idea* of the end in a way that keeps the old conceptual structures intact, what we need is a *new conception of the end*. Nietzsche puts it beautifully: “the absolute necessity of a total liberation from ends: otherwise we should not be permitted to try to sacrifice ourselves and let ourselves go. Only the innocence of becoming gives us the *greatest courage* and the *greatest freedom!*”²⁴ Here, along with the critique of supra-sensuous ends, Nietzsche posits a recovery of the “innocence of becoming” as the supreme end of the critique. In other words, the liberation *from* ends is the *means towards the real end*; the denial of the ends of becoming is directed towards a superior type of becoming as the true end.

It is only through realizing that the critique of the ends of becoming is the *means to an end* that we come to grasp the true meaning of the critique of nihilism. That is, the very meaning of speaking of and critiquing nihilism resides in one’s overcoming of it. Far from being satisfied with merely pointing out the fictitiousness of all ends, Nietzsche also speaks of the difference between “*active nihilism*” and “*passive nihilism*.”²⁵ The latter is the “decline and recession of the power of the spirit” and the former is said to be “a sign of increased power of the spirit”. The criticism of nihilism is therefore not meant to be a mere confirmation of the powerlessness of philosophy vis-à-vis externally given ends (passive nihilism). Rather, it is expected to function as the springboard towards the true end. The question therefore becomes: what persuades us to turn towards the true end? With what procedure can we shake off the nihilistic skepticism towards all ends of becoming and regain a hope in our own becomings? The problem for us today is no longer that false ends are masquerading as true. This belief no longer exists and its criticism is merely a confirmation of the new belief in the meaninglessness of existence and in philosophy’s powerlessness when confronted with the lack of meaning. The real problem is therefore how we can recover the

²³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p.7. §1.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.416. §787.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.17. §22.

strength of our becoming after the realization of the falsity of the supra-sensuous ends of becoming, or after we have come to know nihilism as the truth of this era. Criticism is merely a diagnosis of the problem. We must look elsewhere in order to find the antidote. Beyond the criticism of false ends, we now require the true end.

2. Bergson as a Materialist Dialectician: Method of Intuition

It is in relation to such a pervasive sense of nihilistic depression that we derive the chief motivation to turn to Bergson's philosophy in view of the problem of dialectic. For us, the inability to find the true beginning as well as the true end of philosophy after the materialist reversal stems from the difficulty of completing this very reversal at the level of the experience of consciousness. Indeed, Marx and Nietzsche brought about the reversal of the relationship of priority between the Ideal and the Material and hence established a theory of material-historical determination of philosophical consciousness. However, due to the difficulty of affirming Absolute Knowledge within this new philosophical perspective, the material life-process now accidentally takes up the role of the divine mediator of history and philosophical consciousness has no choice but to see itself as a derivative product. Our self-consciousness has thus been suffering from its own sense of powerlessness to establish itself upon a new theory of the Absolute Knowledge and this effectively returns materialism back to the problem of the Idealist Metaphysics.²⁶ The alienation of consciousness from the Absolute then confronts us with renewed strength and we once again find ourselves within the antithetical opposition between philosophy as ideological consciousness and material life process as the pure Beyond. In short, unless we confront the problem of the unavailability of Life, the materialist reversal's promise of liberation from

²⁶ Within a certain strand of Marxism, the congruence between materialism and metaphysics has long been acknowledged. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, states:

I conclude in all good faith that it is a metaphysical doctrine and that materialists are metaphysicians. But they immediately stop me. [...] It is a clear and *a priori* stand on a problem which infinitely transcends our experience. This is also my own stand, but I did not consider myself to be any the less a metaphysician in refusing the existence to God than Leibniz was granting Him.

Sartre, J.-P., ([1947, 1949] 1962). *Literary and Philosophical Essays*. Trans. A. Michaelson. New York: Collier. p.200.

ideological illusion ends up being a false promise that repeats the same old mistake.

We propose to revisit Bergson's philosophy vis-à-vis the problem that the materialist reversal of dialectic has brought forth. Today, if we are to go back to a philosopher whose time has seemingly passed and if this going back is to be of any political value, this must be done with the intent of overcoming the problem of nihilism within the context of the materialist dialectic. Our intention, however, is not at all to *undo* materialism by returning to Bergsonian "idealism". Our aim is exactly the opposite: Bergson will be read and defended as a materialist dialectician that solves the problem of nihilism. In direct opposition to the traditional reading that treats Bergsonism as a type of Idealism, we will argue that Bergson rather performs the reversal of the Material and the Ideal without alienating philosophical consciousness from material-life and relapsing to nihilism.

As we intend to show, the crux of the matter is how to overcome nihilism and gain access to *human freedom* through a new form of materialist dialectic. Throughout his career, Bergson tirelessly expounds upon the unique characteristics of freedom that belongs to human beings and his method of philosophy is considered to be, in his word, the "artifice" developed for the benefit of human freedom.²⁷ He states in *Matter and Memory*:

Freedom is not [...] reduced to sensible spontaneity. At most, this would be the case in the animal, of which the psychical life is mainly affective. But, in man, the thinking being, the free act may be termed a synthesis of feelings and ideas and the evolution which leads to it a reasonable evolution. The artifice of this method simply consists, in short, in distinguishing the point of view of customary or useful knowledge from that of true knowledge.²⁸

Bergson specifies the characteristic of human freedom as the "synthesis of feelings and ideas" [*une synthèse de sentiments et d'idées*] and gives it a name: "reasonable evolution" [*évolution raisonnable*]. Moreover, the so-called reasonable evolution is said to be "the ultimate end of philosophical research" [*La démarche extrême de la recherché philosophique*].²⁹ In other words, reasonable evolution is what Bergson's philosophy directs itself as its destination/end, or it is what is *promised* as its ultimate *Telos*.

²⁷ MM 186/322.

²⁸ MM 186/322.

²⁹ MM 185-186/321-322.

In the above quotation, Bergson states that this telos/end of reasonable evolution consists of the “synthesis” between “feelings” and “ideas”, or between “customary or useful knowledge” and “true knowledge”. In other words, the “free act” that belongs to the human being is the act of synthesis and the subject of this synthesis is the free human being. Although a full determination of the meaning of the “human” as well as of “reasonable evolution” must be left for the end of this thesis, let us note here that what Bergson points out as “Man, the thinking being” [*l’homme, être pensant*], which is said to be the subject of free synthesis, radically differs from how “human” is understood in its ordinary sense as a derivative, finite creature that is entangled within the “relativity of knowledge” and is thus opposed to the Absolute Knowledge of the original being.³⁰ Within the same section of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson clearly states that his method of philosophy requires one to: “seek experience at its source, or rather above the decisive turn where [...] it becomes properly *human* experience.”³¹ If the human were to be understood in the sense of derivative creature, the freedom of human being would not exceed its relative attachment to an external creator and the “reasonable” would, at best, denote the self-consciousness of its ultimate *unfreedom* in front of the Absolute Being. In this way, overcoming nihilism would be impossible since freedom belongs to what is external to human being and since the beginning and end of everything can only be a mere projection stemming from the side of the finite creature. However, this is not at all what Bergson means by the “human” nor by the “reasonable”. On the contrary, what is human for Bergson is *above* [*au-dessus*] what is “properly” human and hence, if we can borrow Nietzsche’s famous expression, the meaning of the human consists in the “Overman” as the *overcoming* of the human.³²

Here, Bergson’s essential doctrine concerning the freedom of human beings amounts to this ironical proposition: *what is human is not human proper*. The task of this thesis is to expound upon the inner structure of this ironic proposition and to find out what is meant by “reasonable evolution” as the ultimate end of philosophy. In short, we aim to reconstitute a materialist dialectic that is capable of providing us with both the condition for critique/negation of ideological

³⁰ MM 184/321. Bergson uses the word *man* [*l’homme*] rather than *human*, which is the term we have preferred to use in this thesis.

³¹ MM 184/321.

³² Nietzsche, F., [[1883] 1969]. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R.J. Hollindale. London: Penguin. p.5., p.12.

consciousness, as well as the capacity to affirm and know ourselves *as* the material reality of Life. The first part of our argument thus consists in demonstrating that Bergson's philosophy is capable of performing what has been commonly understood as the materialist function of philosophy – that is, Critique – and the second part aims to resolve the existing impasse within materialism – that is, nihilism – without violating the basic constitution of the materialist reversal.

What, however, qualifies Bergson's philosophy as a materialism and how can we derive a dialectical logic from his thought? Many might object that this project is untenable since Bergson has been known as the anti-dialectical philosopher *par excellence*, which has resulted in him being treated as one of the most unlikely candidates that can deliver a materialist dialectic. After all, Bergson clearly bids “farewell to the dialectical artifice which lulls the attention to sleep and which, in dreams, gives the illusion of advancement”.³³ Much textual evidence from his works would indeed explicitly suggest that Bergson often speaks *against* the dialectical method and describes his own philosophy as something that acquires its particularity through being *opposed* to it. Gilles Deleuze, who is one of the most celebrated and well-known commentators of Bergson, states that:

Bergsonism's incompatibility with Hegelianism, indeed with any dialectical method, is also manifest [...] Bergson reproaches the dialectic for being a *false movement*, that is, a movement of the abstract concept, which goes from one opposite to the other only by means of imprecision [*à force d'imprécision*].³⁴

It is certainly true that Bergson's philosophy can be and has been read in terms of an explicit opposition to dialectical method, in general. To remark that this anti-

³³ CM 68/1309.

³⁴ Deleuze, G., ([1966] 1988). *Bergsonism*. Trans. H. Tomlinson, B. Habberjam. New York: Zone Books. p.44. In his early essay on Bergson titled, “Bergson's Conception of Difference”, Deleuze derives the key concept of *difference* which is later developed in his doctoral dissertation, *Difference and Repetition*. However, he introduces this concept in terms of its opposition to the concept of “contradiction”, which is, according to Deleuze, the reason why difference is misunderstood within a Hegelian-inspired dialectic. Although it is fair to point out that there is an element that goes beyond the logic of contradiction in Bergson's philosophy (namely duration or pure heterogeneity), we would nonetheless like to argue that Bergson does not ignore the problem of contradiction. For us, the chief import of Bergson's philosophy is to establish within dialectic both the logic of contradiction and the logic of the immediate so as sublimate their mutual antagonism and unify them within a higher Logic. See Deleuze, G., ([1956] 2002). *Bergson's Conception of Difference*. In *Desert Islands*. Trans. M. Taormina. New York: Semiotext(e). pp.32-51.

dialectical aspect does exist within his philosophy is, of course, not fully mistaken.³⁵ The original French title of his doctoral dissertation is “Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness” and it is certainly upon “the immediate” that Bergson places emphasis in a way that connotes his intention of emphasizing his *opposition to* dialectical mediation. However, the mere recognition of Bergson’s insistence upon the immediate or anti-dialectical aspect does not necessary lead to a conclusion that there is therefore no dialectic in his philosophy, or that his philosophy as a whole can be adequately understood in terms of its one-sided opposition against dialectic. On the contrary, we will propose that the philosophy of Bergson as a whole *contains* this opposition within it but it is by no means exhausted by it. That is, the immediate and the mediated – or the anti-dialectical and the dialectical aspects, so to speak – are both irreducibly present within his philosophy. In fact, Bergson conceives not only their distinctness with regard to one another but also their unity in their inter-relation so as to ground both aspects within a higher Logic. In our view, what Bergson calls the *method of intuition* is none other than this Logic itself. A re-thinking of his philosophy with regard to this subject-matter can illuminate the hitherto concealed aspect of a materialist dialectic in his work so as to help us avoid the trap of nihilism as well as the return of the Idealist metaphysics.³⁶

³⁵ Between the early and the mid-20th century, Bergson’s philosophy became one of the favourite targets of criticism by numerous well-known Marxist writers in both Germany and France such as Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Georges Politzer, and Louis Althusser, just to name a few. Since the latter half of the 19th century, due to Gilles Deleuze’s explicit engagement with Bergson’s thought in virtually all of his texts, there have been numerous debates concerning the status of Deleuze’s philosophy vis-à-vis his Bergsonism through provocative commentaries by Alain Badiou and other affiliated commentators. In these recent developments, Bergsonism (in Deleuze as well as Bergsonism as such) is often treated as the mark that qualifies Deleuze’s thought as anti-Marxist, or more simply, as capitalist bourgeois ideology. On the one hand, by conceding to such a view, it has become a commonplace for many contemporary commentators sympathetic to Deleuze to treat Deleuze’s Bergsonism as a problem that needs to be overcome. As such, they often explicitly differentiate *Deleuze’s* Bergsonism and Bergsonism as such. On the other hand, many Deleuzian writers situate themselves within this Marx/Bergson dichotomy and endorse what has come to be known as “affect theory”, “anti-representational theory”, *etc.*, and are explicitly against Marxist criticism. In either case, the more important question regarding the status of the opposition between Marx and Bergson (which is the very premise of the discussion) has not been adequately addressed. For a thorough review of the reception of Bergson’s philosophy within Marxist thinkers, see Bianco, G., (2011). “Experience vs. Concept? The Role of Bergson in Twentieth-Century French Philosophy.” *The European Legacy*, vol.16, no.7, pp.855-872.

³⁶ Although Deleuze emphasizes the difference between Bergsonism and dialectic, he also states at the beginning of *Bergsonism* that “intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method, one of the most developed methods

In the second introduction to *Creative Mind*, Bergson states: “these considerations on duration were, as it seemed to be, decisive. Step by step they led me to raise intuition to the level of a philosophical method.”³⁷ Intuition, according to Bergson, is established as a “philosophical method” as a result of his consideration on the problem of duration. In its ordinary usage, the word “intuition” refers to an irrational way of knowing things. When one intuitively knows something, this usually means that one knows something without knowing why or how one knows. This, however, is not at all what Bergson means by the term. Bergson states that it is a “method” and, hence, that it differs in kind from how it is usually perceived in terms of a generalized anti-intellectualism.³⁸ By intuition, then, we shall understand it as a unique principle of philosophy that is precisely formulated in accordance with Bergson’s original reading of the legacies of Kant and the post-Kantian conceptions of intuition [*Anschauung*] as the transcendental condition of experience. Also, insofar as it is said to be the “method”, we cannot understand it in terms of a philosophical investigation “of” intuition in the sense that there is philosophy first which afterwards thinks about intuition as a particular empirical phenomenon that is examined by it in the manner of psychology. If intuition is the method of philosophy, this can only mean that intuition is first erected [*ériger*] as that which is *prior to* any philosophical investigation “of” any empirical phenomenon whatsoever. The very fact that Bergson states that intuition is a method means that we must approach it as that which makes any philosophical investigation itself possible in the first place; indeed, it is the latter that *springs forth* as a result of establishing intuition as its foundation. Intuition is therefore the irreducible presupposition that precedes everything and, hence, in its completion, occupies the equivalent place of dialectical logic in the sense that Hegel expounded it as what makes up the theory of the Beginning as such.

To return, then, to our question: why delve into Bergson in order to find out about the materialist dialectic? Is not a study of Marx’s philosophy sufficient for this task? What can Bergson’s philosophy give us that is lacking in Marx’s own

in philosophy. It has its strict rules, constituting that which Bergson calls “precision” in philosophy.” See Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p.13.

³⁷ CM 30/1271. Translation modified.

³⁸ Bertrand Russell states, for instance, that Bergson’s philosophy is essentially “anti-intellectual”. See Russell, B., (1912). “The Philosophy of Bergson.” *Monist*. vol. 22, pp.321-347.

writings? It is our argument that the problem we encounter *vis-à-vis* the materialist dialectic cannot be fully resolved via a study of Marx's work *per se* since Marx does not show us precisely *how* the materialist dialectic is itself established prior to its demonstration; by extension, the investigation of the materialist dialectic cannot be confined within the pre-established realm of Marxism. What we see in *Capital*, for instance, in its detailed analyses of commodity, money, capital, labour, *etc.*, are the *results* of an already established materialist dialectic. The very *process* through which his distinct dialectical logic itself comes about, however, is nowhere to be found in Marx's own writings. Although he explicitly discusses the problematic aspects within the Hegelian dialectic in his early works (particularly towards the end of *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*), his discussions are largely restricted in providing a criticism of Hegel's idealism *à la* Feuerbach and they do not explicitly present his own dialectic in a positive manner. Of course, Marx's criticism of Hegelianism is an indispensable source for an investigation into the construction of materialist dialectic. Yet, in order to inquire into the very essence and the inner structure of the materialist dialectic, we must venture out of Marx's own writings and construct a new *materialist phenomenology*, or a *materialist science of the experience of consciousness*, which is prior to any demonstrations of the dialectic in terms of its concrete historical manifestations. We may summon here the introduction to *Science of Logic*, where Hegel states:

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* I have exhibited consciousness in its movement onwards from the first immediate opposition of itself and the object to absolute knowing. The path of this movement goes through every form of the *relation of consciousness to the object* and has the Notion of science [*Begriff der Wissenschaft*] for its result.³⁹

³⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p.48. One might well argue that the question pertaining to the relationship between phenomenology and logic in Hegel's overall system is much less straightforward than can be detected in this passage from *Science of Logic*. For instance, in the *Encyclopedia*, phenomenology is not what comes before logic but after it under the rubric the Philosophy of Mind between Anthropology and Psychology. Phenomenology therefore seems to assume two distinct places within the overall shape of the system. However, we agree with Heidegger when he says: "the *Phenomenology of Spirit* remains the work and the way that not only once but always, and in a definite and indispensable manner, prepares the ground – better: the space, the dimensionality, the realm of expansion – for the encyclopedia-system." That is, although phenomenology also occupies the *inner* position within the system, this grounding of phenomenology as the inner element of the later system is nonetheless prepared by the preliminary exercise in

Hegel says that the particular shape of dialectical logic (*i.e.* “science”) is to be obtained as a result of the preliminary project of Phenomenology. Dialectical logic is indeed what constitutes the Beginning of everything, but there is a prior project of phenomenology that determines the very particularity of it before its concrete manifestations. Marx rather accepts this point and states in the Manuscripts of 1844 that “[w]e must begin with his Phenomenology, which is the true birthplace and secret of the Hegelian philosophy.”⁴⁰ Leading on from the above, if Marx puts forth a new logic that differs from the Hegelian version, we can say that the materialist reversal must have first taken place at the level of phenomenology since the dialectical logic is its result. The same phenomenology cannot give birth to a different dialectic unless it is the same disguised as different. Although Marx himself does not explicitly present such a doctrine, in principle, we must be able to construct a new materialist phenomenology that guides us towards a new logic as a result; this can be done independently from the strict confines of Marx’s own writings. One might be inclined to think that materialism does not require phenomenology or even to presuppose that materialism is to be understood as a destruction of the very possibility of phenomenology since the latter is the project that seeks to obtain absolute knowledge exclusively through cognizing the experience of consciousness. After all, as we have explained above, Marx states that philosophy “has no history” and hence he treats it as the secondary product of the material process that lies outside it. Why, then, should we engage in phenomenology when we already concede that it is the secondary product of Life? Do we not know that any attempts to obtain absolute knowledge through consciousness necessarily ends up being a failure since consciousness is *constructed* and the real *constructing* force of Life rather lies outside consciousness?

To be sure, there is a great temptation to assume that the materialist negation of philosophical consciousness is a destruction of the possibility of obtaining absolute knowledge through the science of the experience of consciousness; in other words, it is easy to regard materialism as anti-phenomenology. However, in order to protect ourselves from the jaws of nihilism,

phenomenology “not only once, but always”. See Heidegger, M., ([1980] 1988). *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. P. Emad., K. Maly. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press. p.8.

⁴⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*. pp.382-382.

it is necessary to regard the materialist reversal as a call to envisage a new phenomenology that establishes not the Ideal but the Material Life as the “Demiurge of the Real” *within* the experience of consciousness. After the reversal, Material Life, or the *Other* of philosophical consciousness, is granted the position of the Absolute Self. The new phenomenology must then accept that the Other of philosophical consciousness is obtained through a new philosophical consciousness. The establishment of the Other/Material Life as the Absolute Self must be seen as phenomenology’s *positive* achievement rather than its destruction. After all, even if one accepts that the absolute knowledge produced by the philosophical consciousness is not an absolute but rather a contingent product, there is no point in denying that this negation of the absolute knowledge occurs *within* consciousness and that it is simultaneously a realization of the Other of philosophical consciousness as the new absolute by the *new* philosophical consciousness.

After the materialist reversal, philosophy is thus confronted with a choice between two possible routes: one is to admit that we are unable to know the Absolute and establish this unavailability or absence of truth as the ultimate truth; the other is to point out the being-there of the new truth not in terms of the hitherto understood shape of philosophy but through a new philosophy that surpasses the limitation of old philosophical consciousness. We are convinced that it is towards the second route that we need to follow. Rather than establishing the unavailability of the Other/Life as the Absolute – namely, the Otherness of the Other with respect to knowledge as the Absolute Truth – we shall envisage the Other of philosophical knowledge as *what is given* within a new experience of consciousness.

After all, the mere acceptance of the falsity of one’s self-consciousness alone does not produce a new concept of logic and the latter, if it deserves the name, must be established upon the absolute knowledge and not upon the mere consciousness of its impossibility. The materialist dialectic, which is established upon the negation of the Hegelian theory of absolute knowledge, must itself contain a new materialist theory of absolute knowledge. The challenge, of course, is to envisage the new philosophical consciousness of the Absolute Self without accidentally turning it into an ideological form of consciousness. There is, therefore, a great risk in taking up such a project. Yet if we continue to evade the

possibility of obtaining absolute knowledge within the science of experience altogether, the result of the materialist reversal would merely be a one-sided/alienated consciousness that is turned against itself and left with no other choice but to mortgage its ultimate fulfilment onto a pure speculation/Idea that lies outside itself. Without the acquisition of the new kind of the absolute knowledge, although the materialist reversal seems to have promised the liberation of the body from the “phantom” of the head, it is the head that ends up losing the Body and become convinced that it is itself incapable of finding it. The task for us is to find the body without confusing it with the phantom of the head. The point is to know clearly the difference between the Ideal and the Material with respect to consciousness and transcend the absolute otherness of the Material within consciousness without confusing it with the Ideal.

3. Materialist Reversal of Intuition

In this thesis, we will examine the precise inner workings of Bergson’s method of intuition so as to understand how it can be established as the foundation of a materialist dialectic. Our central argument is that while Bergson’s theory of intuition is constructed alongside the legacies of Kant and post-Kantianism, it nonetheless differs from the former through a *materialist reversal* akin to that of Marx. That is, in a manner analogous to Marx’s materialist dialectic as the reversal of the Idealist dialectic, we argue that Bergson reverses the Kantian and post-Kantian idealism of intuition and produces a distinctly materialist theory of intuition. Furthermore, we will argue that Bergson’s materialist reversal does not signify a “fulfilment” of idealist metaphysics. Although it prepares the ground for the materialist criticism of metaphysics, it nonetheless establishes a manner of apprehending the Absolute through a distinctly *non-metaphysical* means. In short, when understood in terms of a materialist reversal, Bergson’s method of intuition can help us clarify the definite phenomenological procedures the materialist operations of *Negation* as well as *Affirmation* ultimately consist of.

Our aim in delving into Bergson’s method of intuition is therefore to envisage the specifically materialist theses of the Negative as well as the Affirmative purely at the level of the experience of consciousness that would be in

accordance with the materialist dialectic. As we know, Marx's criticism of Hegel's phenomenology is primarily directed towards his opposition against the theory of the negation of negation, or of thinking of thinking, which is established as the affirmative reconciliation of the Absolute Self with itself. For Marx, the negation of negation is still "abstract" and does not "prove itself through its own existence"; it is thus in need of what is truly positive outside itself.⁴¹ He then posits the material Life – or the so-called "real", "sensuous", "human", *etc.* – as that which is truly affirmative in contradistinction to the Hegelian affirmativeness of the Idea. As we have said earlier, however, Marx does not fully explicate what the "real" or "sensuous" *is* in terms of a new theory of the experience of consciousness. Given that lack, what we set out to demonstrate in this thesis is the following: while providing the framework for critiquing the coming into being of the Idea out of material Life-process, Bergson's method of intuition can also provide this very framework for *affirming* the Truth of Life without turning it into a mere idea, an object of critique within experience.

That being said, the traditional criticism against Bergson from the Marxist perspective has been focused upon its alleged anti-dialecticism, or its supposed incapacity to negate ideological consciousness due to its perceived naïveté towards the historical mediation of the latter. This is largely due to the mistaken view of Bergsonism as simple anti-Kantianism that is unable to consider seriously the element of negativity within the Hegelian dialectic that ultimately stems from the former's post-Kantianism. Indeed, the most well known philosophical invention of Bergson is the concept of *duration* [*la durée*], which is first put forth in his doctoral dissertation as the *immediate data of consciousness* in direct contradistinction against the Kantian conception of Time. As we know, the latter is the *a priori* form of *mediation*, or the form through which intuition [*Anschauung*] of the Self is *a priori* synthesized into an *appearance* [*Erscheinung*] and hence turned into the negative other of itself. Bergson's alleged anti-dialecticism and inability for self-critique is located in his supposed anti-Kantianism; as the common argument goes, the concept of duration is presented in terms of its *opposition* to the Kantian time and dialectic (both in its Hegelian as well as the Marxist versions) as the objective knowledge *par excellence* of the movement of mediation/negation

⁴¹ Marx, *Early Writings*. p.382.

prompted by time.⁴² That is, Bergson's philosophy appears as simple anti-dialecticism since, although dialectic requires the negative force of time as the central motor of history (as what it thinks and acquires as the object is the knowledge of the movement of time), Bergson's concept of duration seems to exorcise this force of negativity and destroy the possibility of cognising the movement of negativity. While Marx puts forth his dialectic as the *opposite* of Hegel's, in his case doing away with the negativity of time is not at all the intention of the materialist reversal. Materialist dialectic rather retains, as Marx says, the "rational kernel" of the Hegelian dialectic, which is the aspect of the negativity that constitutes its "critical and revolutionary" aspect rather than its "mystical" and conservative elements.⁴³ For Marxists, then, Bergson's supposed anti-Kantianism seems to be a move that simply ignores and goes against revolutionary negativity. The theory of duration is thus seen as ushering Bergsonism towards the one-sided illusion that imagines itself to dwell within an affirmative plenitude against the temporal force that negates it.

However, before subscribing to an opinion derived from a hasty judgment, it is our view that the core of the problem rather resides in determining the precise relationship between Bergson's philosophy to that of Kant's. To merely suppose that the "anti" of Bergson's anti-Kantianism signifies a simple opposition against Kantian negativity indicates the inability to understand negation except as *abstract opposition*. The latter is not a movement that liberates the new from the old but is still haunted by the phantom of the old while merely pretending that this phantom does not exist. We may summon Hegel to our aid, who, in the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, states:

The more conventional opinion gets fixated on the antithesis of truth and falsity, the more it tends to expect a given philosophical system to be either accepted or contradicted; and hence it finds only acceptance or rejection. It does not comprehend the diversity of the philosophical system as the progressive unfolding of truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements.

⁴² To speak of phenomenology in relation to Kant (rather than purely in relation to Hegel) is not an anachronism. As Kant states in private letters to Lambert and Hertz in 1770/1772, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is intended to be a "general phenomenology", which is, in his own words, "presupposed by metaphysics". See Kant, I., (1999). *Correspondences*. Trans. A. Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. p.108., p.132. Also see Hyppolite, J., ([1953] 1997). *Logic and Existence*. Trans. L. Lawlor., A. Sen. Albany: SUNY Press. p.58.

⁴³ Marx, *Capital Vol.1*, p.103.

The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter.⁴⁴

In a Hegelian vein, then, to see only an abstract opposition against Kant in Bergson's anti-Kantianism does not explain the real nature of their relation. Rather, this would assume the disappearance of Kantianism from Bergson's work altogether despite the fact that "anti-Kantianism" already presupposes a consideration of Kant to be *against* it in the first place. In other words, a negation of the old, if it is at all successful, must be seen as a constructive addition or extension of the original project so as to contain and affirm the original and add something new.

In tandem with the argument that materialism is not a simple refusal of idealism but retains the "rational kernel", we propose to see Bergson's anti-Kantianism as a negation *without* contradiction of Kant's philosophy. We are following in the footsteps of Feuerbach, here, who states in one of the referenced works of Marx's *Manuscripts*, that the *new philosophy* after Hegel must be:

the realisation of the Hegelian philosophy or, generally, of the philosophy that prevailed until now, a realisation, however, which is at the same time the negation, and indeed the negation without contradiction, of this philosophy.⁴⁵

Similarly, a negation of idealism by materialism cannot be reduced to a mere disagreement. Instead, it needs to be seen as the creation of novelty that builds itself through a non-contradictory relation to what is negated. In an analogous manner, and as opposed to the popular image of Bergson as a simple anti-Kantian, we will argue that his anti-Kantianism is a materialist reversal of Kantianism – or a non-reductive negation of Kantianism that contains Kantianism within itself yet extends and transforms it at the same time.

⁴⁴Hegel, G. W. F., ([1807] 1977). *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. p.2.

⁴⁵Feuerbach, L., ([1843] 1986). *Principles of Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. M. Vogel. Cambridge: Hackett. p.31.

4. Transcendental Dualism: Time ≠ Duration

Given the non-reductive negation of Kantianism we have mentioned above, what does it mean for us to understand Bergson's concept of intuition in terms of a materialist reversal? How is a materialist reversal possible with an inversion that takes place at the level of intuition and how does it help us to surpass the problem of the unavailability of the true Logos after the materialist reversal? To answer these questions, we must understand Bergson's theory of time in its broadest sense. It is our contention that Bergson's theory of time can reveal to us the distinctly materialistic conception of the experience of consciousness, which, in its completion, gives rise to the materialist dialectic as a result. Time, in the sense that Kant conceives of it, is the *a priori* form of intuition. Insofar as phenomenology aims for the acquisition of the absolute knowledge of the Self through the experience of consciousness, it also aims for the concrete knowledge of time as the unity between the content and the form of the Self. What we would like to accomplish through examining Bergson's method of intuition is to reverse the very conception of the absolute knowledge of the Self which is based upon the idealism of time and instead construct a materialism of time.

Bergson's theory of time, as we touched upon earlier, is presented in terms of the concept of duration, which is put forth in opposition to Kantian conception of time. In essence, in putting forth the concept of duration, Bergson argues that Kantian time is nothing other than space, or the fourth dimension of space – the form of exteriority rather than that of interiority. In a nutshell, Bergson criticises Kantian conception of time for being an “illegitimate translation” of the Self in terms of its external appearance and hence alienated from the content/truth of time. The real time, on the contrary, is duration, which is what is given immediately to consciousness and it differs in kind from the external appearance of the Self intuited through the form of time.

The traditional criticism against Bergson on this front stems from the hasty judgment that Bergson's theory of time as a whole is thus opposed to Kant's and that its essence can be understood in terms of this one-sided opposition. It is presumed that there is a perfectly symmetrical configuration between Kantian time as the mediation/negation of the Self on the one hand and Bergsonian time as the immediate/affirmativeness of the Self on the other. From that standpoint, it

would thus seem obvious that Bergson is an anti-dialectical philosopher and that his philosophy is utterly unable to provide any criticism of ideological consciousness since there is no theory to explain how the appearance of the Self comes into existence out of the functioning of time.

Everything changes, however, if Bergson's anti-Kantianism is seen *not* a simple disagreement against Kant and if his theory of duration is seen *not* as something that annuls the negativity of Kantian time. In this thesis, we will argue that Bergson's philosophy rather apprehends *both time and duration* as the *two transcendental conditions of intuition* and that these two elements, though they differ from one another, cannot be reduced in terms of one or the other. We call this irreducibility *Transcendental Dualism*. This means that the dualism of time and duration within intuition is to be seen as *transcendental*, or that the duality of intuition itself is the *a priori* condition of subjectivity, in the manner that Kant conceived of the transcendental that makes any experience of reality as such possible (see, Diagram 1).

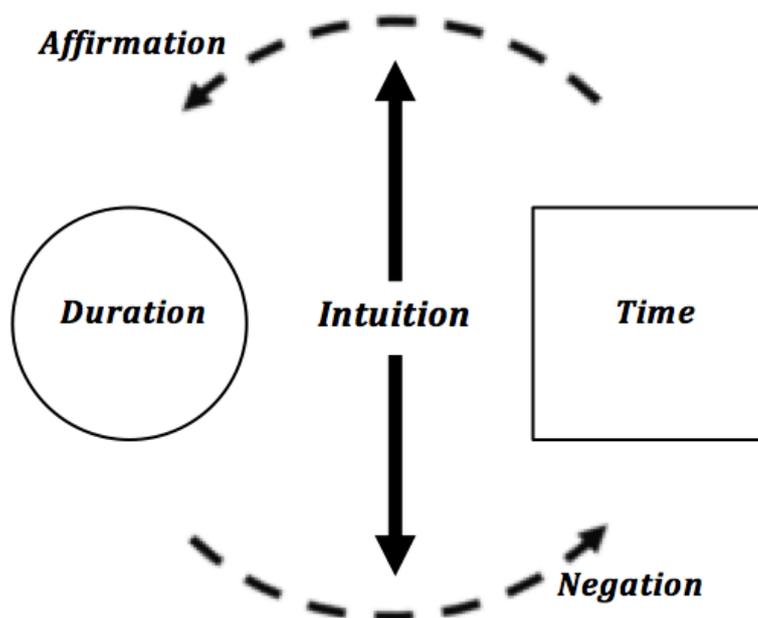


Diagram 1: Structure of Intuition

The pseudo-dualistic configuration between Bergsonian and Kantian time, which for us displays dialectical immaturity, will be replaced by a *real, superior dualism* that contains both the negativity of time as well as the affirmativeness of duration within Bergson's theory of time. Let us be clear at this point: we are not

arguing that Kant is the philosopher of mediation and that Bergson is the one who opposed to it. Within the Bergsonian method of intuition, both the mediation and the immediate, both time and duration co-exist as the transcendently dual condition of intuition. Our argument therefore is that it is this duality of the transcendental condition that qualifies Bergson's method of intuition as a materialist reversal of idealist phenomenology.

"Dualism", in the ordinary sense of the term, is often treated as being problematic in itself. This kind of ordinary duality assumes that two opposites *ought* to be one, or that the unity of the one need to overtake duality. Duality is thus subordinated under the desire to reduce duality to singularity. Such one-sided dualism ultimately stems from a premature understanding of time in the wake of Kantian critical philosophy. Time, in the philosophy of Kant, is the concept that is put forth within the dualism that distinguishes the world in terms of the orders of phenomena (*mundus sensibilis*) and thing-in-itself (*mundus intelligibilis*). However, this dualism is not complete in Kant; as such, post-Kantian philosophy and the consciousness of the Self attained through phenomenology after Kant is not a dualism that is conscious and certain of itself but a one-sided dualism that is in need of its *Other*. The thing-in-itself, or that which lies outside time is not given but is merely an object of *belief* and is only affirmed in terms of the Idea of Reason, which is a one-sided self-projection made by the spontaneity of Reason. That is, after positing the concept of time and dividing the world into appearance and the things-in-themselves, the experience of consciousness is one-sidedly confined on the side of appearance. With regard to the thing-in-itself, it is merely treated as the pure object of thought and not in terms of what is given within sensuous experience. Indeed, post-Kantian philosophy, particularly that of Hegel, turns this non-givenness of the Idea into a particular kind of givenness to pure, self-sufficient *thinking*, and hence, as Hyppolite remarks, "exorcises" the "phantom" of the thing-in-itself.⁴⁶ However, materialism is the doctrine that ultimately negates this absolute self-sufficiency of the Idea/pure thinking and posits its *Other* (the material life as the thing-in-itself) as the Demiurge of the real besides the historical dynamism of the Idea. Of course, after the materialist reversal, the appearance of the self-sufficiency of the Idea is itself treated as a historically conditioned reality, which becomes the object of criticism. Yet the question is how to apprehend the

⁴⁶ Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p.3.

otherness of material life within a new kind of experience of consciousness along with the critical consciousness of the idea as the illusion of Life. The task for materialist phenomenology is therefore to apprehend *both* the reality of the idea as well as its other, namely materiality, within the experience of consciousness.

For us, the only way to accomplish this task is to posit duality at the level of intuition or the transcendental condition of experience and to render this duality itself into the source from which one can derive the complete knowledge of the Self. This allows us to apprehend the reality of the appearance of the idea as well as the reality of materiality that differs from the former within consciousness without confusing the two. What we put forth as Transcendental Dualism is the duality of the field of intuition itself, which differs in kind from the ordinary dualism that envisages duality *from the side of time alone*. What we propose is a higher synthesis, as it were, of duality and singularity – a higher, *superior dualism* of duality and singularity within the experience of consciousness. If ordinary dualism is solely conditioned by time, superior dualism includes the condition of time within it but also apprehends the other condition that gives *the Other of time or duration* within experience along with time.

The ultimate aim of establishing a transcendental dualism of intuition is to prepare the foundation for “the true work of integration”, in Bergson’s words, or what amounts to the same thing, a “reasonable evolution”.⁴⁷ What matters in the end is to apprehend the two transcendental conditions together so that this knowledge of the beginning endow us with the capacity to *synthesize* the powers of negation and affirmation so as to bring about a free, self-conscious development of Life as the *end* of materialist philosophy. Thus, what matters at the end is to establish the duality of intuition as the condition of possibility for the synthesis between time and duration. This synthesis, however, must be understood strictly with respect to the *transcendental* duality of intuition. That is, the synthesis of time and duration cannot be understood as something that *undoes* the difference in kind between time and duration. The duality is what makes the synthesis itself possible and the synthesis does not resolve the difference between them. Although the demonstration of our argument must be reserved for the body of this thesis, it is nonetheless important for us to stress here that the synthesis of reasonable evolution is not a *third* in the sense that it is a sublation of contradiction between

⁴⁷ MM 185-186/321-322.

time and duration. Rather, the standpoint of the synthesis is what we would like to call the *fourth* position between two kinds of thirdness since, as we will demonstrate below, time and duration are both particular types of thirdness that are obtained through two distinct kinds of sublation of ontological contradiction.

Thus, by setting the synthesis of reasonable evolution as the end of materialist dialectic, we are not arguing that this final synthesis is that which takes place, as it were, as the mediation of the contradiction between duration and time in a way that ends up with either time or duration as *the* third. To do this would return us back to a one-sided dynamism of time rather than establish the duality as the transcendental condition of intuition. Insofar as the transcendental condition is to be seen as double and insofar as the method of intuition grasps the transcendental in its irreducible duality, time and duration refer to two distinct kinds of thirdness obtained through different procedures of mediation; concomitantly, the subject of synthesis, who is capable of seeing both time and duration simultaneously occupies the position of the fourth. That is, “Affirmation” and “Negation”, which in turn correspond to distinct manners of apprehending duration and time within intuition, refer to those two distinct kinds of mediation and the synthesis of the two is neither one or the other but distinctly *both and neither*. Indeed, as we will see, “reasonable evolution”, cannot take place if we see it in terms of *either* affirmation *or* negation. As we will argue, with Bergson, the *Spirit* appears in two different ways and the method of intuition obtains the knowledge of this duality as the condition of possibility for reasonable evolution.

5. Methodology: Extraction of an Artifice

Having said the above, what is the meaning of reasonable evolution and through what method can this notion be interpreted? In other words, what is the appropriate method of interpreting the meaning of reasonable evolution? This thesis is an investigation into Bergson’s theory of intuition as a philosophical method, and we aim to derive the meaning of reasonable evolution through a particular method of interpreting this method as the condition of possibility for reasonable evolution. It is therefore an investigation into the transcendental condition of reasonable evolution, or its *a priori* condition of possibility. We

believe that the meaning of the notion in question lies in our interpretation of the method of intuition.

This problem of how to determine an appropriate method, or of how to choose the right method, must be approached through taking a look at the quality of the thing that the method approaches. Or, as Schelling reminds us of the ancient saying, “like is recognized by like”, an appropriate method must itself contain the quality that it sees in the thing.⁴⁸

Since the subject-matter of the thesis is Bergson’s theory of intuition understood as a philosophical method, the methodological question regarding the appropriateness of the method of interpretation overlaps with the actual work of the entire thesis. However, even though a philosophical method is the subject-matter, a particular method of interpretation that interprets the subject-matter is still needed in order to derive a particular interpretation, which is the actual work and the products of the present thesis. We must therefore ask whether the method to be used to produce our interpretation of the method of intuition is itself valid and appropriate for the given task.

A. Interpretation as an *Extraction* of Meaning

Extraction: Receiving and Constructing

The name of the method we propose is “extraction”. For us, to extract something is to find something hidden and to illuminate this hitherto hidden thing from something else. In a nutshell, what the method of extraction does is to first encounter and receive a thing itself that is to be interpreted, and then to derive a concept for the thing encountered. This endeavor therefore ends with a production of a concept, or a knowledge of the thing, but the concept to be produced within this process is modeled after the thing that is received beforehand. Hence the method involves two separate steps and it has a dual function.

Extraction distinctly understood within the present thesis is an extraction of philosophical meaning from texts. Since what we are inquiring into specifically here is the question whether the tool to get a hold of the thing is appropriate for the thing, we must inevitably compare the tool and the thing and see if they resonate with each other. The appropriateness of the chosen method for the thing

⁴⁸ Schelling, F. W. J., ([1809] 2006). *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. J. Love, J. Schmidt. Albany: SUNY Press. p.10.

can be measured by asking to what extent the proposed method in fact resonates with the thing to be interpreted. What, then, is the nature of the method of intuition for Bergson and how can we judge if the method of extraction that we are proposing is in fact appropriate for the given thing?

An *Artifice*: Trick, Skill, Craftsmanship, ...

Let us quote the passage from *Matter and Memory* where Bergson describes what the philosophical method is. He states:

in man, the thinking being, the free act may be termed a synthesis of feelings and ideas and the evolution which leads to it a reasonable evolution. The artifice of this method simply consists, in short, in distinguishing the point of view of customary or useful knowledge from that of true knowledge.⁴⁹

Bergson is here not saying that the “free act” is composed of choosing the true knowledge over the customary or useful knowledge. The freedom that a thinking human exercises, for Bergson, does not have to do with choosing the real over the usual as in a true or false question. Rather, Bergson speaks of “the artifice” [*l’artifice*] that makes a distinction between the real and the usual, and the “free act” of human being and “reasonable evolution” lies in *having* this artifice. We can also gather from the above passage that this artifice is seen as that which makes the “free act” as well as living the life of reasonable evolution possible. That is, for Bergson, a thinking human being who is able to act freely and knows how to lead a life of reasonable evolution is one that possesses the artifice. Quite simply, therefore, we can say that the possession of the artifice is the necessary condition for the free act, and this means that the artifice is the *transcendental condition* for reasonable evolution.

Since the methodological questioning must address whether the chosen method is appropriate for interpreting the thing to be interpreted, let us investigate whether this so-called “artifice” can resonate with what we propose as the method of extraction. What is an “artifice”? It refers to a *trick*, *skill*, or a *craftsmanship*, etc. It is a capacity or a power, which can be either corporeal or mental or both, that tends towards accomplishing a task. It is an art of directing energy towards accomplishing a certain end. For instances, the artifice for pottery

⁴⁹ MM 186/322.

is the skill to make the pots and the knowhow to coordinate the production process, and the artifice for cooking is the ability to cook or prepare food in a certain way. In both cases, an artifice is directed towards accomplishing a certain goal, and it is therefore directed towards something outside itself. Thus, by asking whether the method of extraction is an appropriate method, we are asking whether this method resonates with the qualities of the so-called artifice, which is a skill or a kind of craftsmanship that is directed towards a making of something.

The methodological question that we must raise here is this: if an artifice, which is a skill that enables a making of something, is the object of interpretation, why is the method of extraction appropriate for this task? How can we methodologically ensure that what we grasp through the method of extraction is not a mere illusion of the object in question? How can we prevent ourselves from grasping, as Hegel says, the “clouds of error” [*Wolken des Irrtums*] rather than the thing that is actually in question?⁵⁰

Here, in order to examine if the chosen method is appropriate for the task, we must know a little more about the artifice itself. The appropriateness of a method for the thing in question must be determined by the quality of the thing that is being approached. In other words, we must let the quality of the thing to be the guide, so to speak, for us to determine whether the chosen method of interpretation is appropriate for it. For instance, the question of whether a spoon is an appropriate tool for eating a salad can only be inferred from the quality of the salad itself and not from the spoon. The spoon does not have the power to decide for itself whether it is suitable for a salad. If it did, either the spoon can care less about the salad or it would take a look at the salad and try to turn itself into something that looks like a fork. For this reason, in order to know whether the chosen method is appropriate, we must first take a look at the quality of the thing itself and let this quality be the guide for judging if the chosen method contains matching qualities.

We have already stated that the object of inquiry for this thesis is the method of intuition, and this method is said to be an “artifice”. The question for us here is concerning how to determine what sort of method does the so-called artifice demands as its appropriate tool. Which qualities of the artifice make the method of extraction its appropriate tool?

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.46.

The important thing to be noticed about the quality of an artifice is this: even though it is that which creates something else (*e.g.* pots, food, etc) it is itself something that needs to be considered as *an object of derivation, attainment or of learning in its own right*. That is, an artifice is something that is directed towards a making of something, but it is itself something that is attained and made. After all, no one is a five star chef or a good thief by birth. Those individuals have acquired the skill that has made them who they are and sustain their continuous existence through maintaining it. This quality of the artifice to be a thing in its own right – this must then be the guide for us to judge the appropriateness of the chosen method. The method of extraction, on its part, must therefore contain the capacities to derive, that is to say to encounter and to get in touch with its object of interpretation as well to attain the artifice itself within itself.

Another important quality of an artifice is that it is the *transcendental condition of possibility* for both its products as well as the individual who possesses the artifice. First, let us consider the situation regarding the “product” of the artifice. Let us think of an example of cooking. The artifice of cooking is what makes the production of food possible. The artifice of cooking serves as the transcendental condition for the production of the food made by an individual who possesses the artifice of cooking (*a cook*). The transcendental here means that the very being of *any* products that the artifice creates is necessarily conditioned by the artifice, or that the products necessarily exist *through* the existence of the artifice. Since an artifice is what makes its product possible, the product is *necessarily* conditioned and brought to bear the particular form of existence due to the artifice. We can therefore call the relationship between an artifice and its creation, a *transcendental synergy* between the two. The thing created and the artifice for it is *transcendentally* bound together, and the very existence of the product is not possible without first assuming the existence of the artifice that creates it.

Secondly, it can also be said that the artifice is the transcendental condition for the particular existence of the individual that comes to possess it. Quite simply, the artifice of cooking is what makes any production of food possible, but the existence of the artifice within the cook is the transcendental condition for the very being of the cook. If this individual was not a cook before, the individual has *become* a cook through an actual acquisition of the artifice, and without the artifice

of cooking, the individual would not be a cook. Thus, the derivation and the acquisition of the artifice is what conditions the very being of the individual transcendently.

Now, let us scrutinize further about the appropriateness of the method of extraction for the particular type of artifice that is in question. Bergson makes it clear within the above passage from *Matter and Memory* that the artifice that he speaks of *vis-a-vis* the end of reasonable evolution is that of “distinguishing” [*distinguer*] two points of view. What exactly is this “distinguishing”?

The artifice of “distinguishing” can be described in terms of a skill to tell the difference, to see an inner division within a thing, or clearly demarcating two separate regions, qualities, *etc* of a thing. Then, what are those things that are distinguished from each other within the thing? If, as we just remarked, an artifice is the transcendental condition of the thing it creates, with what does the specific artifice in question have its transcendental synergy? What does this specific artifice create and to what does it serve as its transcendental condition? They are said to be two *points of view* [*le point de vue*] of cognition [*la connaissance*], and those two points of view are of “ideas” [*idées*] on the one hand and the “feeling” or “sentiments” [*sentiments*] on the other. What do those attributes tell us about the specific quality of the artifice? What kind of things does this artifice of distinguishing create or what sort of creativity does it condition transcendently? The product that the artifice of distinguishing makes is referred to as “*l’homme, être pensant*”.⁵¹ Thus, those two points of view that the artifice distinguishes make up the components of the “man, the thinking being” as such.

Let us ask the final methodological question: if what the artifice creates and serves as the transcendental condition for the human being in general, what sort of quality does an appropriate method must contain within itself? We have stressed above that an artifice is something that makes a production of something possible, and it serves as the transcendental condition for the thing it creates. In the case of the given artifice of distinguishing, the product is the capacity to tell the difference between the “usual” and the “real”, or between “ideas” and “feelings”, and this capacity itself is what makes “reasonable evolution” possible.

Furthermore, we have stated that an artifice is itself something, and it is that which transcendently conditions the being of the individual who comes to

⁵¹ MM 186/322.

posses it. If this is the case, the artifice of distinguishing the “usual” and the “real”, which makes up the very being of the thinking human being, is the transcendental condition for the thinking human being to be what it is and the artifice is what brings about the transformation of the individual in becoming a thinking human being.

We are now in a better position to see if the proposed method of extraction is appropriate for the task. Overall, we must not forget that this methodological consideration is directed towards the method of interpreting the method of intuition. That is, the methodological problem that we are dealing with is: through what appropriate method of interpretation can the artifice be approached if the object in question is a method of philosophy that transcendently conditions the free act of thinking human being as well as the very being of the human being itself? What qualities are must the method of extraction contain within it? If the artifice in question is the transcendental condition that produces the thinking being with a capacity for free act and reasonable evolution, an acquisition of this artifice by an individual brings about a transformation of the individual into an individual who is actually able to think (being a thinking being) and is able to have a concept for this capacity of thinking.

As we stated, in order for a method to be appropriate for the thing in question, the method must deserve its place in front of the thing or that it must already contain the quality that it sees in the thing. Thus, since the artifice is something that brings about a transformation to the individual that comes to acquire it, the method that is required to get a hold of this must itself be capable of transforming the individual who employs it. In other words, just as the artifice is what transforms the individual that comes to posses it, the one who employs the method of extraction and comes to posses the artifice is subject to transformation through practicing the method.

Then, since the artifice is the transcendental condition for the creation of human being, the method of extraction must be equipped with a capacity to actually encounter the artifice itself and conceive of what was encountered. That is, by acquiring the artifice of making the distinction between ideas and feelings, the method of extraction must be able to transform the individual that employs it into a bearer of the artifice or a being a thinking human being. The method of

extraction must therefore be able to bring about a self-transformation of the individual.

Granted the artifice is what makes the human possible *transcendentally*, this transcendental condition of the human is itself an object of attainment and creation. The method in question therefore must be able to derive itself first through first encountering itself, and then conceiving of itself through this self-encounter. What is said to be the “thinking being” is the result of attaining the artifice for it. If this is the case, in order to interpret the meaning of the artifice of distinguishing two points of views, what is said to be the skill that conditions the existence of the human being as a thinking being is not readily available, but must be attained in its own right.

What, then, does it mean to attain the skill that makes the creation of the human being possible and how is it that the method of extraction can be judged as appropriate tool for it? The method of extraction is an extraction of the transcendental as such, and this extraction is at the same time, a creative endeavor. In a word, the method must be a method for a self-determination of an individual into a thinking human being. To *extract* the artifice then is to derive and construct the concept for the artifice, and this is the same as to actually attaining the transcendental condition through the hermeneutic method of extraction. Overall, the method of extracting a meaning of philosophical texts then is to acquire an artifice itself and let this act of acquiring the artifice be the cause of a self-transformation of the individual.

On the Choice of the Primary Texts

Where, however, can we get in touch with and derive the artifice in question? Which texts shall we focus specifically in order to derive the artifice? Of course, if it is indeed Bergson’s philosophical method, the artifice of making the distinction is present within everything he wrote. However, depending upon the particular subject-matters that are looked at through the artifice, our chance of directly encountering the artifice itself varies significantly. The artifice of distinguishing the usual and the real – where can we look in order to see from where it springs forth? The answer to this question is prefigured in the choice of the main philosophical subject-matter, which is Bergson’s theory of intuition as his philosophical method.

In order to receive and conceive of the artifice in question, we must examine Bergson's theory of intuition before everything-else.

It is for this reason that the present thesis will focus primarily upon Bergson's first two major works – *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*. Within these first two works, Bergson establishes his theory of intuition as the transcendental condition of human experience through taking up a particular philosophical position vis-a-vis Kant's theory of time. It is within those first two works that we can see his theoretical justification for the acquired artifice. In order to extract the artifice, we will not so much focus upon *Creative Evolution*, which is perhaps his most famous work and one that seems to be the most appropriate work for this thesis.

Creative Evolution is a work that Bergson deals with the theory of evolution through investigating into the natural history of human faculties (intellect and instinct). Due to this characteristic, it seems like a work that requires our primary attention more than other works. This thesis is interested in finding out an alternative understanding of the materialist dialectic and the latter sees Life as the new form of the Absolute. In terms of its immediate impression, *Creative Evolution* therefore seems naturally fitting for the suggested task.

However, what we are interested in extracting is the transcendental artifice to tell the difference between feelings and ideas, and the purpose of this extraction is to determine the meaning of reasonable evolution, or the possibility for a "free act". *Creative Evolution* explains the division of human faculty into the direction of the intellect and of the instinct. But the question for us is regarding the philosophical method that allows Bergson to speculate upon this division in the first place. If the artifice of distinguishing, or the method of intuition is really Bergson's philosophical method, the whole discourse within *Creative Evolution* about the movement of Life and its internal division is itself based upon the philosophical method. There must be a primary artifice that makes the particular acts of distinguishing between things themselves possible.

In short, in order to make sense of what is presented in *Creative Evolution* and to know how such notions like "Life", "*élan vital*", etc that are used in the work, we must take a look at Bergson's method of intuition and how something like Life is possible from the position of the method.

Of course, all of Bergson's writings are taken into consideration in this thesis and our choice of treating *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory* as our primary texts does not mean that we condemn other works or that we will not make any references to it. Rather, it just means that the artifice is already at work within the writing of other works, and the derivation and the conceptual justification for the artifice must be treated as our main texts for the thesis.

We just mentioned that it is within the first two works that Bergson engages with Kant's theory of time. Kant's theory of time, in its marvelous complexity, is at the end a theory of the transcendental condition of human experience or intuition. If Bergson derives a new theory of time through reading and arguing against Kant, and through this he acquires a new method of philosophy, this means that Bergson has an alternative theory of the transcendental condition of human experience or that he had acquired and conceived of the new transcendental artifice for the human experience in general. This thesis is an attempt to extract this alternative theory of the transcendental condition that Bergson had acquired. The artifice that we aim to extract must be situated where Bergson theorizes what the transcendental condition of human experience is, or at the level of the theory of intuition, which is the same as the theory of time.

B. Materialism, Life and the Determination of the Human

Having said the above, let us clarify a few points regarding the method of choice. In particular, let us consider whether there might be any possible obstacles that lie in front of the proposed endeavor with the method and see if those obstacles can be cleared away beforehand. One thing that was not sufficiently explained in the above description of the method of extraction is its adherence to materialism. That is, the method of extraction is proposed in a way that adheres to the materialist reversal of dialectic, and it must therefore be seen within this particular scenery.

Marx says in the 1873 Postface to *Capital* that the dialectical method he employs is a reversal of Hegel's and this amounts to designating the Material rather than the Ideal as the Demiurge of the real. If the proposed method of interpretation is put forth in adherence to materialism, this means that the method must fit naturally within this scenery. Let us see if we can say that this is actually

the case. That is, the method of extraction must be able to defend itself as a materialist theory of interpretation that adheres to the reversal of dialectic.

Furthermore, if this adherence to materialism is actually successful, the method of extraction must be able to prevent itself from falling into the trap of nihilism, and it can successfully overcome materialism's shortcomings to fully realizing itself as something that differs from idealism. In other words, nihilism is the product of idealism wearing the mask of materialism, and we shall ask whether the proposed method of interpretation might or might not be considered as still operating within an idealist framework underneath its mask.

Ideological Philosophy vs. Materialism

First of all, to point out an obvious concern, it is not so difficult to turn the proposed method of interpretation itself into an object of a materialist critique. The method of extraction is, after all, a method of interpreting the meaning of philosophical texts. If this is the case, from a materialist perspective, one can easily claim that an interpreted meaning of texts is necessarily derived from the actual material-historical forces that surrounds the activity of interpretation that *a priori* determines the meaning. Then, the proposed method of actually getting in touch with the quality of the artifice itself seem like a naive idealist belief. After all that was said so far about the materialism of the method of intuition, isn't the method of extraction that interprets the method still based upon a naive faith in the autonomy of a philosophical Idea? After all that was said and proposed about Bergson's materialism and his supposed overcoming of nihilism, isn't this thesis still too Bergsonian in the conventional sense of the term that denotes a kind of naive Idealism as well as an uncritical Spiritualism?

In order to have a complete answer to this question, the problem must be tackled in several different ways and those aspects cannot be adequately covered here without overtaking what is to be done within the actual body of the thesis. However, without going outside of the confines of the general description of the background problematic of the thesis, we can describe and defend ourselves preliminarily from a charge of idealism. Here, we must be able to show clearly that there is a definite difference between a mere ideological naiveté that can be easily dismissed through a simple historical critique and the materialism of the proposed method of interpreting the materialist method.

This task is particularly important when we consider the fact that Bergson and Bergsonism have been one of the favorite targets for Marxist ideology criticism. For instance, many well-known ideology criticisms that target Gilles Deleuze's philosophy have been based upon the well-known materialist criticism of Bergson due to Deleuze's supposed Bergsonism. The name of Bergson has long denoted the supposed vitalism, spiritualism, or the inability to critique its own historicity, *etc.*⁵²

The question is: how is it possible that what we propose as the method of extracting the transcendental artifice protects itself from such a simple ideology critique? And, by extension, how is it possible that the method of extraction does not fall into the pitfall of nihilism at the level of hermeneutic and the methodological problem of interpretation?

Life and the Artifice

A solution to this question can be proposed through preliminarily describing what Life is within materialism and how the proposed method is capable of approaching Life through a genuine materialism. If, as we propose, that materialism can be described in terms of the reversal of dialectic that Marx brought about, the Material Life-Process or Life is the so-called Demiurge of the real. Let us remember that Marx said "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by Life."⁵³ If this is the case, what exactly is Life and what does it mean to say that Life is the Demiurge of the real? Furthermore, what is the status of this so-called Life within the proposed method of interpreting a meaning of philosophical texts? If Life is different from an Idea and if Life is indeed what creates the "real", how can a method of interpretation protect itself from being entirely determined *by* Life and hence merely being an externally determined ideology? Where is Life within the method of extraction and how is it different from an Idea of Life?

In order to answer this question, let us differentiate our methodological position with an ideological point of view of Life. An ideological philosophy that is

⁵² For instance, Benjamin Noys asserts in *Persistence of the Negative* (2010) that "in taking over Bergson's ontology in the name of change, Deleuze repeats the error of positing a perpetual change that never reaches beyond an abstract re-shuffling of existent realities." See, Noys, Benjamin. *The Persistence of the Negative*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, p.60.

⁵³ Marx, K & Engels, F., ([1964] 1976). *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. p.42.

unaware of itself does not know what Life itself is independent of the ideological conception that it has about it. That is, an ideological philosophy confuses Life itself with the ideological construction/mediation of Life itself. If the proposed method of interpretation can be defended as a materialist method, at least preliminarily, we must be able to admit that the method of choice adheres to this view of the relation between Life and the concept of Life.

In a nutshell, this problem comes down to describing the method's capacity of distinguishing Life itself from the conceptual mediation of it. That is, the proposed hermeneutic method must be established upon an actual capacity of the method to locate and to encounter Material Life itself and distinguish this with a knowledge or a concept of Life it creates for itself.

Within materialism, this seemingly innocent phenomenon of Life itself is the keystone that supports everything-else that exists. If a concept of Life is not Life, and if our task is to know Life itself, through what means can one approach Life itself? First of all, if Life is the object of knowledge, what is the tool that deserves its place for it? In order to take up and defend the philosophical position of materialism, Life is something that must be known in-itself and one must know its difference from the concept of Life. That is, a concept or a philosophical consciousness of Life is not Life, and all conceptual means to know Life does not count as a proper knowledge of Life. This obviously does not mean that philosophical concepts are evil and we must get rid of it in order to reach Life. If one engages in such a one-sided dualism, Life cannot be reached.

The question is, given that there is a concept of Life and philosophy must bear the fact that it does approach Life through conception also, how does one get to know Life itself? Would it be appropriate to assume that a conceptual mediation of Life takes away Life from it? If it is really the Demiurge of the real, Life cannot be lacking from anything within the real *with no exceptions*. To place oneself within the real for materialism is to see everything that exists in the world as being necessarily conditioned by Life. If Life is what conditions absolutely everything, it can be said that an act of interpreting a meaning of philosophical texts must contain Life itself within it and it is itself made possible by Life. If Life is the Absolute and it differs from a conceptual mediation of it, this means that a concept of Life must be seen within the world where nothing lacks Life and hence there is Life within the concept.

The present thesis aims at interpreting a philosophical artifice. The question is, in order to preliminarily defend the materialism of the method of extraction, how is it that a mere interpretation of texts can claim to go beyond merely recognizing its external derivation? The only way forward is to say that within this present extraction of the philosophical artifice, Life itself is found within the very activity of interpretation. After the materialist reversal of dialectic, it seems quite difficult, or even *a priori* impossible, to envisage a true knowledge of the Absolute. How can something like Life be known? It is something that gets missed if one assumes that a philosophical concept is *only* something that points towards something else. No doubt, this attribute of the concept is self-explanatory and we have no intention of denying it. A concept is a representation or an expression of something-else. It is a symbol that points towards an other region of reality outside of itself. Here, we are simply saying that a concept of a spoon is not the spoon.

Without contradicting what has been said so far about the difference between a concept and Life, we would like to argue that Life itself can be known and the method of extraction is established within such a knowledge of Life. When one asks about the possibility of knowing Life itself, we must be able to both see Life outside of its concept, and also to see Life within it. At the end, the outside of concept and the inside of concept must be identical to each other in order to properly describe the realm of Life *vis-a-vis* the concept. To acquire the artifice of distinguishing the points of view of ideas and feelings is to take up two separate points of views within the same human being. From the side of Life within a human being, the concept is what gets produced through its effort – the concept is its product. From the side of the concept, however, this does not mean that Life is lacking from it. Life is the transcendental condition of the concept, and this means that Life *resides* within the concept. Life is the energy of the concept, or its very force that makes itself possible. As Meister Eckhart once says, “[t]hose who seek God through a particular method come to obtain only the method, and do not grasp God that hides within the method itself.”⁵⁴ All one needs to do to find Life itself is to take a look at whatever Life produces and find out where its spring-source lies. Life must live within the product of Life, otherwise there would be no products.

⁵⁴ Eckhart, M. *Collection of Eckhart's Sermons*. [Eckerto Sekkyo Shu] Trans. T. Tajima. Iwanami: Tokyo. p.39.

The more appropriate question for the proposed method regarding its materialism is how to deal with the consequence of accepting the possibility of knowing Life itself. If Life can be known, a thinking person is not merely the conception one has of oneself. The concept one has of oneself is itself made possible by Life, and this Life that makes one's self-conception possible is itself known and located within oneself. Once the knowledge of Life is actually acquired by an individual, the individual comes to possess the condition that makes the individual within oneself. A philosophical thinking within this scenery, that is to say a conceptual articulation of itself and the production of a concept for itself gets done from the point of view of Life acting according to itself, out of Life's own freedom that is identical to the freedom of the individual.

Freedom, Life, Ontology: Self-Determination

Let us discuss the last point a bit more and let it be the last aspect of this methodological discussion. This is about the relationship between Life and freedom. Within the above quotation from *Matter and Memory*, Bergson speaks of the so-called "free act" [*l'acte libre*]. Supposedly, the artifice is what makes this free act possible, and this free act is identical to the capacity to "think", that is to say to have the capacity to "synthesize" the difference between ideas and feelings instead of being one-sidedly constituted as merely "affective" existence. The method of extraction is an acquisition of the artifice and a creation of the concept for the artifice. This method of interpretation is suggested to be an appropriate one for the artifice also because the meaning of reasonable evolution as well as what is meant by the "free act" of the thinking being is expected to show itself through the interpretive exercise.

However, against the supposed materialism of the proposed endeavour, how is it possible that such a capacity for "the free act" is seen as belonging to a mere human being? Why is it that such a freedom, which denotes the power of being the *causa sui* as well as having the capacity for auto-determination, can be seen as granted to an individual human being who employs the method of interpretation? If what we have argued so far can be granted its validity, the proposed method of extraction has the quality of being able to actually bringing about a transformation to an individual who practices it, and the result of this

attainment is to become able to engage in “the free act”, which indicates that the individual has the power to determine itself.

Now, within materialism, how is an individual freedom possible? That is, in materialism where Life determines consciousness, how is it possible to avoid the trap of nihilism and really say that an individual can in fact come to possess a capacity for self-determination? The materialist reversal of dialectic introduced a transformation to the concept of the Absolute, and the new concept now points towards the so-called Material Life-Process. We have already stressed that the dialectic clearly defines this Life to be different from the concept of Life and further that Life itself must be something in its own right. If one was to pose a question regarding freedom, at this point, the dialectic seems to only grant the right of freedom to Life itself and a mere individual who is a human being does not seem to dwell within the freedom of Life.

Instead, what the proposed method of extraction claims is that the capacity to actually engage in “the free act” as well as to become the purveyor of reasonable evolution can in fact be granted to an actual individual human being. Can this be defended as a materialism? If an actual individual, like me, you, or someone from this or that liqueur store on a street corner *here and now* can actually possess the capacity to determine one-self out of one’s own freedom, how can this be still seen as a materialist doctrine?

In order to demarcate our own position, let us point out Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Bergson and explain how our reading differs from it. Even though we admire Deleuze’s own philosophy as well as his reading of Bergson greatly, our reading differs from Deleuze’s on a crucial point. Whereas Deleuze openly states that Bergson’s philosophy is a kind of *Ontology*, we do not believe this is in fact the case. This disagreement stems from the specific role that the interpretation of the concept of duration plays *vis-a-vis* the question of freedom. For us, the concept of duration refers first and foremost to an experience of Life itself and it is through the concept of duration that Life, or the materialist Absolute is not an idea for Bergson. What is meant by this is that the concept of duration points towards one’s actual capacity to get in touch with Life itself and hence to transform the individual who possesses it into a self-consciousness of Life. However, Deleuze’s reading does not suggest the same. If anything, the kind of self-determining capacity that we are talking about is not granted to an empirical individual but to an “immemorial or

ontological Memory”.⁵⁵ Deleuze says that within Bergson’s philosophy, a certain “leap” is made and this leap introduces us into “the element of sense.”⁵⁶ The word, “ontological” here means that the so-called immemorial memory is in fact a supra-sensible Idea that has no basis in sensuous reality. What is accessed through the leap is an ontological presupposition that is supposedly accessed through *transcending* into the supra-sensuous region of Being.

Unlike Deleuze, we do not conceive of Being to be something to be attained through a “leap” or a transcendence into it from the empirical *here and now*. For us, Being is an actual object of encounter and it is a question of knowing the true nature of duration. It is not a question of Memory since, for us, duration does not appear as such if the region one seeks it is the realm of memory. Memory, as we will explain in the second chapter, is already a representation of duration and it differs in kind from duration itself. Deleuze made a mistake to assume that duration itself can only be attained through “leaping” into the Ontological, and this move effectively turns Bergson’s philosophy into an idealism. For us, Being can only be accessed if one seizes to think in terms of leaping into it and actually coming to possess the means through which it is accessed *here and now*, which is the realm of perception and not memory. That is, the so-called Deleuzian “leap” into the ontological is precisely that which prevents the actual encounter and taking possession of Life within perception and this is the major obstacle that materialist philosophy must overcome in order to prevent nihilism. What is said to be the “Ontological” by Deleuze is not, for our method of extraction that is, really Being. The “Ontological” must rather be put into quotation marks because the actuality of the ontological resides outside the region of the concept in general. The “Ontological”, that is to say Being itself, cannot be truly accessed in itself if it is regarded as a region one gets to through “leaping” and escaping into it from here. A leap into something is to *depart from* the here and now. If the “Ontological” is what is accessed through departing from the here and now, one is not in fact in the actual presence of the ontological in its material reality. Life, if it is in fact different from the concept of Life, cannot be an object of attainment through departing from the sensuous. An encounter with Life itself can only occur through sensuousness

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p.57.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

(which is of course what Deleuze argues for in *Difference and Repetition* but he did not grant such a conception to Bergson).

6. Thesis Structure

The structure of the thesis stems directly from the duality of intuition. In Part I, we examine the nature of time as one half of the transcendental condition of intuition and in Part II we present duration as the second transcendental condition that differs from that of time. As a whole, the method of intuition apprehends both time and duration as two sides of the Absolute Self. By “time” we mean the Kantian time, which is what Bergson often calls “space”. Time therefore refers to a kind of false time, which differs in kind from duration. As it is well known, Bergson famously argues against the Kantian conception of time by putting forth the thesis of duration, which is said to be what constitutes “real” time. From this latter perspective, Kantian time is a transcendental form of mediation (intuition as *a priori* mediated by time as the form of intuition) but for Bergson, it is that which distorts genuine duration and turns it into an illegitimate translation of the Self. However, as we have briefly explained above, Bergson’s criticism of time is not a simple opposition. Rather, a close reading reveals that Bergson in fact *retrieves* Kantian time as a real existence, which comes into being out of social relations as the condition of the “surface ego” [*le moi superficiel*]. That is, after criticising the inadequacy of Kantian time with regard to the “real” time or duration, Bergson nonetheless returns to it and gives it the status of real existence.

By comparing his theory of memory to Kantian schematism of imagination, we will argue that time for Bergson is that which comes into being out of material social relations. Time presents the world in terms of abstract idea or number, *i.e.*, in terms of “space”, but this is so due to time’s origin in one’s concrete life, or one’s “suffering” within material reality. Time is therefore a social construction and hence the transcendental condition of experience in the Kantian sense of the term is seen as a product of material historical formation. Reconfigured in this way, the theory of time allows Bergson to have a genuine form of political criticism of subjectivity. It is what serves as the condition of possibility for us to posit a “no” to the pre-existing, ideological form of consciousness devoid of autonomous will. As

we will see, the apprehension of the presence of time therefore gives it the very *negative capacity* to both see and critique socio-political forces.

In Part II, we will examine the nature of duration as the second half of the transcendental condition of intuition. Duration is what refers to the “real” time in contradistinction to “space” or Kantian/spatialized time. If, as we argue in Part I, Kantian time indeed does exist for Bergson, the simple opposition between time and duration fails to characterise the nature of intuition. That is, duration or real time is not what replaces false time when it enters into the scene. On the contrary, neither time nor duration vanishes and duration is what must be held in sight *along with* time and side by side within intuition. That is, although it is outside of the milieu of what we will call ordinary *within-time-ness* (the world of appearance/*mundus sensibilis*), the realism of time does not abolish the particular *presence* of duration within intuition. Duration is a kind of *without-time-ness*, or what Kant conceives as *Freedom* “within” intuition presented alongside time. In short, duration will be explored in terms of a transcendental condition that lets the *Other of Time* appear within intuition.

Due to its *immediacy*, many commentators have mistaken duration as a correlate of idealism. In comparison to Kantian idealism of without-time-ness (rightly argued by Fichte and others), we will demonstrate that the without-time-ness of duration is that which is given within sensuous experience. The “immediate” of *the immediate data of consciousness* is not an Idea of reason immediately apprehended by reason via supra-sensible intuition. This kind of immediacy rather belongs to the side of time and it is that which falls into infinite self-reflection, or into the self-externalisation of the Idea through *recollection*. The mediating mode of access employed for duration thus belongs to a qualitatively different order. Such a view of duration refers to an immediate sensuousness outside of the temporal reflection and it is therefore a non-Ideal, non-abstract, and hence materialist mediation of the absolute through a superior form of sense awareness.

In plain terms, what we argue is achieved through this theory of duration is a foundation for what Heidegger calls “the reversal of metaphysics”, or, what amounts to the same thing, the overcoming of the Western “Ontotheology”.⁵⁷ As we will see, duration grasps the Absolute Self in a way that differs from temporal “presence” and this is where its importance lies. While on the one hand

⁵⁷ Heidegger, *Time and Being*, p.57.

apprehending time as a real existence enables the method of intuition to perform a socio-political critique of ideology, on the other *apprehending duration* within intuition protects our own critical capacity from falling into *relativist perspectivism*, or into the trap of the self-denial that is nihilism. Historical criticism, which places any pronouncement of truths in quotation marks, lacks the ability to affirm the Absolute Self in-itself. What we need, however, is a method that articulates our true foundation, which does not turn into a mere imaginary fabrication. In the following chapters, we will argue that this foundation gives us not only the dialectical power of affirmation but, ultimately, the foundation for all political critiques.

Part I

Negation and Time

When many of them are sitting together in assemblies, courts, theatres, army camps, or in some other public gathering of the crowd, they object very loudly and excessively to some of the things that are said or done and approve others in the same way, shouting and clapping, so that the very rocks and surroundings echo the din of their praise or blame and double it. In circumstances like that, what is the effect, as they say, on a young person's heart? What private training can hold out and not be swept away by that kind of praise or blame and be carried by the flood wherever it goes, so that he'll say that the same things are beautiful or ugly as the crowd does, follow the same pursuits as they do, and be the same sort of person as they are?

Plato *Republic*, 492c.

For the work of Maya is stated to be precisely this visible world in which we are, a magic effect called into being, an unstable and inconstant illusion without substance, comparable to optical illusion and the dream, a veil enveloping human consciousness [...] Such clear knowledge and calm, deliberate presentation of this dreamlike quality of the whole world is really the basis of the whole Kantian philosophy; it is its soul and its greatest merit.

Arthur Schopenhauer⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Schopenhauer, A., ([1818] 1969). "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy." In *The World as Will and Representation: Vol.1*. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover. pp. 419-420.

Introduction

Does Time Exist for Bergson?

The question regarding Bergson's capacity for dialectical negation can be summed up as follows: does time exist for Bergson? That is, does time as opposed to duration, or the *Kantian* "spatialized time", exist *for* Bergson? The answer that we propose to this question is "yes", but traditionally, this has not been the case. It is well known that Bergson puts forth his concept of duration *against* Kantian time. Due to this opposition, commentators across the spectrum base their readings upon an assumption that time in fact does not exist for Bergson. Accordingly, the attribute "Bergsonism" has come to represent one who accepts the *annulment of time* through the concept of duration. For those who are fundamentally opposed to Bergson, this supposed denial of time simultaneously proves his inexcusable *naiveté* towards the historical mediation of consciousness; consequently, the lack of time is the testimony to his inability to put forth a revolutionary negation of ideological illusion. A notable illustration of this anti-Bergsonian position can be seen in Horkheimer's remark in *On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time*:

Instead of placing his psychological analyses in the service of a more differentiated knowledge of the historical context, always more conscious of its own preconditions, for Bergson himself they are directed to the goal of establishing and of guaranteeing his myth of 'creative evolution'. However, the contradiction which disrupts this philosophy in its totality [...] consists between the, in principle, unhistorical thought of the entire tradition upon which Bergson is dependent, and his undertaking to comprehend the role of time. Since every metaphysics necessarily includes the idea that its form and its sense of events are not themselves again subordinated to time, the intention of Bergson's thought annuls its own content. It denies time in that it elevates it to a metaphysical principle.⁵⁹

For Horkheimer, Bergson's philosophy "denies time" and ends up elevating time to "a metaphysical principle". That is, rather than subordinating metaphysics under the time of history and understanding the latter in terms of the historical determination of human subjectivity, Bergson naively assumes that real time is

⁵⁹ Horkheimer, M., ([1959] 2005). "On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time." Trans. F. Stracy. *Radical Philosophy*. Issue 131. pp.9-19.

unhistorical and ends up enforcing “the ideological justification of the ruling state of affairs on the basis of eternal principles”.⁶⁰

The above remark was confirmed by Walter Benjamin and influenced the latter’s critique of modernism that locates Bergson’s philosophy as the cornerstone of a proto-Fascist ideology:

Since the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy has made a series of attempts to grasp “true” experience, as opposed to the kind that manifests itself in the standardised, denatured life of the civilized masses. It is customary to classify these efforts under the heading of a philosophy of life. Their point of departure, understandably enough, was not man’s life in society. What they invoked was poetry, preferably nature, and, most recently, the age of myths. Dilthey’s book *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* represents one of the earliest of these efforts which end with Klages and Jung; both made common cause with Fascism. Towering above this literature is Bergson’s early monumental work, *Matière et Mémoire*. [...] Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data. It is, however, not at all Bergson’s intention to attach any specific historical label to memory. On the contrary, he rejects any historical determination of memory.⁶¹

After Horkheimer, Benjamin similarly stresses that Bergson’s philosophy lacks the dimension of the historical determination of subjectivity. Moreover, by pointing out that Bergson is the quintessential philosopher that attempted to grasp “true experience” beyond the standpoint of “man’s life in society”, Bergson’s philosophy is counted amongst those who “made common case to Fascism”.

If we are to defend the use of Bergson’s dialectical method for politics, the above remarks pose an inescapable challenge. One cannot ignore the fact that Bergson has long been treated as the favourite target of criticism primarily due to his alleged lack of respect towards materialist history and the inability to engage in socio-political criticism. Bergson’s philosophy, in essence, has come to be seen as an *uncritical metaphysics* that blatantly overlooks the material determinations of human subjectivity within history. As a consequence of his supposed naiveté vis-à-vis history, it is assumed that his philosophy ends up reinforcing the pre-existing structure of domination and fulfilling the “social function”. Overall, the stereotypical image of Bergson has become the archetypical enemy of materialism:

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp.11-12.

⁶¹ Benjamin, W., ([1972 – 1989] 2003). “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”. In *Selected Writings Vol.4 1938-1940*. Trans. E. Jephcott. Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press. p.314.

an image of a naïve metaphysician that one must oppose if one endorses materialism.

In a word, what Horkheimer and Benjamin insist upon is the political necessity of putting forth a revolutionary “no”. In other words, they insist upon the operation of dialectical negation that issues a self-critique so as to overcome the bourgeois ideology inherent within any uncritical, positivist ideology masquerading as the true experience of the world. In Marx’s words, this “no” is a “negative revelation” and a feeling of *shame*, which is like “a lion recoiling in order to spring.”⁶² This is the moment when the “most repulsive despotism stands revealed for all the world to see” and functions as the springboard towards the real “reform of consciousness”.⁶³ It is out of an allegiance to this Marxist project that much of political criticism strives to define itself and oppose to the alleged positivist tendency in Bergson’s philosophy.

In order to defend the political efficacy of Bergson’s method of intuition, we will challenge the traditional reading of Bergson that treats him as a naïve metaphysician and will instead locate a distinct theoretical framework that is capable of putting forth negation in his concept of time. For us, to ask whether Bergson’s philosophy is capable of putting forth negation is equivalent to asking if Bergson has thought of time as a real existence. “Time” here refers to the equivalent of the concept of history deployed within the materialist criticism of subjectivity and not to the concept of duration. As opposed to the latter, which is said to be the *real* time or the *immediate* datum of consciousness, time of historical critique refers to the Kantian derivation of the concept, which is the form of *mediation* that conditions and colours individual experiences in a particular way depending upon the historicity of the social/material milieu that surrounds the individual. To affirm the reality of time is therefore to affirm the real existence of the mechanism that sustains the production of historically mediated experience, which is the prerequisite for any socio-historical criticism of subjectivity.

In Part I, we will overall demonstrate that time is an irreducible element that makes up one half of the transcendental condition of intuition. As we stated above, the transcendental dualism that we put forth argues for the irreducible duality of time and duration. With respect to the question pertaining to Bergson’s capacity

⁶² Marx, *Early Writings*, pp.199-200.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p.199, p.209.

for negation, this means that duration is not something that cancels out the reality of time. That is, instead of treating time as something that is annulled by duration, we argue that time and duration differ from one another but they are both present within intuition and the presence of time within intuition is that which endows the method with the distinct capacity to criticise the historical determination of subjectivity.

Of course, duration is the *real* time for Bergson and he presents this concept in explicit opposition to the Kantian conception of time. Duration does not come into being out of external historical mediation, but it is immediately felt within as the *Absolute Self*. That is, Bergson's duration is not the mark of human finitude as Kantian time would suggest but is identical to the Absolute itself, which "lives with us".⁶⁴ In turn, this absolutism of duration seems to be a blatant violation of the Marxist theory of historical determination of consciousness. Many would thus conclude that the concept of duration seems to be a product of Bergson's inability to criticise his own ideological illusion. Indeed, as we have made it clear already, no one can deny that the theory of duration is *opposed* to the theory of time and we have no intention to argue otherwise. However, the opposition between time and duration does not mean that time therefore does not exist for Bergson. To argue for the existence of the unhistorical element within experience is one thing. To argue *against* the historical mediation of experience is another. In fact, we will demonstrate below that Bergson has a separate theory of time that accounts for its real existence and this does not violate the possibility of apprehending duration. In short, our argument is that Bergson does not refute Kantian conception of time via the concept of duration without also *retrieving* Kantian time as that which *comes into being* out of history or the past. Time for Bergson does exist and Bergsonism contains within it a realism, or a socio-historical constructivism of Kantian time, without compromising the latter's transcendental character. Once we have identified the irreducible existence of time within Bergson's theory of intuition, we can then see that his philosophy is in fact compatible with the ostensibly contrary position taken by the Marxist critics. More specifically, what we propose to show is that the particular ways in which Bergson deals with Kantian notion of time as the *a priori* form of intuition is ultimately compatible with the Marxist historical criticism of ideological subjectivity.

⁶⁴ CE 298-299/747.

Chapter 1.

Bergson Contra Kantian Time

1. Bergson's Polemic Against Kantian Time

As its English title suggests, *Time and Free Will* principally expounds upon the relationship between the concept of time and the problem of free will. More specifically, Bergson focuses upon Kant's conception of time and criticizes it for reinstating the Eleatic paradox (the race between Achilles and the tortoise) in terms of the problem of free will.⁶⁵ Overall, Bergson's argument is that the Kantian conception of time only permits the "symbolical representation" of the free movement of the Spirit in "space" or in "a fourth dimension of space" and hence inadvertently makes freedom impossible.⁶⁶ For Bergson, Kantian time is the "illegitimate translation" of the real time that confuses the qualitative and indivisible movement with its representation in terms of a quantitative, measurable sequence of positions that abides by the mechanical laws of causality.⁶⁷ This confusion results in the view of the mind to be only possible from a standpoint of the *necessary* laws of nature. As long as the mind is envisaged within this framework, any conception of free will is *a priori* rendered impossible unless, as Kant does in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the latter be relegated to the purely intelligible realm and thus regarded as a supra-sensuous *noumenon* or an object of belief.⁶⁸

It is with respect to this problem of the paradox of free will that Bergson criticizes Kant's conception of time and instead devises the concept of duration as real time. As opposed to Kantian time, which is said to be a fourth dimension of space or a symbolical representation of the mind, duration corresponds to the real

⁶⁵ TFW 112-115/75-77. Before he decisively reaches the problematic of time defined within the realm of Kantian philosophy, Bergson begins with a setting of the background through a broad review of the 19th century pre-Freudian mechanistic psychology, known as "psychophysics". Most importantly, he focuses upon the notion of "intensive magnitude" as the conceptual ground through which psychophysics renders states of consciousness distinguishable in terms of quantitative "more or less" and thus renders it *a priori* open to mathematical measurement and calculation by investigating the supposed external causes of psychic states such as strength of light, muscular efforts, etc.

⁶⁶ TFW 109-110/73.

⁶⁷ TFW *xix*/3.

⁶⁸ TFW 232-235/151-153. Also see CPR A445-A452/B473-B480.

movement of the Spirit and it is identical to the “genuine free self”.⁶⁹ Through the concept of duration, the possibility of free will is no longer relegated to the realm of belief. Instead, the freedom of the will is rendered as what is immediately and sensuously given to consciousness in a way distinct from what the spatial, symbolical representation would make of it.

The subject matter that we will focus on in this chapter, however, is not the concept of duration. Rather, we will concentrate upon the concept of time or the very mechanism that brings about the “symbolical representation” of duration. As we stated above, the traditional reading of Bergson’s argument against Kantian conception of time has played an important role in determining the image of Bergson as a naïve metaphysician. By looking at the overall status of Bergson’s argument, it becomes quite apparent that the concept of duration fundamentally stems from his motive of transcending the philosophical position that only admits the view of the mind in its symbolic representation *in time*. In contradistinction to the mediated representation of the mind, duration is what is immediately given and Bergson’s point is to stress that the immediate givenness of duration differs in kind from the givenness of its representation in time. However, it would be a mistake to infer from this that Bergson then goes against the theory of representation altogether and falls victim to the trap of ideology. It is one thing to say that Achilles and the tortoise differ in kind, and quite another to say that the tortoise alone *is* and the Achilles *is not*. By distinguishing the movement of duration and its representation, Bergson is essentially saying that time and duration differ in kind. But it is mistaken to infer from this that Bergson then conceives of time or the symbolical representation of duration as non-being. It is indeed against the symbolical representation of the movement that Bergson puts forth the concept of duration but the *givenness of duration* does not cancel out the *givenness of time*. Instead, Bergson notes that they are the “two aspects of conscious life”.⁷⁰ This indicates that the opposition between time and duration is not a one-sided or abstract opposition but there is a distinct reality of time in parallel with that of duration within intuition. As such, Bergson’s dialectic cannot be described in terms of the movement that favors either one or the other within the duality. We must, on the contrary, admit that there are two distinct movements

⁶⁹ TFW 233/152.

⁷⁰ TFW 128/85.

in his dialectic and that this two-sidedness of the movement does not cancel out the particular movement that belongs to the side of time.

We will overall argue that Bergson does not only put forth a polemic against Kantian conception of time but also *retrieves* its positive existence via problematizing it from of a materialist standpoint as a complementary movement. Although the theory of time is a relatively obscure part of Bergson's philosophy, a close reading will reveal that Bergson not only acknowledges the distinct existence of time alongside duration but also investigates into its *origin* by further extending the Kantian project towards a materialist direction.

In order to maintain that Bergson's philosophy in fact contains the capacity for negation, we must therefore unearth Bergson's theory of the intuition of time. Indeed, in order to have the capacity to negate ideological consciousness, the latter must first exist. Even if it is the apparent or illusory appearance of reality, this illusion must itself be regarded as real in its own right. Seen in relation to the real time of duration, time or the fourth dimension of space is a kind of *false* time. However, if time and duration are the "two aspects of conscious life", this indicates that the false time has a distinct reality alongside that of duration and Bergson's theory of intuition contains within it a theory of time as its irreducible part. Bergson's overall philosophical position therefore cannot be grasped if we stop at the point where he posits the concept of duration as that which differs from time. By doing so, Bergson simultaneously posits the reality of time and, as we will argue in chapter 2 in relation to *Matter and Memory*, investigates into the origin of time from a materialist standpoint. In contradistinction to the theory of duration which will deliver the method for apprehending the immediate and hence *ahistorical* data of consciousness, the theory of time will instead supply the distinctly Bergsonian framework of *critiquing* how the historically mediated view of the Self or its *apparent reality* is itself constituted out of the alienation of consciousness.

However, to conceive of Bergson's thought in terms of the materialism of time would be to go against the traditional reading of Bergson altogether and it requires us to explicitly reformulate aspects that have been hitherto hidden. In order to illuminate the latter, we must engage in a reconstructive reading that pays special attention to what Bergson has in mind when he criticizes Kantian conception of time and how he transfigures this very object of criticism into a positive conception. For this task, we will first examine Bergson's argument vis-à-

vis Kantian conception of time within *Time and Free Will* and identify within what specific field of questioning his conception of time can be seen as located. To inquire into Bergson's positive conception of time is to examine the particular conception *from which* duration is differentiated. If Bergson argues that Kantian time is the result of the "illegitimate translation" of duration, the very subject matter that we must examine thus resides within the very procedure of "illegitimate translation" itself with respect to the context of Kant's philosophy in particular. The task of this chapter is to determine what specific aspect of Kant's philosophy Bergson challenges and examine the overall significance of this aspect vis-à-vis our greater concern for Bergson's materialist dialectic.

2. Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic

Let us begin with a quote from the passage where Bergson expresses his objection against Kant most explicitly. In the last section of the conclusion of *Time and Free Will* titled "The Error of Kant", Bergson states:

Kant's great mistake was to take time as a homogeneous milieu. He did not notice that real duration is made up of moments inside one another, and that when it seems to assume the form of a homogeneous whole, it is because it gets expressed in space. Thus the very distinction which he makes between space and time amounts at bottom to confusing time with space [...] He thought that consciousness was incapable of perceiving psychic states otherwise than by juxtaposition, forgetting that a milieu in which these states are set side by side and distinguished from one another is of course space, and not duration. He was thereby led to believe that the same states can recur in the depths of consciousness, just as the same physical phenomena are repeated in space; this at least is what he implicitly admitted when he ascribed to the causal relation the same meaning and the same function in the inner as in the outer world. Thus freedom was made in to an incomprehensible fact. [...] He therefore raised it to the sphere of noumena; and as he had confused duration with space, he made this genuine free self, which is indeed outside space, into a self which is supposed to be outside duration too, and therefore out of the reach of our faculty of knowledge.⁷¹

⁷¹ TFW 232/151. Translation modified. In the original translation, the term "milieu" is translated into "medium". The latter carries a connotation of "mediation" and hence also of "form" as that which mediates and orders matter. Yet it seems that the fact that Bergson chooses "milieu" rather than "form" indicates that he intends to differentiate the two terms.

Bergson's argument can be summarized as follows: Kant made a mistake to assume that time is "homogeneous", while such a characterization can only be applied to space. For Bergson, time is in fact "heterogeneous" and if it appears to be homogeneous, it is because it gets *expressed* in space. The word "express" [*exprimer*] here can be interpreted as referring to what Bergson points out by the operation of "illegitimate translation". For the time being, we can suppose that Bergson's criticism of Kantian conception of time as "homogeneous" is directed towards this operation of "expression" that turns time into space and investigate how such an operation poses a problem for Bergson in his reading of Kant.

The question is: where can we find the rationale behind this claim that Kantian time is expressed in space within Kant's own writings? By "space" and "time", Bergson is seemingly referring to the concepts derived from Kant's doctrine of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* that we find in the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, to what particular operation within the context of Kant's philosophy is Bergson referring when he says that time is *expressed* in space? Kant introduces the theme of transcendental aesthetic as that which expounds upon "a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility."⁷² Rather than understanding space and time as empirical phenomena, Kant conceptualizes them as the *a priori* forms of intuition or sensibility that accompany our experience of the world transcendently. Within this framework, space is considered as the "outer sense" since it is the capacity for the mind to receive presentations that are placed outside it (*i.e.* "objects"). Time, on the other hand, is called the "inner sense" since it refers to the *a priori* capacity for the mind to be affected *by itself* and receive itself as its object of intuition (*i.e.* "soul"). His intention behind these conceptions (and to derive space and time as the two *forms*) is to determine in what ways "matter" or the "manifold of appearance" is "ordered" *a priori* via those forms and to argue that such ordering is itself *transcendental*; it thus pertains to the very "principles of pure reason" as such and is not itself derived from empirical, contingent experience.⁷³ Thus, the *Transcendental Aesthetic* overall establishes that space and

⁷² CPR A22/B36.

⁷³ CPR B28.

time constitute the transcendental capacity/power [*vermögen*] for the mind to be affected both in terms of its outer and the inner intuition.⁷⁴

Having said that, Bergson's argument vis-à-vis Kant's conception of time consists in saying that Kantian time is "homogeneous" because it falls under the category of space rather than time and time for Bergson is "heterogeneous". The insight required from us in order to understand the particular nature of Bergson's argument is concealed in this deceptively simple claim: *Kantian time is space*. In the following section, we will first quickly survey Bergson's explanations regarding the "homogeneity" of Kantian space and time so that we can later return to the more specific question pertaining to the "expression" of time with space from a more informed vantage point.

3. Homogeneity of Space and Time

The Kantian conception of space, as we have pointed out, corresponds to the transcendental form through which the mind intuits external objects. Kant states that "[the] presentation of space cannot be one that we take from the relations of outer appearance by means of experience; rather, only through the presentation of space is that outer experience possible in the first place."⁷⁵ That is, regardless of any empirical specificity of the object in question, Kant establishes that the mind's capacity to be affected by its exterior objects is limited by the form of space *transcendentally*. If this is the case, what are the specific characteristics of space for Kant and why does Bergson describe it as "homogeneous"? Kant states that space can be characterized as the form of "simultaneity" and it is the form through which objects appear to the mind as "outside and alongside one another" in "different locations".⁷⁶ In essence, Bergson describes these characteristics as the "multiplicity of juxtaposition" and argues that this implies space's homogeneity since, for him, the *idea of number* is in turn implied in this form of juxtaposition.⁷⁷ According to Bergson: "space is [...] the material with which the mind builds up number, the

⁷⁴ CPR A19/B33.

⁷⁵ CPR A23/B38.

⁷⁶ CPR A23/B38, A31/B47.

⁷⁷ TFW 75/51.

milieu in which the mind places it.”⁷⁸ When the mind intuits objects outside of itself, they appear to the mind as “the synthesis of the one and the multiple”.⁷⁹ That is, within space, each external object is viewed on the basis of a discrete, discontinuous self-same *unit* that makes up a whole by itself. In turn, the *collection* of units can also be considered as a self-identical unit in itself without bringing about a heterogeneity to the form of unity (*e.g.* number 1 is *a* unit, and number 2, which is a collection of two units/1s, is itself a unit since it is *a* number). Hence, in the case of mind intuiting objects in space, there is a constantly assumed *homogeneity of quality* regardless of whether one focuses upon a unit or a collection of units as a unit. This implies, as Bergson states, that the intuition of space involves the abstract idea of number and it is this idea that assures *the qualitative identity* between the individual part and the whole insofar as the form of the unity itself is constantly present. Any change or difference merely amounts to the difference in quantity that keeps the homogeneity of the unit itself intact and it does not bring about a change in their quality. The form of unity itself stays the same no matter how many times one subdivides an object or adds more units as in the case of infinitely divisible extension.

Furthermore, Bergson argues that the involvement of the idea of number in spatial intuition is derived not so much from the physical experience of objects in general but rather from the supposed logical necessity of thought:

In reality, it is not a physical but a logical necessity which attaches to the proposition: ‘Two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time.’ The contrary assertion involves an absurdity which no conceivable experience could succeed in dispelling. In a word, it implies a contradiction.⁸⁰

What we can infer from this statement is that spatial intuition and the idea of number fundamentally imply their subordination under the logical principle of non-contradiction. What Bergson means by “homogeneity” can therefore be understood as homogeneity of the form of the object that imposes itself as the law of thought.⁸¹ *Via* the form of space, an object is seen in terms of a self non-contradictory being, *i.e.*, the being of an object is identical to itself, and it is not

⁷⁸ TFW 84/57.

⁷⁹ TFW 75/51.

⁸⁰ TFW 88/60.

⁸¹ TFW 207/136. “The principle of identity is the absolute law of our consciousness”.

heterogeneous to itself (A = A, not not-A). That is, within space, a thing is what it is in a way that its being excludes what it is not (being = being, being ≠ non-being). In space, two bodies must be *counted* in accordance with their occupations of separate locations and a body is identical only to itself.

Let us now move on to the concept of time. The second aspect of Bergson's argument is that Kantian time, like space, is also homogeneous. Just like it is the case for the form of space, Kant supposes that time is the transcendental form of inner sense and this means that the mind can only intuit *itself* through the form of time. The difference between space and time pertains, in simple terms, to the following: as opposed to space being the form of simultaneity, Kant describes time as the form of "succession" – "different times are not simultaneous but sequential (just as different spaces are not sequential but simultaneous)."⁸² That is, when the mind receives itself as its object of intuition, this self-intuition of the mind for Kant only occurs in the form of a progressive, sequential line that "has only one dimension".⁸³ Here, it is apparent that the descriptions of time and space are set up in a way that they mutually exclude one another. If space is the form through which things appear in their simultaneous co-existence (*i.e.* the being of beings at the same time), time is that which prohibits and violates this sense of togetherness of multiple things within it. Instead, time has only one dimension and this means that the multiplicity of things within time is inconceivable unless it is a form through which one thing continuously succeeds and replaces another. In time, an appearance of one thing (*i.e.* a moment or a "now") must be accompanied with a disappearance of another moment which *no longer is*. In order for a moment to *be*, it first has to erase itself and pass into non-being (*i.e.* it *was*) so as to make room for the being of the new moment to spring forth.⁸⁴ Kant therefore states that time

⁸² CPR A30-31/B46-47.

⁸³ CPR A33/B50, A32/B47.

⁸⁴ At the beginning of *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel provides a reading of Kant's notions of space and time and says: "[s]elf-externality splits at once into two forms, positively as Space, and negatively as Time." When Heidegger puts forth his interpretation of Hegel's "ordinary conception of time" and argues that Bergson's conception of time is merely a correlate of Hegel's conception, he interprets Bergson's "time is space" in terms of a simple reversal of Hegel's "space is time". For us, this reading does not penetrate into the true meaning of Bergson's polemic against Kant since by arguing that time is expressed into space in Kant's philosophy, Bergson is not saying that *duration becomes space* in the sense that relates to what happens within the doctrine of Transcendental Aesthetic. Kant indeed argues within transcendental aesthetic that time is the "formal *a priori* condition of all appearance generally" and Hegel is right to re-iterate this as "the truth of space is time".

is what brings together “in one and the same object, of contradictorily opposed predicates”.⁸⁵

Why does Bergson argue that time is expressed in space? In a nutshell, Bergson’s contestation consists of pointing out that Kant did not successfully grasp the real nature of succession. For Kant, temporal succession is indeed defined in contradistinction to spatial simultaneity but the kind of succession Kant conceives of still takes, for Bergson, the form of a juxtaposition and it hence only differs from space within the same order of generality. In Bergson’s words:

[If] time, as the reflective consciousness represents it, is a milieu in which our conscious states form a discrete series so as to admit of being counted, and if on the other hand conception of number ends in spreading out in space everything which can be directly counted, it is to be presume that time, understood in the sense of a milieu in which we make distinctions and count, is nothing but space.⁸⁶

Bergson describes the Kantian conception of succession in terms of “discrete series” that spreads out in space. For him, just as in the case of spatial intuition, Kantian conception of succession allows the states of consciousness to be counted within a discrete series and thus to be intuited in terms of the multiplicity of juxtaposition that presents its members (*i.e.* moments) in terms of self-identical and mutually non-contradictory moments (*e.g.* ...“I”, ...“I”, ...“I”). His argument is that if time is understood as the form through which our mind appears to itself in terms of discretely successive units, this implies that time too is a multiplicity of juxtaposition and it is rather a “fourth dimension of space.”⁸⁷

It is with respect to this fundamental disagreement regarding the characteristics of succession that Bergson puts forth his concept of duration. For Bergson, the real succession or time does not allow for any parts to be “external to one another” and it is rather a multiplicity of “mutual penetration” that *endures* as it is without “separating its present state from its former states.”⁸⁸ In other words, real time is *the movement itself* or it is a *qualitative* “pure heterogeneity” that has

Hegel, G. W. F., ([1830] 2007). *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. p.28. § 253.

⁸⁵ CPR A32/B49.

⁸⁶ TFW 91/61-62.

⁸⁷ TFW 109/73.

⁸⁸ TFW 99-101/67-68.

no “affiliation with number”.⁸⁹ As the famous Eleatic paradox of Achilles and the tortoise shows, “we cannot make movement out of immobilities” and this indicates that Kant does not grasp the nature of real succession/time and rather “unwittingly falling back upon space, and really giving up time”.⁹⁰ Bergson’s polemic is concentrated upon showing that the contradiction between space and time or between simultaneity and succession are much more radical than how Kant conceives of it. Although space and time are set up to be distinct from one another, Kant nonetheless conceives of their difference through working out the order of primacy between the two within the same genus. Bergson presses this point in his lecture course on the *Critique of Pure Reason* in Lycée Henri-IV and states:

Kant reunites space and time, while one of them is more general than the other, he places them on the same plane [...] But as the representations of external things are known to us by becoming internal states, time is the condition of all our representations be it either mediately or immediately. There is thus difference of generality (degree) between two forms, not difference of nature.⁹¹

According to Bergson’s argument, for Kant space is indirectly conditioned by time in a way that time’s characteristic spills over or rather extends into that of space. To put it differently, Kant conceives of space as homogeneous due to the original homogeneity of time. Indeed, Kant states:

All presentations, whether or not they have outer things as their objects, do yet in themselves as determinations of the mind, belong to our inner state; and this inner state is subject to the formal condition of inner intuition, and hence to the condition of time. Therefore *time is an a priori condition of all appearance generally*: it is the direct condition of inner appearances (of our souls), and precisely thereby also, indirectly, a condition of outer appearances.⁹²

Despite of the difference between the two forms, Kant argues that time is the “condition of all appearance generally” and the spatial intuition is rather indirectly conditioned by time. Thus, the particular characteristic of space is that it is the product of time serving as the “*a priori* condition of all appearance generally”. For

⁸⁹ TFW 104/70.

⁹⁰ TFW 98/66, 115/77.

⁹¹ Bergson, H., (1995). *Cours III*. Paris: PUF. pp.146-147.

⁹² CPR B51. Emphasis added.

Bergson, this amounts to saying that Kantian space and time differ only within the same order of generality and thus they do not constitute difference of kind/nature.

4. The Reversal of “Space is Time”: Beyond Heidegger’s Interpretation

Let us pause here for a moment to clarify the status of Bergson’s argument we have covered up to this point vis-à-vis a traditional reading of Bergson. So far, we have surveyed Bergson’s description regarding the “homogeneity” of Kantian space and time, which is that Kantian time really amounts to being the fourth dimension of space rather than time. As we pointed out previously, what Bergson ultimately argues here is that Kantian time *is* space. The important question we must ask is therefore the following: by saying that “time is space”, is Bergson simply putting forth the reverse of Kant’s original argument concerning space and time?

By claiming that time is the primary form of intuition generally, Kant is essentially saying that “space is time”, or, to borrow Hegel’s words, “the truth of space is time”.⁹³ So if Bergson says that “time is space” in contradistinction to Kantian position, would it be appropriate for us to interpret the latter claim as the mere opposite of the Kantian position that “the truth of time is space”? In other words, by reproaching the Kantian conception of time, is Bergson putting forth space as the primary form of intuition that seeps inward, so to speak, and *becomes* the form of time? In a nutshell, this is how Heidegger interprets the essence of Bergson’s argument. In the well-cited footnote at the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger states:

In spite of all differences in reasoning, Bergson's interpretation agrees with Hegel's thesis that space "is" time. Bergson just turns it around: Time (temps) is space.⁹⁴

⁹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, p.34. §257. See, also, Heidegger, M., ([1976] 2010). *Logic: The Question of Truth*. Trans. T. Sheehan. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press. p.209.

⁹⁴ Heidegger, M., ([1953] 1996). *Being and Time*. Trans. J. Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press. p.410. This brief passage on Bergson that Heidegger presents in the footnote to *Being and Time* is a condensed version of what he already presented in his 1925-26 lecture course at Marburg entitled “Logic”. See Heidegger, *Logic*, pp.206-224.

Here, Heidegger famously mentions that Bergson's argument "time is space" is the mere opposite of "space is time". Although the main philosopher that Heidegger focuses in comparison to Bergson is Hegel and it is the latter's supposedly Aristotelian conception of time as the succession of the "now"/"punctuality" that he takes issues with, it is clear from the above analysis that Bergson's contestation against Kant takes exactly the same form. That is, be it the doctrine of Kant, Hegel or Aristotle, Bergson claims that "time is space" against the position that "space is time".

For Heidegger, however, Bergson's criticism does not amount to proposing anything new vis-à-vis the claim that "space is time" since "time is space" is rather in agreement with the conception of time as the succession of the "now". It would not be an overstatement if we said that this interpretation is responsible for producing a devastating image of Bergson's overall philosophy. Indeed, even though Bergson's name appears several times in *Being and Time*, his philosophy is only treated as one of the most prominent examples of how time is understood in its "common understanding" [*vulgäre Zeitverständnis*]. That is, based upon his interpretation of Bergson's argument against the Kantian conception of time, Heidegger argues that Bergson fails to grasp time in terms of the "horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being" and does not have what he calls the "original explication of time" [*ursprünglichen Explikation der Zeit*].⁹⁵

However, having surveyed Bergson's descriptions of Kantian space and time, would it be appropriate to interpret Bergson's criticism in such a way? This is an important question that we must clear it out before we proceed further; an interpretation of Bergson's claim that "time is space" will determine towards which Kantian doctrine Bergson is directing his criticism and this will in turn eventually specify the profile of what Bergson retrieves and incorporates as his positive conception of time. In other words, depending upon how we understand the specific claim he makes upon Kantian time, we will have a different outlook regarding exactly in what realm of questioning Bergsonian conception of time belongs.

If Heidegger's interpretation is right, what Bergson problematizes through claiming that "time is space" is merely the *order of primacy* between space and

⁹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p.17.

time; this means that the very homogeneity of the forms of intuition itself is rather kept intact. In this way, one can hardly say that Bergson offers an alternative conception of time to that of Kant's or that his philosophy deepens the fundamental understanding of time beyond what he criticizes. More specifically, if we were to concede that Bergson in fact does not go beyond the "common understanding" of time that persists since the time of Aristotle, as Heidegger argues, this would be to accept the view that Bergson is, after all, a *naïve metaphysician* in the sense that Marxists traditionally describe. What Heidegger seeks through problematizing time in terms of the "horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being" is to disclose and to think the problem of time as the "originality of the origin of metaphysics."⁹⁶ That is, by moving beyond the ordinary conception of time as the succession of the "now" and instead putting forth the "original explication" of time, Heidegger seeks to think time as that which determines the inner possibility of metaphysics as such.⁹⁷ Then, a failure to grasp time in this "original" way, which is precisely what Heidegger accuses Bergson of, is to be "alienated" from the very origin of metaphysics as such and, hence, to be unwittingly entangled within the world that is already conditioned by time.⁹⁸ Just like an "ideological philosophy" that is unable to critique its own origin in material history, the failure to grasp time as the origin of metaphysics leads to the utter inability to put forth a self-critique.

Contrary to Heidegger's argument however, the above survey clearly suggests that what is meant by Bergson's claim of "time is space" cannot be understood in terms of a mere "opposition" to the Kantian "space is time". The core part of what Bergson means by "time is space" is that both time and space fall under the category of space or under the genre of "homogeneity" and that the real time or duration is rather "heterogeneity". That is, Bergson is not at all saying that the real time and space are to be placed within the same genus. What Bergson attempts to achieve through saying that "time is space" is not a mere reversal of the order between space and time considered within the same genus, but rather to point out that the Kantian space and time are *both* the equivalent of the form of juxtaposition and that the real time (*i.e.* duration or succession without mutual

⁹⁶ Heidegger, M., ([1973] 1997). *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. R. Taft. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press. p.2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p.166.

externality) rather differs in kind from the former. For Bergson, time is space *but real time is in fact not space*. Here, we must take the words “homogeneity” and “heterogeneity” in their etymological senses in order to grasp Bergson’s argument. “Homogeneous” means having the *same origin* and “heterogeneous” is to have the *different origin*. Thus, if space and time are said to be homogeneous, this means that they belong to the same *genus* or *kind* or that they *originate* from the same source. On the other hand, if real time or duration is said to be “heterogeneous”, this means that it has a different origin with respect to *both* space and time. In short, by saying that “time is space”, Bergson is drawing a new line of distinction between space and time in a way that differs from how Kant draws it (see *Diagram 2* below). What Bergson aims to achieve through characterizing both Kantian space and time as homogeneous is to come up with a new way of distinguishing between space and time in a much more fundamental fashion. As we saw, Kant distinguishes the difference between space and time, or between exteriority and interiority, within the doctrine of transcendental aesthetic (Line A). Kant then supposes that both fall under the same genus since time is said to be the form of appearance generally. This is tantamount to saying that “space is time” since space rather belongs to the same genus as time or that it *is* time.

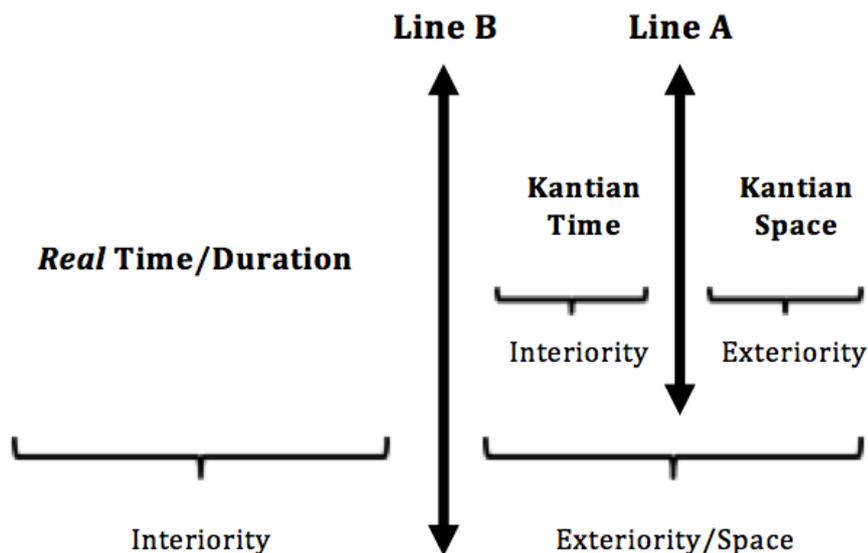


Diagram 2

By saying that “time is space”, Bergson recognizes the homogeneity of Kantian space and time but instead designates the whole genus of time as “space”/exteriority and draws a new line (Line B). “Time is space” therefore does

not mean the reverse of “space is time” or that the truth of time is space. Instead, the “homogeneity” of space belongs to the whole genus of time and real time is that which belongs *outside* the former; hence, it is that which *transcends* the Kantian *a priori* form of intuition altogether. It is therefore clear that Bergson’s argument does not amount to suggesting a mere opposite of Kant’s position. On the contrary, Bergson is pointing towards a wholly different way of conceiving time that does not belong to Kantian doctrine of transcendental aesthetic.

We are now in a better position to re-state our question. We are overall interested in finding out to what aspect of the Kantian doctrine the “expression” or the “illegitimate translation” of time with space that Bergson refers. The above analysis at least gives us insight into what it is *not* and this negative knowledge can guide us towards the direction we must turn in order to locate the procedure of “expression” within the context of Kant’s philosophy. By claiming that Kant confuses time with space, Bergson is not arguing that Kantian time is expressed in Kantian space or that Kant confuses the order of primacy between space and time within the strict confines of the transcendental aesthetic. Rather, the “expression” of time with space means that the purely heterogeneous movement of the *real* time or duration gets expressed in the homogeneous form of time as a fourth dimension of space.

We may recall that Bergson states in the conclusion to *Time and Free Will* that Kantian time is space because real time gets expressed in space. There are two distinct components to this argument: one is that Kantian time is space – this means, as we have just examined above, that the whole territory of what Kant explains as time or the *a priori* form of intuition generally falls under the category of space or homogeneity. The second component is that Bergson’s argument locates the *cause* of this homogeneity of time in the “expression” of time with space. It is apparent that Bergson is not pointing towards the same thing by saying that “time is space” and that “time is expressed in space”. In the first, “time” refers to the Kantian time; in the second, it refers to *real* time or duration which is rather missing in Kant’s doctrine. To put it differently, the “time” which allegedly gets expressed in “space” in Bergson’s argument refers to the form of interiority that is *other than* or even *prior to* what Kant refers to by the same term. As we can see from the above diagram, the “time” of Bergson resides outside the proper problematic of Kant’s transcendental aesthetic and it points out not only *what gets*

expressed but also *what gets lost* through taking up the *a priori* form of time. For the sake of convenience and clarity, we can follow Heidegger's vocabulary and call what Bergson refers to as time "*Ur-time*."⁹⁹ For now, the only thing we can say about *ur-time* is that its proper domain is outside the "ordinary conception of time" as the sequence of "nows" and that an examination of the doctrine of transcendental aesthetic alone would not give us any positive conception of it. That is, what we can know about *ur-time* from the perspective of the transcendental aesthetic is that it is the pure *Beyond/Other* and that any positive insight into the nature of what is being talked about cannot be gained through time.

Without explicitly inquiring into the nature of *ur-time* itself as of yet, however, we now have a clearer idea regarding where we should look within Kant's philosophy in order to find out about the operation of "expression". What Bergson is pointing out by placing emphasis on the expression or the *confusion* of time and space is not between time and space within transcendental aesthetic but rather between *ur-time* and time. The confusion is hence between what gets expressed by time and what expresses it through a determinate form of time (see *Diagram 3*). In truth, there is no confusion between the two in Kant's writings and Bergson's argument cannot be understood as a simple polemic against Kant. On the contrary, it can rather be seen as an original reading of the role of Kant's conception of time with respect to the paradox of free will. We may notice, for instance, within the quotation from the conclusion of *Time and Free Will* that we cited earlier ("*The Error of Kant*"), that Bergson singles out the shortcomings of Kant's conception of time as "homogeneous" on the ground that it is insufficient to support a viable conception of free will. This is a testimony to the fact that Bergson

⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Logic*, p.176, p.222. We borrow the term "ur-time" from Heidegger's 1925-26 lecture course. Although it is our contention that Bergson's influence can strongly be felt in Heidegger's own problematisation of *ur-time*, Heidegger himself argues that Bergson overall did not successfully reach towards the phenomenon of *ur-time* since duration is still understood as "succession". For us, this argument is unconvincing. Heidegger forcefully inserts the characteristic of spatialized time into the qualitative succession of duration but to do so is to confuse the difference between duration and time. This is odd since Heidegger is perhaps the only reader of Bergson who clearly sees that time and duration are distinct from one another and his own problematisation of time with respect to ontological difference makes little sense without the fundamental distinction between time and duration. This polemic is then re-asserted in the famous footnote at the end of *Being and Time*. Bergson's concept of duration is ultimately treated as a correlate of what he calls the "ordinary conception of time" as the sequence of "nows" along with Hegel's conception of time. Again, this is the image of time that only applies to spatialized time and it is not at all applicable to duration.

is not taking issue with Kant's conception of time upon the same ground as Kant. What is actually problematized by pointing out that Kantian time is the expression of space is the way in which the concept of time is set up within Kant's whole system of philosophy with respect to the paradox of free will.

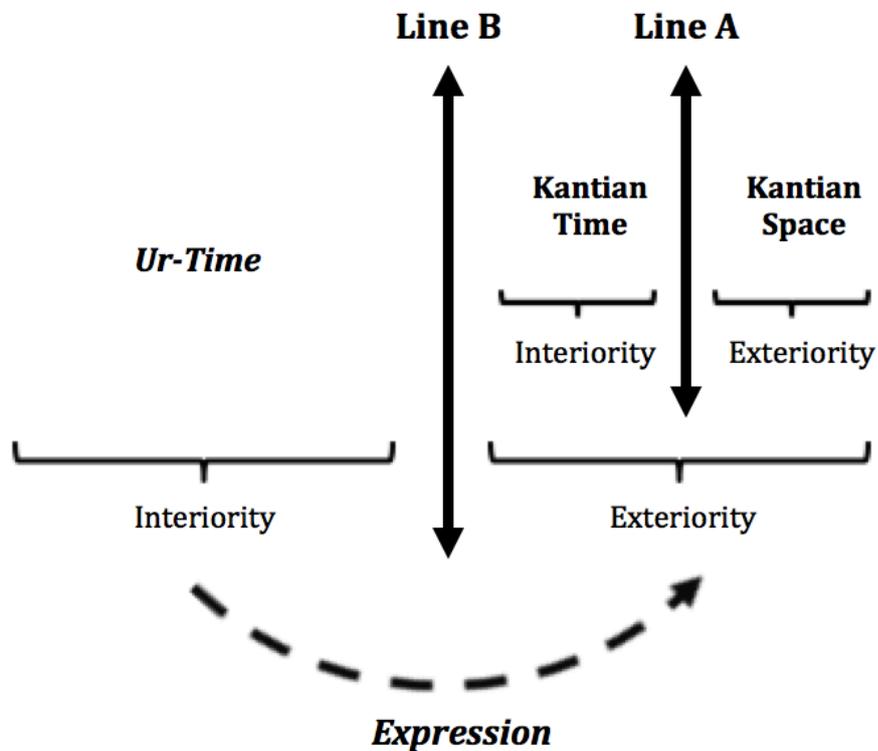


Diagram 3

For Kant, establishing the concept of freedom is not at all the aim of transcendental aesthetic. If anything, its purpose is to demarcate the proper territory of the “metaphysics of nature” and also to clearly establish its difference from the territory of the “metaphysics of morals”.¹⁰⁰ While the guiding motif of the former is the concept of *nature*, which by definition abides by the laws of necessity, the latter is established upon the idea of *freedom* and this concerns the view of the world in terms of “what ought to be”.¹⁰¹ Transcendental aesthetic plays an essential role in this demarcation between the two heterogeneous systems of reason since the *a priori* form of time conceived as the “condition of appearance generally” functions as the dividing line between the *phenomenal* world and the *noumenal* world. If Kant's conception of time has any contribution towards the establishment of the concept of freedom, it only does so negatively since freedom

¹⁰⁰ CPR A841/B870.

¹⁰¹ CPR A840/B868.

is ultimately defined as that which transcends the territory of temporary conditioned world of phenomena.

Thus, Bergson's claim that Kant confuses time and space can rather be seen as a commentary upon how free will, which is the real time for Bergson, is relegated to the supra-sensuous realm of pure intelligibility and turns into the merely intelligible *Other*. Setting aside how Bergson puts it, we need to repeat here that there is no real confusion here for Kant since it is the explicit intention of the transcendental aesthetic to demarcate the difference between the Soul as opposed to the mere appearance of it and this is the equivalent of making the distinction between duration and spatialized time in Bergson's vocabulary. As soon as Kant opens the exposition of transcendental aesthetic, he inserts the following statement:

Although inner sense provides no intuition of the soul itself as an object, yet there is a determinate form under which alone we can intuit the soul's inner state. Thus everything belonging to our inner determinations is presented in relation to time.¹⁰²

Kant therefore makes it clear that what he conceives as time is not the "soul itself" [*Seele selbst*] but rather the *determinate form* [*bestimmte Form*] through which the soul appears to us in its representation. Furthermore, at the end of the transcendental aesthetic, Kant states:

Our kind of intuition is called sensible because it is not *original* [*ursprünglich*]. I.e., it is not such that through this intuition itself the existence of its object is given (the latter being a kind of intuition that, as far as we can see, can only belong to the original being [*Ur-wesen*]).¹⁰³

Here, it is more than evident that it is Kant's original argument that the intuition of the Self through the form of time is not the intuition of ur-time (*i.e.* that which can only be intuited by God, the "Ur-wesen"). That is, Bergson's claim is more of a re-interpretation of Kant's position than a contestation. Of course, Kant does not conceive of the "Soul itself" as real time or as the sensuous datum of intuition and hence this is a unique contribution made exclusively by Bergson *contra* Kant. Ultimately, Bergson seeks to capture *what gets lost* through the temporal

¹⁰² CPR A23/B37.

¹⁰³ CPR B72.

determination, *i.e. ur-time* or duration as the “soul itself”, and Kant makes it quite clear that such a thing is not at all available for any sensuous experience of consciousness. The fundamental position that supports the very core of Bergson’s philosophy as a whole is to put forth the anti-Kantian argument that the Absolute Self is immediately given *via* a superior form of sensuous intuition. That is, by invoking the difference in kind between *ur-time* and time and by calling the former the *real* time, Bergson seeks to throw light upon the positive being-there of the *Other of Time* in terms of its non-Ideal or sensuous presence to consciousness, an aspect that we will explore in depth within Part II. For us, this argument is what qualifies Bergson’s philosophy as a materialist philosophy in contradistinction to Kantian and the post-Kantian idealism since the Soul or the Absolute Self is not relegated to the height of the Idea of Reason but treated as what is actually given within sensuous/material intuition.

However, without dismissing Bergson’s novel philosophical position in any way, we can see that the very form of the distinction between duration and time is itself derived from Kant’s philosophy. This is indicative of the fact that Bergson’s philosophical position is rather a modification of the former and it is more of a “negation without contradiction” of the former in the same way that materialism is the non-reductive reversal of idealism.¹⁰⁴ The true meaning of Bergson’s reproach of Kant can thus not be understood if one fails to see Bergson’s deep indebtedness to Kant beyond the seeming confrontation. Having said this, the task for us now is to find out to what distinct procedure Bergson refers by the “expression” of time with space within Kant’s philosophy. In order to find out about the positive existence and the precise nature of the false time for Bergson, we must further investigate into Bergson’s reading of Kant so that we can point out to what Kantian doctrine does the operation of “illegitimate translation” ultimately corresponds. If *ur-time* gets expressed in time, there must be the third thing that assists the procedure of determining the form of time and this operation can be identified as what Bergson refers to as the “expression” of time with space.

5. Schematism: Expression of Ur-Time with Time

¹⁰⁴ Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, p.31.

With the above clarification in mind, let us go back to Bergson's descriptions of the homogeneity of Kantian space and time. If, as we clarified above, Bergson's criticism of Kant is not directed towards the conception of time within the transcendental aesthetic *per se*, why does Bergson still claim that Kantian time involves an "illegitimate translation"? Again, Bergson's contestation essentially focuses upon how Kantian space and time are both equivalent to a form of juxtaposition and upon how this in turn implies that they are subordinated under the idea of number. If for Bergson space and time are already subordinated under the idea of number, this is not because the latter stems from the physical experience but because those forms abide by the logical necessity of laws of thought. Here, although Bergson does not make it explicit in any of his major writings, it is more than plausible to assume that he is making a reference to the third thing that *a priori* mediates the relationship between intuition and concept, namely, the Kantian doctrine of Schematism. We can see Bergson's allusion to this doctrine when he states:

For their co-existence to give rise to space, there must be an act of the mind which takes them in all at the same time and sets them in juxtaposition: this act *sui generis* very much resembles what Kant calls an *a priori* form of sensibility. If we seek to characterize this act, we see that it consists essentially in the intuition, *or rather the conception* of an empty homogeneous milieu.¹⁰⁵

Bergson boldly states that Kant's intuition of time is not an intuition at all but "rather the conception" due to what he calls the "*sui generis*" act.¹⁰⁶ Here, we must understand that by "conception", Bergson is referring to that which bears this name strictly within the framework of Kant's philosophy, which is *spontaneity*. This in turn indicates that he is alluding to a higher operation that determines the form of time prior to its springing-forth.

In order to understand the particular nature of Bergson's argument, let us examine what "conception" specifically means for Kant. At the beginning of the transcendental logic, Kant states:

Our cognition arises from two basic sources of the mind. The first is to receive presentations (and is our receptivity for impressions); the second is our ability to cognize an object through presentations (and is the

¹⁰⁵ TFW 94-95/64. Translation modified.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

spontaneity of concepts). Through receptivity, an object is *given* to us; through spontaneity an object is *thought* in relation to that presentation (which is a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts, therefore, constitute the elements of all our cognition. Hence neither concepts without an intuition corresponding to them in some way or other, nor intuition without concepts can yield cognition. Both intuition and concepts are either pure or empirical.¹⁰⁷

Kant overall proposes that receptivity and spontaneity, or intuition and conception, are the “two basic sources of the mind” [*Grundquellen des Gemüts*]. That is, Kant defines any empirical cognition to be made up of both receptivity and spontaneity *a priori* and he insists that those two sources are distinct from one another and “cannot exchange their functions”.¹⁰⁸ In his lecture course, Bergson succinctly describes that this irreducibly double source of cognition indicates that every object of knowledge for Kant is “the fold” between intuition and concept or between how we receive and how we spontaneously act upon what we receive.¹⁰⁹ Kant however supposes that the empirical unity of the two sources can be dissociated through “pure cognition” and they can be examined independently from experience in their respective transcendental characteristics.¹¹⁰ The results of this method of pure cognition are the two separate pure “elements” that Kant presents under the doctrines of transcendental aesthetic and transcendental logic.

Going back to Bergson’s argument, his claim is that what Kant conceives as the pure form of receptivity is rather the conception or spontaneity. At bottom, the argument pertaining to the “illegitimate translation” can be seen as directed towards this illegitimate confluence between receptivity and spontaneity: while Kant conceives of time as the pure form of receptivity, for Bergson it is not receptivity at all but rather an illegitimate translation of receptivity in terms of spontaneity. How can we make sense of this argument within the context of Kant’s own philosophy given that Kant clearly distinguishes receptivity and spontaneity? As we have clarified above, when Bergson says that “time is space”, this means that Kantian time is the expression of ur-time through the determinate form of time. If this is in fact the case, Bergson’s claim that Kantian receptivity is spontaneity points towards the distinct procedure that determines the determinate form of

¹⁰⁷ CPR A50/B74.

¹⁰⁸ CPR A51/B75.

¹⁰⁹ Bergson, H., (1995). *Cours III*. Paris: PUF. p.133.

¹¹⁰ CPR B2-B3.

time as spontaneity prior to its constitution. The question is: to what does this procedure correspond in Kant's own philosophy? Once we identify this particular doctrine within Kant's philosophy that is responsible for the transition of ur-time into time, this will give us insight into which aspect Bergson ultimately targets his criticism of Kantian time as the "illegitimate translation". After this clarification is in place, we can find out what the specific field of questioning Bergson's positive theory of time is couched.

In a nutshell, by the "expression" of time with space, Bergson is rather making a commentary upon how the determinate form of time is itself determined *a priori* through the functioning of the faculty of judgment that sits in-between ur-time and time (see, *Diagram 4*).

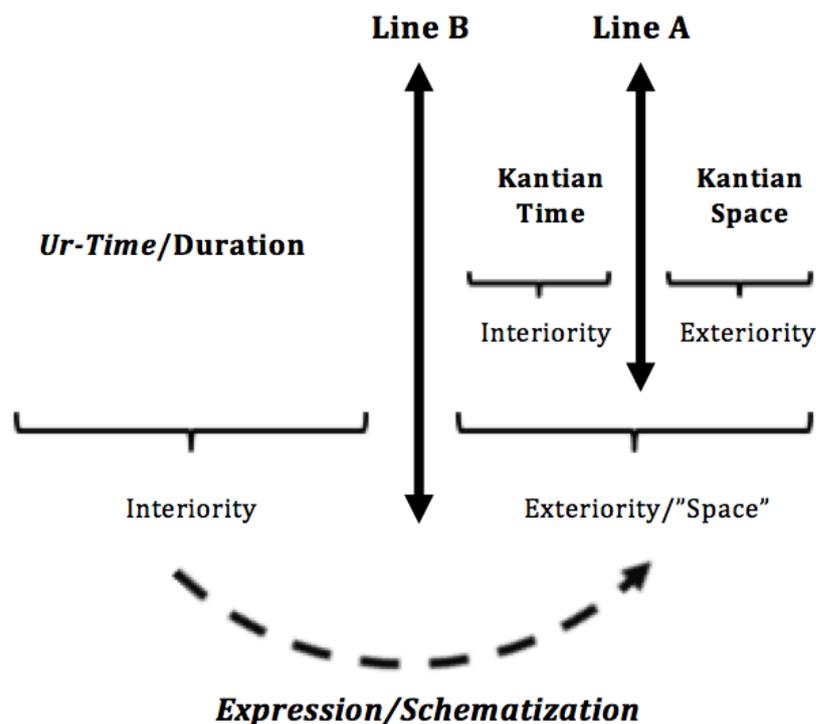


Diagram 4

In *Book II* of the transcendental logic, Kant expounds upon his doctrine of the faculty of judgment as the "third" that *a priori* mediates the unity between receptivity and spontaneity. Kant asks, if one supposes that the two sources of cognition are distinct from one another transcendently:

How, then, can an intuition be subsumed under a category, and hence how can a category be *applied* to appearances – since surely no one will say that

a category (e.g., causality) can also be intuited through senses and is contained in appearances?¹¹¹

Despite of the difference in kind between receptivity and spontaneity, Kant argues that “the presentation of the object must be homogeneous with the concept” in order for an empirical cognition to be possible in the first place.¹¹² As we noted, Kant supposes that every empirical cognition is made up of receptivity and spontaneity as the two distinct sources of the mind. However, Kant further notes that this heterogeneity of the two sources cannot itself produce a unified empirical cognition unless what is received through intuition can be “subsumed” under the spontaneous categories and the categories can be “applied” to intuition in a way that the possibility of the congruence between the two sources are established *a priori* by the third faculty of judgment. Insofar as receptivity and spontaneity are two heterogeneous sources of the mind that are independent from one another, the unity between the two in turn cannot be derived from either the power of intuition or from that of conception exclusively. There must therefore be a third kind of power that is homogeneous with both of them and makes their unity possible *a priori*.¹¹³

The rationale behind Bergson’s argument thus lies within Kant’s doctrine of the faculty of judgment. Bergson’s claim is that the Kantian conception of time is not pure receptivity but rather already translated into the form of spontaneity due to the mediating faculty of judgment that determines it *with respect to the categories of understanding*. We may recall here that Bergson argues that what Kant conceives as the form of succession is rather the form of juxtaposition that implies the idea of number and that the real form of succession rather differs in kind from the former. The procedure of “illegitimate translation” that assists the transition from the real succession to the form of juxtaposition, or from ur-time to time, is none other than the faculty of judgment, which refers to the procedure of *a priori* subsumption of time under the spontaneous categories through the *schematism of understanding*. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant expounds upon the function of the faculty of judgment in terms of the “transcendental schema” and

¹¹¹ CPR A137/B176.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ CPR A138/B177.

calls it “a transcendental time determination” [*transzendente Zeitbestimmung*].¹¹⁴ Insofar as judgment is the third that mediates the relationship between receptivity and spontaneity, the schema of imagination is “both *intellectual* on the one hand and *sensible* on the other hand”.¹¹⁵ Resembling an abstract diagram that resides within “the depth of the human soul”, it is that “through which, and according to which, images become possible in the first place.”¹¹⁶ As opposed to the understanding, which is the doctrine that expounds upon the faculty of rules, judgment is the faculty to “subsume under rules”.¹¹⁷ Kant states: “whenever an object is subsumed under a concept, the presentation of the object must be homogeneous with the concept.”¹¹⁸ That is, although time is said to be the pure form of receptivity that generally has its source solely within intuition and does not stem from the spontaneous categories of understanding, the form of intuition itself is however seen as *a priori* congruent with the spontaneous categories due to the schematism of imagination that determines it towards the direction of spontaneity. Although receptivity and spontaneity are said to be heterogeneous, unless the categories can be applied to intuition and the latter be subsumed under the former, there would be no empirical synthesis between the two. In other words, the schema of imagination is precisely what determines the form of receptivity and hence guarantees the unity of sensibility and spontaneity *a priori*.

We are now in a better place to understand Bergson’s polemic against Kantian conception of time. What Bergson calls the “illegitimate translation” or “expression” of time with space refers to the function of the faculty of judgment that schematizes the pure receptivity of ur-time into the determinate form of time that is in congruence with the spontaneous categories. This procedure is said to be “illegitimate” since the form of intuition that is *a priori* mediated by the schematism of understanding is not pure receptivity but rather transfigured for the benefit of the spontaneous understanding. While spontaneity and receptivity are posited as distinct, imagination, in itself being “blind” and “secret”, is said to function in a way to *a priori* intervene upon intuition by inter-mixing conceptual understanding in it. The whole rationale behind Bergson’s assertion that the Kantian time is space lies in this crucial point. The homogeneity of space and time

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ CPR A141-142/B180-181.

¹¹⁷ CPR A132/B171.

¹¹⁸ CPR A137/B176.

is not due to the original homogeneity of the succession/duration but to the intervention by the spontaneous form of understanding made possible by the *a priori* function of the faculty of judgment.

Indeed, Kant begins the exposition of transcendental aesthetic with the following remark:

In whatever way and by whatever means a cognition may refer to objects, still *intuition* is that by which a cognition refers to objects directly, and at which all thought aims as a means.¹¹⁹

That is, insofar as intuition and thinking are said to be the “two sources of the mind”, thinking shall be seen as directed towards intuition/receptivity – spontaneity remains that which acts upon what is received through receptivity. Indeed, time is said to be the “pure” form of intuition and hence the doctrine of transcendental aesthetic supposedly delivers to us the form of intuition that is free from any empirical admixtures from the form of spontaneity. If this is the case, every thinking shall be a thinking *about* something that is received by intuition and the spontaneous activity of thinking shall be seen as that which is *attentive towards* and hence *guided by* intuition. As we saw, however, this is not at all the case for Kant. The supposed “purity” of the receptivity turns out to be not so true. Rather, the so-called pure form of receptivity is *a priori determined* by the faculty of judgment towards the direction of the categories of the understanding and hence it “is” or *becomes* the form of spontaneity. Although receptivity and spontaneity are said to be distinct, Kant separates the two only insofar as they are *a priori* unified by the faculty of judgment; in short, the pure form of receptivity can only be what it is insofar as it is subsumed under spontaneous categories due to the *a priori* mediation by imagination. In this way, thinking is not subservient to intuition but it is intuition that is subordinated to thinking. That is, before one thinks of an object of intuition, the object is delivered over to thought in a way that is already homogeneous with it and we are only capable of receiving what we are capable of thinking. In this sense, the pure form of receptivity is not the capacity to present the real states of things but only what the conceptual spontaneity allows to be

¹¹⁹ CPR A19/B33.

visible, namely, appearances conditioned in accordance with the necessary laws of nature.

Overall, Bergson's contestation of the Kantian conception of time stems from the role that time plays with respect to the possibility of free will. Since time is the form of self-intuition, the *a priori* unity between intuition and conception ultimately means that one's self-intuition is only possible through the form that is already mediated through the influence coming from spontaneous thinking. To put it differently, the only manner through which the Self appears to itself is within a form of time *a priori* subordinated to the necessary laws of nature. From the standpoint of sensuous intuition, the absolute and free Self then disappears into the suprasensuous *Beyond* or the *Other World*. The very condition of possibility of human freedom is therefore relegated to the realm of *noumena* that is unavailable to our worldly senses. Hence Bergson's statement that "the paradoxes of the Eleatics [are] the problem of free will."¹²⁰ In order to access real intuition or real time, we must engage in an effort to re-discover it beneath the layer, so to speak, of conceptual understanding that covers it in the case of our ordinary imagination. Bergson's concept of duration, which is said to be *pure heterogeneity* "without any affiliation to number", is formulated precisely in order to fill this gap we have inherited from Kant.¹²¹

6. Time, Dialectic and History: The Error of Marxist's Criticism of Bergson

As we have pointed out earlier, Bergson has been the favorite target of Marxist criticism and the latter (as it is evinced by Horkheimer and Benjamin's commentaries we have shown in the introduction to Part I) traditionally points out Bergson's lack of capacity to negate ideological consciousness. More specifically, as Horkheimer argues, such a view stems from a particular reading of the concept of duration that allegedly "denies time in that it elevates it to a metaphysical principle".¹²² Having examined Bergson's argument, can we say that such a reading

¹²⁰ TFW 74/51.

¹²¹ TFW 104/70.

¹²² Horkheimer, *On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time*, p.10.

captures the nature of the relationship between duration and the Kantian conception of time? In a nutshell, the Marxist criticism takes place through looking at duration as the result of the historical development of the Spirit that negates itself *within* time. Put differently, even though duration is said to be heterogeneous and hence outside of time, it is nonetheless seen as a new expression of time that remains within time. Here, to assert that duration is “within” time is the crucial aspect of Marxist criticism since this is where the claim upon Bergson’s naïve metaphysics ultimately stems from. If duration is within time, this means that it is a contingent result of time’s *historicity* and hence it is not something that is in-itself and free from the external forces of determination.

However, having surveyed Bergson’s argument vis-à-vis Kantian time, it has become apparent that this is an obvious misreading. We have pointed out that duration is said to be “heterogeneous” from time and this essentially means that duration and time are posited together and that their difference cannot be reduced in terms of their difference “in time” since this would violate the heterogeneity of duration. If duration were to be seen as a new expression of time, this would entail the subsumption of the difference between time and duration in terms the homogeneity of time and would therefore entail giving up the whole concept of duration. It is clear then that Marxist criticism does not grasp duration in its heterogeneity and hence does not know what it is. The truth is that, since duration is what it is because it is *not* time and since this very definition strictly prohibits duration to be placed within time, duration cannot be seen as the historically contingent “metaphysical principle” that sprang up within time. That is, the being of duration must be seen as that which remains what it is despite of the existence of time that translates it within itself; its heterogeneity is that which belongs to duration which is outside time.

Given the above, the mistake of the Marxist criticism resides in their practical unwillingness to treat Bergson as a materialist philosopher and hence in their choice to not scrutinize Bergson’s philosophy on the level of “theory”. When looking at Bergson, what Marxist criticism sees is merely the phenomenon of the dialectic – the dialectic of Bergson itself is not called into question. What we find for instance in Horkheimer’s criticism is not a reading of Bergson in terms of the latter’s unique dialectical logic but only the *appearance of Bergson* within the dialectical movement of the history of the Spirit from the standpoint of materialist

logic. Of course, it is more than possible to critique any claims upon the Absolute through the historicist method and such criticism would certainly produce a correct display of materialist logic. Yet, in this way, what is read is *a priori* subsumed under the already-accepted form of logic and the very possibility of explicitly thinking about logic itself through Bergson's thought is ruled out also *a priori*. If we were to actually read Bergson's philosophy in relation to the question of materialist dialectic, what we must pay attention to is not simply the historicity of Bergson's philosophy. We must also ask whether Bergson's philosophy allows for a materialist conception of history. The question for us is therefore not how to criticize Bergson but to inquire into what the method of thinking consists of for Bergson. By doing this, we can disclose through what sort of logic the misreading of Bergson takes place and examine whether the same movement can be produced out of Bergson's own philosophy. Indeed, any praxis of critique takes place by taking up a particular theoretical form and the knowledge of the latter can be of value for our own explication of the Bergsonian dialectic.

The question for us is, can Bergson's philosophy produce the positive theory of history and think of the determinateness of time itself? As we stated above, time is the *a priori* form through which ur-time or duration appears to us and hence it is the determinate form of time that is responsible for making the ur-time *transcendent* with respect to sensuous intuition. The rationale behind the Marxist criticism that Bergson is a naïve metaphysician lies in this reading of duration "as" time that renders the Absolute Self transcendent despite of his opposition against Kant for doing the same. If we strip down the form of this criticism to its basic movement, it consists in saying the following: duration is the negation of time and hence it "is" time. Here, although coming from a different route of reasoning, the way in which Horkheimer reads Bergson's argument against Kant comes extremely close to Heidegger's abovementioned interpretation. Just like Heidegger who treats Bergson's criticism as the mere "opposite" of Kant's original position, Horkheimer interprets duration as a mere "denial of time" that ends up constituting a new form of time that again makes the Absolute Self transcendent since duration "is" time. This is to see the concept of duration as the product of *negation*, which is the internal differentiation of time that produces itself through simultaneously unmaking and making itself. In the eyes of Horkheimer and Heidegger, Bergson's theory is "vulgar" since the concept of

duration is regarded as the negation of time *within time* and hence it “is” time. In both cases, the relationship between duration and time is fundamentally misunderstood and the heterogeneity of duration is subordinated under a dialectical movement that only belongs to the side of time, namely, the movement of negation. Duration is thus seen as a mere historical instance of time that leaves the problem of time’s determinateness unthought. As a result, both single out Bergson’s supposed inability to grasp time in terms of the problem of its historicity and the incapacity thereof to critique metaphysics from the standpoint of its historical determinateness.

Within this very criticism, we can clearly see that what is at play is the negative movement of dialectic. Bergson’s concept of duration, which is the very core of his philosophy as a whole, is treated as a historically contingent expression of time that has come into being out of the dialectical movement of the Spirit since duration “is” time even though it negates time. The historical criticism of the “metaphysical” largely consists in employing this dialectical movement as its method that renders any concepts of the Absolute as that which is determined by time’s self-negation. If duration “is” time, this means that the other of time is time or that which is external to time is rather merely within time. That is, the negation of time is seen as the equivalent of time’s self-determination and time is seen as that which determines itself through its *negativity*. The copula “is” here signifies the becoming of time that gives birth to itself through becoming other than itself *within itself*.

Now, the question for us is whether Bergson’s philosophy is itself capable of thinking this negativity of time and incorporating it within his method of intuition. We have already stated that to treat duration *as* time is an obvious misreading since the heterogeneity of duration prohibits such a treatment by definition. However, the question that we are posing here is whether Bergson’s own philosophy is capable of thinking about the very form through which this misreading of duration itself takes place. Thus, the direction that we are looking to take is not towards that of duration but rather towards time since what we are interested is Bergson’s own thought upon time’s differentiation through its negativity. As we will show in the next chapter, Bergson’s criticism of Kantian time does not stop at the point where time is said to be the illegitimate translation of duration. Bergson in fact goes further and engages in what can be called the

“retrieval” of Kantian time by problematizing its historical determinateness from a novel point of view.

As we intend to show, unlike how traditional Marxist critics describe it, the very method of criticism that they themselves utilize is actually present within Bergson’s own philosophy. The error of Marxist criticism is therefore twofold. First, by misinterpreting duration *as* time, the heterogeneity of duration is overlooked. Second, since duration is mistaken as time, the question regarding the theory of time within Bergson’s own thought is not explicitly posited. More specifically, by looking at Bergson’s philosophy as a particular instance of the historical expression of the Spirit, the concept of history within Bergson’s philosophy is itself left unexplored. The heterogeneity of duration and time means that duration differs in kind from time and hence that it cannot be subsumed under the negative movement of time. Yet it also means that the heterogeneity of duration does not cancel out the homogeneity of time and that the particular being of the latter can also be thought without destroying the ahistorical being of duration. As we stated earlier, to say that Achilles and the tortoise differ in kind does not mean that either one of them *is* and the other *is not*. Rather, both of them in fact *are* and Bergson’s philosophy rather contains both of them within itself.

Chapter 2.

Bergson's Retrieval of Time

1. Preliminary Conception of the Retrieval in *Time and Free Will*

a. The Second Self

Our exposition in chapter 1 has showed that Bergson's confrontation of the Kantian conception of time in *Time and Free Will* primarily stems from the particular role time plays vis-à-vis the paradox of free will. More specifically, we focused on how the Kantian conception of time is already subsumed under the categories of the understanding due to the *a priori* intervention of the faculty of judgment and how this inevitably makes pure receptivity transcendent. Of course, any investigation of Bergson's philosophy as a whole cannot be complete without examining the definite nature of the intuition of duration since it is through the unique conception of the latter that Bergson aims to differentiate his own philosophy from Kant's. In other words, the central axis of Bergson's overall philosophy revolves around the concept of duration that captures pure receptivity, or the immediate data of consciousness. By extension, the polemic against the Kantian conception of time constitutes merely a negative aspect with respect to the positivity of duration.

However, just because time constitutes the negative image, so to speak, of duration, this does not mean that the problem of time is therefore neglected or that Bergson's theory of intuition can be understood as something that neglects the negativity of time. On the contrary, if time is negative vis-à-vis duration, it is because Bergson has thought of time as a real component of intuition and has positively produced a concept of the negativity of time as that which belongs to it. Indeed, when one surveys Bergson's philosophy, it is easy to see that time takes up a negative position since it occupies the position of *false* time as opposed to the *real* time of duration. This configuration has given rise to the mistaken view that Bergson is staging a confrontation, as Bertrand Russell has put it, between the

intuition of time versus the intuition of duration mimicking the opposition between “the good” and “the bad” as if it were a moralistic children’s tale.¹²³ However, such a view fundamentally misunderstands the meaning of Bergson’s dualism. Contrary to Russell’s interpretation, Bergson’s dualism is not aiming to destroy the legitimacy of time nor is it arguing that duration as opposed to time is either “good” or “bad”. Instead of entering into a confrontational and mutually cancelling relationship, both time and duration are held within intuition, which contains the distinct realities of both the numeric and the non-numeric experience of consciousness. In order to uncover the genuinely critical dimension of Bergsonian philosophy, we shall continue to focus on the ways in which Kantian time is further dealt with. Rather than stopping short at proposing a one-sided denial of time through the concept of duration, Bergson’s theory of intuition includes what can be called a *retrieval of time* that goes back to and further extends Kant’s original doctrine of the determinate form of time towards a new *realist* direction.¹²⁴

After putting forth the polemic against Kantian time in the chapter 2 of *Time and Free Will*, Bergson states:

mark that the intuition of a homogeneous space is already a step towards social life. [...] Our tendency to form a clear picture of this externality of things and the homogeneity of their medium is the same as the impulse which leads us to live in common and to speak. But, in proportion to as the conditions of social life are more completely realized, the current which carries our conscious states from within outwards is strengthened; little by little these states are made into objects or things; they break off not only from one another, but from ourselves. Henceforth we no longer perceive them except in the homogenous milieu [...]. Thus a second self is formed which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another and easily expressed in words.¹²⁵

Here, one notices a sudden change of scenery with respect to how time has been previously treated as *false* relatively to duration. Whereas Kantian time was

¹²³ Russell, *Philosophy of Bergson*. p.324.

¹²⁴ The notion of “retrieval” is borrowed from Heidegger. He describes the project of *Being and Time* as the retrieval/repetition [*Wiederholung*] of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* which aims at “the going-back into the finitude in human beings” so that “temporality as transcendental primal structure becomes visible.” See Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. p.169. §44.

¹²⁵ TFW 138/91-92.

hitherto spoken of as the form that distorts the immediate intuition of the self, it is now treated as that which belongs to “a second self that covers over the first”. Similarly, the immediate givenness of duration is now said to break off from itself and to turn into something “we no longer perceive” except in time. What changes within this configuration is the particularity of the voice through which the subjectivity of the “we” is articulated in relation to duration and time. When Bergson argues that duration is the *real* time, it is certainly within the intuition of duration that the selfhood of the “we” is seen to reside. However, in direct opposition to identifying the subject with duration, Bergson also conceives of another subjective position by saying that this “we” within duration gets displaced from itself and becomes established as the *second self* that resides within time.

For us, this crucial change in perspective is a testimony to the fact the aspect of duration does not exhaust Bergson’s theory of intuition. Rather, apart from duration, Bergson’s theory of intuition must be seen as containing within it an explicit conception of time as its distinct component. Contrary to how it is traditionally dealt with, the Bergsonian account of intuition is not the movement of abandoning the determinate form of time and merging with the Absolute Self (as a simple anti-Kantianism that stresses its *ahistoricism*). Although this is true with respect to duration as it comprises one half of the logic of intuition as a whole, we must also acknowledge that Bergson’s theory of intuition accounts for and contains within itself the opposite movement that goes from duration to time as a distinct type of dialectical movement. In comparison to the first movement that leaves time behind as *negative* and *false*, the second movement *retrieves* the negative and explicates time’s *coming into being* as the real basis of the derivative self. Taken in isolation, the latter is the movement that conditions the *fall* of the Absolute Self that gives rise to the subjectivity of the derivative “I” within time. From the subjective viewpoint of the second self, it is rather duration that becomes the obscure and invisible object *for* the self and time is now seen on the side of concrete and lived reality of the *I*. Overall, then, the “reality” of duration and the “falsity” of time do not derive their meanings from whether or not they exist within intuition. They are both found within the theory of intuition and one must grasp their unity in comprising two heterogeneous territories within the same field.

In this chapter, in order to expound upon this genuinely critical dimension of Bergson’s philosophy, we will investigate the distinct conception of the second

movement that conditions the coming into being of time. We consider this second movement to correspond to the critical dimension of his philosophy since it is what gives rise to a materialist conception of the historicity of consciousness. Unlike the movement that explains the apprehension of the *ahistorical* Absolute Self by exiting the limit of the finite determinate self, the opposite movement corresponds to the movement of history out of which the *a priori* form of receptivity emerges as its product. The consequences of this configuration are enormous. If it is indeed true that Bergson's method of intuition contains within itself this opposite movement that goes from duration to time and hence is constitutive of the condition of the finite self, this means that Bergson's theory of intuition contains within itself the theory of the historical determination of the Spirit. This accounts for the critical dimension in Bergson's philosophy: to have the theory of the determination of the Spirit is to have the capacity to account for the movement of the Absolute in its *Negativity*. Although the theory of intuition is not exhausted by this movement alone, the examination of the retrieval of time helps us understand how Bergson's theory of intuition contains within itself the capacity to critique the coming into being of the transcendental condition of subjectivity.

b. Genesis of Time: Materialist Reconceptualization of Judgment

What, however, does it mean to "retrieve" the Kantian conception of time after its initial criticism? If retrieval means to pick up something that was once set aside, would it not *undo* the novelty of Bergson's position vis-à-vis Kant? That is, with the retrieval of time, would not Bergson also bring back the idealist metaphysics of the Absolute Self? To answer all these questions, we must first ask another one: how can Bergson maintain his initial objection against the Kantian metaphysical transcendence of the Absolute Self while also resuscitating time through the notion of the second self?

We shall come back to this question at the end of this chapter since we cannot concretely deal with it without having first examined the more precise nature of the project of the retrieval. It is however important for us to note here that this question ultimately relates to the possibility of overcoming nihilism after the materialist reversal of dialectic. The overall aim of this thesis is to demonstrate

that Bergson's method of intuition can be seen as a materialist reversal of the idealist dialectic, which overcomes nihilism as the perpetual return of onto-theological metaphysics.¹²⁶ With this overall aim in view, the specific task of Part I is to elucidate the critical aspect of the method of intuition and argue that this aspect is compatible with the materialist conception of history. Whether or not Bergson's retrieval of time brings back the transcendence of the Absolute Self is equivalent to asking whether or not Bergson's method of intuition considered as a materialist method of thinking is capable of overcoming nihilism.

Before we tackle this question directly, we must first examine if and how Bergson's method of intuition in fact contains a reversal of the Idealist dialectic and if it is capable of supporting the materialist conception of the historical determination of consciousness. The outcome of this inquiry will depend upon knowing in what way Bergson retrieves Kantian time and towards which direction he extends the Kantian problematic through the retrieval. As Heidegger notes, a genuine retrieval is "the opening-up of its original, long concealed possibilities, through the working-out of which it is transformed".¹²⁷ In other words, a retrieval of Kantian conception of time is an elaboration upon Kant's original project so as to transform and deepen its problematic towards a new direction. The question regarding the new direction Bergson imposes on the Kantian problem will determine whether Bergson's philosophy is capable of supporting the materialist conception of history.

With this in mind, let us proceed with our task at hand. To be sure, Bergson does not explicitly thematise or delve into the project of the retrieval right away in *Time and Free Will*; this properly begins with his second major work, *Matter and Memory*. As we will explain below, *Matter and Memory* principally puts forth the concept of memory and it is this latter concept that can be read as Bergson's retrieval of Kantian time. Yet, as we have seen in the passage from *Time and Free Will* we quoted in the previous section, Bergson clearly has in mind the basic theme of the retrieval before *Matter and Memory*. We can gain important insights into which new direction Bergson extends Kant's conception of time in his 1893-94 lecture in *Lycée Henry-IV*, where he states:

¹²⁶ See the comment we have made in the introduction, section 1, "Why Bergson Today?"

¹²⁷ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. p.143.

After Kant, experience implies space and time as a necessary condition. Thus space and time are anterior to and independent of experience. Here, an empiricist would respond that the history must be taken into account. This is so for the experience of the present which is built upon an indefinite number of past experiences. The alleged forms may well be only habits. They would be imprinted from the outside to the inside, as the spirit registering the successions and juxtapositions.¹²⁸

Here, even before the completion of his doctoral dissertation, Bergson is prefiguring the project of the retrieval through an “empiricism” that conceives of space and time as the *habitual-historical* product of the past experiences. What we can infer from this is that Bergson is attempting to reconceive of space and time as the *a posteriori* products of historical accumulation of habits.

What, then, is the meaning of this “empiricism” that conceives of space and time as the *a posteriori* product of history? How can this still be a retrieval of the Kantian conception of space and time as the transcendental/necessary condition of experience? The challenge for us is to understand this “empiricism” in a way that does not contradict Kant’s original doctrine regarding time as the transcendental condition of subjectivity. By turning the *a priori* condition of experience itself into the *a posteriori* product of experience, Bergson is not, as it were, simply preferring Hume over Kant in their famous dispute regarding the nature of experience. On the contrary, the kind of empiricism that Bergson puts forth after Kant can be seen as a synthesis between empiricism and transcendental philosophy in a way that reconciles them through elevating or *sublating* the opposition between the empirical and the transcendental at a higher level. That is, just like the Marxist/Feuerbachian materialism being the “negation without contradiction” of Hegelian Idealism, Bergson’s retrieval of Kantian time is a non-reductive negation of Kantianism that accounts for the genesis of the *a priori* condition of experience out of a deeper, *pre-transcendental* kind of empirical experience.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Bergson, *Cours III*. p.152. It seems that Bergson is referring to Felix Ravaisson’s *De L’Habitude*. Ravaisson’s work is referenced at the beginning of *L’Idée de Lieu chez Aristotele* (Bergson’s second doctoral dissertation) and as we can see from “*The Life and Work of Ravaisson*” in the *Creative Mind*, Bergson was familiar with Ravaisson’s work. For an excellent review of the historical importance of the concept of habit as well as the relationship between Ravaisson’s work and Bergson, see Malabou, C., (2008). *Addiction and Grace: Preface to Félix Ravaisson’s Of Habit*. In Ravaisson, F., ([1838] 2008). *Of Habit*. Trans. C. Carlisle & M. Sinclair. London: Continuum. pp.vii-xx.

¹²⁹ Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. p.31.

In a nutshell, Bergson makes the passage towards a new empiricism of the transcendental through a materialist reconceptualization of Kant's theory of judgment. As we discussed in the previous chapter, Bergson's criticism of Kantian conception of time is directed not so much towards Kant's theory of time within the doctrine of the transcendental aesthetic *per se* but more towards Kant's theory of judgment that subsumes and schematizes the pure receptivity of time under the categories of understanding. It is in relation to judgment's function of guaranteeing the homogeneity of time with spontaneous categories that Bergson puts forth the concept of duration and seeks to capture the *real* form of receptivity before the intervention of the faculty of judgment alters it towards the benefit of spontaneity/conception. Now, if Bergson in fact retrieves time as a real existence, this means that the retrieval involves taking a second look at Kant's theory of judgment from a new perspective.

Let us refer to another passage of *Time and Free Will* where Bergson shows his preliminary problematization of the retrieval more clearly in terms of this new conceptual context. Before the conclusion to the chapter 2 of *Time and Free Will*, Bergson states:

In a word, our ego [*notre moi*] comes in contact with the external world at its surface; our successive sensations, although dissolving into one another, retain something of the mutual externality which belongs to their objective causes and thus our superficial psychic life comes to be pictured without any great effort as set out in a homogeneous medium. But the symbolical character of such a picture becomes more striking as we advance further into the depths of consciousness: the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a self whose states and changes permeate one another and undergo a deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another in order to set them out in space. But as this deeper self forms one and the same person with the superficial ego, the two seem to *endure* in the same way.¹³⁰

Here, Bergson clearly delineates and names the new conceptual context of the retrieval of time in terms of the distinction between "the surface ego" [*le moi superficiel*] and "the deeper ego" [*le moi plus profond*].¹³¹ As the title of the last section of chapter 2 suggests, after he fundamentally criticizes Kantian time as the

¹³⁰ TFW 127-128/83.

¹³¹ Jean Hyppolite regards this distinction between the two aspects of the self as the central component of Bergson's philosophy that resonates with phenomenology and existentialism. See Hyppolite, J., (1971). *Figures De La Pensée Philosophique*. Paris: PUF. pp.444.

illegitimate translation of duration, he then moves on to reclaim this very same time in terms of one of the “two aspects of the self”. Instead of directly attacking time *via* the concept of duration, Bergson here switches his standpoint and now posits that there are in fact two separate aspects to the self/ego. On the one hand, the so-called surface ego, which comes into being out of the “contact” [*touche*] between the self and the external world, appears to itself in terms of the form of “mutual externality” (*i.e.* time as the form of juxtaposition). On the other, the immediate givenness of duration, or the self “whose states and changes permeate one another”, recedes into the *depth* of one’s interiority and gets covered over by the symbolism of the surface ego that represents it in terms of the determinate form of time.

Albeit in a preliminary way, we can see Bergson’s unique reconceptualization of Kant’s theory of judgment through the project of the retrieval. At the beginning of the quoted passage, he states: “our ego comes in contact with the external world at its surface”. The “surface” of the self is in constant contact with the world and this “contact”/“touch” between the self and the external world is seen as that which produces the determinate form of time. That is, like a lump of clay that gets shaped by a potter, the surface of the self receives its determinate form from the direct touch of the world and comes to appear *as if* it were the transcendental form of intuition. For us, this primacy of the touch vis-à-vis the coming into being of time suggests that Bergson’s retrieval of time stems from a materialist reconceptualization of Kant’s theory of judgment. It is materialist in the sense that the touch, which is an empirical/material force exerted at the level of the body, is regarded as the pre-transcendental cause that gives rise to the form of time as its product.

Here, this primacy of the touch is where we begin to catch a glimpse of the uniquely Bergsonian conception of the *empirical-material Life*, which is problematized in relation to his reconceptualization of Kant’s theory of judgment. To repeat the point we have made, Bergson’s contestation of Kantian time is largely directed towards the function of judgment that *a priori* subordinates receptivity under spontaneity. Having said that, our task in this chapter is to demonstrate that this very mechanism of *a priori* subsumption that Bergson criticizes acquires a positive value within the new project of the retrieval. Our main argument consists in demonstrating that this retrieval of time is conducted

from a materialist standpoint, which is ultimately compatible with Marx's reversal of Idealist dialectic that asserts the "Material" as the "Demiurge of the Real" or in arguing that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life".¹³²

The specificity of Bergson's materialism can be understood through grasping the special kind of empirical exteriority that the touch of the external world assumes vis-à-vis consciousness. When one hears that the world directly touches us and that this empirical experience gives shape to the surface of our existence, one might assume that the "exteriority" of the touch and the "taking shape" of the surface ego is what takes place *within space*. This is however not the case. The "exteriority" of the touch, or perhaps we can say the *objective, sensuous materiality* of this corporeal force, rather points towards a radical form of exteriority that is *other than* and *prior* to the constitution of the sensuous "world" *in space*. We have pointed out that in Kant's doctrine, the faculty of judgment schematizes receptivity towards the direction of spontaneity and this is what Bergson points out as the procedure of "illegitimate translation", or "expression" of time with space. It is this very procedure of expression that Bergson positively reconceives through the retrieval (See *Diagram 5*). That is, the *a priori* procedure of expression is what determines the determinate form of time and the material force of the touch, which is conceived as the cause of the passage of ur-time into time; this passage is what takes place *before* time properly arrives within consciousness.

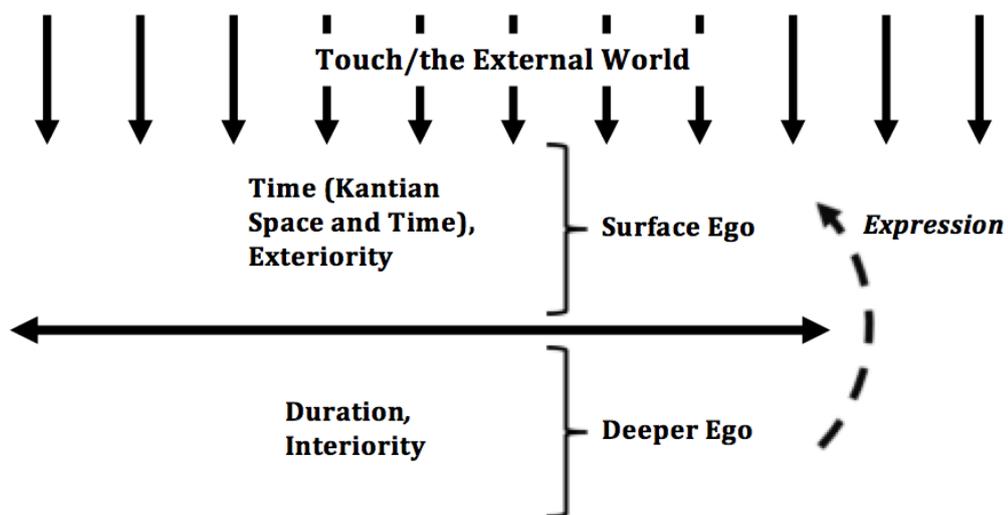


Diagram 5

¹³² Marx, *Capital*. p.102. Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, p.42.

This leads us to the conclusion that the very sensuous materiality of the force of the touch, which comes from and itself located within the external world, is not exterior or material in the sense that it is part of the external series of sensuous phenomena that appears to the subject in space. If the touch of the world is indeed the force that causes the coming into being of the determinate form of time/surface ego, the *sensuous world* which appears to the subject as external to it is rather conditioned *by* the special kind of sensuousness and it is the derivative product of the more radical form of exteriority that itself does not appear within the world. Put succinctly, the sensuous materiality of the force of the touch is posited as that which *transcends* the totality of the sensible world and hence constitutes itself into a radical alterity vis-à-vis the internal consistency of the time-bound consciousness. The touch, therefore, is the *supra-sensuous sensuousness* that differs from what is ordinarily perceived as residing within the external world of sensuous materiality. This materiality of the supra-sensuous sensuousness, which is what we must focus our attention on in order to delve deeper into Bergson's project of the retrieval of time, can be described more accurately in terms of its obscurity and otherness that is not accessible within the ordinary world of the sensible.

We must stress once again that to prioritize the empirical sensuous materiality over the *a priori* condition of experience is not a simple anti-Kantianism. In fact, Kant himself had a great intimation of this when he says in *Critique of Pure Reason*:

schematism of our understanding, *i.e.*, its schematism regarding appearances and their mere form, is a secret art residing in the depths of the human soul, an art whose true stratagems we shall hardly ever divine from nature and lay bare before ourselves.¹³³

Here, Kant notes that judgment's function to harmonize the two heterogeneous sources of cognition through the transcendental schematism is an "art" [*Kunst*] whose "true handle" [*wahre Handgriffe*] remains "secret"/"hidden" [*verborgene*] from view. Kant uses the word "handle", which clearly indicates his intimation towards an obscure sort of material sensuousness that constitutes the art of schematism. However, he does not pursue this route of questioning and instead

¹³³ CPR A141/B180-181.

posits the realm of obscurity as the world of pure *intelligibility* devoid of sensuousness and turns it into the Ideal realm. Bergson's retrieval of time in this sense takes the route of materialism and seeks the origin of time in the radical alterity of the supra-sensuous sensuousness of the touch. The peculiar kind of empiricism that Bergson puts forth is therefore not a simple contradiction of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Instead of opposing the *a priori* and *a posteriori* as incompatible with one another, the new empiricism of Bergson explains the coming into being or the *genesis* of the *a priori* condition of experience through positing a kind of *pre-transcendental* force of experience.

c. The Social Existence of Time

The above analysis gives us insight into the preliminary way in which Bergson reconceptualizes Kant's theory of judgment from a uniquely materialist perspective. But before moving on to the analysis of *Matter and Memory*, let us elaborate further upon the meaning of this "materialism" by turning towards the particularity of the surface ego. As we mentioned earlier, Bergson states that the formation of time is a step towards "social life", or towards "liv[ing] in common and speak[ing]". We have remarked that this is a clear indication that the retrieval of time is where the problem of the "social" enters into his philosophy. Yet if this is the case, it already implies that the question of the reality of time cannot be dissociated from human beings' need to live within society. This testifies to the fact that the fundamental problem concerning human beings' irreducibly political existence is indeed accounted for by Bergson long before the more explicitly "political" *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. By extension, this further implies that the project of the retrieval of time simultaneously constitutes a political critique of the force of society upon the formation of the individual ego.

In order to clarify our understanding of the relationship between the being of time and society, let us follow Bergson's footsteps and go back to the scene where Kant defines time in *Critique of Pure Reason*. We began our investigation into Bergson's reading of Kant with a remark that time is seen as one of the two sources of cognition. Both of them are referred to as "powers" (*Vermögen*)¹³⁴ –

¹³⁴ CPR B76/A52.

space and time are the power to be affected (receptivity) and concepts of understanding are the power to affect (spontaneity). Furthermore, we need to emphasize here that the peculiarity of time-bound intuition is defined by Kant in terms of its derivative characteristics which constitutes Man as finite thinking being as opposed to the *original*, or the so-called *intellectual intuition* which solely belongs to God, the *Ur-wesen*.¹³⁵ That is, as Heidegger points out, Kant's theory of intuition is constitutive of the "essence of human knowledge"; to retrieve time as a real existence means that this operation is a laying bare of our transcendental power for passive-active affection which constitutes us as finite Man.¹³⁶ Thus, if Bergson in fact retrieves time through reconceiving it in terms of its genesis, we can claim that this retrieval is what constitutes a genetic anthropology, or the discourse on the genesis of the essence of Man. The genesis of time is constitutive of the coming into being of the essence of Man, since it is the horizon for finite, thus properly human knowledge. If we can borrow the expression from Levinas, this project can be also seen as a Bergsonian *egology* since it explains the constitution and the coming into being of the power which makes up our human *Ego* as such.¹³⁷

Via the retrieval, the power which constitutes the essence of Man is here reclaimed as something that comes into being as a contingent constitution. That is, what the new project of the retrieval shows us is that it begins from a standpoint where time as a derivative form of intuition is refashioned from its prior definition as the transcendental given, *i.e.*, a passage is made from the *immutable* and *necessary* structure that pre-formulates the world a priori, into as that which *comes into being*. We can therefore no longer agree with Kant when he says that "(t)ime is not in transition; rather, the existence of what is mutable is in transition in time."¹³⁸ With the retrieval, we must now say; *what is mutable is indeed in time, but this very time which grounds the mutable is itself mutable, or time is itself grounded by a different kind of mutability*.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ CPR B72.

¹³⁶ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p.17.

¹³⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.44.

¹³⁸ CPR B184.

¹³⁹ When one focuses on the retrieval of time, there emerges a striking similarity between Bergson and the image of Hegel that Catherine Malabou depicts. Time reclaimed by Bergson can be seen as *plastic* form; it is made possible by "a capacity to receive form and a capacity to produce form." Or, to borrow Derrida's reading of the concept, to retrieve time as that which comes into being means that "time itself would have a history." See Malabou, C., ([1996] 2009). *Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. Trans. L. During. London: Routledge. p.9. Also see Derrida, J., ([1998] 2009). *A Time for Farewells:*

Going back to our earlier remark about the place of society in Bergson's philosophy, what is important for us to notice is that Bergson furthermore defines the genesis of the essence of Man in terms of its *being within society*. That is, the power, which constitutes us as human beings, or the time, which grounds the appearance of the world for derivative beings, is contemporaneous with the force of society. As Marx states: "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations".¹⁴⁰ As for Marx so for Bergson, the essence of human beings is conceived to be socially constructed. The Bergsonian style of anthropology is necessarily an anthropology that sees an individual as a *social individual*. The theoretical refutation of homogeneous time therefore fundamentally contains an irreducible political dimension and the retrieval of time is simultaneously an exposure of Man as social individual. In other words, the transcendental condition of experience that constitutes the essence of Man is inseparable from Man's being within society and the genesis of time is simultaneously the genesis of society in and through the individual.

One might object here that it is not until his last major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* that Bergson directly engages with the problematic of society and politics as a central subject matter. This view, of course, is correct from the standpoint that sees "politics" as a distinct subject matter exclusively dealing with demarcated activities that deserve to be called political and separate from philosophical problems concerning the nature of reality as a whole.¹⁴¹ However, by paying special attention to the project of the retrieval of time, it becomes evident that the political is not a peripheral problem for Bergson. On the contrary, it takes up one of the indispensable issues located at the very heart of his philosophy which concerns the coming into being of time. As we have seen, the new conceptual context of surface ego he introduces through the retrieval is in fact simultaneously defined as social in its fundamental character. Put differently, what Bergson means by surface ego is strictly coterminous with what he calls the "social ego" (*moi social*) in *The Two Sources of Morality and*

Heidegger (Read by) Hegel (Read by) Malabou. In Malabou, C., ([1996] 2009). *Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. Trans. L. During. London: Routledge. p.vii.

¹⁴⁰ "But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations." Marx, *Early Writings*, p.423.

¹⁴¹ Lefebvre, A. & White, M., (2012). *Introduction: Bergson, Politics and Religion*. In Lefebvre, A. & White, M., eds. (2012). *Bergson, Politics and Religion*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press. p.3.

Religion.¹⁴² Indeed, in all of his writing throughout his entire career, whenever Bergson engages in a retrieval of time, there is a reference to society. Thus, the project of retrieving time is fundamentally inseparable from his view of homogeneous time as the condition of social subjectivity. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* is by no means the only work that focuses upon the subject-matter of the social. A close reading reveals that Bergson is in fact asking the question concerning society as soon as he commences the retrieval of time in *Time and Free Will*. The problematization of society serves as the broader context within which time is further examined in his entire oeuvre from the very beginning. To miss this aspect is thus to miss the crucial point where the being of society as such is called into question.

While often overlooked, this is where we can say that Bergson's philosophy contains a revolutionary "no" or negation that functions as the ground for political critique at its core. To retrieve time as the basis of Man as social individual is, in Marx's words, a "negative revelation" whereby one is exposed to the lack of freedom at the core of one's existence.¹⁴³ Thus, Bergson's confrontation with Kant in fact contains two parts at once – one is his theoretical refutation; the other is the political-existential confrontation directed towards the actual reality of time, which formulates and constructs social individuals that we are. Our claim has thus been that in order to speak about the political in the work of Bergson, we must first deconstruct the ordinary view about society and then allow Bergson's philosophy as a whole to define the political. We must seek not a philosophy "of" politics in Bergson, but a genuine political potency, which permeates his philosophy through and through. On this matter, we can perhaps borrow from Sartre who put it most adequately: in order for philosophy to qualify as the foundation for politics, we must "plunge man back into the world", and give "full measure to man's agonies and sufferings, and to his rebellions."¹⁴⁴ In other words, the political must be found in the most intimate part of our essence as Man and not in a separate place independent of our existence in the world. In order for it to be truly political, the "no" must be put forth at the most fundamental level of our reality.

¹⁴² TS 15/986.

¹⁴³ Marx, *Early Writings*, p.199.

¹⁴⁴ Sartre, J.-P., ([1936] 1957). *The Transcendence of the Ego*. Trans. F. Williams & R. Kirkpartrick. New York: The Noonday Press. p.105.

2. Retrieval of Time in *Matter and Memory*

a. From Illegitimate Translation to Adaptation of the Real

Up until now, we have talked about how Bergson prefigures the project of the retrieval in *Time and Free Will*. Let us move on to *Matter and Memory* where Bergson fully turns towards an exposition of how time comes into being. Our fundamental argument is that *Matter and Memory* is the work that retrieves Kant's doctrine of schematism from a new materialist standpoint. Instead of inquiring into the real status of time that differs from Kantian conception, what Bergson asks now is with what definite mechanism and within which realm of reality the mediation, or the "illegitimate translation", of duration into time in fact takes place. That is, after seemingly abandoning the negativity of time via the theory of duration as the immediate data of consciousness, Bergson re-introduces it within his philosophy. If *Time and Free Will* primarily focuses upon the falsity of Kantian time, this very time is now positively reconceived as the part and parcel of human subjectivity.

As it is openly declared in its preface, the essential task of *Matter and Memory* in its explicit presentation is to intervene into the "problem of the relation between mind and body" via taking a "common sense" view of matter that renders Kantian criticism "unnecessary" (*n'aurait pas été nécessaire*).¹⁴⁵ That is, instead of starting from a Kantian stance where matter is *a priori* synthesized by the faculty of judgment, he chooses to start from a perspective where image "exists in itself."¹⁴⁶ In relation to such a theme, as we already pointed out in Benjamin and Horkheimer's criticisms, *Matter and Memory* has predominantly been treated in terms of its anti-Kantianism. Merleau-Ponty also highlights in his 1948 lecture that the very starting point of *Matter and Memory*: "[Bergson] did not follow the itinerary of Kantian philosophy" and thus there is a "naïveté" which prevents him from adequately treating the problem of the cogito as well as the phenomenological primacy of perception.¹⁴⁷ This anti-Kantian outlook is the

¹⁴⁵ MM 11/163.

¹⁴⁶ MM 10/162.

¹⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty, M., ([1968] 2001). *The Incarnate Subject: Malebranche, Biran, and Bergson on the Union of Body and Soul*. Trans. P. B. Milan. New York: Humanity Books, 2001. pp.87-88.

crucial aspect which allows critics to repeatedly point out that Bergson's philosophy is at bottom unable to take history and self-critique seriously. The work is traditionally interpreted as denoting a "naïve" or uncritical/ahistorical positivity and therefore leaning towards vulgar metaphysics.¹⁴⁸

From the outset, therefore, it seems that the correct way of interpreting this work is to solely focus upon its anti-Kantian affirmationism. Contrary to such a view, it is our argument that *Matter and Memory* strongly carries forward the task of retrieving Kantian time by focusing on the aspect first touched upon only negatively in *Time and Free Will* – the illegitimate translation of time into space (or, of duration into time). While in his previous work, Bergson highlights this "illegitimacy" as a kind of violence that turns time into the equivalent of the fourth dimension of space, his effort is now directed towards disclosing how exactly such a translation takes place. In other words, he is interested in examining how it is that our immediate self sinks into the deep abyss and how we come to live in the illusory realm of time – that is, at the level of our surface existence where we are cut off from our true *free* self.

In short, what we see in *Matter and Memory* is a retrieval of Kantian doctrine of schematism in terms of his new conception of *Memory*. If Kantian time is once relegated as the *false* receptivity due to the schematism, it is this very mechanism that Bergson retrieves in terms of a new perspective and positively accounts for its reality. Bergson therefore does not simply leave Kantian time altogether after his initial refutation. The anti-Kantianism of *Matter and Memory*, although an important aspect, is not at all the most profound facet of the work and it certainly does not exhaust the fundamental scope of the work as a whole. Rather, here Bergson engages in retrieving Kantian conception of time in terms of a theory of *Memory*, which can be seen as the equivalent of Kantian faculty of judgment. As we have shown earlier, the operation that Bergson points out in Kant as "illegitimate translation" corresponds to the function of transcendental faculty of judgment in *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Through the retrieval of judgment in terms of his new conception of memory, what was hitherto seen as the illegitimate translation now transforms

¹⁴⁸ Among the existing literatures on *Matter and Memory*, Leonard Lawlor shows an alternative view that seeks to read the work not only in its explicit anti-phenomenological outlook but also in terms of the possibility to bridge such a gap. See Lawlor, L., (2003). *The Challenge of Bergsonism*. London: Continuum.

into a positively reconceived function of “adaptation of the real” [*adaptation du reel*] or “attention to life” [*attention à la vie*].¹⁴⁹ The mediation of judgment is thus given a positive value and is now spoken of as that which aligns human consciousness with reality and life.¹⁵⁰ Thus, far from going only towards the opposite direction against Kant, Bergson makes a definite return to Kantian time as one of the two transcendental elements of the method of intuition. The centrality of society is also firmly present within this conversion since this adaptation of the real/attention to life is said to be aimed towards “the interests of practice and to the exigencies of social life.”¹⁵¹ Here, not only Bergson again stresses the fundamentally social characteristics of time as the basis of Kantian apparent reality, but he also further clarifies the nature of social reality as the sensuous milieu within which the individual must *live*, or must support its *vital need* (*besoin*). The retrieval of time in *Matter and Memory* thus puts forth the material need, or the individual’s vital/practical interest as the determining factor for the coming into being of time.

Yet, what makes it possible for Bergson to retrieve the Kantian faculty of judgment in terms of the “interests of practice” and “vital need”? Whence comes this Idea of *Life* from which the faculty of judgment as well as the schematism of time are retrieved? Everything happens as if the concept of memory is introduced as the subsidiary of Life; concomitantly, the activity of memory, which establishes the peculiarly *human* form of experience for Bergson, is seen as the internally purposive and self-organized being that exists in and for-itself. Thus, although Bergson successfully retrieves the determinate form of time as a real existence within the field of intuition in *Matter and Memory*, the self-subsistence of Life from which time is retrieved seems to re-introduce his philosophy back into the Idealist Metaphysical tradition where the Absolute Self is relegated within the sphere of transcendence with respect to intuition. As we touched upon earlier, if Bergson brings back the Kantian conception of time, there is the danger that the retrieval might also bring back the transcendence of the Absolute. The important question we must ask therefore is: how can Bergson account for the reality of time without also repeating the mistake of Idealism? We will come back to this question after

¹⁴⁹ For the concept of the “attention to life” see MM 14/166. For “adaptation of the real”, see MM 183/319.

¹⁵⁰ MM 184/321.

¹⁵¹ MM 183/319.

the exposition of the concept of memory. At this stage, it suffices to say that *Matter and Memory* begins from the point Kant left off in *Critique of Judgment*, namely, the doctrine of the “teleological judgment” where he puts forth the “concept of a thing as in itself a natural end” [*Naturzwecks*].¹⁵² As we will argue, Bergson’s retrieval of time stems from a radicalization of this concept of “natural end” since human perception comes to be treated in terms of its participation within the immanent activity of Life. Overall, the difference between the two philosophers is that Bergson starts from the concept of Life and then deduces human perception as the by-product of Life’s internal purposiveness whereas Kant only treats natural end as the “regulative principle” of reflective judgment “which can only lie in the Idea”.¹⁵³ The result is that the genesis of time in Bergson stems from Life’s internal activity and the essence of Man is explained in terms of the immanent development of the material Life process.

b. Matter as Image: Pure Perception

In order to understand how time emerges out of Life, let us begin with a discussion regarding the central theme of the first chapter. From the preface to chapter 1, Bergson’s effort is directed towards explicating the nature of perception from the standpoint of the concept of “image” that “exists in-itself”.¹⁵⁴ He states:

The afferent nerves are images, the brain is an image, the disturbance traveling through the sensory nerves and propagated in the brain is an image too. If the image which I term cerebral disturbance really begot external images, it would contain them in one way or another, and the representation of the whole material universe would be implied in that of this molecular movement. Now to state this proposition is enough to show its absurdity. The brain is a part of the material world; the material world is not part of the brain.¹⁵⁵

By “image”, here Bergson is not referring to the familiar conception of image as “representation”. *Image* for Bergson exists “in-itself” and it therefore refers to something that is self-sufficient and capable of standing on its own. Here, as

¹⁵² CJ 5:375.

¹⁵³ CJ 5:405.

¹⁵⁴ MM 10/162.

¹⁵⁵ MM 19/170-171.

Merleau-Ponty notes, Bergson's starting point differs from the Kantian transcendental framework that sees an image as *a priori* synthesized by the faculty judgment. That is, rather than starting from the position where matter can only be intuited as phenomenon which is *a priori* ordered by forms of intuition/time (which is in turn conditioned by faculty of judgment), Bergson begins the work with putting forth a conception of the "material world" whereby the faculty of judgment has not yet taken its effect.

Like Schopenhauer's "world as will", insofar as it is defined as "self-existing", the image here refers to a view of the universe as comprised of aggregates of the *in-itself immediate object* related to one another solely through mutual actions and reactions.¹⁵⁶ Thus, time as the *a priori* form of intuition which presents appearance in general as phenomena to us has no efficacy in the world of image. An image, strictly defined by Bergson, does not denote an appearance *for us*, or *in us*. That is, the image is not defined as an object given to the subject as phenomenon. Time has no place in the world as image since it is, in principle, only effective in the world of phenomena conditioned by the subject. The world of image instead denotes a viewpoint where the duality of object/subject is not yet applicable and where the ideality of the world conditioned by the derivative human consciousness is altogether excluded.¹⁵⁷ In this universe, we are ourselves images situated amongst other images and thus all that exists is strictly *in-itself*. From this point of view, the image cannot be a representation which solely exists in relation to us since "the brain is part of the material world; the material world is not part of the brain."¹⁵⁸

How is it possible to posit a view of the world where relativistic finitude is altogether excluded while it is an incontestable fact that we are human beings and any perception is necessarily a human perception? Does this not imply an anachronism after Kant? Or, as critics point out, is this made possible only through a *positivistic* naiveté which ignores the Marxist historical constitution of our subjectivity? To be sure, the assertion of the material world as self-existing image

¹⁵⁶ MM 17/169. There is a striking resemblance between Schopenhauer and Bergson on their respective formulations of "will" and "image." See Schopenhauer, A., ([1818] 1969). *The World as Will and Representation: Vol.1*. Trans. E. F. J. Payne. New York: Dover. pp.95-161. §§17-28.

¹⁵⁷ For a reading that specifically focuses upon the uniqueness of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*, see Meillassoux, Q., (2007). "Subtraction and Contraction: Deleuze, Immanence, and Matter and Memory." *Collapse III*, Falmouth: Urbanomic. pp.63-107.

¹⁵⁸ MM 19/171.

is itself supported by a distinct theory of what Bergson calls the “pure” or “impersonal perception”, which is said to be true only “*in theory*” but not “*in fact*”.¹⁵⁹ A full exposition of this notion cannot be pursued here since this can only come to light with respect to the more detailed explication of the concept of duration in Part II. But the theory of pure/impersonal perception involves a radicalization of Kant’s theory of the internal purposiveness of Life, as evidenced in the latter’s treatment of teleological judgment, which is in turn made possible through Bergson’s unique conception of the experience of Duration. That is, through the immediate experience of duration that unites the self-intuition of the derivative consciousness with the movement of the Absolute Self, in Bergson internal purposiveness, or what Bergson calls the “*élan vital*” in *Creative Evolution*, of Material Life is apprehended at the seat of self-consciousness and the immanent activity of Life is the point of departure from which his philosophy begins.

Going back to *Matter and Memory*, it can be said that the conception of the world as self-existing image stems from this perspective that regards oneself as partaking within the internally purposive Life of the Absolute. The question here is: what is the particular role of this conception in the work in its entirety? If Bergson stopped short at putting forth the view of the world as self-existing image and if this were the only image of the world that Bergson chose to uphold, the central argument of *Matter and Memory* would merely constitute a one-sided anti-Kantianism. However, this is, in fact, not at all the case. Although the argument presented in the first chapter is the crucial foundation of the entire *Matter and Memory* and the following discussions regarding the nature of memory must be understood strictly with reference to it, the conception presented in this chapter is simultaneously what permits the development of another view of reality to take root. That is, the concept of the world as self-existing image is that *from which* Bergson performs his retrieval of Kantian time in a way that makes it possible for him to surpass Kant precisely by returning to the latter. Accordingly, as we will argue in our subsequent discussion of Memory, the internal purposiveness of Life is determined both as the source *and* the end of derivative consciousness.

We have just mentioned that within the world of image there is no distinction between the subject and the object and that what takes place within it cannot be seen as a phenomenon represented for us. Bergson however asks:

¹⁵⁹ MM 34/185.

How is it that this perception is consciousness, and why does everything happen *as if* [*comme si*] this consciousness were born of the internal movements of the cerebral substance?¹⁶⁰

It is clear that what he is interested at this point is not merely directed towards the in-itself existence of the world *per se* but rather the coming into being of the peculiarly subjective experience which seems to exist *as if* it is “my” experience. As we noted, the point of departure is the world as self-existing image, which contains me within it, rather than as something existing for me. But the question now is, how is it that this image of the world which exists in and for itself *becomes* “my” consciousness? Or, how is it that this internally purposive material world then comes to appear *as if* it is produced by and within consciousness? This is the second important step of Bergson’s argument which leads him towards inquiring into the nature of Memory on which he devotes the rest of the book where he explicates its centrality vis-à-vis the subjective, “spiritual” dimension of reality.

To fully appreciate the role of the conception of the world as image, *i.e.* the theory of pure perception, we must examine it in relation to this second step of Bergson’s overall argument, namely the function of Memory vis-à-vis human consciousness (the examination of memory will be pursued in detail in the following section). Whereas the theory of pure perception explains our participation within the self-existing world, which effectively dispels the trap of solipsism, the theory of memory explains how the same world comes to be pictured as representation for me. Bergson therefore insists that perception and memory are different in nature and their difference cannot be understood as mere difference in degree. Yet, Bergson notes that the ordinary human perception is the mixture between the two and it is memory’s contact with the internal purposiveness of Life that conditions the coming into being of the derivative or human consciousness. That is, although they are said to be different in kind, there is a point of contact between perception and memory so that the nature of human consciousness may be understood in terms of its relative distance from the pure perception. This allows Bergson to establish the premise that the origin and the end of human perception ultimately resides in the realm of action rather than that of *pure knowledge* and hence the nature of human cognition would be understood

¹⁶⁰ MM 33/183.

not in terms of disinterested speculation but rather in terms of the impersonal drive for action stemming from the inner purposiveness of Life. That is, as Bergson clearly states in chapter four, human consciousness is ultimately directed towards and conditioned by the need for the “exigencies of social life”, and, as he puts it, “[that] which is commonly called a *fact* is not reality as it appears to immediate intuition” but it is already conditioned for the sake of action.¹⁶¹

What matters here is noticing the importance of starting from the world of self-existing image rather than from the side of subjective consciousness. If one begins from the side of consciousness and subsequently posits the world in relation to it, one has no other choice but to admit the absurd hypothesis that the whole universe is contained within consciousness and to inevitably turn the objective reality of the external world into a complete mystery. In this way, as Bergson states, no adequate explanation concerning the transition from the sensibility to understanding is possible since the former is posited as the derivative product of the latter even though its substantial basis remains a total mystery.¹⁶² On the contrary, if one begins with the objective reality of the world as existing by itself outside of one’s consciousness so as to explain the transition from the objective to the subjective world, one can deduce how it is possible for the objective world to be alienated from itself and to be seen as a representation for consciousness. In other words, by beginning the exposition from the non-conceptual realm of image, the conceptual mediation of the world acquires its foundation within the impersonal realm of pure perception. The essential nature of human consciousness is therefore defined in terms of its partaking of the *labour* [*travail*] or the relationship of sensuous/suffering [*subir*] that the body is subjected vis-à-vis the surrounding environment.¹⁶³ Bergson states:

This (pure perception) *is* the chief office of consciousness in external perception is indeed what we may deduce *a priori* from the very definition of living bodies.¹⁶⁴

Here, although Bergson makes it clear that perception and memory differ in kind, he is nonetheless deducing the “chief office of consciousness” from the natural

¹⁶¹ MM 183/319.

¹⁶² MM 28/178-179.

¹⁶³ MM 29/179.

¹⁶⁴ MM 65/212.

purposiveness of the living body to be in an *economic* relationship with its surrounding environment.¹⁶⁵ This economic relationship is a relationship of sensuous *suffering* (*subir*) and to be a sensuous suffering being means to be open to the ensemble of received actions from one's surroundings and its reaction to "the greater or lesser advantage which it can derive".¹⁶⁶ That is, in order for a being to be alive, it is necessary for it to be situated in the midst of economic relations based on its material needs for nourishment and repair.¹⁶⁷

In many ways, it could be argued that this "*a priori* deduction" of the nature of consciousness from Life is that which aligns Bergson's retrieval of time with the materialism of Marx and Nietzsche. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript* of 1844, Marx states:

[To] be sensuous is to *suffer* (to be subjected to the actions of another). Man as an objective sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being, and because he feels his suffering, he is a *passionate being*.¹⁶⁸

Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, centrally holds that:

[Behind] all logic too and its apparent autonomy there stand evaluations, in plainer terms physiological demands for the preservation of a certain species of life.¹⁶⁹

For both thinkers, it is essential to start from the supposition that *to be* is to be a living, sensuous being and *to think* is to think for the sake of life. Similarly to Marx and Nietzsche, then, for Bergson, too, in order to derive the objective essence of Man – the true essence rather than essence in an *estranged* form – one must not have recourse to how the latter appears to *abstract thought*. Instead, the *a priori* ground for this abstraction itself must be sought in the sensuousness/suffering of the individual as part of nature/life. This is an extension of Kantian critical project

¹⁶⁵ The term "economic" is used here in its etymological sense (οικονόμος) denoting ruling of the house/dwelling. See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.175. "To separate oneself, to not remain bound up with a totality, is positively to be *somewhere*, in the home, to be economically. The "somewhere" and the home render egoism, the primordial mode of being in which separation is produced, explicit."

¹⁶⁶ MM 20/172.

¹⁶⁷ MM 64/213.

¹⁶⁸ Marx, *Early Writings*, p.390.

¹⁶⁹ Nietzsche, F., ([1886] 2003). *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. R.J. Hollindale. London: Penguin. p.35.

whereby the in-itself essence of Man is deduced *a priori* from the idea of Life and asserts the “root of our knowledge of things” as the impersonal, pure perception which is in itself “a part of things”¹⁷⁰.

c. Memory: *A Priori* Synthesis

As we have remarked, what Bergson addresses after the abovementioned exposition is the transition from the self-existing world of image to the subjective consciousness. Whereas the objective world of image is said to be only true “in theory”, Bergson is now interested in how this impersonal perception makes a transition into a factual perception with distinctly subjective characteristics. The former relates to the in-itself being which is part of things (the world as image) and the latter only grasps the being *for us* or the world of human perception which is alienated from the in-itself reality. If pure perception corresponds to the world as image where time is not yet present, then in order for us to inquire into the retrieval of time we must examine through what definite procedure the in-itself of image passes into the image for-us. This is tantamount to saying that to examine the nature of this passage is also to pinpoint how exactly time as the derivative power which constitutes us as surface/social ego ultimately comes into being.

Our reading of Bergson’s treatment of this problem in Kant has been that this passage is enacted by the illegitimate translation by the faculty of judgment since it is that which *a priori* mediates and subsumes intuition under the categories of understanding. This means, as Heidegger notes, that we can locate the functioning of imagination as the source from which time springs forth insofar as time is already mediated by imagination. The principal task of *Matter and Memory* from chapter 2 onwards is to examine the definite nature of this mediating mechanism in terms of the function of *Memory*, which is the focus of this section. Bergson states: “it is memory above all that lends to perception its subjective character”.¹⁷¹ If pure perception is obtained via subtracting memory from perception, to examine the nature of factual perception he must now investigate into the mechanism of memory. It becomes apparent that memory serves a

¹⁷⁰ MM 64/213.

¹⁷¹ MM 73/220.

function equivalent to that of the Kantian faculty of imagination. As it is the case with Kantian imagination, which is “a necessary ingredient of perception itself”,¹⁷² Bergsonian memory is not a secondary activity of the mind that occurs after a concrete perception. As he puts it: “concrete perception, however short we suppose it, is already a synthesis made by memory”¹⁷³ and therefore memory must be construed also as a necessary or *a priori* component of our concrete human perception. If our hypothesis is correct, in the same way that the function of judgment is the source of time for Kant, it follows that memory for Bergson can also be seen as the proper site where time springs forth.

In order to test our hypothesis, let us return to the notion of the “self-existing image”. We made a brief comment above regarding the resemblance between this “in-itself” of the image and Kant’s teleological judgment. We may recall here that in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant’s thesis on the faculty of judgment acquires a further elaboration through another distinction between two kinds of judgment – *determinative* and *reflective* judgment. Determinative judgment is a form of judgment whereby “the universal is given, [and] then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is determining.”¹⁷⁴ In short, this type of judgment is conditioned by the transcendental schematism which guarantees the subsumption of intuition under concepts of understanding *a priori*¹⁷⁵ so that no strenuous effort or thinking of the concept is necessary for the unified experience to take place. In other words, this type of judgment takes place “mechanically.”¹⁷⁶ This is also the case for synthesis since, as we have stated above, synthesis indeed starts from the empirical object of encounter but is nonetheless referred back to the transcendental apperception of the “*I think*” as it’s *a priori* ground.¹⁷⁷ In either case, the faculty of imagination functions in a way that *a priori* subsumes empirical intuition under categories of understanding mechanically.

¹⁷² CPR A120. Bergson’s memory thus differs from what Kant points out as “reproductive” power of imagination in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Rather, what is conceived as “productive”: the original presentation of the object is already a synthesis of memory for Bergson. See Kant, I., ([1764-1803] 2007). *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Trans. M. Gregor, P. Guyer, R. B. Louden, H. Wilson, A. W. Wood, G. Zoller, A. Zweig, Eds. G. Zoller, R. B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. pp.278-277. §28. 7:167-169.

¹⁷³ MM 182/319.

¹⁷⁴ CJ 5:180.

¹⁷⁵ CJ 20:211-212.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ CPR A109-A110.

In addition to the above type of judgment/functioning of imagination explained in the first critique, in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant adds another kind, which he calls reflective judgment. In contrast to determinative judgment, which starts from the universal concepts, reflective judgment refers to a case when “only particular is given, for which the universal is to be found”.¹⁷⁸ That is, rather than starting from the universal and then move down (descending) toward the particular individual via the way of *a priori* subsumption/synthesis, reflective judgment works *via* “ascending from the particular in nature to the universal”.¹⁷⁹ This means that the particular given is initially without concepts and thus one must seek hitherto unknown concepts and produce unified experience in a new way. In the first version of the introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant states that this reflection indicates not a schematic, *i.e.*, “mechanical”, subsumption of things under concepts, but that it operates “technically” or “artistically.”¹⁸⁰ It is so described since one must create a concept. Thus we have, *via* Kant, two distinct ways (determinative and reflective judgment) in which imagination functions as the “power to subsume under rules”. Determinative judgment posits that we already know the thing in its schematic being prior to our encounter with the thing. Reflective judgment posits that we have to find the ways in which we schematically subsume the thing so that we can know the thing after the encounter.

Going back to our investigation of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson’s effort in chapters 2 and 3 is directed towards explicating the concept of memory precisely as a retrieval of the above-described Kantian faculty of judgment. Just like the two forms of judgment (determinative and reflective), Bergson explains that there are two distinct kinds of memory and that, in turn, those function in ways that support two different types of recognition. On the one hand, there is the type of memory that is called “habit-memory” (*souvenir-habitude*). At bottom, habit-memory functions in accordance with “a closed system of automatic movements”.¹⁸¹ It works like a reflex action whereby the certain region of the past is mechanically re-

¹⁷⁸ CJ 5:180.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ CJ 20:214. Deleuze states that this new type of judgment introduced in the *Critique of Judgment* shows us not the ordered regularity of time which connects the Self to the *I* but the hitherto-undisclosed “sources of time.” Deleuze, G., ([1993] 1997). *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. D. W. Smith & M. A. Greco. New York: Verso. p.34.

¹⁸¹ MM 79/225 - 86/231.

lived and *acted* by the body so that the past can be repeatedly prolonged.¹⁸² In turn, this faculty of automatic habit-memory supports what he calls the process of “inattentive recognition” (*reconnaissance par distraction*).¹⁸³ As Deleuze states, this refers to the process of recognizing usual objects “which occupy a large part of our daily life: this is a table, this is an apple, this the piece of wax, Good morning Theaetetus.”¹⁸⁴ It is called inattentive since it requires no conscious attention to recollect past memory for it to function. In fact, we are hardly conscious of this procedure to an extent that “[we] might believe it innate”.¹⁸⁵

On the other hand, there is another kind of memory called “memory-image” (*image-souvenir*).¹⁸⁶ In comparison to habit-memory, which requires no effort of consciousness to recollect past in the present, memory-image comes to us when “a call (*appel*) is made to the deeper and more distant regions of memory” by our consciousness.¹⁸⁷ It is more of a representation, or picturing the past events to oneself rather than action performed by the body. This type of memory supplies, in turn, what he calls the “attentive recognition” (*reconnaissance attentive*)¹⁸⁸ which functions in an analogous way to Kantian reflective judgment. It is so called since it utilizes attention, or “reflection” (*réflexion*) which is a kind of “projection, outside ourselves, of an actively created image”.¹⁸⁹ It is a projection of the past onto the object of perception beyond the automatic habit-memory since the image that one grasps is not given to us habitually but must be further recalled from the past thereby re-creating each perception anew. This process is more of a dynamic reconfiguration, or the plastic refashioning of the perceived object, which renders it richer and more detailed every time new memory-image adds hitherto hidden aspects of the object.

¹⁸² MM 94/239.

¹⁸³ MM 98/244.

¹⁸⁴ Deleuze, G., ([1968] 2004). *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. P. Patton. London: Continuum. p.171.

¹⁸⁵ MM 81/227.

¹⁸⁶ MM 79/225, 81/227.

¹⁸⁷ MM 101/247.

¹⁸⁸ MM 98/244.

¹⁸⁹ MM 102/248.

d. Aim of Memory: Attention to Life

While keeping intact the correspondence with Kantian functions of judgment, Bergson's retrieval is also an extension/refashioning of these functions by adding another yet fundamental element. The type of memory that we are talking about here is *impure* memory, or that which is mixed with perception – it is memory or the recollection of the past insofar as it has become a part of living perception in the present. Now, the function of external perception in the present was earlier deduced in chapter 1 of *Matter and Memory* in terms of its economic relation with the external environment for the sake of the individual's survival or life. Thus, impure memory, inasmuch as it is recollection of a region of the past in the present perception, is memory which has turned towards *sensible action*.

This conception of memory is a refashioning of Kantian critical judgment since the latter is seen as directed towards speculative interest of reason or pure “scientific” knowledge.¹⁹⁰ Here Bergson reconceives this postulate and turns the function of memory towards “attention to life”, or towards “adaptation to the present circumstances”.¹⁹¹ Memory is that which *a priori* mediates any factual perception of the world but this takes place to the service of one's survival or life. Is the fact that mediation takes place for life still the case for memory-image, or what we could call attentive recognition? Memory-image, to be sure, is characterised as having more to do with representation since it involves “an inhibition of movement, an arresting action”.¹⁹² Nonetheless, Bergson firmly maintains that “the phenomena of inhibition are merely a preparation for the actual movements of voluntary attention.”¹⁹³ It is true that the memory-image is aroused by a momentary halt, or a kind of “shock” (*choc brusque*)¹⁹⁴ in the midst of our ordinary habitually recognised world. Yet the seeming anti-utilitarian outlook of the memory-image is still a preparation for an eventual action because after this momentary arrest of movement “more subtle movements will soon graft themselves.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ MM 28/179.

¹⁹¹ MM 173-174/312.

¹⁹² MM 101/246.

¹⁹³ MM 101/246.

¹⁹⁴ MM 171/310.

¹⁹⁵ MM 101/246-247, 168-169/307-308: “memory, laden with the whole of the past, responds to the appeal of the present state by two simultaneous movements, one of

Let us consult the famous diagram of the reverse cone in order to clarify our discussion (See Diagram 6 below).

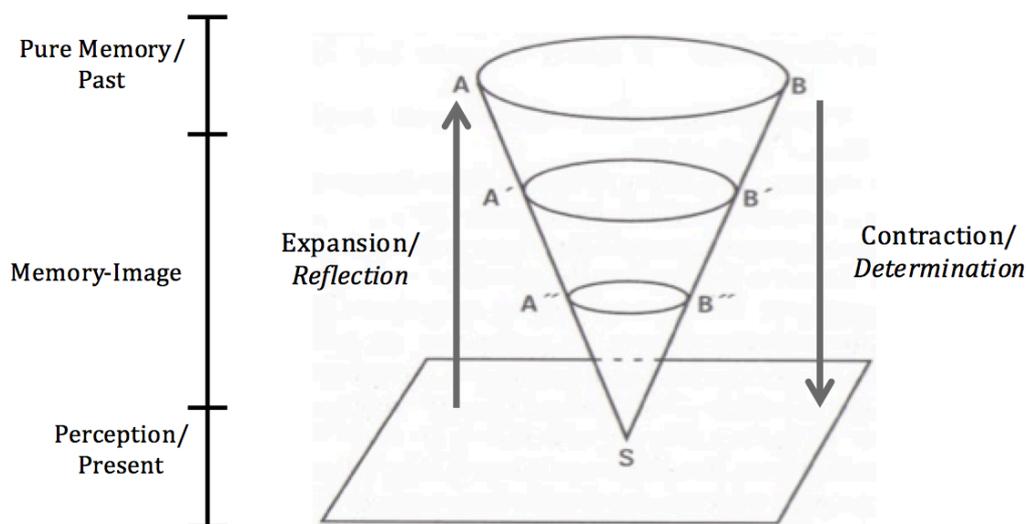


Diagram 6

Bergson explains in chapter 3 that the mechanism of memory as a whole can be illustrated in terms of an inverted cone: the tip of a cone (which touches the plane) representing the present perception and the base of the cone representing the motionless totality of the pure past.¹⁹⁶ Impure memory, which furnishes our perception, is “the double movement of contraction and expansion” which takes place between the two poles of the pure present and of pure memory. On the one hand, the downward movement, or *contraction* of the past, corresponds to inattentive recognition (determinative judgment, as it were) made possible by habit-memory.¹⁹⁷ As we can see in the figure, this contraction is a narrowing down or “crystallisation” (*crystalliser*) of the past into the present. On the other hand, the upward movement refers to the process of attentive recognition, which ascends towards the depth of pure past thereby bringing back memory-image. This is an *expansion* or an “evaporation” (*s'évaporer*) of the present perception onto the past

translation, by which it moves in its entirety to meet experience, thus contracting more or less, though without diving, with a view to action; and the other of rotation upon itself, by which it turns toward the situation of the moment, presenting to it that side of itself which may prove to be the most useful.”

¹⁹⁶ MM 152/292.

¹⁹⁷ MM 166/305, 168/307.

memory thereby the present perception can incorporate more and more detailed aspects of the objects of perception. As it is obvious in the diagram above, the movement of attentive recognition is made up of going up towards the pure past but in order for pure memory to manifest itself as memory-image and as actual perception (treated separately from pure memory itself), a second downward movement is further required. In other words, an expansion happens *so that* a new contraction can soon follow. In the same way, the downward movement of habitual recognition also requires an initial, mechanical and automatic, upward movement prompted by the object of perception.

Thus, both habit-memory and memory-image are ultimately subordinated to a movement towards the action of the body in the present. If this is not the case, we cannot even speak of this memory in the present since, by virtue of its definition, pure memory stays where it is in the realm of the pure past and does not become a part of the present. Whether automatic or not, the function of impure memory as the retrieval of the past in the present is for the past to be useful, or active. And, to return to a point we have made in previous sections, to be useful or active means that the past is deployed for the benefit of individual subsistence. Overall, the ascent and descent of memory represent two sides of the same process of concrete perception which has its aim in “attention to life” and in its continuous process of adaptation to the environment. Thus, Bergson calls memory the “power of action upon things” (*la puissance de son action sur les choses*).¹⁹⁸ The sole function of memory is to be *useful* in view of “attention to life”, and not contemplation.

e. Transcendental Time Determination: Time as Schema of Action

We are now able to focus more concretely upon the definite mechanism of time’s springing forth out of memory. If it is indeed the case, as Heidegger notes, that imagination is the source of time for Kant, the fact that Bergson retrieves Kantian faculty of judgment *via* the concept of memory ultimately means that memory is the source of time for Bergson. Time is born out of the above process of memory’s ascending and descending, or contracting and dilating, between the past and the

¹⁹⁸ MM 228/359.

present as a schema of perception. In other words, impure memory is posited nothing less than the source of time. It is indeed one of his fundamental claims that the activity of recollection, or process of recognition, is *a priori* aided by the brain's automatic grafting of objects under "schema" (*schème*)¹⁹⁹ and this schema of perception comprises time. Bergson states:

[Beneath] concrete extensity, a network of which the meshes may be altered to any shape whatsoever and become as small as we please: this substratum which is merely conceived, this wholly ideal scheme of arbitrary and indefinite divisibility, is homogeneous space [...] we are bound to imagine an abstract schema of succession in general, a homogeneous and indifferent milieu, which is to the current of matter in the sense of length as space is to it in the sense of breadth/width: herein consist homogeneous time.²⁰⁰

While Bergson does not explicitly mention Kant when he first derives the concept within a discussion of aphasia in chapter 2, our reading that points to the correspondence between memory and the faculty of judgment makes it more than obvious that, by "schema", he has in mind a correlate of the Kantian schematism. In Bergson's rendition, it is described as the "empty vessel" (*réceptif vide*) or the "mold" (*moule*) that sketches out the objects' outlines so that our perception "flow into" (*couler*) it automatically.²⁰¹ From one to the next, before any apprehension of the diversity of phenomenal objects, the schema intervenes *a priori* in our process of perception and "shows our thought the way" (*montre à notre pensée le chemin*).²⁰² It is therefore evident that Bergson knows well that time is this "abstract schema" (*schème abstrait*) supplied to us by imagination for Kant. We see here an almost exact replica of Kantian schematism of imagination except that there is one decisive alteration. What is crucial for us to note is that the nature of time also undergoes a redefinition due to the earlier deduction of the function of perception in view of practical interest for life. Indeed, it is evident that memory is the source of time. This time, however, cannot be considered independently of

¹⁹⁹ MM 97/243. The word "schème", which Bergson consistently uses throughout *Matter and Memory*, is unanimously translated as "diagram" by Paul and Palmer. Of course, given the kind of explanation provided by Bergson, the word "diagram" makes complete sense. Yet the implicit reference to Kantian schematism is completely lost.

²⁰⁰ MM 210-211/344.

²⁰¹ MM 98/144, 121/266.

²⁰² MM 121/266.

practical interest due to the fact that it is a product of memory insofar as it is already turned towards present perception.

In short, Kantian time is refashioned by Bergson as “the schema of our *action*” (les schème de notre *action*),²⁰³ or a “motor schema” (*schème moteur*)²⁰⁴ instead of “form of contemplation” deployed for the interest of speculative reason.²⁰⁵ And insofar as memory is the source of time as the schema of action, memory is the measure of our “power of action upon things” (*la puissance de son action sur les choses*).²⁰⁶ Granted, time is still seen by Bergson as the condition for any perception which happens, as it were, without our conscious effort. In other words, we are “automatically acted”²⁰⁷ upon by the schema as any factual perception of the world is prepared *a priori* by it. Yet Bergson explains that this is so because the schema is supplied automatically or habitually by the brain for the benefit of action alone. Again, since the function of perception is to establish economic relation with the environment, the aim of impure memory, as well as the schema, which is produced by it, is necessarily seen as directed towards economic action. This also means that, in its springing forth, the schema of time already contains the scope of our categories of understanding. As Bergson says in *Time and Free Will*, time as the form of intuition is therefore already conception and it comes into being insofar as it abides by transcendental logical principles. That is, as soon as time as the schema of perception comes into being ahead of our conscious perception, the ways in which the world is *a priori* ordered is in accordance with the logical categories of understanding – presentation of any being according to the categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality. Thereby, being is already passed over and constituted as an object of our *thought*. Put differently, any being within the world of phenomena can only be understood in terms of a self-identical and non-contradictory unit based upon number (as spatialized time) and the very sense in which we attribute to the word “being” is *a priori* supplied to us by the schema of time. Thus, in line with Heidegger’s statement, Bergson also displays full awareness that imagination is “the root of both stems”, both intuition and

²⁰³ MM 211/345.

²⁰⁴ MM 121/266.

²⁰⁵ MM 211/346.

²⁰⁶ MM 228/359.

²⁰⁷ MM 160/300.

understanding.²⁰⁸ Cognition has two distinct sources, but those are *a priori* conditioned by imagination as the common source of sources.

From that point on, the totality of world as phenomena and thus as object of our conceptual representation appears as a unified *system of nature*. That is, in line with the Kantian doctrine, this transcendental time determination of the function of impure memory also functions as the source of the transcendental logical principle of *genera* and *species*.²⁰⁹ In this sense, the abstract schema as the product of impure memory is also said to furnish the mind with “the *general idea of genus*” (*l'idée générale du genre*):

from genera so sketched out mechanically by habit we have passed by an effort of reflection upon this very process, to the *general idea of genus*; and when that idea has been once constituted, we have constructed (this time voluntarily) an unlimited number of general notions.²¹⁰

In line with Kantian transcendental logical principle of homogeneity or genera, the downward movement of habit-memory detects resemblances between objects (“perception of resemblances”) and thus aids our mind to recognize them based upon their commonality with other objects. The upward movement of the memory-image, on the other hand, seeks the individual differences (“recollection of differences”) of objects as in the case for the principle of specification or species and thus it is the faculty of noticing individual specificities, namely species.²¹¹ The principles of homogeneity and specification, put forth by Kant and retrieved by Bergson in terms of resemblance and differences, are, however, not contradictory. There is, for Kant, a third principle of the continuity of forms which commands an affinity between genera and species so that the systematic unity of the whole can be established and Bergson explains this in terms of a maintenance of a certain “intellectual equilibrium.”²¹² To be governed solely by resemblance is to be “always swayed by habit” or to be a “conscious automaton;” but to be pre-occupied solely with difference is to be “(a) human being who should *dream* his life instead

²⁰⁸ Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p.137. § 35.

²⁰⁹ MM 161/301.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ CPR A651-A661/B679-B689. MM 155/296.

²¹² MM 161/301,172/311. “The essence of general idea, in fact, is to be unceasingly going backward and forwards between the plane of action and that of pure memory.”

of living it.”²¹³ What this third principle does in a nutshell is to subordinate and contain individual difference under resemblance and commonality within a schema. Just like the function of memory-image is still to render the past useful in the present and become part of present perception, difference is only recollected to an extent that the equilibrium of the mind and its continuity with general resemblance is maintained. In Deleuze’s words, “*difference becomes an object of representation always in relation to a conceived identity, a judged analogy, an imagined opposition or a perceived similitude.*”²¹⁴

The general idea, then, is that which appears between the two currents of memory and establishes what is analogous to Kant’s “systematic unity of nature”.²¹⁵ Here, again, while he perfectly reconstitutes the Kantian transcendental logical principles in terms of the function of memory, Bergson subordinates this retrieval under the primary motivation for the individual’s survival rather than for speculative contemplation – insofar as impure memory is directed towards the action in the present, our symbolic representation of the world in terms of genera and species is necessarily executed from the perspective of our practical interests. That is, we come to represent the world in terms of identical beings due to our needs for economic action:

[the] truth is that this independent image is a late and artificial product of the mind. In fact, we perceive the resemblance before we perceive the individuals which resemble each other; and, in an aggregate of contiguous parts, we perceive the whole before the parts. We go on from similarity to similar objects, embroidering upon the similarity, as on their common stuff, or canvas, the variety of individual differences. And we go on also from the whole to the parts, by a process of which consists in breaking up, for the greater convenience of practical life, the continuity of the real.²¹⁶

²¹³ MM 155/295- 296. This important distinction between resemblance and difference is taken up by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* vis-à-vis Heidegger’s problematisation of ontological difference. We cannot delve into the details of Deleuze’s operation here since this requires a thorough analysis of Bergson’s conception of *duration*. It suffices to note that Deleuze reads Heidegger vis-à-vis Bergson’s explication of memory as a retrieval of the Kantian faculty of imagination. His criticism of Heidegger seems to stem, then, from the latter’s shortcomings in seeing an alternative method of grasping the world other than the Kantian position (while the alternative method is put forth by Bergson as *duration*). See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.211.

²¹⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.174.

²¹⁵ CPR A651/B679.

²¹⁶ MM 165/304.

Based on the above, the Kantian systematic unity of nature indeed constitutes, in Bergson's case, "an essential phenomenon of mental life" (*un phénomène essentiel de la vie mentale*),²¹⁷ which in turn gives factual "independent images."²¹⁸ Yet such is the product of the movement of memory which coordinates itself in view of "attention to life".²¹⁹

3. Reversed Platonism: Beyond "Vulgar" Dualism

We have shown above, through a procedure analogous to the Kantian schematism of imagination, the world of "pure perception" gets covered over by the *a priori* synthesis of memory. Consequently, we come to live in the world of memory as the transcendental condition of experience, which seems "as if" cut off from the immediate reality of the self. There then arises what Bergson calls the "second self" in *Time and Free Will*, which now assumes the dominant condition of experience that covers over our immediate experience of the world. Between *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*, Bergson therefore completes the retrieval of the essential mechanism of the coming into being of time and its prior status of being a mere error is now given a positive reality.

Yet, due to this operation, a contradiction would seem to reside at the heart of his thought. On the one hand, immediate heterogeneous duration is put forth as the real in contrast to the false homogeneous time and, in a diametrically opposed manner, this homogeneous time is now on the side of the real through the new concept of memory. Again, in *Matter and Memory*, pure perception is only said to be true *in theory* rather than being the immediate reality and this indicates that time is now nearer to us than duration and that the latter recedes in the background. Many dualisms within Bergson's works can be said to stem originally from this distinction between time and duration. False criticisms have taken place due to the failure or unwillingness to reconcile, or to properly acknowledge, the very nature of this dualism. In fact, such criticisms have tended to stage artificial confrontations between one term against another such as "virtualism vs.

²¹⁷ MM 161/301.

²¹⁸ MM 165/304.

²¹⁹ MM 173/312.

actualism”, “continuity vs. discontinuity”, “flow vs. repose”, or “feeling vs. intellect”.²²⁰

In order for us to adequately grasp what is at stake here, we need to explore the nature of this duality itself. It is our contention that the duality of time and duration and their seeming contradiction stem from Bergson’s unique contribution to the post-Kantian project of reversing Platonism. Through his abovementioned treatment of Kantian time as that which comes into being out of memory, Bergson effectively reverses the order of the famous Platonic dualism between the visible and the intelligible world. Bergson’s view here closely resembles that of Schopenhauer who sees no problem in juxtaposing Plato and Kant on this very subject matter.²²¹ By referring to Kantian time as the milieu of “surface”/“superficial” existence, Bergson is re-interpreting Kant in terms of the allegory of the cave in Plato’s *Republic*.²²² We may briefly recount that in the dialogue, Socrates explains that the state of uneducated humans resemble prisoners who are forced to see the play of shadows on a dark cave wall and are made to believe that what they see is in fact the true reality.²²³ Here, the play of shadows that the prisoners see represents the “visible realm” [τόπος ὀρατός], which is the pre-intellectual realm of sense perception (imagination/image and

²²⁰ The details of these debates cannot be fully covered here since this would cause considerable diversion from the purpose of the present chapter. As we touched upon in the introduction, there is an implicit assumption of an internal confrontation within Bergson’s thought which asks us to choose one over another, as it were, and this is detrimental in grasping his thought as a whole thus leading us towards a devastating hermeneutic failure. For an excellent exposition on the status of the dualism and the seeming contradiction within Bergson’s works in general, see Worms, F., (2005). “Time Thinking: Bergson’s Double Philosophy of Mind.” *MLN*, Vol. 120, No 5, December. pp.1226-1234.

²²¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation. Vol.1*, p.419. Schopenhauer draws a straight line, which connects not only Plato and Kant on this subject matter, but also the non-Abrahamic Asian wisdom tradition such as Vedic philosophy and Buddhism.

²²² We can readily infer his juxtaposition between Kant and Plato, since we can also see in the beginning of chapter 3 of *Creative Evolution* where Bergson makes an explicit reference to the allegory of the cave. However, we must note that Bergson refers to it so that he distance himself from what is expressed by the allegory: “(h)uman intelligence is, as we represent it, is not at all what Plato taught in the allegory of the cave”(CE 191/657). Instead of fully endorsing Plato, he puts forth a more materialistic and naturalistic, or, in a word, “lived” account of the faculty of intelligence. His opposition to Plato is of course obvious here. Yet in order to understand the originality of Bergson’s argument, it is essential that we first map the terrain in which he places his thesis, which is undoubtedly Platonic. That is, the vividness of his argument cannot be captured without understanding his reading of Plato vis-à-vis the surface ego or time.

²²³ Plato, *Republic*, 514a-514b.

belief) that supplies us with nothing but confused *opinion/doxa* [δόξα].²²⁴ In the *Definitions*, we find that *doxa* refers to “fluctuation in reasoning; the thinking which is led by reason to the false as well as the true.”²²⁵ In other words, it is of the order of *becoming*. In order to go beyond the realm of *doxa* and grasp the reality itself, Socrates suggests that one must make an “upward journey” towards the intelligible realm [τόπος νοητός] so that the *idea or being* of things is grasped *via* reason through the power of thinking.²²⁶

Now, when Bergson refers to Kantian homogeneous time as the basis for the surface as well as social ego, he is alluding to this Socratic allegory since by “surface” we are led to imagine a kind of projection screen, or the “communicating surface” [*la surface de communication*] where “the shadow of the self [*l’ombre du moi*] projected into homogenous space” comes to “obscure” duration and ultimately prompts us to lose contact with reality:²²⁷

[Little] by little these states are made into objects or things; they become detached not only from one another, but from ourselves. Henceforth we no longer perceive them except in the homogeneous milieu in which we have set their image, and through the word which lends them its banal colour. Thus a second self is formed which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another and easily expressed in words.²²⁸

Insofar as our experience is conditioned by time, then, like Plato’s prisoners in the allegory of the cave, we are alienated from the true, immediate reality. If Bergson in fact retrieves Kantian time after his initial refutation and treats it as that which comes into being as part and parcel of real human existence, he may be said to effectively generate a re-interpretation of Plato’s allegory in terms of a modern, post-Kantian worldview.

However, given that time’s coming into being is explained in terms of the mechanism of memory, this in fact signifies a *reversal* of Platonism. In fact, memory for Plato is the very opposite of alienation. Memory, or *anamnesis* [ἀνάμνησις] for Plato has to do with the process of learning and it is said to be akin to the “upward

²²⁴ *Ibid.* 510a.

²²⁵ *Ibid.* 414c.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* 517a, 511b.

²²⁷ TFW 126-128/84-85.

²²⁸ TFW 138/91.

journey of the soul to the intelligible realm”.²²⁹ It marks a kind of departure from the sensuous, mortal body and up towards the divine, suprasensuous immortality of the soul. If anything, memory is seen as that which re-establishes and *heals* the forgetfulness of the human soul caused by its admixture with the bodily sense perception. Seen in this way, philosophical thinking is none other than the process of recollection and it is to find truth of reality beyond the visible and the sensible world *via* the power of the intellect [νοῦς], which recaptures the forgotten essence of our true being. With Bergson, however, the opposite is true. Memory is not the device that helps us to acquire our forgotten essence but it is that which puts us in the state of forgetfulness in the first place. It is not that we naturally dwell within the illusory world of sensibility, which must be overcome with our power of memory, but *we forget because we remember, or we lose ourselves because our perception is covered over by memory a priori*. Alienation thus occurs and we come to dwell within the realm of illusion since our pure perception becomes infiltrated by the *spiritual reality* of memory. In this sense, although the Platonic duality of the real is retained here, Bergson operates within radically new terrain since the thesis of memory implies a reversal of the original Platonic configuration.

It is well known that Nietzsche proclaimed his philosophy as reversed Platonism, yet the same can be said of Bergson. By turning memory into the instrument of our forgetfulness, Bergson reverses the Platonic order between the sensuous world of the “below” and the suprasensuous world of the “beyond” and identifies the latter as the apparent reality. This implies that an attainment of Truth cannot be done through recollection, or, as Bergson says, through a kind of “fleeing” [*fuir*] into the realm of the suprasensible.²³⁰ The problem rather stems from our flight into the suprasensible and it is the question of coming back down to the sensible realm as our true home. However, it is important for us to remember that Bergson enters into the above terrain through the retrieval of Kantian time. The retrieval results into the reversal of Platonism because it is Kant who reverses Platonism in the first place. As Deleuze says, it is Kant who first makes a reversal of Platonism and by retrieving Kantian time out of memory, it seems that Bergson is merely following Kant’s footsteps.²³¹

²²⁹ Plato, *Meno*, 81b – 81d; *Republic*, 517 b.

²³⁰ CM 139/1374.

²³¹ Deleuze, G., ([1969] 2004). *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. M. Lester & C. Stivale. London: Continuum. p.291.

Given the above one might ask: by retrieving Kantian time does not Bergson also invite back the same “error” of positing the unknowable, transcendent “beyond” this time as the world of sensibility?²³² As Heidegger says regarding Nietzsche’s reversed Platonism:

after the inversion [...] the sensuous, the world of appearances, stands above; the supersensuous, the true world, lies below. [...] But as long as the “above and below” define the formal structure of Platonism, Platonism in its essence perdures.²³³

Does then the dualism of *Matter and Memory* signify a kind of resurrection, or a continuation of Platonic “metaphysics”, which is, according to Heidegger, reducible to an *onto-theology*?²³⁴ Indeed, as we have explained so far, one of the essential doctrines of Kant’s critical philosophy is that the receptivity of intuition is *a priori* covered over by the spontaneity of understanding and this implies the original diminution of our receptive power due to the *a priori* intervention of the suprasensuous categories upon the sensuous receptivity. Thus, for Kant, it is not that the activity of pure reason would free us from the shackles of our sensuous perception; in fact, *any* sense perception is condemned to dwell within the *transcendental ideality* of the world. The world “beyond” once occupied by the suprasensuous realm is now replaced with the world of the *things in themselves*, which is regarded to lie outside of the confines of the “possible experience”. Indeed, the thing in itself is called “noumenon” and we can interpret it in a Platonic way as that which is merely imagined by the shackled creature that lacks the power to perceive it directly.

Let us ask again, then: Does not Bergson also retrieve the unreachable world of the *thing in itself* as the correlate of the Platonic “beyond”, this time as the world of “pure perception” which is said to be only true *in theory*? We have already seen in our analysis of *Time and Free Will* that Bergson goes beyond Kant’s reversed Platonism and posits the in-itself of the world as directly and immediately given to sensuous perception. Yet, after having done so, why does he go back to the Platonic dualism *via* the theory of memory so as to revive the *beyond* once again? Would not the prior effort of expelling Platonism be now ruined by the retrieval?

²³² CM 140/1375: “Why did Kant, their adversary, share their error?”

²³³ Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1 & 2*, p.201.

²³⁴ Heidegger, M., ([1957] 1969). *Identity and Difference*. Trans. J. Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Rowe. p.71.

There are several instances in Deleuze's commentary on Bergson that make us suspect that such, in fact, is the case. For instance, as Meillassoux suggests, Deleuze says in *What Is Philosophy?* that "pure immanence" only happens once in the first chapter of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, seemingly indicating that transcendence looms over his philosophy from that point onward.²³⁵ What is at stake here is not only the status of Bergson's reversed Platonism but also the inevitable risk involved in his inability to put forth a socio-political criticism of subjectivity. No doubt Bergson refutes Kantian time in *Time and Free Will* and goes beyond the reversed Platonism of Kant through this refutation of time as the false duration. Yet, by getting rid of the dualism, he would also seem to lose the power of negating the fictitiousness of historically constituted ideological consciousness. To get rid of time is to get rid of the form of representation and by getting rid of the form of representation, one also loses the power of putting forth a revolutionary "no" to the conditioned surface appearance of the world. Seen in this light, it is thus natural that Bergson therefore has become the favorite polemical target within Marxism due to his supposed inability for negation.

It is against such a reading that we have emphasized the real existence of time in Bergson's philosophy. The theory of memory in fact explains the coming into being of time as the basis of the so-called surface/social ego, which is equivalent to the Marxist conception of ideological consciousness. The problem is that this retrieval of time, albeit in a reverse manner, seemingly re-invites transcendence at the heart of Bergson's philosophy along with the possibility for putting forth a socio-political criticism. To retrieve time as a real existence would seem to be the same thing as to reinstate the Platonic dualism once again and envisage the "true world" behind the veil of the apparent reality. Yet the latter would be the case only if we saw Bergson's reversed Platonism as a "vulgar dualism" [*dualism vulgaire*], as Bergson himself puts it.²³⁶ With regard to such a dualism, we need to keep in mind that if Bergson makes an original contribution to philosophy in *Matter and Memory*, it is not through the reproduction of Kant's reversal of Platonism in terms of the analysis of the subjective condition. Rather, Bergson makes possible a unity of two seemingly mutually exclusive philosophical movements: on the one hand, by retrieving time and re-introducing a reversed

²³⁵ See Meillassoux, "Subtraction and Contraction: Deleuze, Immanence, and Matter and Memory."

²³⁶ MM 227/358.

Platonic dualism, he makes a socio-political critique of subjectivity possible; on the other, by distinguishing his own dualism from the so-called “vulgar dualism”, Bergson liberates the socio-political critique of subjectivity from presupposing the transcendent thing in-itself that goes beyond our consciousness. As he states:

All the difficulties raised by this problem, either in vulgar dualism, or in materialism and idealism, come from considering, in the phenomena of perception and memory, the physical and the mental as *duplicates* of one another.²³⁷

The essence of what Bergson calls vulgar dualism resides in the relation between the material and mental realities mirrored in the relationship between *the copy and the original*. First, two distinct systems of reality are posited – one is the suprasensuous system of ideas and the other is the sensuous system of bodies. Vulgar dualism then sets either of the two as the true substance of reality and then seeks to deduce the other in terms of the other half of the dualism.²³⁸ In the case of subjective idealism, material reality is thus conceived to be the representation of the idea. On the other hand, materialism supposes that the system of ideas is the product of brain/matter (resulting in the thesis of epiphenomenalism). In either case, each time one system is supposed to have the miraculous power to produce the other in the manner of a “*deus ex machina*”.²³⁹ In this sense, “vulgar dualism” is in fact a kind of monism, or a dualism that desires to reduce one term over another *via* a movement of *negation*.

There is, as Bergson points out, a “dialectical artifice” at work within this scenario and its origin is “entirely metaphysical.”²⁴⁰ Although the qualitative difference between the idea and matter is first posited, this difference is subsequently erased or *mediated* at the second instance through an “an unconscious trick of intellectual conjuring” that converts one in terms of another.²⁴¹ No doubt, this dialectical movement is itself explained in terms of the function of memory, which mediates and translates duration into time. As we argued, this is equivalent to the Kantian schematism of imagination that covers over receptivity in terms of spontaneous understanding. Thus, by uncovering the

²³⁷ MM 226/357.

²³⁸ MM 27/178.

²³⁹ MM 26-27/176-178.

²⁴⁰ ME 188-189/960-961.

²⁴¹ ME 192/963.

dialectical movement of memory, Bergson is effectively demonstrating how the logic of ordinary dualism itself functions.

However, to return to our argument, Bergson's dualism differs from such a one-sided conception since it "pushes dualism to an extreme" and affirms both the reality of spirit and the reality of matter in their own terms.²⁴² That is, as much as Bergson positively explains the mechanism behind the *a priori* synthesis of memory, he does not exclude the right of the other half of the divide to be also positively defined in itself: "we define spirit and matter by positive characters, and not by negations. It is in very truth within matter that pure perception places us, and it is really into spirit that we penetrate by means of memory".²⁴³ Rather than defining the nature of the spirit and matter by positing a negative relationship with regard to one another, Bergson's dualism positively defines *both* sides of the divide.

In a nutshell, such a positive characterization of the both sides of duality is possible due to Bergson's novel treatment of *intuition*. Freed from vulgar dualism, intuition is raised to the status of philosophical method. The dialectic that guides our thought within vulgar dualism has its roots in the supposed "insufficiency of our faculty of perception".²⁴⁴ Either the mind or the body is seen to lie outside of our intuition and the dialectic is there to supplement what we do not perceive. That is, one half of dualism is seen to be within the infra-perceptive realm of intuition, while the other is relegated outside it. Abstract reasoning is then employed in order to transcend into the realm of the beyond and supplement what intuition does not perceive. In Platonism, it is the Idea which is given the place of the beyond of perception; in the case of Kantianism, it is the thing in-itself. Thus we can see that although the order is reversed between the ancient and the modern dualism, the configuration is the same as long as the boundary between the "up above" and "down below" is drawn in terms of the limit of intuition. This supplementary thinking is philosophy itself and as Bergson argues, it is born out of the insufficiency of perception.²⁴⁵

As we will see in greater detail in Part II, while Bergson situates himself within the framework of Kantian reversed Platonism, he does not rely upon transcendence since going-beyond of apparent reality is accomplished *within*

²⁴² MM 181/318.

²⁴³ MM 180/317.

²⁴⁴ CM 132-133/1368.

²⁴⁵ CM 132/1368.

intuition and not beyond it. In the “Method to Be Followed” section of chapter 4, Bergson states that his method of philosophizing makes it possible:

to seek experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly *human* experience. [...] The relativity of our knowledge may not, then, be definitive. By unmaking that which these needs have made, we may restore to intuition its original purity, and so recover contact with the real.²⁴⁶

In other words, while Kant’s reversed Platonism only *conceives* of the thing in-itself through abstract reasoning due to the insufficiency of intuition, Bergsonian dualism makes an actual *contact* with it. What this means is that the thing in-itself is *sensuously intuited* by Bergson *via* a kind of enlarged perception. Both the spiritual and the material reality are defined in terms of their positive characteristics since the duality is not posited in terms of what belongs to intuition and what does not. Rather, the body and mind belong to two kinds of intuition – or, duality is posited *within* intuition as the two sides that comprise it. Bergson’s reversed Platonism thus frees itself from vulgar dualism and establishes what we have called a *Transcendental Dualism*. No doubt, *Matter and Memory* retrieves time through the novel theory of memory and it is due to this retrieval that we can say Bergson’s philosophy is capable of putting forth a socio-political criticism of ideological subjectivity. Yet, this fact alone does not lead us to conclude that Bergson therefore goes back to Kant’s reversed Platonism or that Bergson merely “completes” Western metaphysics as *onto-theology*. With Bergson, in a way, the “here below” and the “up above” are both in *this* world and the going-beyond or the transcending of apparent reality, so to speak, is done *within* intuition and not through a flight into abstract reasoning.

Furthermore, the dialectical distinction between the below and the above are here made not in terms of the knowable and the unknowable. Rather, the Kantian speculative knowledge of apparent reality is reinterpreted in terms of “ordinary or useful knowledge” [*connaissance usuelle ou utile*]; what was hitherto treated as the unknowable thing in-itself is now made available to our intuition as “true knowledge” [*connaissance vraie*].²⁴⁷ Having the reality of spirit and matter within it, intuition’s capacity to distinguish and apprehend the separate realities of

²⁴⁶ MM 185/321.

²⁴⁷ MM 186/322.

those transcendental elements signifies a capacity for dialectical negation and affirmation.

We have focused primarily on the status of time in Part I since it corresponds to the negative or spiritual side of the dualism – a conscious apprehension of the spiritual reality of time gives intuition its negative capacity in the sense of Marxist ideology critique. Yet since the affirmative reality of duration is also posited and apprehended within intuition, the negative capacity of intuition is not negative in the sense of reducing the immediate sensuousness into non-being and presenting the truth of the world only in terms of the truth of spiritual mediation. Rather, the truth of the spiritual mediation is regarded as only one half of Truth, the half that pronounces what is true from a perspective of the socio-historically conditioned, *relatively* determined fashion.²⁴⁸ The negative capacity of intuition is the capacity to be aware of and negate this relatively determined being of the negative. It is therefore a kind of negation of negation – it is a capacity to hold and negate the negative spiritual being in one's intuition as a determinate being-there.

²⁴⁸ CM 159/1392.

Part II

Affirmation and Duration

Although the individual phenomenon of the will begins and ends in time, the will itself, as thing-in-itself, is not affected thereby, nor is the correlative of every object, namely the knowing but never known subject, and that life is always certain to the will-to-live. This is not to be numbered among those doctrines of immortality. For permanence no more belongs to the will, considered as thing-in-itself, or to the pure subject of knowing, to the eternal eye of the world, than does transitoriness, since passing way and transitoriness are determinations valid in time alone, whereas the will and the pure subject of knowing lie outside time.

Arthur Schopenhauer
The World as Will and Representation, §54.

What are you looking for, my lamenting heart? What is it that rouses your indignation against a system to which my intellect cannot make the slightest objection? This: I want something which lies beyond mere mental presentations, which is there, was there, and will be there even if there were no presentation; something which the mind only looks at without producing it or making the least change in it.

Johann Fichte
The Vocation of Man, p.67.

Introduction

Is Duration Ideological Illusion?

In Part I, we elaborated upon Bergson's retrieval of time from a distinctly materialist standpoint. By demonstrating that the "illegitimate translation" of time into space is in fact accounted for in terms of the function of memory, we have shown that Bergson's theory of intuition contains within itself the distinct dialectical movement that goes from duration to time. This dialectical movement in turn conditions the genesis of the derivative subjectivity of the human being in view of the "attention to Life". What we established in the previous chapters is how time, as the *a priori* condition of the derivative self, comes into being out of consciousness' partaking of material Life. Based on this, we have established that this novel understanding of time corresponds to Bergson's materialist reconceptualization of time in a way that constitutes his unique theory of history.

Given the above, the task of Part II is to investigate the nature of duration as the irreducible half of what the method of intuition apprehends. Whereas the concept of time signifies the negative side of Bergson's dialectic, the concept of duration is what makes up its affirmative side. The leading question for us is the following: how can the immediate givenness of the Self be apprehended within intuition provided that pure perception gets covered over by memory and becomes the obscure object for derivative consciousness? With what distinct method of intuition can Bergson maintain the theory of duration after time is retrieved as a real existence? To answer these questions, we must take the renewed reality of time into consideration and examine how Bergson's theory of intuition can possibly contain within itself the apprehension of something that is hidden within time-bound consciousness.

This investigation cannot commence without first acknowledging the familiar oppositions raised against the concept within the context of materialist philosophy. As we have touched upon earlier, if duration is the immediately given Absolute Self within intuition, how can this conception be understood as something other than the counterexample that blatantly ignores and destroys Bergson's materialism? In order to undertake our exploration into the concept, we must first at least clear out the obstacle that lies ahead of us and demonstrate

beforehand that the theory of duration can still be considered within the framework of materialism. Indeed, one can hardly deny that the concept of duration centrally contributes towards the popularised view that Bergson's thought largely falls under the banner of a pre-critical "spiritualist metaphysics",²⁴⁹ or is, as Alain Badiou puts it more simply, "bourgeois".²⁵⁰ No matter what specific label Bergsonism acquires, it has become a commonplace to opine that it is largely antithetical to radical politics due to the implications that the concept of duration carries for materialism.

Why is this so? To go into the heart of the matter straight away, such a view stems from the concept of duration since, as the French title of his dissertation clearly states, duration as the "real time" points to the *immediate data of consciousness*. Insofar as it is said to point to what is immediately given, duration is that which goes beyond or dismantles the Kantian condition of possible experience. In other words, it really refers to a direct and unmediated grasping of reality as such in an absolute fashion. Or, to employ Kantian vocabulary, duration points to a theoretical position that affirms the *thing-in-itself* as the actual object of one's experience – an obvious sign that Kant's warning against "transcendence" is ignored.²⁵¹

The perceived problem, in this case, is that Bergson's insistence upon the truth of immediate reality is seen as essentially antithetical to Marxist historical criticism, ostensibly functioning as the root concept that puts Bergsonism on the wrong side of radical politics. The leftist revolutionary political theory that stems from Marx's materialist philosophy has long sustained its standpoint by opposing itself to any pronouncement of ahistorical Truth as ideological fabrication and the concept of duration seems to precisely indicate such a fabrication. One may recall that in *German Ideology* Marx says:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse,

²⁴⁹ Alliez, E., (1998). *On Deleuze's Bergsonism*. Trans. T. Conley, M. McMuhan. *Discourse*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 226-246.

²⁵⁰ Badiou, A., (2004). *Theoretical Writings*. R. Brassier & A. Toscano. London: Continuum. p.70.

²⁵¹ CPR A296/B353.

alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.²⁵²

Morality, religion, and metaphysics are here given the status of “the phantoms formed in the human brain”, which only possesses a “semblance of independence”.²⁵³ As Althusser famously argued, this move by Marx seems to indicate a decisive departure from philosophy; it is a move which differentiates Marxism from “ideological philosophy” that pretends to have no determinate ground in material history.²⁵⁴ What is put forth as independent truth is thereby counteracted as a historically contingent fabrication. The concept of duration therefore naturally appears to be the Achilles’ heel of Bergsonism.

Here, as soon as we attempt to come face to face with the concept of duration within the context of radical politics, we come across a severe obstacle. If duration is indeed the immediate givenness of the Absolute Self, it is seemingly ill advised from the outset for any political thinking to take the concept seriously. Before we examine the nature of the concept, there is a clear warning posted in front of us: if one is to show allegiance to Marxism, one must dismiss such a concept as a mere ideological illusion. Is it not, after all, a product of Bergson’s “Judeo-Christian” enthusiasm, which must be overcome since Marx clearly says that “the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism”?²⁵⁵ How to face duration – is this question not equivalent to asking how to submit ourselves to the historically fabricated Absolute Truth or God within politics, the so-called “*opium of the people*” despite Marx’s clear warning?

How can we proceed from here? It certainly seems that the abovementioned warning sign commands us to dismiss the concept of duration altogether in order to save other aspects of Bergson’s philosophy from the trap of Idealism. Let us, however, take a different approach and instead examine the

²⁵² Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, p.42.

²⁵³ Louis Althusser extracts the formula of philosophy as ideology out of the above and also explicitly singles out Bergson as one of the “pitiful” examples of French philosopher-ideologues. See Althusser, L., ([1965] 1969). *For Marx*. Trans. B. Brewster. London: Verso. p.25. “This is the pitiful history of French philosophy in the 130 years following the Revolution of 1789, its spiritualist persistence in reaction, not just conservatism, from Maine de Biran and Cousin to Bergson, its contempt for history and for the people, its deep but narrow-minded ties with religion”.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.30-33

²⁵⁵ Derrida, J., (2002). *Acts of Religion*. London: Routledge. p.77. Marx, *Early Writings*, p.243.

conceptual structure of what is being said in the above warning so that we can determine whether the road ahead can be secured in any way.

The gist of the claim against duration that we have just mentioned is the following: insofar as it is put forth as the immediate reality beyond representation/time, the concept of duration falls prey to ideological illusion. The claim is launched from a standpoint that treats the concept of duration itself as an object of political criticism. However, this seems odd since in Part I, we have already shown that the Bergsonian retrieval of time is equivalent to the Marxist theme of the critique of ideology. Given our exposition of the realism of time in Part I, the claim that duration is an ideological illusion can be articulated in our own vocabulary in the following way: *duration is impossible since it must be a priori conditioned by time*. What this claim is really saying is that duration is *within time* even if it refers to that which is beyond the mediation of time. As long as one puts forth the reality of time, since time is the historically constituted *a priori* form of intuition, it necessarily negates the givenness of the immediate reality and turns it into its other.

What, however, does it mean to say that duration must be *a priori* conditioned by time? In criticising duration in this way, does one really consider the specificity of the nature of duration? Again, if we were to put forth a legitimate criticism against duration, we must at least take duration as its own object. Instead, what we have here is an illegitimate, one-sided quarrel that heads straight towards the direction of time. In other words, while the statement claims to be speaking *of* duration, the very object of criticism within the claim rather resides within time and it hence does not even face duration. In fact, therefore, what the claim speaks of is not at all duration but rather its illusory shadow. Although the definition of duration is precisely that which is not conditioned by time, the critique of duration as ideology deals with it in an inverted fashion that confuses it with its temporal mediation.

Duration must be a priori conditioned by time: this means that duration, although it is put forth as that which is *not* conditioned by time, is only interpreted as an appearance within time. Insofar as the criticism of duration considers not duration itself but its appearance within time, it still falls short as it is merely pointing out something other than what it claims to point out and hence ultimately remains estranged from the very object it seeks to criticize. In this way, duration

never enters into our sight and we do not have any choice but to *mystify* it. Here, the alleged mysticism ascribed to Bergson reveals itself to be stemming not from the concept of duration itself but rather from the transcendental projective surface prepared by the concept of time blocking our vision. Before even examining the concept of duration, the operation of critique *a priori* renders it impossible and does not permit itself to face duration directly without turning it into its other. Although the operation of mystification itself stems from the criticism, the concept of duration is thus magically rendered responsible for this mystification. The criticism is seemingly intending to enter into duration but it rather ends up knocking on the wrong door.

* * *

The above analysis shows us, no matter how negatively, in what way we must not approach the concept of duration. Our central thesis is that the duality of time and duration comprises the essential structure of the Bergsonian dialectic. Our position therefore affirms both the historically mediated view of reality (time) as well as the ahistorical immediacy of the Absolute (duration) and does not allow one term to be sacrificed for another. As it is often said in Buddhism, both the relative truths and the Absolute truth need to be seen as true. Insofar as both must be affirmed, the existence of time does not annihilate the existence of duration and *vice versa*. That is, we neither deny that duration and time must be distinguished, nor do we concede that they are mutually exclusive. Just as the concept of duration *qua* real time does not preclude the real existence of time, so does the presence of time not relegate duration into the status of non-existence. As long as those two elements are supposed to be mutually exclusive, we do not grasp Bergson's method of intuition.

Why, however, is such a dualism desirable to begin with? Is not the critique of ideology enough by itself? For us, the dualism of time and duration or the dualism of negativity and affirmativeness as the two sides of the dialectic is necessary in order to make human freedom possible. Insofar as the immediate reality of the Absolute is perpetually set aside as the abstract, derivative product of ideology, political criticism suffers from an unavoidable internal contradiction that

weakens it from within. Sartre's insight about the "supreme paradox of historical materialism" in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is of particular relevance here:

The supreme paradox of historical materialism is that it is, at one and the same time, the only truth of History and a total *indetermination* of the Truth. The totalising thought of historical materialism has established everything except for its own existence [...] we do not know what it means for a Marxist historian to *speak the truth*. Not that his statements are false – far from it; but he does not have the concept of *Truth* at his disposal. In this way, Marxism presents itself to us, as ideologists, as an unveiling of being, and at the same time as an unanswered question as to the validity of this unveiling.²⁵⁶

It is clear from the above that historical materialism performs a political criticism of ideology, and, by doing so, puts all truths in quotation marks. As a result, it does not have a concept of Truth that affirms itself beyond the critique of ideology. It is thus easy to see that the legitimacy of putting forth of a "no" receives a permanent damage since to condemn the untruth of all truths as historically contingent ideology necessarily contains its own philosophical standpoint as the very object of criticism. The theory of time, put forth as that which necessarily destroys the theory of duration, is bound to destroy itself. That is, political criticism ends up sacrificing the very foundation it stands upon – critique is forever condemned to negate itself and ends up pronouncing its own death sentence. The way in which one knows that one's condition of subjectivity is socially conditioned, must itself, in turn, be socially conditioned.

How can anyone justify the criticism of abstract truth without assuming that the theory of historical construction itself presupposes an incontestable Truth not historically conditioned? What happens to Material Life, which is the namesake of historical materialism? We see here a tragicomic state of affairs based upon the mechanical repetition of the Marxist overcoming of the Hegelian "negation of the negation". The birthplace of Marxist materialism is the realization that Hegel's "absolute consciousness" which negates negation is itself abstract and therefore still estranged from reality.²⁵⁷ This materialist overcoming of idealism points out that the negation of the negation, which claims to be the revelation of the Absolute, is still an alienated abstraction that is in need of its Other. Yet, does this mean that

²⁵⁶ Sartre, J.-P., ([1960] 2004). *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Trans. A. Sheridan-Smith. New York: Verso. p.19.

²⁵⁷ Marx, *Early Writings*, p.382.

Marx overcomes the negation of the negation solely through another yet negation (negation of the negation of negation)? This would be absurd. Marx's solution to the problem of idealism does not amount to abstractly negating the negation of negation, but instead positively establishes the dialectical method upon the sensuous material reality or what he calls *Life process* [*Lebensprozeß*]. Life process is not reached *via* an abstract negation, since negation of the negation of negation still overlooks material Life that serves as the source of abstraction. Insofar as duration as immediate reality is negated as the negation of negation, this in fact amounts to reproducing alienating abstraction once more, and, as Marx says, remains "doubtful of itself".²⁵⁸ There arises, then, a disconcerting fact: to criticise, that is to say, to *negate* duration as ideology is to trap criticism itself within the realm of abstract thought. As long as what it sees as its object of negation is an abstraction, this negation of abstraction is still an abstraction and hence it is still alienated from sensuous reality.²⁵⁹

Let us be clear. Behind the mask of Marx as an anti-philosopher, there is a veritable philosopher who conceives of the Absolute Truth that serves as the affirmative foundation of reality. The last sentence of Marx's *German Ideology* that we quoted above reads in the following way: "[l]ife is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." From the perspective of the "materialist method," he argues that it is erroneous to assume that consciousness is independent and has no history outside itself. On the contrary, consciousness is a contingent product of the mediating caprice of Life and it is Life that is treated as the primary Subject that is self-affirming and Absolute. Herein lies the secret of Marx's philosophy. Materialism puts forth the critique of philosophical truths but this is done through the affirmation of Life as the first principle. Life itself points towards something that cannot be seen as a contingent product of history. Life then is what makes history itself possible and it is its primary substance.

Yet, the pressing question we must ask at this point is: if it is not an Idea and hence not an abstract object of thought, how does one reach the knowledge of this so-called Life? Where can we find it in relation to our consciousness and how do we protect ourselves from mistaking it for its illusory shadow? In the same

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Feuerbach, L., ([1843] 1986). *Principles of Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. M. Vogel. Cambridge: Hackett. pp.48-49. §30. "He (Hegel) negates thought – that is, abstract thought – but he does so while remaining within abstractive thought with the result that his negation of abstraction still remains abstraction."

paragraph of *German Ideology*, Marx states: “[i]n direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven.”²⁶⁰ We can understand that “heaven” is the Idea and the “earth” is Life and that Marx’s materialist dialectic is established through reversing the relations of subordination between the two. Yet if this materialist reversal renders philosophical consciousness as the contingent product of the Life process, with what method can one access the real realm of Life itself and ensure that materialism be securely based upon this knowledge of the Absolute? Certainly, it is not so difficult to understand what Life is *not* after the materialist reversal of dialectic. As it is proclaimed in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, material Life is not, first of all, the Idea that philosophical consciousness makes of it and it is not, therefore, an object of abstract intuition [*Anschauung*].²⁶¹ In defiance of the latter, it is said to reside within the “sensuous human activity” or “practice”.²⁶² Yet how can we place ourselves within the realm of sensuous practice given that we are first and foremost alienated consciousness that stems from it? Insofar as we are consciousness, are we not, by nature, shut out from the sensuous realm of Life and is not the latter precisely that which does not appear to us? The question, then, is not whether something is *not* Life, but how we can know and affirm the realm of Life as *the Other of thought*.

After the reversal of idealist dialectic, Life assumes the place of the first principle and cannot be treated as a contingent product of history. Yet, without directly facing the question regarding the knowledge of Life, this returns us back to the Idealist Metaphysics which turns the Absolute into the abstract object of thought. The problem for us, which in our view corresponds to the problem of the concept of Duration in Bergson’s philosophy, is how to formulate the knowledge of the so-called Material Life. Heidegger proclaimed that “the reversal of metaphysics” was accomplished by Marx.²⁶³ To explore the concept of duration within the context of materialism is to examine the concept in terms of this question: *what constitutes the foundation of thought after the putative “reversal of metaphysics”?* In order to commence our task of facing duration, we must give the truth of time all it deserves, but this must be done by finding a way to also grant full reality to

²⁶⁰ Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, p.42.

²⁶¹ Marx, *Early Writings*, p.615.

²⁶² *Ibid.* p.617.

²⁶³ Heidegger, *Time and Being*, p.57.

duration in a way that does not destroy the validity of the former. Albeit in a negative fashion, the above clarification of the criticism against duration already uncovers the particularity of the nature of duration and also shows us the special kind of obstacle that lies ahead of our inquiry: to say that duration must be *a priori* conditioned by time really means that a critique as a means to access duration is only able to face the illusory appearance of duration and not duration itself. As we explained, this brings us back to the truth of time rather than an exposition of duration.

Now, this takes us to another premise: insofar as duration is put forth as the *immediate* and hence *the Other of time*, it does not submit itself to a critique since critique requires time as its condition of possibility. If duration can be faced from a standpoint of materialism, it must be sought in a milieu within which time ceases to be the condition of possibility of thought. We shall take this negative knowledge as a starting point of our inquiry. The very definition of duration is that it is an immediate reality beyond temporal mediation and this means that duration cannot be accessed through critique. Its reality only shows itself within a milieu where time is inoperative. Although what this amounts to is a negative realisation of the truth of duration, if we are to attempt to go down the path set forth before us, we need to examine the nature of duration in relation to the strict formula: *Duration ≠ Time*.

Chapter 3

Bergson Contra Kantian Freedom: Critique of *Belief*

1. Duration as the Other of Time: Affirmation and Freedom

Our central argument is that Bergson's dialectical method of intuition takes up the form of a transcendental dualism: it consists of consciously apprehending and synthesizing two distinct transcendental elements – time and duration. Our thesis therefore allows for the distinctness of those elements as well as their mutual non-contradiction. In a nutshell, our premise regarding duration is the following: the conscious apprehension of duration gives the method of intuition its irreducible capacity for *Affirmation*. Whilst the apprehension of time corresponds to intuition's capacity for negation, the apprehension of duration gives intuition its affirmative capacity, which differs in kind from that of negation. As we pointed out above, if the theory of time contributes towards the negation of metaphysical truths as ideological-historical construction, duration, which is the *immediate data of consciousness* differing in kind from time, constitutes the affirmation of Truth in a way equivalent to Marx's primary affirmation of *Life-process*. Affirmation here takes on the sense of apprehending the *causa sui*, which constitutes the capacity of the method of intuition to affirm the Absolute Self in its in-itself immediacy.

Having said this, special care is needed in order to determine the precise meaning of this "affirmation". Insofar as we put forth the argument that both time and duration shall be granted their real existence within intuition and that duration is that which differs in kind from time (duration \neq time), the meaning of this dialectical affirmation ascribed to the apprehension of duration must be derived in a way that recognises its difference from time's negativity. That is, the formula of duration \neq time leads us to another crucial formula that we must uphold – *affirmation \neq negation*. Our central problem regarding duration therefore resides in examining the nature of its affirmative capacity in a way that is different from and yet does not contradict the capacity for negation. In the previous chapters, we have examined the reality of the negativity of time within Bergson's philosophy. Now, in accordance with the configuration of transcendental dualism, affirmation will also be given its proper due and duration's affirmativeness will be investigated

in a way that abides by the formula of *affirmation ≠ negation*. The leading question for us is: given that duration differs from time, in what sense can we say that it gives the method of intuition the capacity for affirmation? What is the exact sense in which duration allows the method to affirm the in-itself being of reality? As opposed to saying “no”, affirmation clearly refers to a putting forth of a “yes”. It is an upholding of something in a way that assures its unshakable validity in its existence. In other words, affirmation affirms being in a way that grants the unshakable Truth of the latter. Yet in what way can we understand the nature of this affirmation and how can we go about examining the concept of duration? Is it sufficient to look at it merely as a non-Kantian conception of time? The key for this investigation lies in understanding that duration in fact takes up the place of the Kantian conception of *freedom*, which belongs to the domain of questioning regarding the problem of *the Other of Time*. The formula of duration ≠ time indicates that the proper context within which our investigation of duration takes place is not time but time’s other. Only in this way can we protect the distinctness of the affirmative from the negative.

The concept of duration [*la durée*] is first put forth in Bergson’s doctoral dissertation, *Time and Free Will*. We know, from the various descriptions given in the second chapter of this work, that duration refers to the inner experience of “continuous” and “qualitative multiplicity”, “succession without distinction”, “pure heterogeneity”, and so on. As it is well known, duration is that which expresses his distinct theory of time as the “immediate data of consciousness” and it is put forth in contradistinction to Kant’s theory of time. Bergson’s argument is that Kantian time is nothing other than space or spatialized time and that real time is duration. Naturally, one would assume that the meaning of the concept of duration could then be investigated by setting Kantian time as its background since duration is put forth in a way that *counteracts* Kantian theory of time. In this way, Bergson’s philosophy would seem like a new version of transcendental aesthetic that replaces the one that accompanied the old Euclidean geometry with a more lively, as Deleuze would say, Riemannian version.²⁶⁴ Overall, Bergson’s argument seems

²⁶⁴ Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p.39. Of course, it is possible to argue with Bergson that time itself undergoes certain mutation/evolution when saying that time A changes into time B. Yet this observation is only true strictly in relation to the domain of time and it is not applicable to the domain of duration. Duration is rather what makes change possible but remains distinct from the *products* of change.

to imply that duration can be understood as a new theory of time that *replaces* Kantian time.

The fundamental meaning and the purpose of us putting forth the transcendental dualism of intuition is to argue against such a view and establish the position that duration and time differ from one another but that their difference is not something that leads toward a cancelation of one over the other. As we demonstrated in Part I, Kantian time in fact does exist within Bergsonian intuition and this means that duration is that which co-exists with time within the field of intuition. It follows that to investigate the nature of duration by contrasting it with Kantian time would not take us to the proper domain of questioning since duration is not the equivalent of Kantian time. Rather, the proper domain of questioning to which the concept of duration belongs is the problem of *the other of time* or *freedom*. Granted, duration expresses Bergson's unique view of time insofar as it is *not* Kantian time but this "not" needs to be seen as pointing towards the particularity of duration as *that which belongs to the realm of the other of time*. In other words, duration is to be seen as that which makes a theoretical intervention into Kantian conception of freedom and it is in terms of this problematization of freedom that Bergson devises the concept of duration.

In the preface to *Time and Free Will*, Bergson declares: "[the] problem which I have chosen is one which is common to metaphysics and psychology, the problem of freedom".²⁶⁵ This confirms our point: duration is Bergson's philosophical creation *par excellence* but the problem against which it is put forth is not time but freedom. Kantian time becomes an important topic of discussion since it is that which covers freedom and turns it into its other. This time that covers freedom is real and, in this way, Bergson certainly accounts for the experience of freedom's hiddenness from our ordinary consciousness (the surface ego). However, it would be absurd to assume that the reality of time therefore turns time and freedom into the very same thing. Perhaps time can be seen as an *imitation* of freedom but time and freedom, the imitation and the original, are still distinct and the latter has its unique reality that differs in kind from the reality of time. That is, duration *is* freedom and its reality must be sought in this capacity.

To distinguish time and duration transcendently, or to give a distinct reality to the affirmative besides the reality of the negative, has a direct political

²⁶⁵ TFW *xix*/3.

implication. Our argument is that putting forth this duality is the only condition of possibility for *revolutionary politics*. If time were to be seen as that which conditions our subjectivity into the *social/surface ego* and if it were seen as the *only* condition for our existence as such, historical criticism would be nothing other than a deterministic description of the *necessity* of the passive suffering of the individual. It would be no different from a nihilist longing towards non-existing alternatives, towards the illusion of *how things are*. On the contrary, any politics and criticism must stem from the affirmation of our unconditioned/free self so that we can build confidence in the force with which an alternative reality can be shaped against the persistence of the past determinations. This amounts to saying that beside the vision of how things are, there must be another vision, which is capable of affirming how things *ought to be*. Besides the reality of how things are already made, transcendental dualism counteracts nihilism through the affirmation of the reality of the other condition, which supplies to us the material *for our own making*.

2. Belief vs. Knowledge of Without-Time-Ness: Idealism vs. Materialism

In order to determine the direction of the investigation into the concept of duration, let us revisit the passage from the “Error of Kant” section of *Time and Free Will*:

[Kant] thought that consciousness was incapable of perceiving psychic states otherwise than by juxtaposition, forgetting that a milieu in which these states are set side by side and distinguished from one another is of course space, and not duration. [...] Thus freedom was made into an incomprehensible fact [*un fait incompréhensible*]. And yet, owing to his unlimited though unconscious confidence in this inner apperception, whose scope he tried to restrict, his belief in freedom remained unshakable. He therefore raised it to the sphere of noumena; and as he had confused duration with space, he made this genuine free self [*moi réel et libre*], which is indeed outside space, into a self which is supposed to be outside duration too, and therefore inaccessible to our faculty of knowledge [*notre faculté de connaître*].²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ TFW 232-233/151-152.

This is the passage with which we began our exposition into Bergson's criticism of the Kantian conception of time. As we can see, Bergson points out that Kant's conception of time is responsible for rendering the "genuine free self" transcendent to which he replies by putting forth the concept of duration. Now, let us focus our attention upon the statement "genuine free self, which is indeed outside space" [*qui est en effect étranger à l'espace*]. This indicates that while Kantian conception of freedom raises it to the "sphere of noumena". While Bergson is indeed opposed to this way of conceiving freedom, he nonetheless admits that freedom is "outside space".

This is a crucial point that sets the tone of the following investigation. What we can infer from this is what proper field of questioning the problem of duration belongs to. As we clarified in chapter 1, by "space" Bergson refers to Kantian time, which is the primary form of intuition that *a priori* mediates our receptivity in accordance with the categories of the understanding. By the "genuine free self, which is indeed outside space", we must therefore understand that Bergson is in fact saying: *duration is indeed outside of time* and hence the proper field of questioning to which duration belongs is indeed regarding the sphere of reality concerning *the Other of Time*. If one attempts to grasp what Bergson calls "space" in terms of Kantian space, then Bergson would seem to argue that Kantian time is the direct equivalent of duration. It would thus be as if the concept of duration or the "genuine free self" corresponds to a new conception of time. This is however not at all what Bergson is arguing. His argument is rather indicative of the fact that Bergson is in agreement with Kant and situates himself within the latter's way of framing the problem of freedom in terms of the other of time.

Our inquiry must start with an acknowledgement of this fundamental point: Bergson is situating himself within Kant's conception of freedom in terms of, let us say, *without-time-ness*. Just like Kant, Bergson indeed envisages freedom as that which lies outside of time and duration is the concept that intervenes into the theorization of the realm of without-time-ness as the realm where freedom properly resides.²⁶⁷ Having

²⁶⁷ We are well aware of Bergson's remark in the second introduction to *Creative Mind* against "getting outside of time" [*sortie du temps*] (CM 31/1271). By setting our agenda in terms of examining duration as the concept of the other of time, we are not ignoring Bergson's warning since the meaning of this "getting outside of time" solely depends upon what is meant by "time". The time, which Bergson prohibits us from exiting [*sortir*] in *Creative Mind*, is not Kantian time but duration – duration is outside of Kantian time but it

acknowledged Bergson's agreement with Kant on the question of freedom, we must now ask: what perceived shortcomings in Kant's theorization prompt Bergson to put forth the concept of duration? That is, if Bergson in fact agrees with Kant on the way in which freedom is problematized as the other of time, why does he still oppose Kantianism and insist upon putting forth the concept of duration?

The above passage contains an important clue to answering this question. Bergson states: "owing to his unlimited though unconscious confidence [*une confiance illimitée, mais inconsciente*] in this inner apperception, whose scope he tried to restrict, his belief [*il croyait*] in freedom remained unshakable." Taking this statement into account, the precise nature of Bergson's disagreement can be summarised as follows: Kant makes a mistake of regarding freedom, which is indeed outside of time, as an object of belief rather than that of knowledge. In other words, it is not that Bergson disagrees with Kant because freedom is seen as the other of time. Rather, he disagrees with Kant and puts forth the concept of duration exactly because the Kantian freedom/without-time-ness is a mere "belief" [*croyance*] and not a *knowledge* [*connaissance*]. What Bergson wants to accomplish through the concept of duration is to turn the realm of without-time-ness into an object of knowledge. This reveals that his polemic is not a simple negation but a constructive addition to or an improvement of the original standpoint by situating himself within the Kantian attitude towards the problem.

Let us remind ourselves that the main task of Part II it is to investigate the nature of duration as that which endows the method of intuition with its uniquely materialist capacity for affirmation. The key is to examine this "affirmation" in a way that differs in kind from time's negativity so that we can grant reality to both affirmation and negation without cancelling one against another and to maintain both the critique of the historically conditioned subjectivity as well as the materialist method of affirming the Absolute Self that grounds the critique. In this chapter, in preliminary preparation to the task, we will investigate the Kantian doctrine of freedom so that we can later more accurately point out how Bergsonian conception of freedom differs from it and how it endows the method of intuition with a uniquely materialist capacity for affirmation. In this chapter, we shall confine the investigation to the Kantian conception of freedom *from which*

is nonetheless time in the sense that it is the other transcendental form of intuition posited besides Kantian time.

duration is differentiated. We must therefore focus specifically upon investigating what Bergson means when he draws attention to Kant's "belief" in freedom. This will ultimately help us understand how the concept of duration, which is claimed to be "knowledge", differs from belief. We will generally argue that the difference between the two philosophers' conceptions ultimately amounts to the distinction we can make between an *idealism* and a *materialism* of without-time-ness in a way analogous to Marx's when he puts forth a materialist criticism of Hegel's idealism.²⁶⁸ Seen through this lens, we will argue that the Kantian treatment of freedom can be seen as idealistic since it is a position that treats without-time-ness as the pure Idea, which may be beyond the reach of one's concrete sensuous experience but is nonetheless affirmed *via* the operation of the supra-sensuous, *intellectual intuition*. On the other hand, Bergson's position will be seen as a materialism since it points toward a special type of *sensuous experience* and not an idea of reason. That is, duration is the *sensuously intuited* "immediate data of consciousness" but such an "immediacy" differs in kind from the Kantian immediacy of the idea of reason. As we will see, duration implies a transcendental affirmation of freedom as concrete material sensuousness. Of course, the sensuousness of duration, by virtue of the formula of time \neq duration, differs in kind from Kantian sensuousness. What Kant refers to by the "sensible", or "sensibility" is *a priori* mediated by time since time is the transcendental form of sensibility. In other words, Kantian sensuousness refers to the experience of the world in terms of its mediation *via* the categories of the understanding. Kantian without-time-ness, accordingly, is "supra-sensuous", *i.e.*, that which is situated only within the intellectual/intelligible realm. For Kant, time serves the role of demarcating the world in terms of the sensible and the supra-sensible realms and the affirmation of the supra-sensible takes place *via* the affirmation of the pure Idea, which is an equivalent of regarding its negativity *as* its affirmativeness. We will thus make it clear that Bergson's real issue is not *that* the world is separated in terms of within and without-time-ness along the line of time. It is just that the realm of freedom as without-time-ness is also seen as a kind of sensuousness since it is *within* duration and hence actually experienced as the object of knowledge.

²⁶⁸ By this distinction, we are not speaking of Bergson's overall philosophy as that which can be either characterised as materialism or idealism nor are we arguing that Marx's philosophy is *solely materialist*. Transcendental Dualism of Intuition itself forbids us to make such a one-sided distinction. Rather, what we are discussing here solely concerns the status of duration, which is one half of the dualism.

From this standpoint, we will argue that duration is not an object of intellectual intuition but a superior form of intuition that grasps the in-itself status of the sensible immediately within sensuous experience.

* * *

Note for Clarification: Which Freedom?

Before going any further into our investigation, we need to pause here for a moment to make a preliminary clarification. We will uncover what is meant by Kantian conception of freedom as belief in the section that follows, yet it is necessary to distinguish our field of inquiry with respect to another kind of freedom already mentioned in the beginning of our thesis.

We indicated in the introductory part of this thesis that we are ultimately interested in extracting intuition as the dialectical method of thinking, which is said to be, in *Matter and Memory*, a synthesis of feeling and idea. We may recall that this synthesis, in turn, is also said to be *freedom*, or “free act.”²⁶⁹ Yet, in fact, this synthetic/methodological kind of freedom is put forth along with another kind of freedom that differs from the former. When inquiring into the concept of duration as freedom, we must know clearly which domain of questioning we are situated in with regard to our starting point of inquiry since this indicates which Kantian aspect we can utilize as the necessary background of our inquiry. Let us revisit the passage from *Matter and Memory*:

Freedom is not hereby, as has been asserted, reduced to sensible spontaneity. At most, this would be the case in the animal, of which the psychical life is mainly affective. But, in man, the thinking being, the free act maybe termed a synthesis of feelings and ideas and the evolution which leads to it a reasonable evolution.²⁷⁰

We can clearly see that Bergson here has in mind two kinds of freedom – one is the “human” freedom, which he wants to put forth as the legitimate philosophical method and the other is the “affective” kind that belongs to animal. As such, when he says that the human freedom is a synthesis between feelings and ideas, he is

²⁶⁹ MM 186/322.

²⁷⁰ MM 186/322.

effectively saying that the first kind of freedom synthesizes the other as its component. The animalistic or the “affective” kind of freedom is something that the active human freedom synthesizes and simultaneously differs from.

Duration, as we stated, is a *part* of what the method of intuition incorporates and, thus, this leads us to conclude that if duration refers to a kind of freedom, it refers to the “affective” kind of freedom or to “feeling”, which is *synthesized* by the “free act”. The latter is the ultimate fruit of our overall investigation since it corresponds to the final shape of the method of intuition as a whole. Freedom of duration is *that which the method sees as its component* and the act of synthesising itself is distinct from its components. Let us therefore bear in mind that in this chapter, we are not arguing that duration is itself the free act of synthesis. On the contrary, duration is what the method contains within it (along with time) as one of its components for the synthesis.

3. Kant’s Belief in Freedom

Let us examine the specificity of the Kantian doctrine of freedom. Following Bergson’s comments, the aspect we must pay attention to is how Kant’s conception of freedom can be understood with respect to “belief”. For some, an inquiry into the status of belief in Kant might sound odd since this seemingly goes against the common image of Kantianism. After all, is he not a dispeller of irrational belief or a promoter of the “secure path of science” that relentlessly put forth the critique of dogmatic and illusory usages of reason?²⁷¹ We can hardly deny that Kant’s main project, at least in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to clearly demarcate the territory of rational and sound knowledge and to play the role of a guardian of human sobriety that judges and persecutes any archaic metaphysical claims launched from any anti-scientific points of view. Bergson’s depiction however gives us the exact opposite impression. Rather than a dispeller of belief and a guardian of sound knowledge, he describes Kant as a firm believer. His reading is therefore quite unconventional to an extent that it is in perfect contradiction with how his thought is commonly regarded. Stranger still, when we focus upon the way in which Bergsonism has been commonly understood, we also find a perfectly

²⁷¹ CPR Bvii.

mirrored image. While it is Bergsonism that is commonly seen as an “irrational”, “anti-intellectual”, or “mystical” precisely due to his alleged anti-Kantianism, a close reading of his criticism of Kant’s notion of freedom in fact shows that it is Bergson who criticizes Kant for the endorsement of belief.

How is it possible for Bergson to put forth such an unconventional image of Kant and, at the same time, present himself as more of a Kantian than Kant himself? As we will demonstrate below, the secret behind this unconventional depiction lies in Kant’s conception of freedom as *the idea of reason*, treated as the object of affirmation even though it transcends the realm of sensuous phenomena. If Kant’s theory of time confines the proper territory of understanding within the realm of sensibility, the theory of freedom is that which expounds upon its *other*, namely the world of intelligibility that transcends the time-bound world of phenomena. “Belief” therefore does not refer to a kind of operation that is antithetical to philosophical reasoning. On the contrary, Kant’s overall system of reason contains the theorization of belief as a distinct type of rational cognition and the latter constitutes the irreducible aspect which functions as the necessary ground for his moral and ethical philosophy.

The crucial point for our investigation lies in finding out the particularity of “belief” as a method of affirmation. As we have remarked previously, Bergson is in agreement with Kant’s conception of freedom as the other of time and his contestation against Kant does not stem from this aspect *per se*. This indicates that the unique characteristic of the concept of duration (which, for us, constitutes the materialist method of affirmation) cannot be understood without first acknowledging its proximity to Kant’s conception of freedom as an object of belief. To put it more simply, Bergson’s method of affirmation can be seen as a certain modification of the method that was first brought forth by Kant with regard to his theory of freedom and we must first understand the former’s similarity to the latter in order to highlight how they differ from one another.

a. Kantian Duality of Nature and Freedom: Freedom as Without-Time-Ness

As soon as we delve into the concept of freedom within Kant’s overall philosophy, we come across the fundamental duality in terms of its division into *speculative* and *practical/moral* philosophy. That is, Kant’s very definition of freedom is inter-

implicated with the duality that exists at the highest level of abstraction posited by reason with regard to itself. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant decisively states:

the legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom. It thus contains natural law as well as moral law, initially in two separate philosophical systems but ultimately in a single such system. The philosophy of nature concerns everything that *is*, the philosophy of morals concerns only what *ought to be*.²⁷²

Kant speaks here of the division of “a single system” into two separate systems. The meaning of the concept of freedom is implicated within this very operation of division itself. This separation of systems within a system, for him, is done through articulating two kinds of law of causality – one is the causality of “nature,” and the other is that of “freedom” [*freiheit*].²⁷³ The causality of nature refers to “the connection, in *the world of sense*, of one state with a previous state upon which the state follows according to a rule”; it is, in other words, the causality of what occurs insofar as it is conditioned within the transcendental framework of time which orders the world in terms of succession/before-after. The causality of freedom, on the other hand, is said to be “the power [*vermögen*] to begin a state on one’s own”, which is an “independence from the determining causes of the world of sense”²⁷⁴. The concept of freedom is the product of this very division, but what is this division itself? While affirming the totality of the “sensible world”, *i.e.*, the world of phenomena, as that which is subjected to the law of “causality of nature”, *via* the division Kant also points out that another kind of world can be envisaged, which is within the same system of reason along with the former. That is, there are two kinds of “law” (the universal law of natural necessity, as well as the law of freedom, which is “independence from the determining causes of the world of sense”)²⁷⁵ and the two must co-exist in unison.

What is freedom within this configuration? To repeat, there is, on the one hand, “nature” or “what *is*” and this refers to the totality of the world insofar as it is given to us within sensible experience. On the other hand, we have a world which is independent and thus not subordinated to this transcendental mediation of time.

²⁷² CPR B868/A840.

²⁷³ CPR B560/A532-B561/A533.

²⁷⁴ GMM 4:452.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Freedom thus refers to the special kind of causality or “law” which differs in kind from that of time. It is not the world of “what is” but of “what *ought to be*”.²⁷⁶

We know from our previous analyses that the supreme arbiter of the world of sensibility is none other than time. It is time that grounds the world of sensibility and turns it into a transcendental ideality “for us”. It is through time that every occurrence is *a priori* conditioned by necessary laws and unfolds within causal chains of temporal successions. However, along with this temporal vision of the universe, we need something else that goes beyond it. For Kant, to conceive that this sensible world is the sole essence of reality is to subordinate every human action under the universal laws of natural causality and thereby sacrifice any possibility for genuine human freedom. In this way, any human action, too, must be subordinated to such natural laws²⁷⁷ and, as Bergson concurs, “automatism would cover over freedom.”²⁷⁸ That is, if the causality of nature governs not the appearance but the thing-in-itself, this would inevitably imply that no human action, or no self-sufficient action issuing forth from an autonomous will, is conceivable. Accordingly, if the causality of freedom refers to the independence from the law of natural causality within the world of sense, this means that that which constitutes the law of the causality of freedom is independent from time. Freedom gives itself a positive existence by virtue of it being situated within the “intelligible world”, where time does not play the role of the supreme arbiter. With respect to time as the ground of transcendental condition of experience, freedom is *its other* – freedom is what time is not.

Our gateway towards examining the concept of freedom in Kant is hidden within this operation of division. This operation is a direct grasping of time and positing of its Other and an articulation of freedom *in terms of* the nature of this Otherness with regard to time. “Causality of freedom denotes our “autonomy” and is said to serve as the “ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational

²⁷⁶ CPR B576/A548.

²⁷⁷ This view of the world is not so different from what Schelling later criticizes as a misunderstanding regarding “pantheism” implied by any “system of reason”, which is seen to inevitably lead to a fatalism devoid of human freedom. See Schelling, F. W. J., ([1809] 2006). *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. J. Love, J. Schmidt. Albany: SUNY Press. p.11. Schopenhauer rightly points out the hidden congruence between Kantianism and Schelling’s treatise on freedom. See Schopenhauer, A., ([1840] 2009). *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. Trans. C. Jenaway. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. p.60.

²⁷⁸ TFW 237/155.

nature".²⁷⁹ Freedom therefore refers to our autonomy, our capability to act on behalf of our own will and not on some other external causes that subordinate us. By conceiving freedom within a broader configuration of the duality of the world, Kant thus establishes both the natural order of the universe as well as the practical, or *moral/ethical* order simultaneously. This preserves their distinctiveness without letting them being mixed and confused with regard to one another.²⁸⁰ What Kant wants to establish by putting forth the duality of nature and freedom is not at all to solely draw attention to their antinomy. As Schopenhauer notes, this duality can be said to constitute Kant's essential doctrine that affirms "the coexistence of Freedom and Necessity".²⁸¹ To separate and distinguish nature and freedom does not at all mean that freedom is rendered impossible. On the contrary, what the division does is to clearly demarcate and to provide separate territories to two heterogeneous uses of reason (speculative and practical). Therefore, the concept of freedom can be seen as the product of this division and its very *being* is affirmed along with its nature of being the Other of Time. For Kant, freedom is situated within the milieu of without-time-ness and this without-time-ness is the condition of the world to which freedom properly belongs.

b. Freedom as the Virtual Idea

Given that Kant secures a place for freedom as without-time-ness within his system of philosophy, what we must investigate now is the particular way in which freedom is affirmed by Kant since this is where Bergson's disagreement with the latter ultimately lies. After dividing the world in terms of the difference between the causality of nature and freedom, how does Kant claim the affirmative validity of the latter? How does Kant apprehend freedom with respect to his method of philosophy? If, as it was argued to be the case within the *Critique of Pure Reason*, any presence is conceived to be *a priori* mediated by the form of intuition, how does freedom, this other of time, can be seen as real at all?

²⁷⁹ GMM 4:433, 4:436; CPrR 5:4. "But among all the ideas of speculative reason freedom is also the only one the possibility of which we *know* a priori, though without having insight into it, because it is the condition of the moral law, which we do know."

²⁸⁰ CPR Bxxiv-xxv.

²⁸¹ Schopenhauer, In *Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*. p.173. Schopenhauer goes so far to say that this co-existence is the "greatest of all human profundity."

As we stated, Bergson's disagreement does not stem from Kant's conception of freedom as without-time-ness. Rather, the real issue pertains to *how* this without-time-ness/freedom is *affirmed*; it is against Kant's manner of apprehending without-time-ness that Bergson puts forth his polemic. At bottom, Bergson's contention stems from Kant's treatment of freedom as an "idea" of reason, which is affirmed despite of its unavailability to any sensuous intuition. In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states:

reason [...] shows in what we call *Ideas* a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it, [...] As a rational being, and thus as a being belonging to the intelligible world, the human being can never think of the causality of his own will otherwise than under *the idea of freedom*; for, independence from the determining causes of the world of sense (which reason must always ascribe to itself) is freedom.²⁸²

As we explained above, freedom is the causality of the world insofar as it is independent from time. Yet, this causality of freedom is said to be a mere "idea". Bearing traces of Platonism,²⁸³ an idea for Kant is what is issued forth purely by the faculty of reason and it is said to involve no sensuous intuition due to reason's spontaneity that goes beyond the territory of the understanding.²⁸⁴ In other words, an idea is a *supra-sensible* concept and its objective validity is not based upon any sense experience but merely on reason's self-assertion. Due to these characteristics, the idea is also called the "problematic" concept".²⁸⁵ It is "problematic" since it is a concept that contains no contradiction but whose objective reality cannot be cognized/understood due to its nature of having no correspondence with any objects of sensibility. The idea does not refer to anything within the sensuous manifold of intuition but it emerges out of reason's self-assertion outside of the realm of the sensible.

The important point of the matter at hand for us is to examine *with what legitimate means* Kant affirms the validity of this supra-sensuous idea. How do we know if freedom is real if it is formulated as that which goes beyond the sensuous reality? Shouldn't we be rather sceptical towards such a supra-sensuous entity? One of the central themes of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Kant's critical

²⁸² GMM 4: 452.

²⁸³ CPR B377/A320.

²⁸⁴ GMM 4:452.

²⁸⁵ CPR B310/A254-B311/A255.

philosophy at large, is to restrict and limit the activity of reason from *overstepping* the proper territorial boundary of the sound human understanding and to set metaphysics onto the “secure path of a science” [*Wissenschaft*].²⁸⁶ This is done *via* the primary dialectic that divides the view of the world in terms of the sensible and the supra-sensible realm and puts forth a “critique of understanding and reason as regards their hyperphysical use”.²⁸⁷ The “critique” is therefore a “tribunal” set forth to reason in a way that “will make reason secure in its rightful claims and will dismiss all baseless pretensions”.²⁸⁸

In other words, the Platonic conception of the idea is invoked by Kant so *that we be aware of its problematic transcendence*. As opposed to the Platonic version, the Kantian dialectic is a critical dialectic, which guards against the problematic movement beyond the realm of the sensible/apparent reality. Insofar as we associate Kant’s critical philosophy with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the function of “critique” seems to have no other roles than *limiting* and *prohibiting* reason from transcending into the realm of the idea. Such a critical move was already rehearsed in *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World* of 1770:

since what is sensible and what derives from the understanding are improperly mixed together, like squares and circles, it often happens that one of the parties to the dispute presents the appearance of someone milking a billy-goat, and the other of someone holding a sieve underneath. But the presence of immaterial things in the corporeal world is a virtual not a local presence (though the latter is improperly but repeatedly asserted to be the case).²⁸⁹

The essence of Kant’s critical project resides in clearly distinguishing what is sensible from what is merely intelligible and treating the latter as a “virtual” rather than a “local” presence. The operation of *transcendental dialectic*, which ultimately amounts to maintaining the distinction between the world of phenomena and the world of things in-themselves, is deemed necessary in order to restrict the territory of our understanding within the sensible world and criticise its *transcendence* beyond the sensible as an *illusion* [*Erscheinung*] of pure reason.²⁹⁰ It

²⁸⁶ CPR Bvii, B352/A296-B355/A298.

²⁸⁷ CPR B86/A62, B88/A64.

²⁸⁸ CPR Axii.

²⁸⁹ ID 2:414.

²⁹⁰ CPR B350/A294.

is in accordance to this critical operation that the idea is called the “problematic” concept in the sense that we are warned of its character of transcending the boundary of human, sensible intuition.

However, within the sphere of the practical or moral philosophy, the supra-sensible idea is not treated in the same manner. Rather, the idea is now that which must be affirmed despite of its transcendence from the realm of sensibility. It is in this sense that *The Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morality* is said to be “nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*” and this principle is revealed to be none other the uncritical affirmation of the idea of freedom.²⁹¹ The Idea, which problematically transcends the boundary of sensibility, is now affirmed as the foundation without which the whole of his moral philosophy is inconceivable. Rather than restricting the idea’s false claim to validity through pointing out its illusory nature, this second system of reason is in fact built upon the essential affirmation of the virtual idea as its necessary presupposition. The question then arises: how can we affirm something which is not given to us in sensuous experience? What is the means through which the supra-sensuous, virtual presence can be affirmed as true? To this question, as Bergson notes in *Time and Free Will*, Kant in fact invokes the notion of belief [*Glaube*]:

Freedom [...] is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be presented in accordance with laws of nature and so too cannot be presented in any possible experience; and because no example of anything analogous can ever be put under it, it can never be comprehended or even only seen. It holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason in a being that *believes* itself to be conscious of a will.²⁹²

Within practical philosophy, the Idea’s unavailability to sense perception stands on the side of positivity and its claim to validity is granted in terms of “belief”. This is the testimony to the fact that belief is the indispensable part of Kant’s system of reason. Provided that one makes a clear distinction between the speculative and practical uses of reason, inasmuch as Kant prohibits a transcendence into the realm of the suprasensible in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he necessitates this transcendence in the case of practical philosophy.

²⁹¹ GMM 4: 392.

²⁹² GMM 4:459. Emphasis added.

c. The “Inscrutable Fact” of Freedom

We are now in a better place to understand the actual content of Bergson’s criticism. Kant conceives of freedom in terms of without-time-ness, since the capacity to determine ourselves freely necessarily implies our independence from the causality of nature or the world of time. Yet, since freedom is defined in this way as without-time-ness, or the other of time, the very possibility of freedom becomes incomprehensible: without-time-ness cannot be seen as something given within sense perception since it is outside of time as the very transcendental condition of intuition. If freedom were in fact given within one’s intuition or time, the very definition of freedom as without-time-ness collapses and turns into mere natural necessity. In order to uphold the theoretical coherence of freedom as without-time-ness and also establish the validity of freedom, Kant must affirm the idea of reason despite of its transcendence from the world of phenomena.

Between speculative and moral philosophy, we therefore witness a definite shift in perspective with regard to the status of the supra-sensuous idea. Paradoxically, within the sphere of practical philosophy, the virtuality of the idea is not a cause of skeptical concern but rather an equivalent to its *affirmativeness*. Kant mentions the motive behind this shifting attitude in the *Groundwork* as well as in the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*. According to him, to have a critique of pure practical reason is “futile” [*vergeblich*] since what is required is nothing more than to show a pure “there is” of practical reason [*es reine praktische Vernunft gebe*].²⁹³ In direct contradiction to what we saw in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is now saying that the idea needs no critique: *it is to be affirmed uncritically*, since the foundation for the principle of morality is the idea of freedom issuing forth from reason itself. In other words, instead of restricting the boundary of sensibility, the essential presupposition of his moral philosophy as a whole now stands upon reason’s transcendence beyond the world of sensibility.

The abovementioned shift between the speculative and the practical systems of philosophy, or between the negative and the affirmative attitude towards the idea, implies that there are two kinds of dialectical movement for Kant. After distinguishing the sensible and the supra-sensible realms, the first movement

²⁹³ CPrR 5:3.

(which belongs to speculative philosophy) criticizes the validity of the suprasensible as a mere subjective fancy of pure reason. On the other hand, looking at the same division between the sensible and the suprasensible realms, the second dialectical movement (which belongs to practical philosophy) heads towards an affirmation of the suprasensible idea as the foundation of reason's self-determination. Indeed, this duality of the dialectic is itself necessary since philosophy "cannot give up the concept of nature any more than that of freedom."²⁹⁴ Yet, Kant also states that "we shall never be able to comprehend how freedom is possible."²⁹⁵ In other words, due to the definition of freedom as without-time-ness, freedom must be affirmed even if we cannot comprehend its possibility. Does not, then, the incomprehensibility or unavailability of freedom equally invite our skepticism towards it? How can we affirm something which is not given to us *via* sensuous intuition?

Let us take a look at two contradictory statements Kant puts forth in the *Critique of Judgment*. On the one hand, Kant states:

the inscrutability of the idea of freedom [*Unerforschlichkeit der Idee der Freiheit*] entirely precludes any positive presentation.²⁹⁶

Yet, on the other hand, he notes:

what is quite remarkable [*merkwürdig*], there is even one idea of reason (which is in itself incapable of any presentation in intuition, thus incapable of theoretical proof of its possibility) among the facts, and that is the idea of freedom, the reality of which, as a particular kind of causality (the concept of which would be excessive from a theoretical point of view) can be established through practical laws of pure reason, and, in accordance with these, in real actions, and thus in experience. – it is only one among all the ideas of pure reason whose object is a fact [*Tatsache*] and which must be counted among the *scibilia*.²⁹⁷

Here, we can see that Kant is torn between two contradictory positions. On the one hand, he firmly states that freedom is something that resists positive presentation altogether since it is an idea of reason. On the other, by virtue of the "practical law" of reason, he also takes up a position that freedom nonetheless must be treated as a "fact". Overall, one cannot help but notice a profound sense of ambiguity residing

²⁹⁴ GMM 4:456.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ CJ 5:275.

²⁹⁷ CJ 5:468.

at the heart of Kant's conception of freedom. How can something "inscrutable" be treated as a "fact" at the same time? Inscrutability and factuality seem to be naturally opposed to each other since the inscrutability of the idea seems to equally imply an *absence* of a factual and objective datum.

4. Bergson against Idealism: Overturning of Metaphysics

a. Kant's Post-Critical Affirmation of the Absolute

So far, we have examined the rationale behind Bergson's objection against Kantian conception of freedom mentioned at the end of *Time and Free Will*. We have demonstrated that Bergson refers to Kantian freedom as "belief" and distances himself from it through the concept of duration since Kant defines freedom as an idea of reason, which is considered as an object of affirmation without being given to one's sensuous intuition. Although it is necessary to define freedom as without-time-ness, the very definition of being the other of time rather prevents the fact of freedom from being given within intuition. Kant therefore has no choice but to put forth an ambiguous position that treats freedom as an *incomprehensible fact*.

With the above analyses in mind, let us turn towards the broader implications of Bergson's polemic vis-à-vis our concern for dialectical affirmation. We began our investigation into Kant's conception of freedom since we are interested in understanding exactly how the apprehension of duration, which we argue as one of the two transcendental elements of Bergsonian intuition, constitutes a certain capacity for affirmation in a way that differs in kind from time's negativity. It is within this context of investigating into the particular nature of duration's affirmative capacity that we examined the Kantian conception of freedom.

In what sense of the term can we understand freedom as the proper background of examining the affirmative capacity of duration? How does freedom relate to affirmation and what *kind* of affirmation does the concept of duration differentiate itself from? We saw in the above analyses that Kant defines freedom in terms of the causality independent from the causality of nature or time. For Kant, freedom refers to the power to begin one's action out of one's own will regardless

of any external influences. The meaning of affirmation resides in this way of defining freedom as time's other: since it refers to the ground of reasoning in terms of its independence from time and since time is the condition that relatively determines and mediates reality into the world of phenomena, freedom requires the affirmation of the Pure *in-itself* Self affirmed in its immediate affirmativeness. This free, Pure Self, which Fichte and other post-Kantian philosophers elaborated upon after Kant, must be understood as affirmative in the sense of constituting *the Absolute*, i.e. that which is in-itself and *absolved* from all external relations of determinations.²⁹⁸ The free self is the Absolute since, by definition, it is not relatively determined or mediated by anything other than itself and thus must be an object of pure affirmation.

As we stated in the beginning, the proper background from which the concept of duration emerges and is differentiated is not time but the concept of freedom. If this is indeed the case, it can be said that the concept of duration is put forth within this Kantian framework that defines freedom in terms of the affirmation of the Absolute Self. Accordingly, it can be said that the meaning of affirmation that we ascribe to the apprehension of duration stems from this derivation of the Absolute Self as the pure object of affirmation. To have freedom as the background within which the concept of duration is put forth is to recognize that it is a framework of conceiving the Affirmation of the Absolute Self. At the end of *Time and Free Will*, Bergson hence states:

For if perchance the moments of real duration, perceived by an attentive consciousness, permeated one another instead of lying side by side, and if these moments formed in relation to one another a heterogeneity within which the idea of necessary determination lost every shred of meaning, then the self grasped by consciousness would be a free cause, we should have *absolute* knowledge of ourselves [*connaître absolument nous-mêmes*].²⁹⁹

The above quotation indeed shows that Bergson situates himself within the Kantian conception of freedom as without-time-ness and hence what he seeks to

²⁹⁸ In a lecture course on Schelling in Freiburg University, Heidegger speaks of the "Absolute" within the German Idealist tradition in terms of "relationlessness": "What is different about the way German Idealism understands philosophy? [...] *Philosophy is the intellectual intuition of the Absolute*. [...] This absolute *relationlessness* to anything else, this absolutely absolved is called the *Ab-solute*." Heidegger, M., ([1971] 1985). *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*. Trans. J. Stambaugh. Athens: Ohio Univ. Press. pp.42-43.

²⁹⁹ TFW 235/153. emphasis added.

accomplish with the concept is to reach towards the affirmation of the Absolute just like the Kantian version attempts to do. That is, by criticizing Kantian freedom through duration, Bergson is in fact after the same thing. Bergson's polemic is thus not directed towards Kant's way of conceiving freedom as without-time-ness of the Absolute but the concept of duration *is* the Absolute since Bergson also sees duration in terms of time's other. However, Bergson's conception of the Absolute must differ significantly from that of Kant since it is put forth *against* Kant. Thus the problem for us is the following: while situating himself within the Kantian framework of conceiving freedom as the Absolute, how does Bergson's own conception still differ from it? The framework through which we can examine the meaning of affirmation that we ascribe to duration has so far been mapped out; it is now a question of distinguishing the difference between the Kantian and the Bergsonian conceptions of the Absolute and to know the specific significance of what the Kantian conception of the Absolute entails vis-à-vis dialectical affirmation.

What Bergson criticizes as "belief" in Kant's conception can be seen as a particular way of affirming the Absolute and it is to this very method that Bergson is raising his objection. In other words, this is a question regarding the *dialectical method* with which the affirmativeness of the Absolute is affirmed beyond the critical skepticism that Kantianism is known for. To be precise, by pointing out Kant's "belief" in freedom, Bergson is criticizing and distancing himself from the *idealist method of affirming the Absolute, i.e.,* the post-critical method of *the negation of negation*. Bergson is opposed to this method because the Absolute is *only* affirmed as the Idea of Reason, *i.e.,* as a supra-sensuous object, which is not fully affirmative but rather remains *negative* with respect to, as Schelling would say, the *thatness* of the Absolute.³⁰⁰ As opposed to the Kantian idealism, Bergson's concept of duration implies a *materialist* affirmation of the Absolute. Duration constitutes Bergson's materialism with regard to the Absolute since it is not an affirmation of the Absolute as the idea of reason but of what is actually given within the non-ideal, sensuous intuition outside of time.³⁰¹ As we will explain in the next chapter, this materialism is not a simple replacing of the idea with matter, ending up with the Idea of Matter (which is another kind of idealism). Materialist

³⁰⁰ Schelling, F. W. J., ([1972] 2007). *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*. Trans. B. Matthews. Albany: SUNY Press. p.147.

³⁰¹ We will explain the specificity of duration's dialectical operation in the next chapter. For now, let us focus upon clarifying the nature of Bergson's criticism vis-à-vis Kant so as to set the stage for the next chapter.

affirmation does not deny the being-there of the Idea, but still distinguishes between the *Being of the Idea* and the *Other Being* that the Idea affirms as its object, *i.e.*, the content of the Idea. In other words, materialism is a negation without contradiction of Idealism. In this sense, Bergson's criticism shares the crucial aspect with the Marxist/Feuerbachian criticism of the "negation of the negation"³⁰². Although their immediate object of criticism differs (Hegel vs. Kant), it can be seen that Bergson is effectively targeting the Kantian root of Hegelian idealism, a theme to which we shall return later.

We call the Kantian method idealist simply because, as we demonstrated above, it is explicated in terms of his theory of the Idea as a supra-sensuous or *virtual* presence, which is affirmed despite the fact that it is not given to sensuous intuition. Although Bergson fully endorses the Kantian dualism of time and freedom and gives the status of the Absolute to the latter, he distances himself from Kant since the idealist method falls short as a mere *belief* of the absolute, which is a kind of *half-affirmation* of the negativity of the Absolute. Although Kant posits two heterogeneous grounds of reason (time and freedom) both of which must be seen as equally valid, he nonetheless ends up sacrificing the full objective validity of the Absolute due to the theoretical necessity of protecting its status of being the other of time. To affirm freedom or the absolute as the idea of reason is to affirm it *despite of its absence* within sensuous experience. As such, the absolute is still spoken of from its *opposite side*, the side of time. In this way, the affirmativeness of the Absolute does not fully show itself and the idealist affirmation is *an affirmation of the negativity of the Absolute*.

Here, a more "esoteric" aspect of Bergson's polemic becomes intelligible. By pointing out this half-affirmation of the Absolute or belief in Kant, we are no longer in the domain of the commonly designated image of Kant in terms of a skeptical destroyer of the Absolute. Rather, the concept of freedom is where Kantianism participates in the long tradition of Western metaphysics and he is criticized precisely at this level where his philosophy is considered as a continuation of this Western metaphysics. In the lecture delivered in Oxford University in 1911, Bergson states:

From the time of the philosophers of the school of Elea, criticizing the idea of transformation, had show or thought they had shown the impossibility of

³⁰² Marx, *Early Writings*, pp.381-382.

keeping so close to the sense-data, philosophy started off along the road it has since travelled, the road leading to a “supra-sensible” world: one was to explain things hence forth with pure “ideas.” [...] [A]ll of them, ancient and modern, are agreed in seeing in philosophy a substitution of the concept for the percept. They all appeal from the insufficiency of our senses and consciousness to the faculties of the mind no longer perceptive, I mean to the function of abstraction, generalization and reasoning.³⁰³

According to Bergson, metaphysics was born out of Zeno of Elea’s argument and this has to do with the dominant way of approaching the Absolute in terms of the supra-sensible idea. What Zeno prompted is the “insufficiency of perception” and metaphysics as such was defined in terms of the “substitution of the percept with the concept”. Metaphysics as a whole is here defined *in terms of* the constitutive insufficiency of perception but what is it that metaphysics seeks and in relation to what does metaphysics find perception to be insufficient? Bergson makes it plain in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, that metaphysics is a knowing [*connaître*] of the Absolute [*l’absolu*], hence the insufficiency that he speaks of here is the insufficiency towards the knowledge of the Absolute.³⁰⁴ To say, then, that metaphysics is a substitution of the percept with the concept due to the insufficiency of perception is to define metaphysics as the knowing of the Absolute through a means *other than* sense perception, *i.e.*, the supra-sensible idea. That is, Bergson defines metaphysics and idealism of the Absolute as one and the same, which is tantamount to saying that metaphysics since Zeno, with “Plato [being] first and foremost”, has always been about the “belief” in the Absolute.³⁰⁵

As we know from Plato’s *Parmenides*, Zeno’s argument itself stems from Parmenides, who argues that “All is One”, or that the all is “unmoved/at rest”.³⁰⁶ In defense of this argument, Zeno, who is his disciple, further adds: the Many cannot be (the many *is not*) since to uphold the Being of the Many would be to admit Being to contain qualitative differences. This would be absurd and unacceptable since the Many/Change, which differs from itself, cannot constitute Being since change

³⁰³ CM 132/1368. Bergson uses the term “philosophy” and “metaphysics” interchangeably, and no explicit differentiation is made between them. For instance, in the same speech, he states: “Metaphysics, as a matter of fact, was born of the arguments of Zeno of Elea on the subject of change and movement. It was Zeno who, by drawing attention to the absurdity of what he called movement and change, led the philosophers – Plato first and foremost – to seek the true and coherent reality in what does not change” (CM 141/1376).

³⁰⁴ CM 159/1392-1393.

³⁰⁵ CM 141/1376.

³⁰⁶ Plato. *Parmenides*, 128b. “You (Parmenides) say in your poem that the all is one”. *Theaetetus*, 183 e. “before the many who have made the universe one and unmoved, [...] I feel it still more in the face of the One – Parmenides.”

implies the non-resemblance to itself (“unlike”) and the resemblance to itself (“like”) is the logical criterion of Being.³⁰⁷ Zeno therefore argues that “the many and change are illusions” or that the Many is Non-Being and prompts Plato “to seek the true and coherent reality in what does not change”.³⁰⁸

If Bergson argues that Zeno is the originator of metaphysics, this means that metaphysics as such is defined in terms of the impossibility of the Absolute or the “all” [πάντα] to be given within sense perception.³⁰⁹ Conversely, the givenness of the Absolute can only be envisaged via the supra-sensible faculty of abstract reasoning devoid of perception, *i.e.* the realm *beyond* and *outside of* the sensible reality, since sense perception only presents us with qualitative differences and it does not satisfy the requirement of being the One. Bergson hence states in *Creative Evolution*:

Such, indeed, was the sentence passed by the philosophers of the Eleatic school. [...] Experience confronts us with becoming: that is *sensible* reality. But the *intelligible* reality, that which *ought* to be, is more real still, and that reality does not change. Beneath the qualitative becoming, beneath the evolutionary becoming, beneath the extensive becoming, the mind must seek that which defies change, the definable quality, the form or essence, the end. Such was the fundamental principle of the philosophy which developed throughout the classic age, the philosophy of Forms, or to use a term more akin to the Greeks, the philosophy of Ideas.³¹⁰

The “insufficiency of perception” with regard to the Absolute or the unavailability of the Absolute within sense-perception is here seen as the *raison d'être* of metaphysics, with the latter being founded upon the constitutive *negation of sense perception* with regard to the Absolute.

Now, if the concept of duration is Bergson’s philosophical creation *par excellence* and is put forth in relation to the so-called “problem of freedom” within the context of Kantian philosophy, what Bergson is really after through his opposition against Kantian “belief” in freedom is precisely where Kantianism is united with what makes Western metaphysics what it is since the time of Zeno –

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 127e.

³⁰⁸ Bergson, H., (2000). *Cours IV*. Paris: PUF. p.175; CM 141/1376.

³⁰⁹ The term “Absolute” is of course a modern notion, but the term “all” [πάντα] as in the Parmenidean “all is one”, in Thales’ “all is full of God” [πάντα πλήρη θεῶν], or Heraclitus’ “all flows” [πάντα ρεῖ], seems to be used in a manner equivalent to the Absolute. Bergson himself is found using the term “the Whole”/“the All” [*le tout*] to mean the equivalent of the Absolute. See, for instance, “The real whole might well be, we conceive, an indivisible continuity” (CE 31/520).

³¹⁰ CE 314/760.

namely, the “insufficiency of perception” vis-à-vis the Absolute. The insufficiency of perception, or the *negativity* the Absolute, which is the very *raison d’être* of Western metaphysics as a whole, is what Bergson intends to counteract with the concept of duration: Bergson’s real aim is nothing other than a *radical overturning of what makes Western metaphysics what it is*.

This latter statement brings us back to the problem of reversing Platonism we encountered in chapter 2 of this thesis. It is true that with Kant Platonism experienced a definite reversal. While Plato envisaged the true world within the “up-above”, Kant conceives of it as that which is located “down-below” as in the *things in-themselves*.³¹¹ That is, with Kant, we are already dwelling within the world of “up-above” (the world of time), but this temporal world we find ourselves in is the apparent reality and the true world from which we are alienated rather lies “down-below” in the without-time-ness of the things in-themselves. However, what is accomplished here is a mere reversal and the negativity of the Absolute still remains. Kant only reverses the order, so to speak, between the up and the down. After Kant, the true world is located in the Earthly down-below in terms of the freedom of the Absolute Self in-itself. Yet, as we have shown above, with regard to the *actual availability of the Absolute*, Kant squarely remains within the post-Eleatic tradition of Western metaphysics founded upon the insufficiency of perception and does not, as Heidegger would put it, “twist free” from Platonism.³¹²

³¹¹ CM 132-133/1368, 140/1375. This seems to be the meaning of Bergson’s statement when he says that “[t]he most obvious result of the Kantian *Critique* is thus to show that one could only penetrate into the beyond by a vision.” It is due to the reversal of the “up-above” and “down-below” that Bergson says Kantian critique *could have* pointed towards the sensuous perception of the Absolute as the post-metaphysical articulation of the Absolute. Yet due to his attachment to the negative power of Time, this “vision” of the Absolute is rendered impossible.

³¹² Heidegger points out that it is Nietzsche who reverses Platonism without ultimately twisting free from it. For us, regardless of whether or not Nietzsche’s concept of “will to power” remains within the tradition of metaphysics as onto-theology, Heidegger’s reading is rather directly applicable to the overall position of Kantian philosophy. Leonard Lawlor utilizes Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche in order to argue that Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* ultimately twists free from Platonism (which we understand as an *idealism of the Absolute*) *via* the concept of memory. Although we accept Lawlor’s argument regarding Bergson in a general scope, we however think that twisting free from Platonism rather occurs not with memory but with duration (those are different in kind and memory, however pure, cannot reach pure perception), which corresponds to the concept of “pure perception” in the case of *Matter and Memory* rather than that of “pure memory”. For us, the concept of pure memory is rather what Bergson *retrieves* Platonic Idea, and signifies the impossibility of the Absolute to be the object of knowledge within the realm of time. See Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol. I*. p.201. Also see Lawlor, L., (2003). *The Challenge of Bergsonism*. London: Continuum.pp.27-28.

In other words, with Kant, the ancient conception of God-as-Substance gets reversed and turns into the *God-as-Subject/Man* but this is a continuation of the ancient metaphysics since the latter still remains as the Idea of reason and hence is only affirmed as an object of belief.³¹³

b. Materialism: Against the Negation of the Negation

Let us go back to our earlier remark about the materialism of Bergson. We have mentioned that Bergson's criticism of Kant can be seen as a materialist criticism akin to Marx and Feuerbach's since we can understand that Bergson's contestation is aimed particularly towards Kant's Idealist method of affirmation, or what amounts to the same thing, the *belief* in the Absolute validated within the formal structure of relating to the Absolute solely as the Idea of Reason.

What we have pointed out by this congruence between Bergson with the "Materialist Criticism" is restricted to the *critical* aspect of their argument against the certain method of affirming the Absolute. We are calling this a 'critical aspect' since both Bergson and Marx in fact show a partial acceptance of Idealism, not in terms of the Affirmation but only in terms of the negativity of the idea. In Part I, we already established that Bergson's realism of time can be seen as an equivalent to the Marxist historical criticism of ideological "truths", *i.e.*, socio-political criticism of truths as historical constructions at the level of the surface/social ego. We have explained that although Bergson has traditionally been treated as a dogmatic metaphysician due to the supposed anti-Kantianism, this is not in fact the case since there is the definite constructivist realism of time in Bergson made apparent via the theory of Memory. Since memory for us explains the condition of the *coming-into-being* of Time and time is what mediates our experience of reality, this realism of time is equivalent to the realism of the *negativity* of the Absolute. It is, in other words, equivalent to the affirmation of the appearing of the Absolute as the Idea of Reason with respect to the surface ego. Yet the realism of time points only towards the being-there of the Idea as the negativity of the Absolute and

³¹³ Bergson says in *Creative Evolution* that "a formal God" of Kant becomes God in Fichte, and that the former is "much less than a substantial God" and "a little more than the isolated work of a man or even than the collective work of humanity", which is a "humanity already somewhat deified" (CE 357/797).

transcendental dualism refuses to confuse this negativity with its absolute affirmativeness. That is, neither Bergson nor Marx deny the positive being-there of the supra-sensible Idea (*i.e.*, historical becoming of *Time*, or the *mediation* of the Absolute) but they also commonly hold that what is apprehended as positive in the case of the apprehension of time is a strictly negative being. As such, they both refuse to conflate the reality of the Idea with the affirmative actual reality of the Absolute in-itself.

What we point out in terms of their common “materialist criticism” in this chapter therefore pertains to the critical aspect, which objects to the Idealist position that claims to have reached the Absolute via the supra-sensible idea. While granting the status of reality to the negativity of the Idea as that which is mediated or conditioned and therefore only affording us with the illusory appearance of Truth, this other aspect points out that to assume this negative being *as* the affirmative Absolute cannot be permitted. That is, what is contested is the claim that the supra-sensible idea *is* the Absolute since the Idea is to be understood strictly as *a mediation/negation of the Absolute*. It must thus be maintained that this differs in kind from the actual reality of the Absolute. No matter how concrete the Idea becomes throughout the history of human beings, the difference in kind between the Idea of the Absolute and the in-itself of the Absolute must be maintained in order to protect ourselves from the imminent threat of nihilism.³¹⁴

To many, this might not sound plausible given that the objects of criticism clearly differ between Bergson and Marx. After all, Bergson never directly mentions Hegel in any of his major writings and Marx never wrote extensively on Kant.³¹⁵ It would be mistaken to conclude however that Bergson was a complete stranger to Hegel’s philosophy, or that his criticism of Kant only stops short at

³¹⁴ We call the conflation between the idea of the Absolute and the Absolute in-itself nihilistic since this position can only affirm the negativity of the Absolute and does not permit any actual affirmation without turning it into an object of criticism *ad infinitum*. We are therefore not speaking about how Jacobi used the term, since what Jacobi wants is to put forth “belief” as a viable avenue of upholding the validity of the Absolute. This position is not so different from the Fichtean as well as the Hegelian position that elevates belief into the status of rational knowledge.

³¹⁵ It would be mistaken to conclude that Bergson was a complete stranger to Hegel’s philosophy. In several places, Bergson mentions Hegel and shows knowledge of the latter’s philosophy in his lecture courses. In the course given at Clermont-Ferrand in 1884-1885 (“*Le Cahier Noir*”), Bergson shows knowledge of Hegel and criticizes the latter’s reading of Heraclitus in terms of the principle of contradiction. See Bergson, *Cours IV*, p.167.

relating to what is characteristically known as Kantian, *i.e.*, the "Critical Philosophy" that others after him supposedly surpassed. As we have shown above, what is criticized in Kant's conception of freedom is precisely where Kantianism meets the foundation of Western metaphysics and where he shows a definite sign of *reaching towards the affirmativeness of the Absolute*. In other words, what is criticized is the particular way of transcending the confines of critical philosophy and establishing itself, as Hegel would say, within the post-critical position of the "positively rational" or the *Affirmative*.³¹⁶

Indeed, before any of his successors pointed out this transcendence toward affirmativeness, Kant himself states that his conception of freedom carries within itself the premium role that far surpasses the mere confines of critical philosophy: "the concept of freedom [...] constitutes the *keystone* [*Schlussstein*] of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason."³¹⁷ Due to the fact that it constitutes the concept of the Absolute Self, freedom is here unmistakably posited by Kant as the *first principle* of his philosophy as a whole. Granted, the explicit problematization concerning the post-critical foundation of metaphysics originates in his successors, nonetheless, Kant gives a clear direction to this endeavor. Here, the problem of freedom is not only seen in terms of that which merely concerns the partial/limited sphere of moral philosophy. Rather, it is stated to be something that holds together the cohesive system of philosophy, *even of speculative philosophy*. This means that even when the self-activity of reason is criticized for overstepping the boundary of sensuous cognition in the case of speculative philosophy, this self-restrictive move still requires freedom as its core presupposition and the speculative philosophy is possible only in terms of the freedom of reason that *restricts and negates itself* as its own conduct; in this sense, freedom is the outside of time, but there is no outside to freedom.³¹⁸ Thus, besides

³¹⁶ Hegel, G. W. F., ([1817] 1991). *The Encyclopaedia Logic*. Trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, H. S. Harris. Cambridge: Hackett. p.125, pp.131-133. § 79, § 82.

³¹⁷ CPrR 5:3-4.

³¹⁸ It is interesting to compare how Kant sees the relation between freedom and nature with Hegel's account on skepticism as a "moment" within a positively rational philosophy. Hegel already states at the end of his early work, *Faith and Knowledge*, that the feeling of "God Himself is dead" is "a moment of the supreme Idea". In this sense, what Hegel means by *nature* beyond the "vulgar view of nature" (the vulgar nature refers to Fichtean conception of Nature as the *Non-Ego* as opposed to Freedom of the Ego) is wholly compatible with the higher conception of Kantian freedom seen as including natural necessity within itself. See Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*. pp.128-131. § 81. Also see Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, p.176, pp.190 -191.

the function of guaranteeing the possibility of moral/practical philosophy, freedom for Kant plays a much more fundamental role in relation to supporting the essential core of his philosophy as a whole, and, as we have shown above, it is where Kantianism unites with the fundamental aspect of Western metaphysics as a whole. Freedom is therefore conceived as *the first principle*, the non-critical “yes” that affirms the essential foundation of metaphysics as a whole. At this level, Kant’s philosophy can no longer be treated in terms of narrow confines of “Critical Philosophy” but as containing within itself the seed for the later development in post-Kantian Idealism.

Our argument pertaining to materialism is that what Marx criticized in Hegel’s dialectic, namely the operation of the “negation of negation”, is already prefigured in what Bergson points out in Kant’s conception of freedom. That is, we argue that Bergson is criticizing the *root* of Hegel’s negation of negation already residing at Kant’s conception of freedom. Following Feuerbach’s commentary of Hegel, Marx points out in the manuscript of 1844 that:

Feuerbach’s real achievement is: [...] to have opposed to the negation of the negation, which claims to be the absolute positive, the positive which is based upon itself and positively grounded in itself. [...] The positing or self-affirmation and self-confirmation present in the negation of the negation is regarded as a positing which is not yet sure of itself, which is still occupied with its opposite, which doubts itself and therefore stands in need of proof, which does not prove itself through its own existence, which is not admitted. It is therefore directly counterposed to that positing which is sensuously ascertained and grounded in itself. (Feuerbach sees negation of the negation, the concrete concept, as thought which surpasses itself in thought and as thought which strives to be direct awareness, nature, reality.).³¹⁹

In this passage, Marx clearly puts forth a disagreement against Hegel’s method of “negation of the negation”, which promises to reach towards the “absolutely positive”. The negation of negation is the third moment within the movement of Hegelian dialectic, which is designed to establish philosophy upon the “speculative or positively rational”.³²⁰ After having undergone the negation of the first naïve being in-itself by the being for-itself of thought, the movement reaches towards the absolute knowledge of being in-and-for-itself. In Hegel’s words, it is the stage where thought achieves an “immediate knowing” [*das unmittelbare Wissen*], since

³¹⁹ Marx, *Early Writings*, pp.381-382.

³²⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*. p.125.

what it knows is immediately available to thought as its own determinate product. In the same way in Kant's affirmation of freedom as the idea of reason, what this immediate knowing knows is the Truth of the Idea and the objectivity of this truth is validated via establishing the identity between "faith" [*Glaube*] and rational knowledge. Hegel states in *the Encyclopaedia Logic*:

What this immediate knowing knows is that the Infinite, the Eternal or God, that is in our *representation* also is [*Vorstellung ist, auch ist*] – that within our consciousness the certainty of its *being* is immediately and inseparably combined with our *representation* of it.³²¹

In a way analogous to Kantian affirmation, the negation of negation affirms the being of the supra-sensuous idea by saying that "representation [*Vorstellung*] also *is*". As Feuerbach states, what this achieves is the affirmation of the negativity of the Absolute by saying that "the 'otherness of thought' is, however, being."³²² It is an operation of affirming something even though the affirmative being that it affirms is not given to sensuous intuition. This method of affirmation, which Hegel also calls "intellectual intuition" after Fichte's reading of Kant, is contradicted by Feuerbach and Marx since it still remains within time even though what it lays its claim upon lies outside it.³²³ Time, due to its characteristic of being the transcendental form that mediates our experience *a priori*, is what puts our thought in a negative relationship with the in-itself affirmativeness of being. As such, the affirmation of the idea is merely the affirmation of the negativity of the Absolute due to the intervention of time. The second negation that negates this negation is seen as an affirmation since it grants a being to this otherness of thought and recognises thought itself as a being. What the negation of negation

³²¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*. p.112.

³²² Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, p.44.

³²³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 63. Hegel differentiates himself from Fichte by saying that the Fichtean intellectual intuition is trapped within "Either-Or" since Fichtean immediacy of the pure Ego formally excludes any mediation and ends up negating and treating the whole of the sense-perception/nature as something intrinsically "bad". Hegel instead insists that what is intuited immediately through intellectual intuition is the product of mediation (*Vermittlung*), which is also called "development, education and culture" (§67). However, it matters little for our discussion whether the idea excludes or contains mediation. What matters for us is that the idea of reason, which is negative with regard to sensuous perception, is still the sole object of affirmation in both cases. After all, we are in partial agreement with the Hegelian thesis of the mediation of the Idea since this later develops into Marx's conception of the material-historical mediation of ideological consciousness.

affirms as the immediate being is the being of thought as negativity, or the mediated as immediate presence to consciousness.

This means that the negation of negation affirms being but the affirmed being through this dialectic *is* insofar as it is *not* the immediate, sensuous material reality. It does not affirm the immediate sensuous being since the latter is already negated by time. The negation of negation thus still remains on the side of the *other* with respect to the immediate sensuous reality. The temporal division between the thing-in-itself and phenomenon is thus only apparently overcome since the being of thought can be affirmed only insofar as its being is separate and distinct from sensuous material reality due to the authority of time. Feuerbach therefore states: "Hegel is a realist, but a purely idealistic realist or, rather, an abstract realist; he is a realist in the abstraction from all reality."³²⁴

We can see here that the way in which Hegel's negation of the negation gives itself the authority to affirm the Absolute is hence analogous to what we pointed out above in the case of Kant. In this sense, Bergson's criticism of Kantian conception of freedom is reminiscent of the Marxist/Feuerbachian criticism. The supra-sensuous idea is first seen as the object of criticism in the case of Kantian speculative philosophy but when it comes to the practical/moral philosophy, it is affirmed *despite of its negativity* and turns into an object of affirmation through "belief". Bergson's particular strand of materialist criticism is thus primarily an objection raised against the very method of reaching towards the affirmative through belief and a criticism that the affirmativeness of the negative is still alienated from immediate sensuous materiality.

³²⁴ Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, pp.48-49.

Chapter 4

Duration as the Knowledge of the Absolute

If I pull myself in from the periphery toward the centre, if I seek deep down within me what is the most uniformly, the most constantly and durably myself, I find something entirely other [tout autre chose].

Bergson, CM 163/1397.

1. Duration and Contradiction: the Other of Time as Time

Let us now examine the specificity of Bergson's concept of duration as that which endows intuition with the unique capacity for affirmation. In the previous chapter, by explicating the rationale behind Bergson's criticism of Kantian conception of freedom as "belief", we have surveyed the background from which the concept of duration is differentiated. It is well-known that duration is the unique concept of time formulated against Kantian time but we have shown that it is a concept aimed towards accomplishing an end much more fundamental than merely putting forth a livelier version of spatialized time. It is rather a concept that intervenes into the domain of *the other of time* or *Freedom*. That is, through the concept of duration, Bergson puts forth a new conception of the Absolute Self as the foundation of metaphysics in defiance not only of Kantianism but also of the dominant tradition of Western metaphysics as a whole, which, since the time of the Eleatics, has been dominantly defined in terms of the constitutive "insufficiency of perception" vis-à-vis the Absolute. We have seen how the Kantian "belief" in freedom/the Absolute Self has criticized due to its participation in this tradition.

How does the concept of duration differ from the Kantian, or the metaphysical conception of the Absolute Self and what meaning can we ascribe to the *affirmation* that duration endows to the method of intuition? Let us begin with reciting the passage from the conclusion to *Time and Free Will* once more:

[Kant] made this real and free self, which is indeed outside space, into a self which is supposed to be outside duration too, and therefore out of the reach of our faculty of knowledge [*notre faculté de connaître*]. But the truth is that

we perceive [*apercevons*] this self whenever, by a strenuous effort of reflection, we turn our eyes from the shadow which follows us and return [*rentrer*] into ourselves.³²⁵

The particularity of Bergson's concept of duration, which is what makes his philosophy unique vis-à-vis the traditional Western metaphysics, is expressed in its astounding simplicity: the free, Absolute Self is within the reach of our knowledge and it is furthermore something that gives itself forth within the actual perception or intuition of duration. The conception therefore refers to a kind of sensuous knowing, which accomplishes a consciousness of the Absolute Self attained through an actual perception.

The difference from the Kantian position is evident. Although duration refers to the aspect of reality that resides outside of time, it is nonetheless seen as that which gives itself forth within one's actual intuition. It is this characteristic that gives the method of intuition its unique capacity for affirmation. Against the traditional Western metaphysics that only grants the Absolute the status of a virtual presence, Bergson argues through the concept of duration that it is rather the actual datum of perception, or that it is *actually there* within one's sensuous awareness. And, although it is made available as an object of knowledge that is *there*, this very *thereness* of the Absolute does not indicate its negativity but its affirmativeness. To be sure, however, the simplicity of the above formulation is also what makes it all the more perplexing. If we reiterate Bergson's argument regarding duration, it is essentially saying that *the other of time is time, or what lies outside of the transcendental form of intuition is nonetheless intuited*. Taken at face value, this formulation inevitably confronts us with the following question: how is it possible that the Absolute can give itself forth as an actual datum of knowledge given that it is the other of time? How can we accept that the other of time is given *within time*?

Although duration is the most fundamental conception that supports the entirety of Bergson's philosophy in its uniqueness, it is also where we face the most difficult problem with regard to its basic intelligibility. Insofar as it is said to be the knowledge of the "real and free self" [*moi réel et libre*], duration is a concept that treats Freedom in terms of one's actual perception or *sensuous intuition* and it goes against the Idealist belief by affirming the *actual givenness* of the Absolute in

³²⁵ TFW 233/152.

its thereness within intuition. Yet, in relation to Kant, nothing seems more contradictory and unacceptable than to put forth such an argument. As we pointed out above, if duration is indeed posited within the Kantian framework of defining freedom in terms of without-time-ness, this means that Bergson situates himself within the framework of conceiving duration in terms of that which *transcends* sense perception, *i.e.*, as the *Beyond*. In this respect, and to borrow Levinas' formulation, duration seems to be the equivalent of the "absolutely other" and this seemingly prevents it from being affirmed through any positive presentation vis-à-vis our intuition.³²⁶ Does not, then, the conception of freedom as without-time-ness necessarily imply the *transcendental impossibility* of the Absolute to be given forth within sense perception? How can one affirm the *actual perception of the Absolute* without committing the "fallacy of subreption" as Kant would say?³²⁷

Indeed, duration seems to be an impossible concept. But this is only the case if, by "knowledge", we understand the kind of knowledge that belongs to an empirical subject that *a priori* submits its object to a determinate relation and hence relativizes the object. That is, the very definition of knowledge is something that *a priori* contradicts the affirmation of the Absolute: knowledge of the Absolute turns it into Non-Being or into a diminution/alteration of it; as such, a possible recovery of its truth can seemingly be done only through taking the route of abstract reasoning that treats it as an ideal virtual presence that is affirmed despite of its eternal hiddenness from our view.³²⁸ Treated in this way, there is seemingly a perfect and unsurpassable contradiction between perceptual knowledge and the truth of the Absolute. As a consequence, the concept of duration can be criticized for implying an obvious naiveté or a *lack of care* with regard to this basic problem.

Again, as many commentators have done so in the past, one might be tempted to quickly identify this seeming lack of care with Bergson's "anti-

³²⁶ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.33.

³²⁷ ID 2:412.

³²⁸ It is our view that Hegel presents the knowledge of the Absolute (*i.e.*, the speculative/positively rational) through this route of reasoning. In the preliminary conception of *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (§55), Hegel refers to Kant's conception of the "intuitive understanding" in the *Critique of Judgment* and states:

The outstanding merit of the *Critique of Judgment* is that Kant has expressed in it the notion and even the thought of *the Idea*. The notion of an *intuitive understanding*, of *inner* purposiveness, etc., is the *universal* concurrently thought of as *concrete* in itself.

It is only in these notions that Kant's philosophy shows itself to be *speculative*.

As we have shown in the previous chapter, the "intuitive understanding" that Hegel refers to here is ultimately *belief*, which is an operation that affirms the Absolute even though it is not given within sense perception.

Kantianism” and assume that his thought implies either a return to pre-Kantian dogmatic metaphysics or a turn to vulgar positivism devoid of any consideration for the finitude of our perceptual knowledge. Even if one overcomes the first temptation that pertains to the realism or retrieval of time, there is the temptation to sidestep the very possibility of duration by choosing to one-sidedly focus upon the dynamic pluralism of time.³²⁹ Although the latter option would effectively rescue Bergson from the accusation of pre-Kantianism, it would end up mystifying the in-itself of the Absolute. Yet no matter how concretely we understand the mediation of the Absolute and no matter how closely we follow the historical transmutations of time *via* the theory of memory, this does not tell us anything about the possibility of duration since the inquiry is not aimed at the right target. Of course, the becoming of time implies the presence of the “virtual other” that supplies it with the potentiality for self-negation and hence transformation. However, in the same way that the real curve necessarily remains distinct from any determined functions in the case of infinitesimal calculus, the Absolute Self or duration itself necessarily remains distinct from any products of temporal mediation. That is, our understanding of the negativity of the Absolute cannot be equated with its affirmativeness. Unless we come face to face with the distinctness of the problem that solely belongs to the in-itself of the Absolute, the latter necessarily remains unknown.

³²⁹ One can detect a strong tendency to confuse duration and memory in Hyppolite and Deleuze. Both commentators place a strong emphasis on *Matter and Memory*, and deduce the meaning of duration from the functioning of memory in view of *attention to Life*. For us, this treatment rather does away with the question of its *possibility* as an actual object of knowledge (although this is precisely the question through which Bergson approaches the concept in the first place). It thus reinstates the hiddenness of the Absolute in its infinite dissipation. Although it is true that duration passes into time out of the functioning of memory, it is nonetheless incorrect to argue that duration is *therefore* memory or the possibility of duration can be explained in terms of memory since this does not shed any light upon what duration *is* in-itself. Rather, memory is what turns duration into non-being, and it signifies our alienation from duration. To argue that this alienation is equivalent to a taking possession of duration is a reproduction of the idealist argument. It is interesting to note that Deleuze sees the shortcomings of Bergson’s philosophy (particularly with respect to three syntheses of time in *Difference and Repetition*) precisely because he equates duration with memory. Also, in *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze speaks of “the plane of immanence”, or the “infinite movement”, as that which only occurs in the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* and nowhere else. For us, this is a misreading caused by his identification of duration with memory. See Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p.51. See Hyppolite, J., ([1949] 2003). “Various Aspects of Memory in Bergson.” Trans. A. V. Colman. In Lawlor, L., (2003). *The Challenge of Bergsonism*. London: Continuum. p.120.

We do need to take into account, here, that Bergson thinks in the aftermath of Kant's "Copernican Revolution". It is due to Kant's reversal of Platonism that the Absolute is now seen as located in the "down-below" (the thing-in-itself) rather than in the "up-above". Yet, unless we directly enter into the realm of the Absolute Self in-itself and interrogate its possibility with respect to actual knowledge, it remains the *pure beyond* and hence a mere product of mystification. More importantly, in this way, metaphysics is bound to remain, as Kant describes in his first preface to *Critique of Pure Reason*, as the "battleground of endless conflicts" whereby no true agreement or no common ground can be obtained without having to resort to violence.³³⁰ If the only avenue to the Absolute is metaphysics, or if the Absolute can only be approached via the abstract cognition of the idea without being supported by any "touchstone of experience", *war* remains the ultimate destiny of human reason. The task of overcoming metaphysics is therefore the most urgent political task concerning the future of thought as a whole and our investigation into the concept of duration needs to respond to such a demand.

2. Duration as the Result of Non-Metaphysical Sublation

Given the obvious contradiction that the concept of duration implies, how can we approach it to inquire into the nature of its affirmative capacity? As it is evinced by the above quotation from *Time and Free Will*, duration is said to be that which possesses a *positive there-ness* within actual intuition. The affirmativeness of duration is disclosed in its givenness to actual intuition. Yet, since we cannot escape from the reality that actual intuition is mediated by time and givenness to perception is ordinarily a temporally mediated givenness, duration seems to be the ineffable other/Idea that cannot be given within actual intuition. This issue cannot be bypassed by merely repeating the various descriptions Bergson gives to duration (continuous multiplicity, flow, real time, movement, etc), since any verbal description of the "what" of duration necessarily covers over and negates its absoluteness and hence betrays its fundamental constitution. Nor can we be satisfied with merely raising duration into the rank of an ontological principle,

³³⁰ CPR Aviii.

since this ignores Bergson's anti-metaphysical stance and fails to fulfil the criterion of being given within the actual datum of intuition.

Our inquiry into the affirmative capacity of duration must therefore inevitably confront the problem of contradiction between the Absolute and knowledge. The only way in which we can do so is to examine the concept *in terms of* the problem of contradiction and let it be an inquiry into the condition of possibility for the *reconciliation* of the contradiction. That is, instead of turning away from the problem of contradiction, we must examine the concept as that which responds to it and provides it with an answer. Our argument is the following: the above contradiction inevitably confronts the concept precisely because the concept is posited directly in relation to the contradiction. In other words, duration is not where the contradiction between the Absolute and knowledge arises and left unresolved. Rather, it is where this problem is cared for and provided with a solution. In a word, we can understand the concept in terms of that which performs a *sublation* of the contradiction between the Absolute and knowledge.

In the previous chapter, as a preliminary to the present investigation, we examined the Kantian conception of freedom as that from which duration differentiates itself. Since the Kantian conception of freedom implies the affirmation of the Absolute Self as the Idea of Reason (belief), we stated that the concept of duration is posited against the Idealism of the Absolute, which is also where Kantianism meets the dominant tradition of Western metaphysics. We concluded that the concept of duration is therefore ultimately put forth against Kant's participation in the traditional way of approaching the Absolute that stems from, as Bergson states in the lecture given at Oxford University in 1911, the constitutive "insufficiency of perception". The crux of the problem for our investigation lies in discerning precisely what constitutes Bergson's next step after recognizing his opposition against metaphysics/idealism. If the claim upon the "knowledge of the Absolute" appears as naïve and absurd, it is because we confuse duration's role within Bergson's dialectic. After recognizing his confrontation against metaphysics, it would be a mistake to assume that he then walks away from the constitutive problem that gave birth to it, namely, from the problem of the contradiction between the Being of the Absolute and its Non-Being within sense perception. The concept of duration seemingly exhibits a naïveté vis-à-vis

the contradiction precisely because it is put forth as a solution to the same problem that inaugurates Western metaphysics in the first place. The fact that it is said to be the knowledge or perception of the Absolute does not imply its lack of care vis-à-vis the contradiction, or that it is one-sidedly and abstractly conceived in a way that shows its dialectical immaturity (in the sense that the concept is caught between an *either-or*). Rather, we argue that duration is that which confronts and reconciles the contradiction. The particular sense through which it is said to be the “knowledge” or the “perception” must be understood in their *higher sense* whereby their usual contradiction against the Absolute is *sublated/relieved* from the standpoint of, as Hegel would say, “the Third”.³³¹

Our investigation into the concept of duration shall therefore be directed towards uncovering its particular operation of sublation – or the particular way in which it constitutes the thirdness with respect to the Being and the Non-Being of the Absolute. Of course, metaphysics utilizes a certain method to transcend the contradiction and Bergson’s method of intuition as a whole certainly contains a retrieval of this kind of sublation in terms of the coming into being of Time. However, the kind of dialectical sublation that we are facing vis-à-vis duration belongs to a radically different kind of mediation: in order to clarify the difference, we shall call it the *non-metaphysical method of sublation*.

In relation to the seeming contradiction that the concept encounters, we put forth an argument that duration constitutes the knowledge of the Absolute insofar as it is *obtained as a result of a particular kind of mediation*. The affirmative capacity of the concept of duration can be approached via conceding that *the immediate is not given immediately but it is rather obtained through a special type of mediation*. Indeed, it seems plausible to assume that one can grasp duration as the other of time by simply pointing towards what is contradicted by conceptual knowledge. In other words, duration seemingly presents itself under the vulgar form of anti-dialecticism that is simply *against* what mediates it and turns it into non-being. It is then a mere tautology to suggest that it exhibits a naiveté vis-à-vis the metaphysical contradiction since the very being of duration is first envisaged as that which is contradicted by its conceptual mediation (hence as something that one-sidedly ignores the contradiction even though the concept is couched within

³³¹ Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, p.170.

it).³³² Contrary to such a view, we argue that the apprehension of duration takes place via a sublation of this very contradiction and that it is a mistake to interpret duration as that which is given within a naïve form of sense-certainty. Indeed, such descriptions as the “immediate data of consciousness”, the “real and free self” *etc.*, seemingly suggest that to get a hold of duration is easy and it can be done *immediately*. Quite the opposite is in fact the case. Bergson states that an apprehension of duration requires a “strenuous effort of reflection” and does not give itself forth within a mere “instinct or feeling”.³³³ For us, this “effort” that Bergson speaks of is the non-metaphysical method of sublation. As we will show, duration is not something given within a natural, *uncritical* consciousness. Bergson’s argument implies that ‘the other of time *is* time’, or that ‘the outside of intuition *is* intuited’. The necessity to think of duration in relation to the non-metaphysical method of sublation for us means that the copula “is” in the previous statements signifies a kind of *development* that differs in kind from the development of history. In what follows, we will determine precisely how this non-metaphysical mediation works and how it constitutes the affirmative knowledge of the Absolute.

3. Mediation for the *Uncreated*

The real issue pertaining to duration begins from this point onwards. In order to save duration from its seeming dialectical naiveté, we need to emphasize the necessary involvement of mediation. The problem is to understand precisely how this mediation works in relation to the assertion that duration is the knowledge of the Absolute. In order to clarify the specificity of this operation to help us direct our attention towards its precise particularity, we need to pose a question: does the involvement of mediation/sublation indicate that duration or the Absolute Self is that which *comes into being*? Does it also indicate that the knowledge of the Absolute is a knowledge of the contingent product of this mediation understood as an activity of *creation*?

³³² For an exemplary criticism of Bergson as displaying a naiveté towards metaphysical contradiction, see Horkheimer, “On Bergson’s Metaphysics of Time”, pp.9-19.

³³³ TFW 233/152, CM 88/1328.

No one can deny that creation, or to engage in the activity of self-creation, is one of the highest aims of Bergson's philosophy. As he states in the second introduction to *Creative Mind*: "I believe that it is of man's essence to create materially and morally, to fabricate things and to fabricate himself. *Homo faber* is the definition I propose."³³⁴ With Bergson, creation is the *Essence* of Man. We are *Homo faber* before being *Homo sapiens*. Also, his most well known work is called *Creative Evolution* and one can certainly say that his engagement with the concept of Time as well as his attack on Metaphysics is simultaneously a confrontation against determinism and a fervent defence of individual freedom for self-creation. Yet does the involvement of mediation in the apprehension of duration mean that the knowing of the Absolute is equivalent to an act of creation, or that *Art* ultimately supersedes the eternal stability of the Absolute Truth?

Nietzsche left us with a statement that still strongly reverberates within the current era and that might help us answer our question: "[a]n anti-metaphysical view of the world – yes, but an artistic one."³³⁵ Indeed, our era can be characterized by the skeptical abandonment of the Absolute Truth. As he states in the *Twilight of the Idols*, the *true world became a fable* – we have grown tired of the idle talk over the Truth as such. It seems, then, that the only way forward is to fully realize the fictitiousness of the true world, *i.e.*, the "fable", and then turn it around and render the Absolute Truth itself into an object of artistic creation.³³⁶ It seems that the "anti-metaphysical view", or the overcoming of metaphysics is achieved via subordinating Truth under Art. Does our insistence upon the involvement of mediation imply that Bergson's conception of duration ultimately amounts to recommending the same? Sartre's existentialism, which professes that *existence precedes essence*, contains this Nietzschean call for individual creation. Many philosophers who come after him embrace this doctrine as a sign of political radicalism and some attempt to align Bergsonism with this kind of doctrine in order to save it from the charge of religious conservatism. Merleau-Ponty's emphasis upon Bergson "in-the-making" as opposed to the "ready-made" as well as

³³⁴ CM 84/1325.

³³⁵ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, § 1048.

³³⁶ Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, The Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, p.171.

Deleuze's promotion of the concept of "fabulation" within the domain of politics is a testimony to this tendency.³³⁷

Does the Bergsonian mediation of the Absolute through knowledge indicate that he also attempts to overcome metaphysics *via* a privileging of Art over Truth, or by rendering the Absolute into a product of creation? The answer to this question depends solely upon what is meant by *mediation* in the special sense that we use the term and with what specific means it sublates the contradiction between the Being and the Non-Being of the Absolute. One thing is certain: if mediation can only be an act of creation and hence a contestation of Truth, the overcoming of metaphysics would rather make a circular return back to metaphysics. As Heidegger notes, this kind of Nietzschean reversal of metaphysics would end up with a "completion"/"fulfillment" [*Vollendung*] of metaphysics and would not in fact "twist free" from it.³³⁸ In other words, the subordination of Metaphysics under Art does not relieve us from the *mystifying belief* in the Absolute or in *onto-theology* but rather re-inscribes us within it. If mediation can only be a creation, the Absolute would be merely "our" anthropomorphic product of creation and hence it would not be the Absolute but a contingent result of a finite determination. The Absolute would be an alteration performed upon the *Uncreated Absolute* ("Nothing"); between the created Absolute and the uncreated Absolute, ontological difference returns once again and bring us right back to the problem of contradiction. The overcoming of metaphysics, which strives to be a negation of the Absolute Truth, rather ends up affirming the latter as the unknowable beyond once again.

Although we argue for the necessary involvement of mediation in the apprehension of duration, the kind of mediation that we speak of differs in kind from creation. It is, according to Bergson, an operation of "recovery" [*retrouver*], or "unmaking" [*défaisant*].³³⁹ It refers to the activity that seeks to "renounce certain habits of thinking" in order to restore intuition within its "original purity" [*pureté*

³³⁷ Deleuze, G., ([1990] 1995). *Negotiations*. Trans. M. Joughin. New York: Columbia Univ. Press. p.174. The concept of *fabulation* is one that Bergson develops in relation to *Closed Morality* in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. It refers to the "myth making function" of *static* religion. Structurally, *fabulation* closely resembles the Kantian *belief* in the Absolute. See TS 108/1066.

³³⁸ Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, p.57; Heidegger, *Nietzsche Vol. 1&2*. p.201.

³³⁹ TFW 129/85, MM 185/321.

première].³⁴⁰ It is therefore rather the opposite of creation, since it is not an *outward* movement that differentiates and creates what is other than itself. What is obtained *via* the mediation is not something that comes into being. The mediation that we are speaking of here is rather an *inward return* from the movement of determination back into the undetermined *source* of creation that *endures* remaining a movement in-itself. It is therefore not a mediation in the sense of creation/modification performed upon the Absolute in-itself so as to negate it but it is a getting back and coinciding with the Absolute Self so as to make a direct *contact* with “the very principle of life in general.”³⁴¹

We misunderstand Nietzsche if what is meant by art is seen only in terms of the contestation against Truth. As he says, “‘appearance’ means reality once more, only selected, strengthened and corrected reality... The tragic artist is no pessimist”.³⁴² Although he stresses his opposition against the duality of the apparent and the real world, he nonetheless remains a dualist since to create a *better* reality requires *the Good* that presides above and beyond the apparent world. Sartre, too, after pronouncing that modern thought is the “monism of the phenomenon”, nonetheless begins *Being and Nothingness* with the introduction that remarks: “[i]t seems rather that we have converted them all into a new dualism”.³⁴³ What we need is not to see Art/Creation as the antithesis of the metaphysical Truth, since metaphysics has always been such an activity. The opposition between Art and Metaphysics is only a pseudo-opposition. The real opposition rather resides in the difference between the product and the condition of production. What we are after in this investigation is the means to obtain the knowledge of the latter without letting it be a mere result of “our” creation. After all, having said the above, transcendental dualism as a whole is not at all *opposed* to creation. On the contrary, *self-creation* is of supreme importance and it is the only avenue of hope we can have with respect to the future of our collective existence.

We will come back to the importance of self-creation as the ultimate destination of transcendental dualism with reference to it being a “free act”. Yet

³⁴⁰ MM 185/321.

³⁴¹ TS 250/1187.

³⁴² Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, The Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, p.170.

³⁴³ Sartre, J.-P., ([1943] 2003). *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. H.E. Barnes. London: Routledge. p.3.

before moving on to the concrete activity of creation, and in order to engage in such an activity, there is a prior question we must address: *from what source* shall our creation gather its motive and strength? A mere imperative for creation alone obviously does not help us. Without knowing the *motivation*, which is *the raison d'être* of any reasonable action, there would be no difference in kind between *our* creation and unconscious biological functions, which, along with the socially induced moral obligations, mechanically reproduce us in response to the capricious sway of Life according to its own logic. Bergson says:

Just as the talent of the painter is formed or deformed – in any case, is modified – under the very influence of the works he produces, so each our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form that we are just assuming. It is then right to say that what we do depends on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are, to a certain extent, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually.³⁴⁴

The essence of Bergson's philosophy does not only reside in pointing out that we are what we do, or that we are our own artists. To point out that we are creating ourselves continuously – this alone is a statement directed towards the activity of *Nature* and *we* remain alienated from the act of creation. Being left to itself, Art belongs to the region of Nature and hence it is a mere confirmation to the fatalistic necessity of *the Law of Nature* that exists outside ourselves. Creation indeed happens within the universe incessantly and does not require our conscious participation for it to go on. It is not that *we* engage in a self-conscious activity of creation but it is Life, which is outside of ourselves, that produces us as its product.

The privileging of Art over Truth only appears to be based upon a revelation of freedom, yet this freedom for creation would signify our *subjugation* to Life's creativity or *abandonment* within it unless we have the strength to become the cause of ourselves and give ourselves the purpose for our own creation. The difficulty is that although we must obtain the purpose, which must be strictly ours so that we can turn creation into genuinely *our* creation based upon freedom, this purpose cannot be derived from the certain interests of finite individual consciousness. The latter, which is attached to the surface/social ego, is already the result of nature and it is produced out of socio-political mediation exerted upon us from without. The purpose of the social ego is *a priori* conditioned

³⁴⁴ CE 7/500.

by its *attention to Life* and it is caused by the mechanism of nature that functions automatically without our self-consciousness. However paradoxical it might sound, then, in order to engage in a genuine creation that is truly ours, or the kind of creation that is genuinely “selective” as Nietzsche says, it is necessary to seek the drive for action within the region of reality that is *not* strictly “ours”. We must go beyond the “we” of the finite/social consciousness that nature and society created. That is, by going beyond the finite “we” and by becoming *other than “ourselves”*, we obtain the insight into our true, Absolute Self and base our creation upon it as *the self-sufficient cause* that truly belongs to us.

4. Relever of Sensuousness: Duration as the Transcendental Givenness

It is clear that for Bergson genuine creation requires a prior mediation, which differs in kind from creation. Or, to put it in another way, a genuine creation must be made up of two kinds of mediation at once: one of which is creation and the other a movement of *recovery/unmaking*. If the former is left to itself without the latter, it can only ever be a blind and mechanical creation and its sense of purpose can only be derived from something other than itself. If it is combined with the insight brought forth by the latter, creation can turn into a *reasonable* and *Self-Conscious evolution* that contains within itself the foundation of the Absolute Self-Consciousness. The essence of Bergson’s philosophy, which is concentrated upon the putting forth of the concept of duration vis-à-vis the dominant tradition of metaphysics, thus resides in showing us how the second kind of mediation is possible along with the first. Although the fact remains that the concept of duration points towards the realm of the other of time/the Beyond, Bergson shows us that the Beyond is much closer to us than it seems and it is available within one’s actual perception without relying upon a mystifying belief.

How, then, does the non-metaphysical sublation work? Or, how can we “unmake” ourselves and get back to the Absolute Self in-itself beyond the above-explained contradiction? If traditional Western metaphysics seeks to resolve the contradiction *via* the affirmation of the suprasensuous idea or by taking the route of seeking the self-sufficiency beyond the either-or within the sovereignty of

Thought, the concept of duration employs the means to transcend the contradiction by positing the “supra-intellectual intuition”.³⁴⁵ That is, it attains self-sufficiency beyond the contradiction by *raising-up* not the intellectual side of consciousness but its sensuous side. Thus, the non-metaphysical mediation is an operation that indicates, as Bergson states in *Creative Evolution*, that: “[s]ensuous intuition itself [...] is promoted.” [*L’intuition sensible va donc elle-même se relever*].³⁴⁶ The word “relever” here is of tremendous importance as it can be seen as carrying a specifically dialectical connotation that corresponds to the German word *Aufhebung*/sublation, which, as Derrida explains, signifies both a kind of relieving and promoting of an original function at the same time.³⁴⁷ In its higher form, the sensuous knowledge that ordinarily enters into conflict with the Being of the Absolute loses its attachment to conceptual mediation and becomes united with its other so as to constitute itself into the knowledge of the Absolute. Duration therefore transcends contradiction through this relieving/promotion of the sensuous intuition but insofar as this method differs from the metaphysical-idealist method of sublation, we can say that it succeeds in escaping from the trap of onto-theological nihilism that perpetually reconstitutes metaphysics as a battleground.

Having said this, how is such sublation possible in actual reality? It is true that Bergson at times speaks of the sublation only in terms of its appearance as a *probable* existence to the vast majority of individuals. In *Time and Free Will*, as we explained above, it is said that the *surface ego* covers over duration due to the necessity to live within society. In *Matter and Memory*, the concept of surface ego is further developed into the theory of memory, which *a priori* intervenes into our perception in view of “attention to Life” and turns the *pure perception* into something only true “in theory”, “by right” [*en droit*].³⁴⁸ In *Creative Evolution*, the covering over of duration is explained in terms of the dominant genesis of the faculty of intelligence within human beings and it is conceived as a faculty that necessarily interprets the world in terms of mechanical causality, hence subjugating the process of life under the “cinematographic illusion”. Finally, in *The*

³⁴⁵ CE 360/799.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ For the correspondence between *relever* and *Aufhebung*, see Derrida, J., ([1972] 1982). *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. A. Bass. Brighton: Harvester Press. p.88. Also see Malabou, *Future of Hegel*, p.144, p.224.

³⁴⁸ MM 34/184.

Two Sources of Morality and Religion, Bergson speaks of the difference between closed and open morality and grants the existence of “mystic intuition” only to rare and privileged individuals, seemingly arguing that the latter is a singular, mystical vision that is unavailable for the rest of us.³⁴⁹ In sum, within all of his major works, we can easily find Bergson’s seeming endorsement of the position that we are irreversibly cut off from duration and abandoned within time so that we are only afforded with the mere probable or virtual existence of the non-metaphysical sublation. While this is true, the probable nonetheless does not at all mean that it is therefore *impossible*. On the contrary, from the very beginning of his philosophical career, the core effort of Bergson’s philosophy has always been directed towards demonstrating that duration is what is given within intuition and this givenness of duration is neither probable nor accidental but rather the *pure transcendental* givenness. No doubt, the apprehension of duration requires a specific method of mediation unlike any other. Yet, this mediation does not take place through a rare object that is utterly unavailable to most of us like the philosopher’s stone. However subtle it may be, it is an operation of grasping what is *a priori* given to all of us *unconditionally*. In this sense, the non-metaphysical method of sublation is an act of *opening towards what is already there* within each and every empirical experience.

As we know, Bergson conceives of two kinds of *purity* in *Matter and Memory*: one is *pure memory* and the other is *pure perception*. Accordingly, our empirical consciousness is said to be the mixture or synthesis of the two. This dualism can be seen as Bergson’s retrieval as well as his going beyond Kantianism as the word “pure” specifically refers to the notion of the transcendental in the Kantian sense. As Kant explains, all our empirical cognition springs from “two basic sources” that are *a priori* synthesized.³⁵⁰ In other words, any empirical experience is transcendently synthesized into a composite, or as Bergson put it, it is the “fold” between intuition and concept.³⁵¹ Now, for Kant, what is “pure” or “transcendental” is obtained via the “*a priori cognition*” that isolates what is intrinsically necessary within any empirical consciousness or what makes such

³⁴⁹ TS 248/1186.

³⁵⁰ CPR A50/B74.

³⁵¹ Bergson, *Cours III*, p.133. Deleuze highlights this brilliantly in *Bergsonism* by saying that: “[i]ntuition as method of division is not without resemblance with a transcendental analysis”. See Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p.23.

composite existence of experience itself possible as its irreducible condition.³⁵² That is, since any empirical experience is conceived as a mixture of receptivity and spontaneity, Kant reaches towards the universal by disentangling this mixture and capturing only what is *pure, i.e.*, those that “occur absolutely independently from all experience” so that “nothing empirical whatsoever is mixed in with them”.³⁵³

Overall, the non-metaphysical method of Bergsonian sublation does not deviate from the basic Kantian premise regarding the transcendental structure of empirical consciousness. For Bergson also, natural consciousness is a composite made up of spontaneous memory and receptive perception and the purity of the transcendental givenness is obtained through disentangling this mixture and lifting one beyond the contradiction so as to sublimate it in its purity. Duration therefore is not at all an “uncritical” conception. On the contrary, it is posited fully within the legacy of Kant’s critical philosophy. Bergson however goes beyond Kant in realizing that, “by right” [*en droit*] and from the same premise that Kant puts forth, there can be two heterogeneous directions to this movement of purification – that is, the transcendental can be both the purity of the intellectual condition that *synthesizes* the empirical (Time) as well as the purity of sensuous givenness that is *synthesized* into the empirical givenness (Duration).³⁵⁴ It is just that Kant does not fully explicate the consequences of his basic premise and only explores one side of the composite so as to “prohibit” himself from obtaining the pure sensuousness.³⁵⁵ If one can say that empirical experience is composed of two heterogeneous sources as its transcendental condition “absolutely independently from all experience”, how does this prevent pure sensuousness from being treated also as the irreducible component that makes up the necessary half of the transcendental? Any one-sided explication of conceptual spontaneity alone does not tell us anything about the non-conceptual character of intuitive receptivity without which the premise regarding the composite nature of empirical experience cannot subsist at all. However, Kant’s overall project is concerned with purifying the empirical consciousness from sensuous experience and with extracting the form of spontaneity as the transcendental condition of all possible experience. Kant therefore leaves the sensuous side of the composite untouched.

³⁵² CPR B2-B3.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ MM 34/184.

³⁵⁵ TFW 235/153.

Granted, as we have seen in part I, Kant seems to have already escaped from such a contestation through the theory of the transcendental schematism of imagination that explains the subsumption of time/receptivity under the categories, since this responds to the problem of the disjunction between concepts and intuition.³⁵⁶ Yet, even after recognizing the validity of the theory of schematism, the gulf between spontaneity and receptivity remains intact and, in fact, the irreducibility of the purely receptive side of the composite becomes even more pronounced. After all, the doctrine of schematism is not at all intended to erase the heterogeneity between the thing-in-itself and intuition but rather to demonstrate the unity and the self-consistency (dynamic or otherwise) of the finite human intuition in its enclosure within its own spontaneity so as to *protect* what lies outside it from being corrupted by our spontaneous appropriation (*i.e. subreption*). As Bergson puts it, Kant's retraction, or the "prohibition" [*interdirer*] rather stems from his demand for our collective *reverence* towards the Outside.³⁵⁷ Kant states:

I cannot even assume God, freedom, and immortality, for the sake of the necessary practical use of my reason, if I do not at the same time *deprive* speculative reason of its pretensions to transcendent insight. [...] I therefore had to annul *knowledge* [*das Wissen aufheben*] in order to make room for faith [*Glauben*].³⁵⁸

It is clear that for Kant, the critical reflection upon the finitude of human knowledge is at the same time what makes room for the sovereignty and the incorruptibility of the Good and what protects it from our pretentious and indulgent appropriation. By strictly demarcating the boundary between understanding and reason and prohibiting the former from transgressing into the realm of the Other with respect to it, Kant *sublates* the confrontation between faith

³⁵⁶ CPR A137/B176.

³⁵⁷ TFW 235/153.

³⁵⁸ CPR Bxxx. In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel calls this "the religious point of view of Protestantism." However, it would be mistaken to assume that Hegel then does away with Faith [*Glauben*] by cancelling it with a dispassionate knowledge [*Wissen*] that is simply *against* faith. What Hegel aims to achieve overall is precisely the *sublation* of the contradiction between faith and knowledge, and this was also what Kant intended to do as we can see from the above passage in the first critique. After all, Hegel says in the *Encyclopaedia Logic* that "everything rational can equally be called "mystical" [...] the mystical is the concrete unity of just those determinations that count as true for the understanding only in their separation and opposition." See Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, p.57, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, § 82.

and knowledge and maintains both the speculative and the practical domains in their own respective territories. It is therefore not at all out of his desire to cancel out the transcendental duality of consciousness that Kant issues the prohibition against pursuing the purity of receptivity. On the contrary, he does so precisely in order to preserve the duality so that the otherness of the other of time can be maintained as the Other. The problem that remains is the following: after raising the Other so high beyond ourselves to the extent that it is no longer visible from where we are, what saves it from being denied, forgotten, and abandoned as the “useless and superfluous” idea as Nietzsche says? The profound lesson that the doctrine of schematism, in particular, and Kantianism, in general, teaches us, and to which Bergson remains a faithful observer, is that our finite consciousness dwells one-sidedly within time and time is the field of *forgetfulness* of the pure givenness of the given. In time, we can only envisage ourselves within the field of consciousness where the purely given is *a priori* subordinated under our spontaneity and this transcendental structure guarantees the synthetic identity between *what is purely given* and *what is given to us* so as to relegate the former into the realm of the unknowable Other. Our finite or natural consciousness is therefore shut up within itself and the kind of self-consciousness that “we” as time-bound consciousness can obtain is merely the consciousness of its own alienation or forgetfulness.

Having acknowledged this, does it necessarily follow that this one-sided self-consciousness is the *only* kind of self-consciousness that is available to us? Are we only capable of knowing ourselves as alienated existence that is trapped in its finitude and hence condemned in its transcendental incapacity to *know* itself as the Absolute Self? If the purification of the intellectual side of empirical composite gives us the self-consciousness of the enclosed/individual selfhood, the purification of the sensuous side illuminates what lies outside of this enclosure – the realm of the “Open” – which is not alien but rather complementary to the enclosure.³⁵⁹ The irony here is that if it is not coupled with a definite insight into the reality of the Other, Kant’s reverence towards it is also that which contributes to its downfall into the status of “indifferentism” or nihilist skepticism due to its inability to differentiate itself from agnostic *disbelief*.³⁶⁰ If the Good is absolutely

³⁵⁹ TS 59/1024.

³⁶⁰ CPR Ax.

beyond our knowledge, what convinces us that it shall *therefore* be respected except for the culturally conditioned moral obligation that turns us into “a machine for the making of gods” as Bergson says?³⁶¹ To point out the “groundlessness” of our existence has become fashionable in invoking an image of anti-conservatism so praised within the leftist circles worldwide. But if it is only used in a negative sense (as in the lack of ground), groundlessness is in fact catastrophic for any serious concern for building a foundation for the genuine well-being of collective existence. We must be equipped with a means of showing the genuine capacity for a concrete individual revelation of the Good *here and now*. Otherwise, mere historical faith cannot protect itself from degenerating into dogmatism.

5. Sensing of Sensing: How to Acquire Pure Knowledge

In order to guard ourselves from falling into the trap of nihilism, we must acquire the means to affirm the outside of our finite consciousness not in terms of a probable or a virtual existence but as the transcendental, necessary reality. In so doing, we must also protect ourselves from making the obvious mistake of falling back into pre-Kantian dogmatism. That is, the demand for the acquisition of the actual knowledge of the outside as the necessary, transcendental reality is not at all a call to dismiss Kant’s warning against the pretension of transcendence. On the contrary, it allows us to affirm the reality of the Outside in its own particularity so that we can let it present itself in a way that differs from what spontaneous consciousness would make of it. More specifically, we need to maintain our guard against confusing the knowledge of the Absolute Self with an object of *conceptual/spontaneous knowledge*, which belongs to the surface/social ego and is hence already a product of the socio-political “adaptation”.³⁶² As we explained in Part I, the surface/social ego functions in view of the *attention to Life*. This means that the type of knowledge that belongs to finite consciousness or what is treated as “speculative” use of reason in Kant’s philosophy is fully absorbed within the constant attention or the *labour* that Life demands of us.³⁶³

³⁶¹ TS 317/1245.

³⁶² MM 183/319.

³⁶³ MM 184/321.

The actual reality of the outside is not revealed to us as long as we one-sidedly place ourselves within the field of spontaneous consciousness. The affirmativeness of the outside must be sought in the region of reality that is not affirmative to “us” but is in-itself and the latter must be established within a radically different kind of knowledge. According to Bergson, what we must acquire is the “pure knowledge” [*la connaissance pure*] that differs in kind from the “customary or useful knowledge” of the surface ego.³⁶⁴ The ultimate question we must ask is, what, in concrete terms, is required of us to get a hold of this pure knowledge? We already pointed out above that duration is to be seen as *pure transcendental sensuousness* and hence it is something that abides by the basic Kantian premise regarding the transcendental structure of empirical consciousness. Duration therefore is not something only possible for small number of individuals but it is the reality for all of us transcendently, *i.e., it is independent of all experience.*

The problem is that the very definition of the concept remains locked within sensuous knowledge although it is independent of all experience and this in fact means that *duration can be said to exist only for those who experience it in actual reality.* Here, we must accept a seemingly *aporetic* proposition: although duration is transcendental/pure and hence independent of all experience, it is nonetheless something that must be experienced in its actual reality for it to be disclosed as real. That is, although Kant’s premise regarding the composite nature of empirical consciousness would suffice for us to speculate upon the transcendental availability of duration, a “theoretical knowledge” of this kind would be a mere equivalent to establishing duration as the idea of reason and would not at all fulfil its basic definition of being sensuous knowledge. To put it simply, although it is independent of all experience and this means that duration must differ from what is given within empirical consciousness, it still does not come to us if we rely upon theoretical thinking.

How, then, can we acquire pure knowledge? One cannot conceive of any other ways of apprehending duration other than through *pure sensuousness*. That which is independent of all experience is independent of all *empirical* experience and the latter is the mixture of receptivity and spontaneity. In the case of extracting the form of spontaneity, theoretical thinking would suffice to take

³⁶⁴ MM 186-187/322-323.

possession of the transcendental. For this, one must merely reflect upon the empirical composite *in thought* and extract what is thought in it through the means of thought (pure cognition). On the other hand, the receptive side of the transcendental does not give itself forth through such a method, since that which reflective thinking takes as its object is what thinking supplies to the given out of its spontaneity *a priori*. Pure cognition is a thinking reflecting upon itself and it is a knowing insofar as it is a thinking that knows itself as thinking. On the other hand, the non-metaphysical mediation makes a movement of the opposite kind. As we stated above, it is a movement of “unmaking” or “renouncing”. It is not a purification of thinking from sensuousness but a renouncing of thinking within empirical cognition so that *sensuousness can be independent from empirical spontaneity*. It is a knowing insofar as the faculty of sensing/perception returns into itself and knows itself *as* sensuousness (pure sensuousness). We may therefore call this movement a sensing of sensing, or sensuousness raised or sublated to the level of self-consciousness.

Although the apprehension of duration requires our active engagement in the mediation since it is something that must be *obtained* as a result of *our own action*, it is crucial to point out that this action is not a *going-after* in the sense of grasping or turning an object into a thing that abides by our form of spontaneity. Rather, it is an act of *receiving*. The faculty of receptivity is a faculty of receiving something as *given*. What is received is not something that stems from our spontaneity but it is *given as a Gift from elsewhere*. The act of receiving a gift differs from an act of taking something as *mine* and it must be an act of *opening* towards the pure givenness of what is given. If conceptual knowledge is an action conditioned by *desire* or *eros* that is turned towards a fulfilment of an individual interest or *pleasure* (the attention to Life), the pure knowledge achieved via non-metaphysical mediation corresponds to an opening up towards the state of *Love* or *agape* that attains *Joy* rather than pleasure.³⁶⁵ As Bergson states in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*: “the soul that is opening, and before whose eyes material obstacles banish, is all joy. Pleasure and well-being are something joy is

³⁶⁵ “In its eternally unsatisfied desire [*Dans son désir éternellement inassouvi*] to embrace the object around which it is condemned to turn, analysis multiplies endlessly the points of view in order to complete the ever incomplete representation, varies interminably the symbols with the hope of perfecting the always imperfect translation” (CM 162/1396).

more.”³⁶⁶ From this perspective, thinking or desiring goes outside of itself in order to obtain an object that is absent from it and enters into the endless tragic cycle of objectifying what it lacks and goes after it precisely because it is conditioned by the lack of what it desires. Time then appears to us as the terrible vicious circle that confines our existence within it, a kind of round wheel where we must run after ourselves only to realize that it is endless and without meaning or destination.

On the contrary, love is not conditioned by an object that lies outside itself; it is that which disrupts the vicious circle since love is realized when the separation between the object of desire (*i.e.*, the Absolute Self) and the subject that desires it is overcome and coincides in a Unity. As Bergson says, “gone [...] is the distance between the thought and the object of the thought. [...] Gone the radical separation between him who loves and him who is loved.”³⁶⁷ One cannot love oneself if one desires oneself as an object that is lacking from oneself since the distance between the object of thought and the thought itself cannot be overcome by or within thought. In front of the gulf between itself and its object, what thinking can achieve as its highest goal is to become conscious of its alienation from the Absolute Self, *that is*, its finitude, or of the infinite distance to the Absolute Self that forever lies ahead of it.

If it succeeds in purifying itself from the influence of spontaneity, sense perception can actually experience and know itself as the Absolute Self. That is, sense perception can overcome the infinite distance between the Subject and the Object and enter into the state of Absolute Unity with itself and receive the given as pure givenness. Bergson states in *Introduction to Metaphysics*: “[w]e call intuition here the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it.”³⁶⁸ Unlike the faculty of spontaneity, the faculty of receptivity has therefore the capacity to “sympathize” with its object or become one with it without

³⁶⁶ TS 58/1024. Schopenhauer makes a precise distinction between *eros* and *agape* and argues that whereas the former is “selfishness” [*Selbstsucht*], the latter is “compassion” [*Mitleid*] or *caritas* and deserves to be called “pure Love” [*reine Liebe*]. Bergson’s own distinction between pleasure and joy profoundly echoes Schopenhauer’s distinction and what Bergson calls joy precisely corresponds to what he conceives of “Love” [*amour*], which is both the knowledge and the object of the knowledge. For Bergson’s distinction between pleasure and joy, see ME 22-23/832-833, TS 58-59/1024. For his conception of Love, see TS 252/1189. Also see Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* Vol. 1, § 67.

³⁶⁷ TS 230/1171.

³⁶⁸ CM 161/1395.

externalizing itself into something other than itself. What is obtained through the apprehension of duration is the consciousness or the knowledge *of* the Absolute Self but this is not a knowing in the sense of grasping what is known as “mine”. The pure sensuous knowing does not take its object as separate from itself but is a result of entering into its interior so as to *coincide* with it.

Through love or pure knowledge, the distance between the object and the subject is overcome and the meaning of *Affirmation* that we ascribe to the concept of duration resides within this act of sympathizing with oneself or Self-Love. Strictly speaking, this love or affirmation of the Absolute Self is not something that belongs to the realm of *human* experience. Bergson states in *Matter and Memory* that we must “seek experience at its source, or rather above the decisive turn where [...] it becomes properly *human* experience.”³⁶⁹ The pure knowledge or the actual apprehension of duration thus corresponds to the realm of reality that is traditionally understood in terms of what is seen through the *divine revelation of the eternity of the Soul/Spirit*.³⁷⁰

At this point, it becomes clear how seriously one needs to take the etymology of the term “duration”. The word “duration”/*la durée* is the past participle of the French word *durer*, which means *to persist, to remain*. *La durée* therefore literally means *the endured or the remained*. Duration is the concept that refers to the remaining or persisting of the other of time. It does not mean however that duration only endures from this particular point of time to another particular point in the sense of it being a finite interval; neither is it what endures for a long time in the manner of indefinite prolongation. On the contrary, the endurance of duration cannot be seen as that which has a beginning or an end and as being either short-lived or long-lived. Duration does not take the form of quantitative measure. The endurance of duration knows neither births nor deaths; it is *eternal*.

Of course, this mystical undertone has been the constant source of condemnation from the viewpoint of Marxist materialist criticism. After all, Bergson explicitly praises Christian mysticism in *The Two Sources* and the

³⁶⁹ MM 184/321.

³⁷⁰ At the end of Chapter 3 in *The Two Sources*, Bergson mentions that the problem of the eternity of the Soul must be posited and solved in terms of experience. See TS 262-265/1198-1201.

conception of duration has a definite similarity to the Neo-Platonist/Plotinian contemplation of the divine *nous*.³⁷¹ We may here quote, Plotinus who says:

when we look outside than on which we depend we do not know that we are one, like faces which are many on the outside but have one head inside. But if someone is able to turn around, either by himself or having the good luck to have his hair pulled by Athena herself, he will see God and himself and the All.³⁷²

The concept of duration, then, is what brings us to the very heart of this Plotinian mysticism of the Eternal Spirit [*nous*], which subsequently influenced the formation of the philosophical doctrine of Christianity. However, Bergson's philosophy is that which makes the mystical, *i.e.*, the divine *secret*, available to all of us. It is not a mysticism in the sense of holding on to a secret as a secret so as to make it into something that resides outside of knowledge that demands faith beyond doubt. On the contrary, Bergson *demystifies* the divine secret by letting it be presented to our faculty of knowledge. It is not mysticism if the mystery is revealed. The opposition between historical materialism and mysticism only obtains as long as the divine secret is to be affirmed in terms of the Idea of Reason as the object of mere belief. Our argument, on the contrary, has been that the transcendental dualism of Bergson rather posits the Divine/Beyond within the real sensuous experience and, hence, does not contradict this materialist criticism of the "flight" into the Other world.³⁷³ In fact, we might as well claim that if

³⁷¹ Pierre Hadot states in his *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*: "was it not from his mediations on the philosophy of Plotinus that Bergson derived his conception of the Immediate, his critique of finalism, and his sense of "organic totality?" Hadot, P., ([1989] 1993). *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*. Trans. M. Chase. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press. p.41.

³⁷² Plotinus, ([1956]1991). *The Enneads*. Trans. S. MacKenna. London: Penguin Books. VI 5, 7.

³⁷³ In this sense, although Bergson himself does not fully realize this extreme proximity, the Bergsonian conception of the Absolute is close to Eastern wisdom traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism that prioritize the direct knowledge of the divine through meditative experience. Although a demonstration of such proximity falls outside of this thesis, the Yoga tradition of Hindu philosophy speaks of the technique of *pratyāhāra* (the famous one is from the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, which is also mentioned in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*). It refers to the art of *withdrawing from the senses* and it is a widely utilized technique also within Buddhist meditation practices as it appears in the famous *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutra* of the Pali canon. Of course, by referring to the proximity between Bergson and the Eastern spiritual practices, we are not saying that such experiential knowledge does not exist within the history of Western spirituality. The above cited revelatory experience of Plotinus as well as the famous "conversion" of Paul rather testify to its universal validity. Inasmuch as the "Eastern" experience exists in the West, the dogmatization of the experience in the East has undoubtedly also been true.

materialist criticism one-sidedly remains within the criticism of all truths as ideological construction and fails to articulate its own affirmative foundation, it ends up being the true mysticism of our era. While criticizing all truths as fictitious, it ends up maintaining the unavailability or secrecy of what is true.

To disclose the Divine/Beyond as that which is available for sensuous perception therefore means that we do not have to surrender to *opinions* in order to construct an ethical community. We just have to observe what is deep within inside all of us and know that the Absolute Self affirms itself within us, or that we can intuit ourselves as the Absolute Self without relying upon any dogma. The meaning of the *affirmation* that we ascribe to duration is none other than the capacity to affirm what is divine/eternal within us or it is the capacity to intuit ourselves as the Divine Spirit. As we stressed in the beginning of this chapter, duration is said to be the *real time* even though it refers to the other of time. Once again, we return to Kant's legacy. *Time*, according to the latter, is the form of self-intuition. It is the form through which one intuits oneself as the object of intuition and thereby comes to acquire the knowledge of oneself. If duration is said to be the *real time*, this means that *through duration* we intuit and hence know ourselves as the *Eternal Soul*.

6. Death and Eternity

Having said the above, the question still remains as to why Bergson at times only describes duration as something only true in theory and why only privileged individuals are said to have accomplished the actual knowing of duration. To be sure, the difficulty of actually perceiving duration comes directly from the fact that our spontaneous consciousness is directed towards the attention to Life. Even though it is Life that conditions us and we are made of Life, due to the constant attention and the labour that Life demands from us, it becomes extremely difficult for us to dispassionately stand back and observe Life itself except in its surface appearance. Bergson states in the *Two Sources*:

While his consciousness, delving downwards, reveals to him, the deeper he goes, an ever more original personality, incommensurable with the others and indeed undefinable in words, on the surface of life we are in continuous

contact with other men who we resemble, and united to them by a discipline which creates between them and us a relation of interdependence. Has the self no other means of clinging [*attacher*] to something solid than by taking up its position in that part of us which is socialized?³⁷⁴

Here, the attention to Life shows itself in terms of its other face, namely, one's "clinging" or "attachment" to individual lives. It is as if Life forgets itself through the labour of having to move up towards the surface from the depth and as if it comes to see itself only as one among many lives. Life loses its pure originality and begins to see itself as a member of a group, a numeric entity that defines itself negatively against other lives. Inasmuch as we are conditioned by Life, the latter hides itself and only comes to reveal to us through a form that is already adapted to the surface or "our" lives. Life becomes *a* life of an individual, which is imagined in terms of the strict confines of an internally consistent and enclosed individuality that stands against what lies outside it as its Other. In short, life comes to be defined against what negates it from without, namely, *Death*. This means that along with our original will or the attention to life that preserves the lives of the individuals, inseparably, there arises our primordial *fear of Death*. As soon as life comes to see itself as "my" life, this life is also conditioned by the fear of death as that which threatens to annihilate it from without since life is only seen as this or that life and those finite lives of course come to an end. In short, the will for life and the fear of death are one and the same phenomenon that Life creates for itself.

It is this latter aspect that accounts for the difficulty of apprehending duration. The difficulty is ultimately caused by our inability to overcome our primordial fear of death. The actual reality of duration or the Eternity of the Absolute Self does not appear to us unless we see death in the face and understand that it is an illusion created by our fear of losing ourselves. In this sense, Hegel is right to point out that the fear of death is the "beginning of wisdom" [*Anfang der Weisheit*].³⁷⁵ We are afraid of death because it appears to us as the dark nothingness that threatens to limit our internal consistency from without. The Other of Time or Eternity then appears as that which lies outside of *this* life, or as that which one enters once the death of this life arrives.

³⁷⁴ TS 14/986.

³⁷⁵ Hegel, G. W. F., ([1807] 1977). *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. §§ 194–195.

Kant is fully aware of the centrality of the fear of death. In *The End of All Things*, he states:

It is a common expression [...] to speak of a person who is dying as going *out of time into eternity*. This expression would in fact say nothing if *eternity* is understood here to mean a time proceeding to infinity; for then the person would indeed never gets outside time but would always progress only from one time into another. Thus what must be meant is an *end of all time* along with the person's uninterrupted duration; but this duration (considering its existence as a magnitude) as a magnitude (*duratio Noumenon*) wholly incompatible with time, of which we are obviously able to form no concept (except a merely negative one). This thought has something horrifying about it because it leads us as it were to the edge of an abyss [...] Now when we pursue the transition from time into eternity [...], as reason does in a moral regard, then we come up against the *end of all things* as temporal beings and as objects of possible experience [...] that duration and its state will be capable of no determination of its nature other than a moral one."³⁷⁶

Kant points out that death prompts us to think of a time "wholly incompatible with time" and hence invoking an image of eternity that is of an "uninterrupted duration". Here, Kant comes extremely close to opening up towards pure sensuousness of eternal duration. Yet he quickly retracts by saying that such time is something that "we are obviously able to form no concept [of] (except a merely negative one)". That is, although Kant shows an awareness of the possibility of envisaging the other of time as time, since he does not grant himself any means of apprehending something other than through conceptual knowledge, Eternity is only negatively determined as "*duratio noumenon*", i.e. as *merely intelligible duration*.³⁷⁷

It is however the very negativity of Eternity, or the very fact that it is seen as the Idea of Reason, that makes itself appear as the abyss of Death. Do not all the evils in the world stem from our inability to understand Life other than through the illusion of Death? It is not that Death is sensuously there and makes us afraid due to this presence. Our argument is the opposite: we are afraid of death precisely because it is not there or because we only give ourselves the means to know Life from the perspective of "my" life, which is necessarily limited by Death. The

³⁷⁶ Kant, I, ([1786-1817] 1996). *Religion and Rational Theology*. Trans. A. W. Wood, G. Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. p.221, 8:327.

³⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that Kant mentions several non-Western religious traditions such as Brahmanism, Tibetan Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Taoism and concludes that those are indulging in "enthusiasm". See Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p.228, 8:335.

reverse is in fact the case. "My" life is the illusion produced by Life and it is the conception of "my" life that is really the appearance/the idea of reason. What is real and concrete is the Eternity of Life. Death is therefore not the negative Other that limits Life. Our argument therefore is that the seeming contradiction between Life and Death is merely a *pseudo-contradiction*. Life has no opposite. Life in fact has nothing outside itself and simply *is*. We need to stop understanding life as this or that particular lives. Life does not refer to "my" life, *human* life, *animal* life, or any organic life that is negatively determined with respect to that which is not life. Life is the current that carries absolutely everything that existed, exists and will exist.

However paradoxical it may sound, the Eternity of the Soul does not exist apart from our finite, individual selves, and we do not have to look for it other than within our sensuous reality *here and now, in the present*. However, to enter into the Present here and now is the most difficult task for our derivative consciousness. The "present" of the finite consciousness falls under the modality of the Past, and it is already conditioned by its fear of death. *Our* present, or the derivative self which presents itself to the "I" as itself, is rather the product of the Past and hence it "is" the Past. From the side of the Past, which dynamically produces the present as well as the future within itself out of its self-differentiation, the Eternal Present thus appears to be the dimension of the Other from which the self is alienated even though it is in the service of the Present that the Past engages in its perpetual strife (attention to Life). If the Past perpetually extends itself into the present and onto the future, and if our derivative consciousness is shut up within this circle of the Past, this is the equivalent to saying that there is no future since the future will eternally be the product of the Past. On the other hand, if one succeeds in apprehending the Other of the Past in the Present, this is equivalent to grasping the dimension of the Future in the Present since the Future is what differs from and hence what brings alterity to the repetition of the Past. We thus argue that through the apprehension of duration, the Future needs to be understood as that which *endures* as it is and it becomes disentangled from the circle of the Past.

How, then, is such an apprehension possible for the finite consciousness? How can derivative consciousness which is conditioned by and "is" the Past step outside of itself and be in the Present? Amidst the appearance of the world that is *a priori* conditioned by the Past due to our labour for Life, there is one thing in the

world which does not exist except in the Present, here and now: it is my body. We have stressed above that the method of apprehending duration is the supra-intellectual, pure sensuous intuition. This means that duration does not exist as the object of spontaneous thought but it must be intuited in and through the Body which can only exist in the present as a perpetual becoming. The present which is apprehended through the body is the perpetual becoming and it is through the body that we come to know the illusion of the individuality of “my” life. The idea of “my” body is a misnomer since “my” body is in a perpetual becoming and, in its becoming, it never ceases to be in relationships with what is not my body. In short, we may say that it is not even that I have my body and then it enters into relationship with the world. My body and the world do not exist apart from each other.

The body brings us back to our argument about pure sensuousness. The body allows us to see our existence other than through “my” body in space and time. The latter is an appearance of the body in terms of an individual body grounded in time, or it is an *externalization* of the body from its sensuous corporeality. Our individual bodies are therefore not the body seen in *its* self-consciousness. As finite consciousness, “we” are conscious of our bodies but those bodies that we are conscious of as *ours* are the *results* of our spontaneity. In order to apprehend duration and be in the present, which brings about alterity to the circle of the past, we must invert this ordinary, idealistic view. Neither the true meaning of becoming nor the body reveals itself to us as long as we see it in terms of a series of individual entities residing within time – becoming cannot be seen as the *becomings* of x, y, z individual bodies. The becoming of the body is not what appears under our gaze. It must be felt *from within* since it is precisely that which exists outside of the transcendental ideality of the world. As long as it is treated only externally, the body does not show itself other than through, as Marx states, “the ideal”, which is “the material world reflected in the mind of man”.³⁷⁸ The latter is a mere appearance that exists within homogenous space and hence *fallen* from the original status of its absolute self-identity/plenitude.

To conclude, then, for Bergson in pure sensuousness there is only One Body and the Becoming of this One Body is absolutely singular and is only identical to itself. The word “One” obviously fails to deliver to us its meaning, since the

³⁷⁸ Marx, *Capital Vol.1*, p.102.

Oneness of the body cannot be understood either as Being or as Non-Being. Oneness or singularity obtained through pure sensuousness is that which transcends such a conceptual constraint. It is what is called within Buddhism as *Emptiness* [Śūnyatā], which is neither Being nor Non-Being but precisely that which makes the actual differentiations of bodies themselves possible since it resides at the root of all that exists.³⁷⁹ From this perspective, the Eternity of the Soul needs to be understood in terms of this singular existence of the Body. It is not that due to the body that we are separated from the Soul. For Bergson, the acquisition of the body, or of sensuousness, is not the cause of the Fall since there is nothing outside of sensuousness. We become separated from the body because of our spontaneity and it is thinking that remains in the state of forgetfulness of the Body.

³⁷⁹ There is a strong tendency in confusing the non-Western conception of the Śūnyatā [void, emptiness] (the view expressed by the Buddhist *Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* most famously) with Nothing in the wake of the first dissemination of “Oriental” philosophy within Europe in the 18th and the 19th centuries. In *Science of Logic* as well as in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel mentions Buddhism in the doctrines of Being and equates the concept of Śūnyatā with the abstract conception of Nothing, which is opposed to Being and hence as a “simple and one-sided abstraction” still caught in dialectical contradiction. Despite of his familiarity with Schopenhauer’s thought, Nietzsche’s treatment of Buddhism in *The Will to Power* does not seem to go beyond this Hegelian misreading. There is a great deal of potential for Bergson’s conception of duration to intervene into this traditional misunderstanding of Śūnyatā as a distinct kind of Thirdness, or as Nagarjuna later develops, of the way of Śūnyatā as the way of the Middle [*Madhyamaka*].

Conclusion

Reasonable Evolution as the End of Philosophy

*[If] we can one day get free from the spirit of revenge,
we will become great human beings.*

Catherine Malabou³⁸⁰

1. Materialist Teleology

Throughout this thesis, we have pointed out the irreducible duality of intuition in the philosophy of Bergson. In lieu of conclusion, we shall end our exposition by inquiring into the consequence of *having* this duality. As we stated in the introduction, dialectical logic refers to the *beginning*, the *principle* that politics or any practical action must rely on as its condition of possibility. The question now is: what exactly have we gained from turning towards Bergson's transcendental dualism in terms of the problem of dialectical logic? What does it mean to have the duality of time and duration as the beginning or principle of everything for politics?

We began the present investigation with a remark upon the impasse that besets philosophy after the materialist reversal of dialectic. After Marx's determination that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by Life", philosophy has been one-sidedly deploying itself for the purpose of self-critique. Predominantly, philosophy has come to see itself as the capacity to criticize itself as the product of material history and performs its duty of criticizing itself or to distance itself from itself by conceding its ultimate powerlessness in front of the true logos of Life. The material life-process, which has come to occupy the privileged place of the "Demiurge of the real", then structurally assumes the form of the unknowable Idea and the materialist reversal of idealism ends up being the "fulfilment" of Idealist Metaphysics, which is another name for *onto-theology* or *nihilism*. The deterministic universal history once again returns in a new form,

³⁸⁰ Malabou, C., [2015]. "From the Overman to the Posthuman: How Many Ends?" In *Plastic Materialities: Politics, Legality, and metamorphosis in the Work of Catherine Malabou*. Eds. B. Bhandar, J. Goldberg-Hiller. Durham: Duke Univ. Press. p.71.

which gives us no choice but to see ourselves as the derivative products of Life. Our self-consciousness has thus been suffering from the sense of powerlessness to establish itself upon a new theory of Absolute Knowledge and this effectively undoes “the death of the abstraction of the divine Being” and the “one-sided extreme of the Self”.³⁸¹ We once again find ourselves within the antithetical opposition between consciousness and the Absolute and so the materialist reversal’s promise of liberation ends up being a false promise that repeats the same old mistake. Against the predicament of historical materialism ending up as a repetition of idealist metaphysics, the fundamental question that has motivated our project is: how can Bergson’s philosophy prepare the ground for a genuine form of politics or a genuine form of living after the materialist reversal of dialectic?

Our central argument has been that Bergson’s method of intuition can be read in terms of a materialist reversal of the idealist theory of intuition which is not only capable of critiquing the determinateness of derivative consciousness but also of affirming the Absolute Self from a materialist standpoint. By qualitatively distinguishing time and duration and granting transcendental status to both terms, Bergson’s philosophy accomplishes the materialist reversal of intuition without nullifying the possibility for establishing the materialist knowledge of the Absolute Self. Having established the duality of time and duration as the transcendental condition of intuition, we can now directly raise questions regarding the consequence of *having* the duality: what benefit does the establishment of transcendental duality of intuition promise for politics and what kind of living does it make possible as a result?

In many ways, the persistence of nihilism is equivalent to our inability to become the free individuals that make their own history and it is of utmost importance for today’s philosophy to establish the condition of possibility for a genuine form of human freedom. As we stated in the introduction, what we have sought overall in this thesis is the condition of possibility for what Bergson calls “reasonable evolution” [*évolution raisonnable*], which is said to be the capacity for “free act” that uniquely belongs to “Man, the thinking being.”³⁸² That is, as we saw in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson remarks that the “synthesis of feelings and ideas”

³⁸¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §785.

³⁸² MM 186/322.

leads towards the so-called reasonable evolution and this is said to be the “true work of integration” envisaged as “the ultimate end of philosophical research” [*La démarche extrême de la recherche philosophique*].³⁸³ The establishment of the transcendental duality of time and duration is our attempt to clarify the condition of this “synthesis”, which is promised as the telos towards which the formation of the method of intuition aims to prepare itself as an “artifice” for it. The final question we must therefore pose is: how can we understand the “free act” of “synthesis” as the end and what is the meaning of this end conceived as the “reasonable”, that is, *rational*, evolution? Also, what does it mean to conceive of this end of reasonable evolution as that which belongs to *human being as a thinking being*, given that we have already put forth the criticism of the “human” as a derivative form of consciousness?

The fundamental theme of this thesis is that Bergson’s method of intuition can be read in terms of a materialist reversal of the theory of intuition. If the transcendental dualism of time and duration delivers to us the materialist conception of intuition, then the synthesis of reasonable evolution is a materialist conception of the end. In what sense of the term can we speak of the synthesis of reasonable evolution as the materialist conception of the end? Is not *teleology* precisely what constitutes the pitfall that today’s materialism seeks to deny as it implies a *determinism* or a belief in the pre-given *destiny* of history? If materialism is to be seen as teleological – or if there were a materialist teleology in the first place – can we still call it a materialism which is supposed to be an overcoming of idealism? It is pertinent for us to note here that Bergson displays an explicit criticism of the idealist conception of the end. We must thus make it clear that the kind of telos that we are speaking of differs radically from it. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson states:

Such, indeed, was the sentence passed by the philosophers of the Eleatic school. [...] Experience confronts us with becoming [*présence du devenir*]: that is sensible reality. But the *intelligible* reality, that which *ought* to be, is more real still, and that reality does not change. Beneath the qualitative becoming, beneath the evolutionary becoming, beneath the extensive becoming, the mind must seek that which defies change, the definable quality, the form or essence, the end [*la fin*]. Such was the fundamental principle of the philosophy which developed throughout the classical age,

³⁸³ MM 185-186/321-322.

the philosophy of Forms, or, to use a term more akin to the Greek, the philosophy of Ideas.³⁸⁴

The conception of the end as the Idea signifies for Bergson a fundamental mistake of Western metaphysics carried forward since the time of the ancient Greeks. For Bergson, the idealism of the end has its origin in the mechanical/intellectualist view of the universe where “all is given” in advance and is based upon a mistaken conception of time that produces no unforeseen novelty.³⁸⁵ Instead, Bergson argues that what is real is the sensible qualitative becoming itself; the idea or the supposedly pre-given destination of this becoming is something that the “bent of our intellectual habits” superimposes upon the reality of becoming.³⁸⁶

It is easy to see that this opposition against the ideal end is equivalent to the criticism of the supra-sensible end and this means that Bergson is in agreement with the Nietzschean project of abolishing the end supposedly located within the realm of the “true world.” But if Bergson in fact criticises the idealistic conception of the end, why do we still insist upon the necessity of the true end? As we pointed out in the introduction of this thesis, the belief in the lack of the end is the complementary symptom of nihilism along with the problem of the fictitiousness of the beginning: nihilism means the lack of beginning as well as the lack of the end *with respect to which* philosophy directs itself toward. If the beginning is lacking in philosophy, the end is also necessarily lacking since every beginning begins *for an end*. No doubt, the materialist reversal endows philosophy with the means to critique the determinateness of derivative consciousness and this succeeds in distancing philosophical consciousness from the illusion of the “true world” within the supra-sensible realm. Yet the mere realisation of this fictitiousness of the end does not liberate philosophy from nihilism. On the contrary, without establishing the capacity to determine the true end, the criticism of the falsity of all ends cannot protect itself from accidentally establishing the Idea of *Nothingness* or *Chaos*, which is still determined as an abstract object of belief and hence secretly comes to replace God’s old position as the external author of history. After the fictitiousness of the beginning as well as of the end is revealed, materialism must make a step further and affirm the true end in order to overcome the vicious circle of nihilism.

³⁸⁴ CE 314/760.

³⁸⁵ CE 39/526.

³⁸⁶ CE 314/760.

2. *Free Act or the Synthesis of the Present*

Having said the above, the special sense in which the synthesis of reasonable evolution is said to constitute the ultimate end of philosophy differs in kind from the idealist conception that would determine this end as the pre-given destination of history. For us, what Bergson describes as reasonable evolution corresponds to a materialist conception of the end since it is said to be the “synthesis” that stems from one’s “free act”. Let us recall that of paramount importance is our interpretation of the particularity of this “synthesis” which is said to be the “free act” that uniquely belongs to “man, the thinking being”.³⁸⁷ Yet what does Bergson mean by “man” [l’homme] as the bearer of the ultimate end and in what sense of the term can we understand the end in terms of the free act of synthesis? Here, we are confronted with the special meaning of the human that differs in kind from how it is ordinarily defined with respect to its derivative characteristics. To be sure, Bergson also speaks of the human in terms of “the impotence of speculative reason” and hence in terms of its *inability* for the free act of synthesis.³⁸⁸ There are, therefore, two radically different concepts of the human about which Bergson never offers a sufficient explanation as to how such polyvocality is itself possible. After criticising the derivative nature of the human consciousness, the question thus becomes: in what sense of the term does Bergson also speak of “man, the thinking being” who is capable of being the author of reasonable evolution?

Overall, our project of establishing the duality of intuition in Bergson’s philosophy has no higher aim than to prepare the logical ground for distinguishing two heterogeneous types of synthesis so as to distinguish two different conceptions of the end as well as of the human that are conceived in relation to those syntheses. On the one hand, the duality of intuition contains within itself the operation of synthesis, which can be referred to as the *synthesis of the Past*. This is the synthesis of intuition that belongs to the side of Time and corresponds to the mechanism of Memory that conditions the coming into being of “the human” as the derivative form of consciousness. As one might recall, Bergson explains in *Matter and Memory* that the subjective nature of one’s consciousness comes into being due to the function of memory that *a priori* synthesises human perception for the

³⁸⁷ MM 186/322. Emphasis added.

³⁸⁸ MM 184/321.

sake of *attention to Life*. Within this configuration, it is the synthesis of the Past that *produces* the “human” as *its* derivative product and the subjectivity of the human is in fact the *object* that stems *from* the Past. In this sense, the Subject of synthesis is that which resides within the sovereignty of the Past and the historical becoming of the human is rather the derivative product of the auto-differentiation of the Past. The subjectivity of human being can only be understood *vis-à-vis* the force of the Past that itself stays outside of the sphere of the human as its *suprasensible Other*. Now, as regards the conception of the end, the synthesis of the Past constitutes a deterministic conception insofar as the Subject of synthesis stays outside of the human intuition; the end or the purpose of this synthesis therefore resides within the realm of the suprasensible Other. The determinative force of the synthesis is outside the subjectivity of the human – it is the Past that *determines* the present and the future of the human out of *its* freedom.

Having said that, the operation of synthesis we have explained above is neither the only possible conception we can have of synthesis nor the only possible conception we can have of the human. For there is, on the other hand, what can be called *the synthesis of the Present* which differs from the synthesis of the Past. The whole point of us establishing the transcendental duality of intuition has been precisely to make possible a higher kind of synthesis and to explain the condition of possibility for a different conception of the human as well as of the end with respect to it. Whereas the synthesis of the Past is the auto-differentiation of the Past which produces the present as well as the future as the derivative products of the Past’s negativity, the transcendental dualism we have put forth also captures the radical alterity of the Future as such in its pure state so as to prepare the condition of synthesis between the Past and the Future in the Present. If the first kind of synthesis *produces* the human being as its derivative product, the second kind of synthesis is made *by* the human and thus the end of the synthesis resides in the very act of synthesis itself. Our argument is that this is a uniquely materialist conception of synthesis that designates the end – not in terms of the pre-determinate goal or the *immanent cause* of historical development that philosophy only recognizes through discovering, as it were, the “hidden plan of nature.”³⁸⁹ As opposed to the conception of telos defined through the perspective of, as Derrida says, the “onto-theological or teleo-eschatological program or design” that “locks

³⁸⁹ Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p.116. 8: 27.

up, neutralizes, and finally cancels historicity” of the “future-to-come”, the materialist conception of telos is to bring about the *indetermination of the future* in the present so as to open up the condition for *our free determination*.³⁹⁰ The materialist conception of the end is therefore not something that presents itself as that which synthesizes the continuous genesis of history according to a pre-given plan. Rather, it refers to human beings’ *free act* of synthesis and it is, as Walter Benjamin says in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, that which disrupts and “blasts open” the “homogeneous course of history” and prepares the ground for a new, revolutionary synthesis.³⁹¹ Our final task, then, is to reflect upon the condition of possibility for this synthesis of the Present and to know clearly how this signifies the overcoming of the synthesis of the Past.

As we have already stated, it is the transcendental duality of intuition that serves as the basis for the distinction between the two kinds of synthesis. Hence, the key in understanding the particularity of the synthesis of the Present lies in the difference between duration and time to which we must return. By saying that Bergson’s transcendental dualism serves as the basis for the distinction between two kinds of synthesis, we are not saying that it is duration that corresponds to the higher synthesis of the Present. On the contrary, the second kind of synthesis is the synthesis between time *and* duration and it is hence that which takes *both* time and duration as its irreducible components. We are only making a distinction between the *synthesis of time* as opposed to the *synthesis of time and duration* since duration is, strictly speaking, *not* a synthesis. In order for us to speak of *syn*-thesis, there must be a separation (*ecstasis*) between two heterogeneous terms so that the activity of synthesis can join them together. Duration cannot be seen as a synthesis since it involves no separation of terms between *before* and *after* without them being absolutely identical to each other. The pure heterogeneity of duration therefore shall not be confused with the *synthetic identity* of the Past in the case of time that admits of heterogeneous terms. No doubt, when we consider the mechanism behind the genesis of Time, we can take notice of the synthetic identity of the Past that differentiates itself into the form of the present out of its negativity and this is indicative of the heterogeneity between the past and the present (which

³⁹⁰ Derrida, J., ([1993] 2006). *Specters of Marx*. Trans. P. Kamuf. London: Routledge. pp.92-94.

³⁹¹ Benjamin, W., ([1955] 1968). *Illuminations*. Trans. H. Zohn. New York: Schocken. p.262-263.

is then seen as synthesised by the Past). This conception of the synthetic identity of the Past, which closely resembles the conception of the Idea in the philosophy of Hegel, stems from the conviction that there is a hidden source from which the determinate form of time springs forth. In fact, as we have seen in this thesis, Bergson speaks of “pure memory” and this conception closely resembles, as Deleuze points out, the Platonic theory of reminiscence which is effectively “ontological” in its character.³⁹² Indeed, in this sense, Bergson’s conception of the past cannot be understood as the former present but it is the present that springs forth from the Past.

Our argument, however, is that this view of synthesis is not the only view available in Bergson’s philosophy since there is duration, which is apprehended through a distinct method of mediation. What is crucial for us to notice here is that the concept of duration, which is first introduced as what is immediately given to sensuous intuition in *Time and Free Will*, is relegated to the virtual realm of pure memory and thus seemingly becomes fixed as the pure object of thought. In this way, it seems as if the concept of memory is that which turns duration into the abstract Idea and any “immediate” intuition of the Absolute Self seems to be the result of the auto-differentiation of the Idea. No matter how concrete the Idea becomes within the development of history, insofar as the pure Idea is grasped as the object of supra-sensuous/intellectual intuition, the purity of the Absolute Self eternally stays away from human consciousness. Based upon this configuration, Bergson’s philosophy could thus be accused of coming to present a solution equivalent to that of idealist metaphysics based upon the ontological conception of the pure Past and memory seems to function in the same way as the ontological copula functions. The point, however, in establishing the transcendental dualism of intuition is to account for two heterogeneous ways of apprehending the purity of the Absolute: one is through the supra-sensuous/intellectual intuition and the other is through the purely sensuous intuition. The very object of knowledge in both cases is the same but the manner of intuiting and, hence, of grasping the object differs radically. As such, this difference in method effectively produces two distinct objects for consciousness. Whereas the suprasensuous intuition presents the Absolute retrospectively through positing the synthetic identity between Being and Thought, the pure sensuous intuition disentangles this synthetic identity and

³⁹² Deleuze, *Bergsonism*. p.59.

unifies itself with the Life of the Absolute in-itself. The difference in the appearance of the object to consciousness can be summed up in the following way: whereas the first type of method grasps the purity of the Absolute from the side of the Thought that realises itself by being directed towards an external object, the object that appears to the second type of intuition does not take up the form of the object “to” consciousness since there is no separation between the thing known and the knower. As we just stated, in both cases, the object of intuition is the same and this means that both methods aim at the Absolute, which causes the coming into being of human consciousness. This is tantamount to saying that the object for both types of intuition is the Becoming or the synthetic middle that produces the actuality of the human experience by sublating the contradiction between Being and Thought. Whereas the first intuition grasps Becoming as such in the synthetic middle that lies *between* two heterogeneous terms (*i.e.* Being and Thought), the second type of intuition grasps the Absolute Identity of the heterogeneous as such *of* the middle. In other words, the Becoming grasped through the apprehension of Duration “is” the middle and it immediately “is” the Absolute Identity of the heterogeneous as such. Duration therefore does not *stem from* a synthesis but it “is” immediately identical to the very Being of Becoming; it is identical to the very source of the synthetic identity between heterogeneous terms. In short, duration is Life in-itself and it is identical with the very Being of the synthesis.

Inasmuch as time is that which conditions the uniquely “human” form of consciousness and duration is the Other of time, what is known through the apprehension of duration is precisely the Other of Man or it is that from which the human springs forth. The transcendental duality of intuition therefore grasps within intuition both the coming into being of the human as the derivative product of Life as well as the very Being of the source of the human, which is Life itself. Now, if intuition contains both the human and its source, what becomes of the bearer of this duality? The special meaning with which Bergson speaks of “man, the thinking being” as well as of the synthesis of reasonable evolution becomes intelligible with reference to *having* the duality of intuition. The question is: what is the relationship between the synthesis of the past and duration and what exactly is the so-called synthesis of reasonable evolution? To repeat, Bergson’s philosophy admits and expounds upon the existence of the synthesis of the past which conditions the coming into being of time out of the synthetic identity of the past.

This synthesis constitutes the *reason* of the becoming of the human being insofar as the human is the *passive product* of the synthesis and insofar as its course of becoming is determined in accordance to an end that lies within the synthesis of the past. Whether it calls itself idealism or materialism, the conception of history this synthesis gives birth to is deterministic in nature. Since the synthesis of the past is what explains the coming into being of time and time is the transcendental horizon of the human subjectivity, the past takes up the role of the mystical bestower of the *destiny* of the becoming of the human being and the *future* of the human is indiscernible with its *fate* from which the human is alienated.

The transcendental dualism of intuition contains within itself the immediate intuition, which is not a *thought* of the Absolute that treats it as an object but it immediately “is” the Absolute. Through the apprehension of duration, what was hitherto treated as the obscure force of the past gets displaced from its closed circle of auto-differentiation and becomes the visible, actual datum of sense perception. This converts the past into the dimension of the *indeterminate* as such in the present and becomes the independent element within the field of intuition. Insofar as the apprehension of duration is directed towards the Absolute Self, which is the source of time, the object of intuition in the case of duration is identical to the pure, immemorial past seen from the side of time. However, duration is the immediate apprehension of the Absolute within pure sensuous perception and it is that which grasps the in-itself of the past – not as the retrospective object of thought solely inferred from its products but as an actual datum of sense perception and hence as actually existing as the independent dimension of the *not-yet* or the *future as such*. Through this operation, which is a kind of *conversion* of consciousness that gives birth to a new subjective position, what was seen as the pure immemorial past gets outside of itself and reappears instead as actually existing datum of experience within the different form of the present. Within this new subjective consciousness, the Absolute is no longer a mere object of belief that hovers over the derivative consciousness and determines its becoming from without. The apprehension of duration disrupts the synthetic force of the past that repeats itself *ad infinitum* and creates the gap of indeterminacy between the Past and the Future in the new form of the Present.

3. The Promise of the Present

Overall, the ultimate end of the Bergsonian method of intuition is to disentangle the circular continuity of the past (which virtually contains within itself both the present and the future) so that the new form of the present can emerge as the condition for the synthesis between that which *has been produced* by the past and that which is *not yet* or the future as such. “Man, the thinking being” is none other than that which resides in this new form of the present, which apprehends both the past and the future as its elements of synthesis. *Having* the duality means that the sense through which the becoming of human being is understood as well as the conception of the *end* to which the becoming is directed undergo a fundamental transformation. From seeing itself solely as the finite being that is determined from without, the human being comes to know itself as the duality of the finite and the infinite and hence comes to know itself as *more than human*. This self-consciousness of the duality results in a fundamental transformation of the meaning of the human as such: “the human” comes to understand itself as *the overcoming of the human*, simultaneously occupying both the place of the human and its Other. If we adopt Nietzsche’s vocabulary, the human being overcomes itself and becomes the *Overman* [*Übermensch*].

This transformation of the human being, then, is also the fundamental transformation of the experience of the present as such. The present therefore comes to be understood as the site where the overcoming of the past takes place. It is the place of both an acknowledgement of the force of the past as well as of an awareness of the potentiality for a new becoming. “Man” in the sense that Bergson speaks of it as the “thinking being” that performs the synthesis of reasonable evolution is the human being who knows that this present is always more than the *having been* of the present. As we have tried to demonstrate in this thesis, the end of materialist philosophy is to construct the condition for this new kind of human being to emerge and to prepare the foundation for the becoming of the human to be the process of its own *self-determination*: the human being that knows itself as the active fabricator of itself or “*Homo faber*” that takes its own becoming as the end.³⁹³

³⁹³ CM 84/1325.

One might ask a final question: how can the human jump out of the historical forces of determination and become the *new* human being that is capable of producing one's own history? *To become the producer of one's own history*: does this not rather indicate the *self-centred belief* of the human being that seeks to imitate God out of jealousy? Is not such a belief in the *self-overcoming* merely destined to be a repetition of the essence of the human which lies in the past? More importantly, has it not been this very naïve belief in the *independence of the human being* that has ultimately been the cause of tragic atrocities committed by humans towards one another as well as to the destruction of the Earth? The will to overcome oneself and become the creator of history – is this not precisely behind the tragic repetition of the human, all too human?

Indeed, both the old and the recent history of humankind convince us that the arrival of the new kind of human in the near future sounds less than plausible. However, the possibility of this arrival cannot be measured by asking whether it is “plausible” or not. To ask whether an arrival of something is plausible is to consult the past in order to find out the course of the future. In this way, the future in fact disappears in front of our eyes and what we have instead is its illusory shadow. The fact that the two kinds of synthesis are distinguished upon a transcendental/logical basis means that no theory of *historical development* can explain the becoming of human being from one to another. If the synthesis of the present is to be seen as that which comes *after* the synthesis of the past in a chronological fashion, this would be to argue that the second type of human being and the higher synthesis would be the *result* of the historical evolution of the human. Put differently, the higher synthesis would be the future product of the pre-given destiny of the historical development that governs the movement, as it were, from a point A to a point B on the line of temporal development. In this way, the transcendental difference between the past and the future would be obliterated and we would confuse the higher synthesis with the future becoming of the synthesis of the past. The *new* would be forever subordinated under the determination of the past and whatever development one would find in the new product would be the result of the historical synthesis of the past. Again, history would look like a theatre that showcases the new in terms of the re-appearance of the same actor under a new mask within the same tragic drama. Within this scenario, the possibility of finding a genuine human freedom would thus be *a priori*

negated since “the new” would pre-determined as only conceivable as a product of the determination by the past. Nihilism would then return at the door and tell us that all effort for genuine creation is futile and meaningless. It is in this light that Bergson states: “humanity lies groaning, half crushed beneath the weight of its own progress. Men do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands.”³⁹⁴ What we must realize, then, is that the future is here and the new human being awaits us at every moment of our life.

³⁹⁴ TS 317/1245.

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