

# Bergson Revisited

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**I**n his eulogy for Deleuze, Derrida writes that Deleuze was “the historian of philosophy who conducted a kind of configuring election of his own genealogy (the Stoics, Lucretius, Spinoza, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Bergson), who was also an inventor of philosophy who never enclosed himself within some philosophic ‘field.’” Derrida continues: “... he wrote on painting, cinema, and literature, Bacon, Lewis Carroll, Proust, Kafka, Melville, etc.”<sup>1</sup> Among the philosophers Derrida lists, Bergson must be singled out. After his *Mémoire* on Hume, Deleuze’s first publications in 1956 were on Bergson.<sup>2</sup> In his last work (co-authored with Guattari), *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze (and Guattari) write:

Will we ever be mature enough for a Spinozist inspiration? It happened once with Bergson: the beginning of *Matter and Memory* marks out a plane [of immanence] that slices through the chaos—both the infinite movement of a matter that continually propagates itself, and the image of thought that everywhere continually spreads an in principle pure consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

This comment, coming at the end of Deleuze’s career, points to the importance of Bergson. But we know that in between Deleuze’s first publications and his last there are other works on Bergson: of course Deleuze’s 1966 book, *Bergsonism*<sup>4</sup>; chapter 2 of the 1968 *Difference and Repetition*<sup>5</sup>; and his two-volume study of the cinema, which is really a study of Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*.<sup>6</sup> Why is there this continuing interest in Bergson? It seems that it comes down to one concept: Bergson’s concept of multiplicity. In his Afterword to the 1991 English translation of *Bergsonism*, Deleuze writes: “From *Time and Free Will* onward, Bergson defines duration as a multiplicity, a type of multiplicity. This is a strange word, since it makes the multiple no longer an adjective but a genuine noun. Thus, he exposes the traditional theme of the one and the many as a false problem.”<sup>7</sup> The Bergsonian concept of multiplicity works either explicitly or implicitly in all of Deleuze’s works. Since Deleuze calls the problem of the one and the many difference (the many) and repetition (the one), the Bergsonian concept of multiplicity is the conjunction of these two: difference and repetition. Moreover, whenever Deleuze uses the word “virtuality,” he is referring to the Bergsonian concept of multiplicity. A last place where we can see this concept functioning is in Deleuze’s discussion of what concepts are; Deleuzian concepts are multiplicities. But concepts are the work of philosophy and,

as Derrida reminds us, Deleuze did not limit himself to the philosophic field.<sup>8</sup> At the end we shall turn to Proust, to the Bergsonian artist who represents non-philosophy. For Bergson, our access to multiplicities is an intuition. Such an intuition is presented to us in Proust as involuntary memory. For Proust, we experience certain memories involuntarily; they come upon us as an event, changing us forever, creating a will in us to do things we have never done before. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze himself calls such an experience a "volitional intuition."<sup>9</sup> We will end here with such a life-changing intuition.

In our investigation of Bergson, we will focus primarily on Bergson's *Matter and Memory*<sup>10</sup> since, as Deleuze says in one of his 1956 essays on Bergson, it contains the "secret" of Bergsonism.<sup>11</sup> Like the earlier *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory* is, as Bergson says explicitly in the 1910 Preface, "clearly dualist" concerning the relation of spirit and matter (MM, 161/9). But, for Bergson, the dualism of reality developed here is supposed to allow us to "attenuate, if not suppress, the theoretical difficulties" which traditional and common sense dualism suggest (MM, 161/9; 318/181). Therefore, the purpose of *Matter and Memory* lies in showing that both consciousness (*conscience*, in French, con-science) and science are right (MM, 191/41), that "science and conscience fundamentally agree provided that we regard conscience in its immediate data and science in its remotest aspiration" (MM, 333/197). Thus *Matter and Memory* is supposed to bring us to a new sort of monism, from a dualism to a monism. This is the "secret" of *Matter and Memory*. But even this monism is only a provisional conclusion in *Matter and Memory*.<sup>12</sup> The real conclusion is what Bergson calls duration. Despite all the images and definitions that Bergson provides throughout his career, duration must be understood as a monistic "substance," where substance itself is not understood as a stable "substrate" but rather as unstable differentiations of spirit into matter.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the real conclusion of *Matter and Memory*, its "secret," is the multiplicity called duration. The concept of the image developed in Chapters 1 and 4 of *Matter and Memory* provides us with one side of this "substance" called duration, this multiplicity; it provides the side of matter. The concept of memory, developed in Chapters 2 and 3, provides the other side of duration, the side of spirit. First, let us examine what Bergson means by image.

### **The Bergsonian Concept of the Image**

It is easy to see that the concept of the image is the most important one Bergson develops in *Matter and Memory*, since the title of each chapter concerns images ("The Selection of Images," "The Recognition of Images," "The Survival of Images," and "The Delimitation and Fixation of

Images"). Bergson develops the concept of image in order to speak about external perception. Other interpretations of external perception have led to the traditional metaphysical positions of idealism and realism. In idealism, we define external perception in terms of ideas or representation projected outward. In realism, there is a thing that is not given to us—matter—but that produces sensations in us (MM, 161/9). The Bergsonian concept of image amounts to a third way between these two views, idealism and realism. On the one hand, the Bergsonian image is not subjective. In Chapter 1 he differentiates it from an affection. The Bergsonian image, therefore, is materialistic; it is defined by extension and objectivity: "an image may *be*," Bergson writes, "without *being perceived*" (MM, 185/35). But, on the other hand, Bergson differentiates it from a *hidden* material thing with the power to produce representations in us (ES, 961–6/191–8). This is an important passage from Bergson: "The truth is that there is one, and only one, method of refuting materialism: it is to show that matter is precisely what it appears to be. Thereby we eliminate all virtuality, all hidden power, from matter ..." (MM, 219/72; see MM, 185/35). Matter is what it appears to be, for Bergson, and this is why Bergson also calls the image, in "a concession to idealism" (MM, 360/229), "presence" (MM, 185/35). Presence, for Bergson, means that the image, or matter, is what it appears to be and yet the image can be without being perceived.

But the image understood as presence immediately raises a question: if Bergson defines the image in terms of matter and presence, then we must wonder why Bergson uses the word "image." Bergson seems to have three reasons for insisting on the word "image." First, because the word "image" suggests vision (see PM, 1355/118). Bergson privileges vision because vision is dependent on light. The Bergsonian image emits light; it is a "picture," as Bergson himself says (MM, 186/36). What the illuminated picture gives vision to see primarily is color, not lines (MM, 162/10). The recognition that the Bergsonian image consists in secondary qualities—color in particular—provides us with three other characteristics of the image: the image, for Bergson, is at once simple or one, complex or different, and continuous or successive. When I see a picture, I see a unity composed of a multiplicity of colors all different from one another (MM, 332/196). These differences between qualities like colors are what Bergson calls "natural articulations" (MM, 333/197) or "the articulations of the real" (PM, 1292–4/50–2). That there are natural articulations of the real is why Bergson constantly speaks of "images" in the plural (MM, 170/22). Despite this plurality of articulations, when I see a picture the colors flow continuously into one another. Unlike the senses of hearing, smell, and taste, vision does not contain intervals during which or in between which it is not functioning (MM, 332/197).<sup>14</sup> If we

think about taste, for example, it is never necessary that as soon as I open my mouth I taste something. Even if my mouth remains open, it is still not necessary that I am going to taste something. As soon as I open my eyes, however, I see and continue to see because light immediately flows into this opening.

The image as a picture brings us to the second reason why Bergson insists on the word "image." An image is always a picture of something. The word "image," of course, literally means "copy." But we have just seen that the Bergsonian image is not a copy of a hidden thing. The impression that the image copies a thing comes from the fact that the image is a surface and a surface has depth. Bergson writes in Chapter 4:

Indeed we have no choice: if our belief in a more or less homogeneous substratum of sensible qualities has any ground, this can only be found in an *act* which would make us seize or guess, *in quality itself*, something which goes beyond our sensation, as if this sensation itself were pregnant with details suspected yet unperceived. Its objectivity—that is to say, what it contains over and above what it yields up—must then consist ... precisely in the immense multiplicity of movements which it executes, somehow, within its chrysalis. Motionless on the surface, in its very depth it lives and vibrates (MM, 339/204; see also 376/247).

In this comment Bergson emphasizes the phrase "in quality itself," which implies that we are still not referring the image to a hidden thing. We can guess about something which goes beyond quality but which "is not essentially different or distinct from" (MM, 343/208) quality. Deep within the chrysalis there are vibrations of the larva which make the chrysalis gleam. Deep within the light of qualitatively different colors, which are given to con-science, there are the quantitatively continuous vibrations of science. The concept of vibration, which the chrysalis suggests, means that consciously seen colors are neither the mere translation of a hidden original text (see MM, 171/22) nor the "duplicata" of a non-present object. The color is not even the "duplicate" of a diminutive object like an atom or a corpuscle (see MM, 358–9/226–7; 338–9/203).<sup>15</sup> The vibrations are there in the qualities, just as when we strike a key of the piano at the low end of the scale, we hear the note and can see the vibrations of the string (see MM, 338/203).

Because the chrysalis is not a relation of translation or duplication, Bergson in this comment also emphasizes the word "act"; there must be an act that would make us guess what goes beyond perception, towards the unperceived. This act—which we can indeed call intuition—is the

genuine experience of matter. In Chapter 4 of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson provides a remarkable description of this act:

If you abolish my consciousness ... matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and travelling in every direction like shivers. In short, try first to connect together the discontinuous objects of daily experience; then, resolve the motionless continuity of these qualities into vibrations which are moving in place; finally, attach yourself to these movements, by freeing yourself from the divisible space which underlies them in order to consider only their mobility—this undivided act that your consciousness grasps in the movement which you yourself execute. You will obtain a vision of matter which is perhaps fatiguing for your imagination, but pure and stripped of what the requirements of life make you add to it in external perception. Reestablish now my consciousness, and with it, the requirements of life: farther and farther, and by crossing over each time enormous periods of the internal history of things, quasi-instantaneous views are going to be taken, views this time pictorial, of which the most vivid colors condense an infinity of repetitions and elementary changes. In just the same way the thousands of successive positions of a runner are contracted into one sole symbolic attitude, which our eye perceives, which art reproduces, and which becomes for everyone the image of a man who runs (MM, 343/208–9).

This is the only time that Bergson mentions art in *Matter and Memory*. While Bergson insists on defining matter in terms of the image because the word "image" suggests vision, and because it suggests surface with depth, ultimately Bergson insists on the word "image" because it suggests art.

In his 1899 essay on laughter, Bergson defines art as the picture of the vibrations of nature (R, 135/458–9; see PM, 1370/135). Art and image are therefore virtually identical for Bergson. Nevertheless, we must keep them distinguished: the artistic picture is art, while the imagistic picture is nature. The image is, as Bergson writes, a "living unity which was born from internal continuity" (MM, 320/183). The image therefore is one or simple, "contracted into one sole symbolic attitude," and yet multiple and continuous, "the successive positions of a runner." The image, in other words, is "the interior organization of movement," "the intimate nature of movement" (MM, 327/191). To be, however, the intimate nature of movement, the image must itself be movement; it cannot be a thing that moves. For Bergson, movement is real; that

things move, that movement depends on things, is illusory (MM, 337/202). This priority of movement over things, a priority that defines the Bergsonian image, is why Bergson in Chapter 4 speaks of "moving images" (MM, 325/189). The moving image, so to speak, "runs in place." It is not like the "snapshot," but like the motion picture or cinema. We can call the moving image "cinema" and ignore Bergson's famous criticisms of cinema in Chapter 4 of *Creative Evolution* only by noting, as Deleuze does, that cinema has changed since Bergson's day.<sup>16</sup> But cinema—thanks to montage, the mobile camera, and the liberation of the viewpoint—is art, not nature. While we must maintain the distinction between the artistic picture created by spiritual energy and the natural picture created by material energy, we must also see why the two are virtually identical. The artistic picture, for Bergson, does not reverse the relation of movement to thing; it does not make movement a function of the thing. In this way, the artistic picture remains virtually natural. In the artistic picture there are no intervals; there is continuity. But there is a second reason for the virtual identity. The artistic picture is virtually identical with the natural image because it carves up the universe according to its natural articulations. The "symbolization" of the artistic picture "corresponds" to the differences in nature between colors. The painting is not a drawing, and especially not language. Again, the artistic picture remains virtually natural.<sup>17</sup>

But even if thinking about the Bergsonian image as cinema helps us to understand it, this comparison does not get us to a perception. So far, the image is material, yet a matter that hides nothing. In the depths the image contains vibrations, but through a specific act, which is intuition but not perception, we have access to them. The image, however, must also be given to perception as a representation, but not be reducible to representations. In his 1910 Preface, Bergson criticizes not only materialism but idealism insofar as it attempts to reduce matter to the representation we have of it. Unlike materialism, which is excessive in its conception of matter as different in nature from representation, idealism is excessive in its conception of matter as identical to representation. Bergson's criticism of idealism implies that the image differs from representation, but it cannot differ in nature from representation since Bergson's criticism of materialism consists in showing that matter does not differ in nature from representation. Bergson's solution to this problem lies in the following comment: "by 'image' we mean a certain existence which is more than what the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than what the realist calls a *thing*—an existence placed halfway between the 'thing' and the 'representation'" (MM, 161/9). The "more" and the "less" in this comment indicate that representation differs from the image by degrees. The representation is less than the image which is

connected continuously to other images in the whole. A representation is a part cut out of the whole; representation is a decomposition of the whole. Here, with representation, we have the first interval to break up the natural continuity of images (MM, 185/35). But this first interval is not necessarily a "denaturation" of nature. Representations, while partial, are in matter. As Bergson famously writes in *Matter and Memory*, we perceive matter in matter.

Before we turn to memory, let us summarize this discussion of the image, of the "moving image." We have seen that, for Bergson, the image defines matter. More specifically, the image differs not only from affection since the image is extension and objective, but also from the hidden thing since the image is presence. Matter is just what it appears to be: presence. After the developments of twentieth-century phenomenology we tend to turn the word "presence" into the phrase "presence to consciousness." Especially after Derrida, we place this word, "presence," immediately in the lexicon of idealism. But with Bergson presence, understood as an image, is not immediately or not yet idealistic. With the Bergsonian concept of the image, I believe, we are confronted with a new, non-phenomenological concept of presence. I think that this non-phenomenological concept of presence is one of the reasons why Deleuze finds the Bergsonian concept of image so interesting. The Bergsonian concept of the image gives us a plane of immanence which is pure immanence, and not immanence to consciousness, this being the Husserlian or phenomenological definition of immanence. From presence, we then determine the Bergsonian concept of image in three ways, which are the three reasons Bergson has for insisting on the word "image": 1. the word "image" suggests the visual unity of a picture composed of continuous and complex color; 2. the word "image" suggests a surface which itself implies depth: the chrysalis; 3. the word "image" suggests art, which, for Bergson, is movement. These three determinations of the Bergsonian image—continuity, simplicity/complexity, and movement—give us a good idea of what Deleuze means when he speaks of multiplicity. But there is yet another reason why Deleuze finds the Bergsonian image interesting: it is not identical to representations, but is, so to speak, their foundation. As Deleuze conceives them, representations establish discontinuities and complexities which are not natural, and they reverse the relation of the moving and the moved. An image is not a representation. Let us now turn to the Bergsonian concept of memory. Where the image gave us one side of the "substance" called duration, the side of matter, memory gives us the other side, the side of spirit.

### The Bergsonian Concept of Memory

Bergson's concept of memory is focused in his discussions of the inverted cone in Chapter 3 of *Matter and Memory*. Before discussing this we must briefly summarize three discussions which occur in Chapter 2 and earlier in Chapter 3. First, Bergson spends most of Chapter 2 trying to show that with the word "memory" we confuse two very different phenomena. On the one hand, we use the word "memory" to refer to the habits we acquire throughout our lives, into the future; on the other hand, we use the word "memory" to refer to images that progress from the past to the present. When people have problems remembering, their problem, according to Bergson, is due to some sort of injury that has affected the body's habits. The conclusion of this differentiation between bodily memory and true memory, for Bergson, is that true memory is entirely spiritual. Second, bodily habits are general; habits, according to Bergson, are motor behaviors which can be repeated indefinitely. In contrast, true memories are singular, each being differentiated by its own date and context. In fact, true memories are so spiritual that they exist prior to being recalled in an image. Third, because all memories are spiritual, that is, insofar as they are not bodily and thus are not affected by things such as brain lesions, all memories survive. In fact, he maintains that their existence is unconscious. For Bergson, then, (1) there is a true memory which is spiritual, the memory which goes from the past to the present (memory, for Bergson, is not located in the brain), (2) true memories are not general but singular; they are defined by difference, not repetition, and (3) insofar as they are spiritual, all memories survive. Let us now turn to the cone image.

We find the cone image twice in Chapter 3. It is constructed with a plane and an inverted cone whose summit is inserted into the plane. The plane, "plane P," as Bergson calls it, is the "plane of my actual representation of the universe" (MM, 293/152). The cone "SAB" symbolizes memory. At the cone's base, "AB," we have unconscious memories, the oldest surviving memories—pure memories—which come forward spontaneously, for example, in dreams (MM, 294/153). As we descend, we have an "indefinite number" (MM, 309/170) of different regions of the past ordered by their distance or nearness to the present. The second cone image represents these different regions with horizontal lines trisecting the cone. At the summit of the cone, "S," we have the image of my body which is concentrated into a point, into the present. The summit is inserted into the plane and thus my body "participates in the plane" of my actual representation of the universe (MM, 293/152). At the base of the cone (which is at the top of the image) we have memories, and at the summit (at the bottom) we have action. What is most difficult



to visualize with the cone image is that it symbolizes a *dynamic* process: memories are "descending" down from the regions of memory towards the present. They are making progress towards present action (MM, 293/152--3). This progressive movement of memory takes place, according to Bergson, between the "extremes" of the base which is immobile and which Bergson calls "contemplation" (MM, 302/163), and the plane where action takes place.<sup>18</sup> This movement of memory between immobile contemplation and moving action is intelligence or thought, or even *intuition* (MM, 371/242; see MM, 269/125).<sup>19</sup> What defines thought here is the movement between the two extremes, the movement from the base to the summit, which is a movement from singularities to generalities (MM, 296/155). This movement of thought, from the singular to the general, works for Bergson in three distinct steps.

Let us say I have a need in the present, an obstacle, a problem that can be solved only if I impose an order on a situation. First, according to Bergson, I must make a "leap" (MM, 288/146). We want to keep in mind what causes us to leap. Nevertheless this "leap" means that when I remember I do not make a "one-by-one" regress into the past. Rather, by means of the leap I am immediately in the past (MM, 278/149–50, 261/116; also, ES 944/170), in, as Bergson says, "the past in general and then in a region of the past" (MM, 276/134). Let us say that with the leap I have landed in a region of my childhood, in the region before my parents moved to the suburbs. Although the leap places me in this region, no image appears at first because I have forgotten the events that formed my character. All I have is the idea of my character. The idea of my character, according to Bergson, is like a "cloud," composed of thousands of drops of water (MM, 277/134). Bergson calls this state the "nebulosity of the idea" (MM, 266/122; see 310/171). Before these "drops" condense, each memory is a pure memory, having the characteristics of being unextended, without sensation, without potency in the present, without image, without consciousness, even without life. Nevertheless, although these pure memories are not alive, they are not destroyed but are surviving. We then come to the second step: the cone "rotates," as Bergson says (MM, 308/169). The movement of rotation expands and relates memories contiguously. The cone is like a telescope pointed upward to the night sky, whose lens-holders I am rotating to bring a region of the sky into focus (MM, 305/166; 310/171; see also 262/122). Thanks to the rotation of the "lens-holders," now I have the image of my parents' old house in the heart of the city. I can now walk through the different rooms of the house; I can see the pieces of furniture and people in each of the rooms, and then I can see the events which took place in the rooms. The rotation of the lens-holders continues. I am in the bedroom I shared with my brother; he is huddled

over the little desk we also shared; he is pasting stamps into an album, carefully, according to the country of origin, according to the size and color, according to the value of each. There is a song on the radio; it is "Under the Boardwalk"; I know it is the summer of 1964. I have singular and personal memories, "memory-images," as Bergson would say. The pure memories in which my character consists have become fixed in living color. Then follows the third effort, which happens simultaneously with the rotation. Once the pure memories are fixed in images, the cone "contracts" (MM, 308/168). Instead of "expanding" into contiguous, singular, personal images, the movement of contraction "narrows" or "diminishes" the images. The narrowing movement of contraction pulls the singular and personal images down the tube of the "telescope" into general and impersonal images, which resemble one another. In other words, I forget again about the summer of 1964. My memory of my brother carefully ordering what he used to call his "stamp book" contracts into an image of his general orderliness. Here with contraction, the differentiations again become obscured in order to correspond to the present perceptual image. The image of my brother's general orderliness becomes an idea or even a general "method" or idea (see PM, 1326/85) for solving problems of order, which I can then contract into a present perception and extend into present action.

In *Matter and Memory*, memory or thought consists in a three-step process progressing from the past towards the present: the leap, the rotation, and the contraction. Through these three steps we can see that memory, for Bergson, is always progressive. This progressiveness means that memory does not come *from* perception but *to* perception; the past does not come from the present but to the present. In a well-known essay on Bergson, Jean Hyppolite has argued that we must conceive pure memories in Bergson as essences. Hyppolite writes: "The German language allows us to bring the past and essence together (*gewesen* and *Wesen*). This is really how, it seems, we must understand pure memory in Bergson."<sup>20</sup> To say that the past is *gewesen*, that it was, means not only that the actual object of perception has passed away but that nothing can change the past. The past cannot be repeated in the sense of being done over. In Chapter 2 Bergson defines memories in this way as "perfect," that is, as non-perfectible through repetition. That memories are non-perfectible—that I cannot do the summer of 1964 over—is why Bergson says, in his descriptions of the cone, that the base of the cone is immobile. The memories at the base are in a sense eternal since they have passed out of the present where change occurs, where one can perfect actions. Although the memories have passed out of the present, they have not, as we have seen Bergson also claim, passed out of time. Insofar as they constitute our character, they continue to affect

the present. Since the memories have not and cannot pass out of time—they can pass only out of the present—we cannot call them “eternal”; they are “quasi-eternal” or, if we want to resort to a strange word from Deleuze, we can say that they are “impassible” (meaning that memories cannot pass away).<sup>21</sup> This is crucial: although we must say that present perceptions cause memories, that memories are copies of objects actually perceived, the present object of perception always passes away. My skinny brother of 1964 has passed away; he is not dead, of course, but he is no longer skinny. Insofar as the present object passes away, it liberates the memory from the present, and the memory, unlike the perception, does not pass away. They are no longer tied to the factual objects that caused them; they have become essences, *Wesen* and not just *gewesen*. This detachment from the object allows memories to be repeated, not in the sense of doing them over but in the sense of unifying them on the basis of resemblance. The memories can be evoked and generalized. The cone’s contractions bring the memories together into a unity which, so to speak, forgets the differences so that the present action I am considering can base itself on them. If the contractions bring forth something like an essence, then we are justified in introducing another strange expression, one that is common in twentieth-century French thought and which probably derives from *Matter and Memory*. The phrase is “a past that was never present.” They are past since they are memories, and as memories they have effects in the present. Yet these memories have never been present since the passing of the perceived object breaks the link between the memory and the perceived object.<sup>22</sup> To say that Bergsonian pure memories are a past means that the past is first, that the present repeats the past, that the past conditions the present just as my character affects every present decision I make.

I think we can see why Deleuze finds Bergson’s concept of memory so interesting: it amounts to a reversal of Platonic reminiscence, a reversal of Platonism. In Plato, as the divided line indicates, actual, material reality consists in images of the originals, that is, in images of the ideas. According to the myths in the dialogues, the ideas existed in the past and human beings had contact with this past before our souls acquired bodies. Therefore, for Plato, the present images repeat or copy the past ideas. But since the ideas for Plato are immobile—and the myths imply this—the ideas are constantly present. They exist therefore in a sort of mythological present, which means that the ideas, for Plato, must be defined by a past present. Before we acquired bodies, we contemplated these immobile ideas, a contemplation which the divided line places at the top. If we combine the analogy of the sun with the allegory of the cave, we know that ultimately we contemplate the idea of the good,

which is located above at the very "summit," we might say, of the divided line. This contemplation was disrupted, however, when our souls fell to earth and acquired bodies. In effect, for Plato, matter makes us forget the ideas and Platonic reminiscence is supposed to put us back into the contemplative vision of the ideas. Let us return now to Bergson. Bergson conserves from Plato that the origin of perceptual images lies in the past, in ideas (or essences, to appropriate Hyppolite's insight again). Unlike Platonic ideas, Bergsonian ideas were never present, not even in a mythological present; they consist in a past which has never been present. Therefore, Bergsonian ideas must be defined by a past past (and not by a past present). Bergson also conserves from Plato that the activity of the soul at the uppermost part of the divided line is *noesis*, that is, contemplation. But unlike Platonic contemplation, which concerns itself with unity or universality, the Bergsonian contemplation is a vision of singularities, singular memories. In Bergson's cone image, the uppermost part is not the summit of universality but the base of singularities. The last thing Bergson conserves from Plato is the source of forgetfulness. For Plato, there is a fall into matter which makes us forget our original contact with the ideas; for Bergson, "matter puts forgetfulness in us" (MM, 316/177). With Bergson we cannot, however, speak of a fall into matter because being is always from the beginning doubled, doubled between matter and memory. But because matter is always there, the possibility of profound forgetfulness is always there. One can enclose oneself entirely in habits and habitual ways of thinking; one can stop the indefinite movement of intelligence or thought. When this happens, we need to evoke the past. But since, with Bergson, memory does not return to ideas but to memories, since it returns not to universals but to singularities, Bergsonian reminiscence in Plato's eyes would be forgetfulness. When we point our telescopes up in the sky and start to rotate the lens-holders, we find no sun, only stars. The Bergsonian reversal of Platonism consists in this: Bergsonian reminiscence is Platonic forgetfulness.<sup>23</sup>

### **Conclusion: Dynamic Schemas and Creative Emotions**

This Bergsonian reversal of Platonic reminiscence makes one think of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. What is most important in Deleuze's Proust book is the concept of essence developed in it, and we have just discussed essence in reference to Bergson's pure memories. These two types of essences are connected, even identical as Deleuze points out in his Proust book. We are still talking about multiplicities. In fact, the definition that Proust himself constructs for an idea applies to multiplicities: "Real without being present, ideal without being abstract."<sup>24</sup> The

clearest description of what a multiplicity is occurs in a 1904 essay titled "Intellectual Effort." There Bergson speaks of the memory of a skilful chess player (ES 937--8/161--2). A skilful chess player can play several games at once without looking at the chessboards. According to Bergson, this chess player does not have the image of each chessboard in memory "just as it is, 'as if it were in a mirror,'" nor does he have "a mental vision of each piece" (ES 938/161). Instead, the chess player, according to Bergson, "retains and represents to himself ... the power, the bearing, and the value, in a word, the function of each piece" (ES 938/162). For each game, the player retains and represents to himself "a composition of forces or better a relation between allied or hostile powers" (ES 938/162). Then, at every move, the player makes an effort of "reconstruction." In other words, he or she "remakes" the history of the game from the beginning, or "reconstitutes" the successive events that have led to the present situation. Therefore, as Bergson writes, "He thus obtains a representation of the whole which enables him at any moment to visualize the elements" (ES 938/162). What the example of the chess player implies is that the chess player has something like what Bergson would call an intuition. He or she has an intuition of the whole and the differences that can be developed from it. The chess player has the whole as a "dynamic schema" in which there are unforeseeable developments. Bergson defines such a schema in this way: a dynamic schema is a "simple" "outline of temporal relations" (ES 950/177), which is "developable" into "multiple images" (ES 936/160). Although the dynamic schema is an "outline," it is not, according to Bergson, an "impoverished extract or summary" of this particular series of images (ES 937/160). If it were, the schema would be limited just to that series of images, and then the chess player would be unable to play new and different games. Similarly, a dynamic schema is not what the images taken together "signify"; in other words, it is not a "logical meaning" because a logical meaning "may belong to quite different series of images." A logical meaning would not allow us to retain and reconstruct one definite series of images to the exclusion of others (ES, 937/160). While an impoverished extract is too limited to be a dynamic schema, a logical meaning is too unlimited to be a dynamic schema. In other words, the extract has too small an extension while the logical meaning has too large an extension. A dynamic schema, as Bergson puts it, has "reciprocal implication" and consequently "internal complication," which the elements or images develop. The dynamic schema in Bergson is, to repeat an image from our discussion of memory, "the nebulosity of the idea" (MM, 266/122). A cloud is a whole composed of thousands of drops of water, but I do not see the different drops until the cloud condenses. Similarly, the idea I have of my character is composed of thousands of

singular events, but I do not see those singular events until I rotate the cone. The idea anyone has of his or her character would be an example of a dynamic schema in Bergson. The idea I have of my character is a simple outline of forces which are developable into singular images of action. This idea, which can never be equated with a Platonic idea, is multiplicity in Bergson.

In the example of the chess player, we said that the player has an intuition of the dynamic schema. How is it possible to have an intuition? Deleuze himself raises this question at the very end of his study of Bergson, the question of the genesis of intuition. To answer this question, Deleuze examines Bergson's last great work, his 1932 *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.<sup>25</sup> More than thirty years after *Matter and Memory*, we find in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* that intuition is based in a specific sort of emotion called "creative emotions." Bergson defines creative emotions as those that generate thought (MR, 1011/43). Most emotions, according to Bergson, arise as a consequence of a representation. For instance, when I see someone I know, I feel happy. Here the cause of the emotion is the representation. But, according to Bergson, there are emotions that precede the representations and are in fact "pregnant" with representations. Here the emotion is the cause and the representation is the effect. These emotions are rare (MR, see 1156/213); an example would be involuntary memory in Proust: the taste of the madeleine cookie, the feel of the cobblestones in front of St. Mark's Cathedral, is beyond representations and instead cause representations in me. Another example of a creative emotion would be the religious emotion of mystical ecstasy. As is well known, for better or worse, in *The Two Sources* Bergson provides a defence of mysticism. The defence consists in arguing that mystics have "superior good sense." This superiority comes from the visions, raptures, or ecstasies, in other words, the emotion that comes up from the depths, "from the darkest depths of the soul" (MR, 1170/229). Bergson interprets this emotion as a fleeting vision of the continuity of our inner life, of the very roots of our being, of the very principle of life in general (MR, 1187/250). In other words, mystical rapture is an intuition of duration or multiplicity. But such a rare and transitory experience upsets one's normal mental equilibrium; it upsets good sense. This "disequilibrium" is why, according to Bergson, mystics are frequently classified as insane (MR, 1183/245). But Bergson insists that the "disturbance is a systematic readjustment with a superior equilibrium" (MR, 1170/229). In fact, he insists that mystics have "an exceptional, deep-rooted mental healthiness" (MR, 1169/228). Thus, for Bergson, what is truly important about creative emotion is its directedness towards action (MR, 1169/228). This directedness of creative emotions towards action is what Deleuze calls, in *The Logic of Sense*, a

"volitional intuition"; a volitional intuition not only gives us a fleeting access to multiplicities but also gives us a will to develop it into unforeseeable free actions and deeds.

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## Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, "Now I am Going to Have to Wander All Alone," trans. Leonard Lawlor, *Philosophy Today* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 3–5. The present essay is based on three lectures presented at the Collegium Phaenomenologicum in Citta di Costello, Italy, July 25–30, 1999, entitled "The Challenge of Bergsonism." The lectures became my *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2003).
2. Gilles Deleuze, "Bergson: 1859–1941," in *Les philosophes celebres*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Paris: Mazonod, 1956). Deleuze, "La Conception de la différence chez Bergson," *Les Études Bergsoniennes*, vol. 4 (1956); English translation by Melissa McMahon as "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).
3. Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), 50; English translation by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell as *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 48–9 (English translation modified).
4. Deleuze, *Bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); English translation by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam as *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).
5. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); English translation by Paul Patton as *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
6. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: L'Image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1983); English translation by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam as *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). Deleuze, *Cinema 2: L'Image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985); English translation by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta as *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

7. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 117.

8. Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* (Paris: PUF, 1964); English translation by Richard Howard as *Proust and Signs* (New York: Braziller, 1972).

9. Deleuze, *La logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 122–3, 175; English translation by Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin Boundas, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

10. Henri Bergson, *Oeuvres*, Edition du Centenaire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959). English translation of *Matiere et memoire* by N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer as *Matter and Memory* (New York: Zone Books, 1994). Hereafter cited as MM.

11. Deleuze, "Bergson, 1859–1941," 298.

12. Victor Delbos, "Études critiques," in *Revue de metaphysique et de morale*, 378.

13. Bergson, *Melanges* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 356.

14. See "Bergson à G. Lechalas," in *Melanges*, 410–1.

15. See *ibid.*, 411.

16. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: l'image-mouvement*, 11–2; *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 2–3: "The evolution of the cinema, the conquest of its own essence or novelty, was to take place through montage, the mobile camera, and the emancipation of the viewpoint, which became separate from projection. The shot would then stop being a spatial category and become a temporal one, and the section would no longer be immobile but mobile. The cinema would rediscover that very movement-image of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*."

17. Bergson describes this specific type of symbolization in Chapter 4, MM, 355/222. Although he does not use the word "correspond" there, the description resembles the descriptions in Chapter 1 where Bergson speaks of a correspondence between two systems of images (MM, 191/41). Other positive uses of the word "symbol" can be found in Chapter 1, MM, 187/37, 205/56.

18. See Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), tome 1, 480.



19. See Leon Husson, *L'Intellectualisme de Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), 21, where he writes that "... in the early text, the word 'intelligence' designated the set of superior functions of knowledge, taken as a whole, regardless of the distinction one can make between them, or, at least, it designated the set of functions of *intellection*, that is, comprehension." See, for example, PM, 1275/35.

20. Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, tome 1, 482, my translation.

21. Deleuze, *Bergsonisme*, 50; *Bergsonism*, 55.

22. Wherever this phrase occurs—whether it is in Derrida, Deleuze, Lévinas, or Merleau-Ponty—it always refers to what we used to call an a priori condition. In the twentieth century, however, due to certain criticisms of Kantianism coming out of the early days of phenomenology, a priori conditions now must be conceived as temporally determined. They cannot be merely constructed, as the early twentieth century neo-Kantians did. This construction was still speculation in the worst sense of the word. Instead, a priori conditions must be experienceable. But as soon as we say that the a priori must be experienceable, we realize as well that they cannot be reducible to experience. If the a priori is reducible to experience, then it would no longer be a priori. The conditions of experience must be conceived as *at once* experienceable and yet not reducible to experience. This "at once" means that the conditions must be in the present experience, that is, affecting present experience or conditioning it, but still not themselves present. If they were actually present, they would no longer be prior to experience.

23. Insofar as Bergsonian memory is Platonic forgetfulness, Bergsonian memory is really what Foucault calls a "counter-memory." See Foucault, "Jean Hyppolite. 1907–1968," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, no. 2 (1969), 132; collected in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits, 1954–1988*, 775; Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," in "Homage à Jean Hyppolite," 171; "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 163.

24. Deleuze, *Proust et les signes*, 73–4; Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 57. See Marcel Proust, *La recherche du temps perdu, Le temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 230; English translation as *Remembrance of Things Past, Time Regained*, vol. III, by C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terrence Kilmartin, and Andreas Mayor (New York: Random House, 1981), 906.

25. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudsley Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977[1935]).