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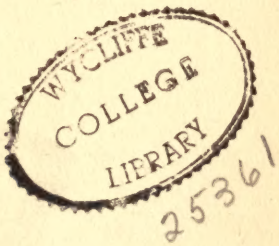
AN ESSAY ON THE SCOPE OF INTELLIGENCE

BY

GEORGE ROSTREVOR



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TO
MY WIFE

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CHAPTER I

DURATION AND THE DURATION OF THE SELF

THE philosopher must—in the proud saying of Plato—be a surveyor of all time and all existence. But, however far he may journey to the remote, he must begin with the world of familiar things about him, his own actual experience of life. Let me begin then, without apology, from the passing moment. As I write, I am sitting at a window which opens out onto the Thames at Hammersmith. Everything that I see—the houses in Chiswick, the tow-path, the trees, the training-ship moored in the river, the tide racing towards me, the boats with their crews or pleasure-parties, the people on the river-bank, and, over all, the heavy white clouds moving across a clean sky—everything is within the subject of philosophy; and I, on the hither side of the window, who see all this with a turn of my head, I who experience a continual

Introductory. The Reality of Time.

flow of feelings and perceptions, must look in on myself as well as out on the world, if I am to understand or to interpret.

How am I to view all this varied panorama? What reality, what degrees of reality, shall I divine? I shall refuse to believe that all the life and motion of the scene can be explained by logical analysis as exhibiting a mere mechanical system of relations. As one who has learnt from the writings of M. Bergson—let me make this profession at once, though I cannot claim to be an orthodox disciple—I shall see different kinds of reality in the solid material house, the flowing river, the tree alive but rooted to one spot, and the human being moving and acting, as it appears, according to his own free will. I shall recognise aspects of change and stability, movement and rest, conscious life and automatism. It is true that none of the objects in which I discern these aspects is wholly outside the sphere of rigid scientific enquiry, of explanation in terms of space, quantity, multiplicity. But the further I get away from inert matter and the further I penetrate into life, the less adequate do I find the terms of mathematical science. Nothing can be accounted for entirely—and life itself can be

accounted for very little—if I fail to recognise the reality and the true nature of *time*.

The reality of time is indeed the first principle of Bergsonian metaphysics. It is essential to the nature of life that it endures, that its moments interpenetrate, that it prolongs the past into the present. The more deeply we live, the more do we realise experience as a unique indivisible flow, with none of its moments wholly separate or distinct. The first " moment " so-called does not die, to give place to the second ; it flows into the second moment, and the second moment so enriched flows into the third. The moments make a growing organic unity, in the same way as notes of music, to an attentive and understanding listener, are bound up inseparably in the process of the tune. This is real time or " duration." We may of course relax our activity or attention : then the moments of our life and the notes of the music will be less perfectly fused—our experience will be fragmentary, superficial. It will be possible to represent it, with much more truth, as a series of isolated sensations, sounds.

This differing intensity of our experience is the key to the problem of matter and spirit. Matter *at its ideal limit* has no duration : it dies

and is born again unceasingly. Its moments are external to one another. It does not develop or change, being but a constant repetition of the past. Between this purely ideal limit of inertia and the most intense life that we can imagine are innumerable actual gradations. Approximating to the lower limit, let us take the nearly homogeneous vibrations of light. "The sensation of red light, experienced by us in the course of a second, corresponds in itself to a succession of phenomena which, separately distinguished in our duration with the greatest possible economy of time, would occupy more than 250 centuries of our history."[1] In actual fact our perception sums up this long history in the wink of an eye. We can imagine, similarly, that the moments of our human duration would be indefinitely contracted for a superhuman observer. "Would not the whole of history be contained in a very short time for a consciousness at a higher degree of tension than our own, which should watch the development of humanity while contracting it, so to speak, into the great phases of its evolution?"[2] When, therefore, we look out on the world and in on ourselves, the fundamental

[1] *Matter and Memory*, p. 273. [2] *Matter and Memory*, p. 275.

distinctions we make must be in terms of time, according to difference of tension or rhythm. We must rid ourselves of the notion of time as something one and the same for all. There is one time for unorganised matter—a feeble, evanescent duration, whose infinitesimal pulsations are almost wholly external to one another. There is another duration peculiar to each of the multitudinous forms of life, vegetable or animal. All these several durations form a series, exhibiting a gradual advance in that organisation of time by which the past penetrates more and more into the present. Real time is not an even flow; it is individual time, it is one with life, and is infinitely variable.

Importance of Bergson's view.

The importance of this view of time cannot be exaggerated. If it is correct, then it follows that any explanation of the universe which the materialist can give is radically false. Even if science were to attain the fullest knowledge that is within her capacity, the universe could not be explained in terms of mechanism. If the universe lives, grows and endures, if reality *increases*, so that there is more reality now than when the human race first appeared on the earth, and more reality to-day

than there was twenty-four hours ago, then it is impossible to say that the sum total of reality is present in any one moment, and that if a single transverse section could be taken of the universe, the whole of its previous history and the whole of the future could be deduced from it. The determinist view is equally condemned. For if man, the microcosm, grows and endures in his spiritual life,—if time makes a real difference to him, and the evolution of individual character is anything more than the unfolding of what was there *ab initio*,—then it is impossible to forecast with absolute certainty any detail of his future. The future is not contained in the present; we are not at the mercy of fate; the problem of free will is no longer the question whether it exists, but the question what is its nature and what, for the individual, its limitation.

The foregoing paragraphs are only an introductory sketch. My object in this essay is to criticise Bergson's theory of knowledge: while fundamentally accepting his view of time—as will be clear from what I have already written—I dissent from the theory of intuition on which it is based. The theory of intuition is, it seems to me, an unnecessary stumbling-block, which

may prevent the theory of time—of life—from exerting its full influence on the future course of philosophy.

Bergson and Kant.

Up to a certain point Bergson is in agreement with Kant as to the scope and powers of the human mind. Both regard the intellect—the scientific intellect working by means of concepts—as incapable of apprehending reality in its own nature. For Kant, the term "intellect" has no wider sense; our thought can only proceed by imposing *a priori* relations on the world presented to it. We can only know phenomena; "things in themselves" are unknowable. In Kant's philosophy there is one solitary way of escape from agnosticism,—that unconvincing *deus ex machina*, the Practical Reason.

The terms "intellect" and "intuition."

Bergson, unlike Kant, considers intellect (in the narrow sense referred to) as only a part of the power of thought, and as a part which has been developed with a view to action, not to speculation. His terminology is difficult. He sometimes uses the term "intellect" or "intelligence" in a wide sense, as equivalent to the whole "mind." For instance, in *Time and Free Will* he writes, in this sense, of

"*the organised and living intelligence.*" "If, digging below the surface of contact between the self and external objects, we penetrate into the depths of the organised and living intelligence, we shall witness the joining together or rather the blending of many ideas which, when once dissociated, seem to exclude one another as logically contradictory terms."[1] Here intelligence represents the vital activity of thought, which—for Bergson—rises above clean-cut conceptions and penetrates by *intuition* or sympathy into the reality of life. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* again, intuition is treated as within the intellect, a function of the intellect: it is the highest function, and as such is contrasted with *analysis*, the habitual function. It is described as "a kind of *intellectual* sympathy," "a kind of *intellectual* auscultation," "a kind of *intellectual* expansion." Our intelligence, we are told, "can place itself within the mobile reality and adopt its ceaselessly changing direction; in short, can grasp it by means of that intellectual sympathy, which we call intuition. This is extremely difficult. The mind has to do violence to itself, has to reverse the direction of the operation by which it habitu-

[1] *Time and Free Will*, p. 136.

ally thinks, has perpetually to revise, or rather to re-cast, all its categories. But in this way it will attain to fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its sinuosities, and of adopting the very movement of the inward life of things." [1]

In Bergson's later writing, the exercise of intelligence comes to be almost identified with its habitual function, analysis. The contrast comes to be drawn, no longer between intuition and analysis as *functions* of the intellect, but between intuition and intelligence as *faculties* of the mind. This division of the mind into faculties appears to represent a natural development of Bergson's thought. For him intuition has always implied sympathetic knowledge or knowledge from within, and has therefore differed radically from intellectual apprehension (as generally understood), in which the object of intuition is set over against the mind. To include "sympathetic" intuition within the borders of intelligence is therefore to strain the use of terms, and the tendency to give it a more independent status was perhaps inevitable. It is doubtful, however, whether it would have been elevated to the rank of a separate

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 59.

faculty had it not been for the elaboration of the theory that instinct and intelligence, in the world of living creatures, are two diverse ways of knowing, intuition being a development of the former. There is, in the introduction to *Creative Evolution*, a significant reference to "certain powers that are complementary to the understanding, powers of which we have only an indistinct feeling when we remain shut up in ourselves, but which will become clear and distinct when they perceive themselves at work, so to speak, in the evolution of nature."[1]

The differing use of the terms intellect and intuition is then a little confusing. But one thing at least is clear. *Intuition, whether regarded as faculty or function, has reference always to knowledge by sympathy, knowledge from within the object known. It follows, I would add, that this intuition, however it may be described, is essentially non-intellectual.*

Intuition of the self.

The primary intuition is the intuition of the self. "There is one reality at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time—our self

[1] *Creative Evolution*, Introduction, p. 13.

which endures."[1] What is the nature of this enduring self? "If, instead of professing to analyse duration (*i.e.* at bottom, to make a synthesis of it with concepts) we at once place ourselves in it by an effort of intuition, we have the feeling of a certain very determinate tension, in which the determination itself appears as a choice between an infinity of possible durations."[2] "The intuition of our duration, far from leaving us suspended in the void as pure analysis would do, brings us into contact with a whole continuity of durations which we must try to follow, whether downwards or upwards; in both cases we can extend ourselves indefinitely by an increasingly violent effort, in both cases we transcend ourselves. In the first, we advance towards a more and more attenuated duration, the pulsations of which, being rapider than ours and dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity; at the limit would be pure homogeneity, that pure *repetition* by which we define materiality. Advancing in the other direction, we approach a duration which strains, contracts and intensifies itself more and more; at the limit would be eternity. No

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 8.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 50.

longer conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. A living, and therefore still moving eternity, in which our own particular duration would be included as the vibrations are in light; an eternity which would be the concentration of all duration, as materiality is its dispersion. Between these two extreme limits intuition moves, and this movement is the very essence of metaphysics."[1]

I would draw very special attention to the emphasis which Bergson lays on the idea that intuition can only be won by doing violence to the intellect. He speaks of "an increasingly violent effort" in the process by which we realise the higher and lower tensions of duration. He speaks again of the "essentially active, I might almost say violent, character of metaphysical intuition."[2] "It needs that, turning back on itself and twisting on itself, the faculty of *seeing* should be made to be one with the act of *willing*,—a painful effort which we can make suddenly, doing violence to our nature, but cannot sustain more than a few moments."[3] "You must take

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 54.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 48.

[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 250.

things by storm; you must thrust intelligence outside itself by an act of will." [1]

Can the intellect apprehend duration?

At the present stage it is not necessary to attempt any further definition of what Bergson means by intuition. The question I now propose to consider is this: *How far is it possible to go, without doing violence to the intellect at all? Is it possible by hard but quiet reflective thought to obtain an insight into the duration of our selves, and so into the nature of time? Duration being the very stuff of our deepest experience, will not the careful analysis of our memories enable us to apprehend it? I mean to suggest that it will.*

In the next chapter of this essay, when I use the term intuition I shall not use it in the Bergsonian sense, as a faculty of sympathetic knowledge from within the object known. I would define it as standing simply for direct intellectual apprehension of an object set over against the mind.

It is necessary here to guard against a fallacy, for all intellectual apprehension is, in the last resort, direct and therefore intuitive. There are indeed certain axiomatic truths—such as the

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 204.

geometrical truth that two straight lines cannot enclose a space—which can be grasped immediately, while there are others which require the mediation of an intellectual process. But this intellectual process merely consists in separating out and bringing together the relevant data; the analysis and synthesis proceed on rules which were themselves originally discovered by intuition, however mechanical they may now be. In any long chain of reasoning there is frequent alternation between intuition and analysis, *i.e.* between intuition and the more or less mechanical application of past intuitions: when, however, the significant data are seen in due relation to one another, truth is grasped by the immediate intuitive activity of our vital intelligence.

CHAPTER II

INTUITION BY REFLECTION

LET us reflect, first, on our most superficial experience. It is not difficult to recognise that when we relax our activity or attention, we become creatures of the fugitive moment. The past and the future are nothing to us. We become absorbed, as the seconds go by, in this or that sound breaking the silence, this or that movement catching our notice. The self of the moment forgets the self of the moment before; the self of the moment before, which was abandoned to some trivial impression, appears to have been annihilated. We live on the surface and surrender ourselves to a pageantry of sense-images; our soul seems to be dissipated into separate moments, like drops of rain or flashes of light, and to become identical with the succession of things seen or heard. This condition of mind has been recorded by

Life at lower tension.

Robert Louis Stevenson with the greatest felicity and truth, and a rather long quotation is, I think, justified. The passages which follow occur in the chapter entitled "Changed Times" in *An Inland Voyage*.

. . . "But now, when the river no longer ran, in a proper sense, only glided seaward with an even, outright, but imperceptible speed, and when the sky smiled upon us day after day without variety, we began to slip into that golden doze of the mind which follows upon much exercise in the open air. I have stupefied myself in this way more than once; indeed, I dearly love the feeling; but I never had it to the same degree as when paddling down the Oise. It was the apotheosis of stupidity. . . .

"I have always been fond of maps, and can voyage in an atlas with the greatest enjoyment. The names of places are singularly inviting; the contour of coasts and rivers is enthralling to the eye; and to hit, in a map, upon some place you have heard of before, makes history a new possession. But we thumbed our charts, on these evenings, with the blankest unconcern. We cared not a fraction for this place or that. We stared at the sheet as children listen to their

rattle; and read the names of towns or villages to forget them again at once. We had no romance in the matter: there was nobody so fancy-free. If you had taken the maps away while we were studying them most intently, it is a fair bet whether we might not have continued to study the table with the same delight. . . .

"We took in, at a glance, the larger features of the scene; and beheld, with half an eye, bloused fishers and dabbling washerwomen on the bank. Now and again we might be half-wakened by some church-spire, by a leaping fish, or by a trail of river grass that clung about the paddle and had to be plucked off and thrown away. But these luminous intervals were only partially luminous. A little more of us was called into action, but never the whole. The central bureau of nerves, what in some moods we call Ourselves, enjoyed its holiday without disturbance, like a Government Office. The great wheels of intelligence turned idly in the head, like fly-wheels, grinding no grist. I have gone on for half an hour at a time counting my strokes and forgetting the hundreds. I flatter myself the beasts that perish could not underbid that as a low form of consciousness. And what a pleasure it was! What a hearty,

tolerant temper did it bring about! There is nothing captious about a man who has attained to this, the one possible apotheosis in life, the Apotheosis of Stupidity; and he begins to feel dignified and longevous like a tree.

"There was one odd piece of practical metaphysics which accompanied what I may call the depth, if I must not call it the intensity, of my abstraction. What philosophers call *me* and *not-me*, *ego* and *non-ego*, preoccupied me whether I would or no. There was less *me* and more *not me* than I was accustomed to expect. I looked on upon somebody else, who managed the paddling; I was aware of somebody else's feet upon the stretcher; my own body seemed to have no more intimate relation to me than the canoe, or the river, or the river banks. . . . Thoughts presented themselves unbidden; they were not my thoughts, they were plainly someone else's; and I considered them like a part of the landscape. . . .

"This frame of mind was the great exploit of our voyage, take it all in all. It was the farthest piece of travel accomplished. Indeed, it lies so far from beaten paths of language, that I despair of getting the reader into sympathy with the

smiling, complacent idiocy of my condition; when ideas came and went like motes in a sunbeam; when trees and church spires along the bank surged up, from time to time into my notice, like solid objects through a rolling cloudland; when the rhythmical swish of boat and paddle in the water became a cradle-song to lull my thoughts asleep; when a piece of mud on the deck was sometimes an intolerable eyesore, and sometimes quite a companion for me, and the object of pleased consideration;—and all the time, with the river running and the shores changing upon either hand, I kept counting my strokes and forgetting the hundreds, the happiest animal in France."

A state of mind, as Stevenson says, "very calm, golden and incurious!" The account of it implies that on the ordinary level of experience the moments hold together more closely—ideas do not come and go "like motes in a sunbeam," but stay longer with us and have some sort of continuous relationship with one another. And certainly this seems to be so. When we are suffering from the apprehension of imminent pain or disaster, our consciousness seems to grow

Life at higher tension. Alternative concentration and relaxation.

more and more full with the cumulative effect of the passing seconds. Even when we are relieved by a momentary distraction, the apprehension continues to affect the tone of our consciousness. It can indeed hardly be disputed that when we are at all active, our inner life is more than a mere sequence of vanishing moments. The more intent we are, the more do the moments appear to hold together. On the other hand, reflection will convince us that our concentration is, as a rule, sustained at its fullest for a very short time. Our activity having for its setting the material world, there is constant need of readjustment. When we play a game, we alternately concentrate and relax our attention. When our attention is highly concentrated, as in a long rally in a game of tennis, our mental energy and will-power must remain braced and alert. They seem to keep up an organic, continuous exercise, and correspondingly our bodily movements seem to flow naturally from one another: in the intervals we readjust ourselves in preparation for new developments in the game. This alternation between concentrated and relaxed effort is characteristic of all human activity. In the deeper levels of experience, there must be a limit to the

need for readjustment, if personality is to express itself; but the need never disappears, and the two aspects—concentration and readjustment—are everywhere found together. On the eve of battle, a general has to take into account the given material factors of the situation. He has to keep them in view and, as he develops his plan, he has to refer to them frequently, if his dispositions are to be good not merely on paper but in action. The cold facts of the material present require this repeated adjustment. But what is the vital process by which the plan is created? The general must have a clear and easy grasp of military principles, won by personal experience or by vivid force of imagination. If the principles are so much his own, so familiar and intimate to him, that he is hardly conscious of possessing them, he will be able, without undue distraction, to bring his individuality into play and, if he is a genius, to create a plan which shall bear his mark unmistakably upon it. This creation comes only of an intense concentration of energy. In the short periods of that concentration, it would seem ridiculous to deny that the mental process, in its living depth, is in some way highly organised. Each "moment" (it is a necessity of language

to use the word) exerts its influence somehow upon the next; not only so, we divine that it passes on a content peculiarly rich, for enshrined in it in some way is the gathered-up personality of the man. An expression of the self so vital is beyond the reach of anyone who is distracted. The inexperienced leader would not be able to grasp the position as a single whole: he would have to adjust his outlook now to this aspect, now to that, seen separately and therefore wrongly; his thoughts would scatter in search of the principles to be applied, and, if he were furnished with the best precedents, he would use them mechanically without regard to any unique element in the situation. The need for indefinite readjustment would be so exacting that no room would be left to him for the vital activity of self-expression.

It is the same with artist and poet—with all creative workers. Temperament and vision are the first requisites, but they are not enough. Art expresses itself through form, which is material—poetry through language, which is modelled on matter. Unless the visionary has at his command an appropriate technique, the attempt at expression will merely break up and spoil his vision, without leading to the production

of any work of value. And not only must he have a mastery of technique in the narrower sense; he must also have his own individual attitude to material things—their colour, their sound, their use, their form. They must have for him a significance, *i.e.* a value as symbols. He must be familiar with the material of expression, no longer the raw material, but the material as he has moulded it to himself. Even with this control over the methods of expression, his creative energy will not be able to flow without interruption. Inspiration does not provide a poet with his rhymes and his vowels: his problem is to find the rhymes and vowels without losing the inspiration. If, as I say, he has the necessary technical power he will be *sufficiently* free, *sufficiently* unhampered by the need of readjustment, to exert his personality, to perpetuate his inspiration, to make alive his forms and colours, his words and sounds and cadences.

We conclude then, from reflection on our own experience and inference as to that of others, that there are many degrees of tension in the activity of life. The present moment appears at times to be almost detachable from our past and our future; at other times it seems to be

rich with our past and pregnant with our future, the moments being, in some undefined way, inseparably organised. But we also conclude that activity cannot be sustained at its fullest for very long: frequent pauses and breaks are inevitable.

Organisation of time. Need the intellect regard it as imposed from without?

We are led thus far by reflecting on normal experience only. If we were to consider mystical experience (as I hope to do later) we might come to the conclusion that the activity of the mystic, who as such is not concerned with the material world, or with self-expression, is the highest order of human activity—if indeed it can be called human—for fulness and sustained energy.

Now, at length, comes the all-important question. How are we to regard these varying tensions of life—without, it will be remembered, doing any violence to our intellect? How, above all, are we to regard the organisation of moments in our deeper experience? *Are we to transcend completely the idea of separate moments and see life itself as interpenetration, continual growth, or are we to regard the organisation as imposed from without on elements which in themselves are separate and mutually external?*

As to life at its lower tension, we shall un-

doubtedly be inclined to view it as a series of independent fugitive moments, with a faintly continuous ego beneath them, in some way loosely holding them together. And here we shall not be far from the truth. Our feebly organised experience, when we live on the surface, gives us a hint as to the probable nature of life on a lower level than our own, and ultimately, of matter itself. We can compare our deeper with our more superficial life, and *if examination of our deeper life enables us to apprehend the duration proper to the human spirit*, then it will be possible for us to reach, by speculative inference, a conclusion similar to that of Bergson. "If the relaxation were complete," he writes, "there would no longer be either memory or will,—which amounts to saying that, in fact, we never do fall into absolute passivity any more than we can make ourselves absolutely free. But, in the limit, we get a glimpse of an existence made of a present which recommences unceasingly—devoid of real duration, nothing but the instantaneous which dies and is born again endlessly. Is the existence of matter of this nature? Not altogether, for analysis resolves it into elementary vibrations, the shortest of which are of very slight duration,

almost vanishing but not nothing. It may be presumed, nevertheless, that physical existence inclines in this direction."[1]

But can we, by examining our experience, apprehend *with our intellect* the idea of duration which Bergson's philosophy teaches? That is the real crux.

The attitude of common sense.

Let us ask what would be the attitude of common sense at this point. Common sense would probably begin by assenting to the proposition that the deeper current of our life can only be broken up into separate states by an arbitrary convention. It would admit the hopelessness of trying to dissect into something like ethereal atoms the subtilised emotion of the poet. It would allow the reasonableness of asserting that no equation can be drawn between the process of experience and the equal minutes of clock-time. Does it not speak of time going slowly or going quickly, so distinguishing between time as felt and the even movement of the clock hands? But common sense will not adhere consistently to this attitude, when once it is made to realise all that is implied in it. If, in the life of the spirit, the past is truly

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 211.

preserved in the present, the complex growing and changing continually,—if the nature of spiritual experience is most adequately suggested by such terms as " interpenetration " and " organic growth,"—then it is implied that each experience is unique, that there is no such thing as repetition in life, and that individual character is not made up of a varying mixture of given elements,—qualities or motives or impulses or desires. This is hard doctrine. But even here common sense has some right notions, however confused. It is indeed accustomed to attribute the same virtue or vice to different people, as if it were a chemical element common to the composition of each: but it is not so blind as to ignore the amazing diversity of human character. It will sometimes try to get over the difficulty by attributing to one and the same quality a power of showing itself in different ways. Jealousy in the disposition of A —it will affirm—declares itself in a sulky brooding silence, in the disposition of B in fits of unheralded rage. It may be objected that this is merely a convenient way of speaking; but, even so, a misunderstanding lurks behind it, or maybe (such is the power of language to react on the speaker) has been created by it. On the other hand a

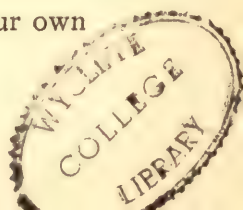
glimmer of true apprehension lies behind a slightly varied turn of speech—A's jealousy is a very different thing from B's. Here the emphasis is on the individual character as a whole, and there is a latent recognition of the fact that the impersonal attribute jealousy is inadequate to describe the personal characteristic. Of course A's jealousy is different from B's for the same reason that it is different from C's or D's; each is a different person from the other, and in times of strong emotion a large part of the unique and intricate character of each comes into play. The more individual a character is, the less can it be described by the attribution to it of impersonal qualities. A catalogue of attributes is not a portrait; this truth again is partially recognised by common sense, when it speaks of an "indescribable personality."

Common sense then hesitates. There is however no doubt that eventually it decides strongly in favour of a view according to which there is no real flow of time. It pictures A and B as self-identical individuals, passing through a series of self-contained states which can be detached from their setting and compared together. What accounts for this? If the theory

of duration is true, we must be able to show how it is that we are so liable to be misled. It may then be easier to see how the intuition of duration is possible for the intellect.

Influence of spatial environment.

It has, I think, been fully demonstrated by Bergson that there is a conspiracy of circumstances against us. Above all there is the fact of our spatial environment. We are set in the midst of a material world and our only means of expression are material. I have spoken of the way in which our vital activity is constantly broken up by the readjustment which it has to undergo in the interest of self-expression. Common sense is aware that our experience is divided by pauses and rests, and is at once predisposed to believe that it can be further subdivided—that the live intervals between the pauses can be split up indefinitely into further intervals. It is continually being invited to believe this; for space, as well as time, enters into our ordinary experience, and each readjustment is not only a point in our own time-process, but is also simultaneous with certain new positions at which events in space have arrived. Whenever we pause from our activity, we may become conscious not only of a stage reached in our own



progress, but also of a concomitant change in external facts. The earth has altered its position relatively to the sun, the hands of the clock have moved over certain intervals. We know that any one of the sixty minute-spaces on the circle of the clock-face can be subdivided *ad infinitum*: we know also that the travelling of the hands over the same spaces is indefinitely repeated. We are naturally inclined to articulate our life into a series of states, each of which is co-extensive with the interval, measured in minutes on the clock, between certain spatial simultaneities. If we follow our inclination, we eliminate real time, and all that is left is a spatialised time, a time which is ultimately "nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness."[1] This devitalised time is well illustrated by the ordinary diary or conventional biography:

> When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
> Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
> And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
> The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
> And none will know the gleam there used to be
> About the feast-days freshly kept by me,
> But men will call the golden hour of bliss
> "About this time," or "shortly after this."[2]

[1] *Time and Free Will*, p. 99. [2] John Masefield, *Biography*.

The view which ignores the reality of time and reduces life to a list of dates and facts is strengthened by its general usefulness. As we have seen, it is approximately true of our life at its lowest tension. Habit plays a large part in our lives, and, so far as we are slaves of habit, our actions (or reactions) do not enter deeply, organically, into our being—they can, without injustice, be isolated and dissected like inanimate things, and very often can be foretold to a nicety.

The insidious influence of space is only one aspect of our trouble. The other aspect is the practical bias—no less insidious—of our intelligence. If the highest reality is to be found in movement and change, why is it that our senses and our intellect present to us a world of clearly defined bodies set out in a uniform space,—separate objects which we can analyse and describe? Why is it that we naturally proceed to search for identical elements in the diverse phenomena with which we deal, and why, if there is, in life, no such thing as repetition of the past, do we cling to the "law" that the *same* cause produces the *same* effect? The only satisfactory explanation of our procedure appears to lie in its practical utility in a world of

and, correspondingly, of our bias towards action.

matter. The first necessity for the success of a living species is an adaptation to its *material* environment. We have seen that while duration, which preserves the past in the present, is the characteristic of spirit, matter is the dispersal of duration, and, at its ideal limit, is characterised by continual repetition and complete spatiality. It is therefore capable of being indefinitely analysed, with close approximation to truth, and —this is all-important—*its future, unlike the future of spirit, can be anticipated.* In a word, the world, so far as it is material, is a fit subject for analysis, and our senses and intellect have been evolved, primarily, as instruments of analysis, with the "unlimited power of decomposing according to any law and of recomposing into any system."[1] They display to us a world of things which we can isolate, measure, rearrange and combine. The world of the present moment is a system of bodies simultaneously related in space, our body being one among the rest. When we act with a purpose, our purpose is to change in some way the relations between the particular bodies in which we are interested; the intellect has been so developed as to enable us to analyse

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 165.

those relations, discovering in them elements which we have met or heard of before, and which we can regard as the necessary causes of effects which are also known to us and can therefore be predicted. *Our working rule is that the future can be foreseen*, i.e. *that it is implicitly contained in the present*, i.e. *that time, as it adds nothing new, makes no real difference.*

Thus the intellect has acquired, in the school of matter, a strong tendency to analysis; leaving school, it carries this tendency over into every department of life. Its social utility is marvellous. It has led to the development of language—that greatest of all instruments of progress, which has enabled man to deal with ideas as well as things, to distinguish clearly between subject and object, to turn introspectively in upon himself and to reflect on human character and human destiny. Analysis has, moreover, achieved triumph after triumph in the sciences, especially in the mathematical sciences. "We are born artisans as we are born geometricians, and indeed we are geometricians only because we are artisans."[1]

It is then not to be wondered at that intellect should have complete confidence in its habitual

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 47.

method of analysis, and should suffer little or no doubt as to its validity for speculation. Yet, if the essence of spiritual reality is indivisible movement and change, it is clear that all the success of the intellect in practical affairs, in language and in science, only handicaps it for the pursuit of metaphysical truth. From continual exercise in practical affairs it has become settled in the useful habit of analysis. From dazzling achievements in science it has gained enormously in self-confidence. Language, lastly, is always exercising its subtle influence. It enables us to express spiritual ideas, but in expressing them we crystallise them and impose on them the immobility of the word. The fixed, impersonal word makes it difficult for us to believe in the uniqueness of the emotion or sensation we feel. The influence of the word on the mind is so strong as to prevail at times against positive experience. Bergson notes that the name of a dish which is reputed to be exquisite may insinuate itself between our sensation and our consciousness so that we believe we are pleased by the flavour, although a slight effort of attention would prove the contrary.[1] An amusing illustration of this

[1] See *Time and Free Will*, p. 131.

occurred in *Punch* a few months ago. A gardener and an odd job man are pictured eating the lunch provided for them by their employer—they are already half-way through it—and the following remarks pass between them

"*Odd Job Man.* Nasty bit o' mutton this, ain't it?
Gardener. 'Taint mutton—it's pork.
Odd Job Man. Is it? I *'ope* it is. I'm very fond of a bit o' pork."

Let us see then how intellect applies its analytical method to the human soul. It reduces life to a succession of fixed elementary parts—separate states of mind. Yet it cannot, in the face of experience, deny all continuity to life. Behind the separate momentary states it is forced to assume some colourless unchanging substance, running through and linking them together. The nature of the substance is a mystery, since all the reality of each moment is put to the credit of the passing state of mind which occupies it: no assignable quality is left to the substance as such. Yet the intellect does not feel that there is anything unnatural about an explanation which reduces continuity to discrete states of mind, strung together, like "beads of a necklace."[1]

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 4.

For "the mechanistic instinct of the mind"—this inveterate tendency to regard soul, equally with matter, as something which can be cut up at will—"is stronger than reason, stronger than immediate experience."[1] Henry James, in his tale *The Figure in the Carpet*, makes Hugh Vereker, the famous novelist, say, in alluding to the baffling secret of his genius, "What I contend that nobody has ever mentioned in my work is the organ of life," and—a little later—"It's the very string that my pearls are strung on." Here is unconscious testimony to the firm hold upon us of the mechanistic "beads of a necklace" picture of life.

Philosophy has based itself on the analytical habit of the intellect,

Enough has now been said to show that if time, in the sense we understand, is the essence of life, there is a strong conspiracy of circumstances to lead us astray. We can understand how philosophy, through generation after generation, has been content to trust the ingrained habit of the intellect and to regard the real and eternal as motionless, unchanging. Heraclitus has had few spiritual descendants, Plato many; the normal attitude of the philosopher has been to distrust the senses

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 18.

but accept without demur the analytical habit of the intellect: he has failed to see that analysis does but refine upon the work of the senses in giving us what Bergson calls a cinematographic picture of the movement of life.

but the intellect must not be identified with its habits.

That part of Bergson's theory of knowledge which deals with the ingrained habit of the intellect cannot be admired too much. But when he teaches that the only way to defeat this habit is to have recourse to a non-intellectual faculty, I strongly disagree. I maintain that there is no need to identify the intellect with its habits, however powerful. Why should the intellect be the prisoner of its own categories? If experience, when we reflect upon it, presents itself to us as indivisible, then I suggest that the intuitive intellect is capable of apprehending duration, and that there is no need to have recourse to any other faculty. True, the idea of duration is abnormal to the intellect, because the intellect is biassed in favour of the discontinuous. But the senses are similarly biassed, and yet are able to present to us, for instance, the indefinite continuous movement of water; it matters not that their habitual function is to introduce to us

bodies whose definite outlines can be recognised, whether in motion or at rest. Again, the eye of an artist, simply because it is not dulled by useful habit, is able to see indivisible movement, instead of substituting for it (as we usually do) a movement which can be divided and measured. Consider this picture of a girl lifting her hand. "Each movement of hers was complete and lovely in itself; when she lifted a hand to her hair the free attitude was a marvel of composure; it might never have begun, and might never cease, it was solitary and perfect."[1]

How then does experience present itself to us? We have already glanced at the common sense attitude towards it, and have found there some inklings of the truth. But common sense is sophisticated and confused. We must try to look at experience with a mind free from sophistication. *We must cut analysis short, as soon as we have any reason to suspect that it is misrepresenting life. Some degree of analysis is necessary: without it, as we shall see in the next chapter, the mind can have no object at all. Moreover, analysis is required in order to free*

If we cut analysis short, our intellect can apprehend duration, and see that life is deeply organised from within.

[1] James Stephens, *The Demigods*.

the movement of life from the particularity of its context: for, if duration is the basis of all experience, the intellect must be able to recognise it—free from particularity—in all experience. But analysis must go no further. It will be wrong in attempting to weigh and measure and decompose the movement which it has liberated: for, stripped of its particularity, experience will be found to be nothing but the unique organic movement of time or duration.

Reflecting on our experience, we can (I suggest) find nothing to justify the theory that the organisation which it exhibits is an organisation imposed upon a discrete series of self-contained states. Let us glance again at the examples I have given some pages earlier. When I am suffering from fear or apprehension which grows more and more acute, I do not seem to pass through a series of stages at all. Any division I make in the process of my emotion is arbitrary. The feeling is one of organic growth or expansion: the more acute feeling is not a new feeling added to those which have preceded it, nor is it the sum of the preceding feelings. It is different in intensity, but the difference is one of quality and not of quantity. I shall not be shaken from this conclusion when it is argued that corresponding to,

and indeed causing, the increased intensity are certain material changes in my body—strained muscles and tortured nerves—which can be analysed and measured. I shall admit a correspondence, although not a complete correspondence, but I shall decline to interpret the qualitative series in terms of the quantitative. Again, when I am playing a game of tennis, although I may be told that I am concerned only with movements of my body, my racquet and the tennis-ball, and although I admit that my feelings as I play are very closely affected by those movements, I shall still maintain the validity of my impression that, to the extent that I was putting myself into the game, my experience was a continuous, interpenetrating process, not in any way measurable by my individual strokes. When I come to the case of deeper creative activity, in the examples of the general, the poet and the artist, I am on ground even more secure. The deliverance of my consciousness is here more plain. I shall refuse to substitute for the unique flux which it reveals to reflection the crude imagery of pearls threaded upon a string : I shall refuse to admit any equivalence between the qualitative complexity of the creative experience and the numerical

multiplicity of material phenomena: I shall not be deluded into thinking that in the intense experience which falls between any two limits of readjustment I can insert as many more dividing limits as I like: in a word, I shall not substitute an artificial explanation for the natural deliverance of my mind.

The triumphs and the limitations of science.

At the same time it is no use denying that the intellect has to make a great effort in order to transcend its mechanism. It cannot be expected to make that effort unless it is persuaded that the results reached by the method natural to it are unsatisfactory. As regards metaphysics, the desired attitude of discontent should be easy to arrive at: we need only study the antinomies to which the analytical method leads. There is poor consolation in the suggestion that these deadlocks are due, not to the pursuit of a faulty method, but to natural, insurmountable limitations of the human mind. Difficulty is more likely to be occasioned by the triumphs which analysis has won in science. These triumphs make it necessary to bring strong evidence to bear against the claim of the analytical method to be the final

interpreter of the universe. But the brilliant exposure of the limitations of science to be found in Bergson's writings should do much to discredit its claim. As he points out, the results of science are the nearer to perfection, the more they are concerned with space and matter. It is significant that mathematics should have matured so much earlier than the sciences of life. As geometricians we deal with the solid, and deal with it successfully; our intellectual machinery is developed for the purpose, and enables us to win further and further insight into the stable aspect of reality. In all life we may discern the contrasting aspects of change and stability, the fluid and the solid. The solid can be decomposed *ad infinitum*; the fluid can be set free, but it cannot be resolved into elements. As students of biology and psychology, we deal with a complex of facts, partly material and partly spiritual. So far as the facts are material, the methods of mathematical science may still succeed, and explanations in terms of space and quantity still claim to be valid. They are, however, doomed to failure when they attempt to fathom the meaning of the spiritual. Bergson argues convincingly in *Time and Free Will* that science is self-deceived when it imagines

itself to be analysing successfully the nature of life. In the case of emotions or sensations obviously connected with physical stimuli in a manner which can be observed, he shows that what are successfully analysed and measured are not the emotions or sensations themselves (the differences of which are qualitative) but the material stimuli. In the case of the more profound emotions, which are out of all proportion to any physical cause, he shows that the complexity of experience is of a nature entirely different from numerical multiplicity. Psychology can do work of the greatest value in studying the correspondence between the qualitative psychical fact and the quantitative physical fact. But "if it offers us the concrete and living self as an association of terms which are distinct from one another and are set side by side in a homogeneous medium, it will see difficulty after difficulty rising in its path. And these difficulties will multiply the greater the efforts it makes to overcome them, for all its efforts will only bring into clearer light the absurdity of the fundamental hypothesis by which it spreads out time in space and puts succession at the very centre of simultaneity. . . . The contradictions implied in the problems of

causality, freedom, personality, spring from no other source, and, if we wish to get rid of them we have only to go back to the real and concrete self and give up its symbolical substitute."[1]

It is to be observed that the arguments by which Bergson confutes the claim of analysis are themselves essentially intellectual and, while full of new intuitions, afford a notable example of the analytical process. The results of science are not to be ignored or, in their own sphere, belittled. But science for its own purposes—and quite legitimately—eliminates the element of time; the philosopher who believes in the reality of time must examine the results of science from a new point of view and show to what extent, in each sphere of enquiry, they fall short of finality. He must indeed himself analyse—knowledge cannot be developed in any other way—but his analysis must be controlled by the intuition of duration as a first guiding principle. Keeping this principle in mind, he will remain free from the bias which inclines us to set the highest value on what our intellect has most fully articulated: he will always be able to revise the too rigid outline which the analytical process is apt

[1] *Time and Free Will*, p. 139.

to impose; he will be able to discriminate between the approximation to truth which can be adequately expressed in the broken medium of speech, and the living truth which language—just because it is discontinuous—can never hope fully to convey. The intellect can transcend its own concepts, but it cannot do without them; they are, in a sense, the stepping-stones of its dead self on which, and on which only, it can rise.

I have said that we can grasp duration without doing any violence to the intellect. By this I do not mean that the task is easy: it is, on the contrary, very difficult. What I do mean is that there is no need to go outside intellect—in the way Bergson teaches—in order to arrive at the truth. No unique or special faculty is required: all that we have to exercise is the ordinary intuitive function of the intellect. But before we can do this, we must clear our minds of their sophistication. This must always be a laborious task, but the pioneer work of Bergson has made it inexpressibly lighter for us. He prepares our minds for the vision of truth by his brilliant exposition of the fallacies which underlie the habitual procedure of the intellect. We start with invaluable aids denied to the pioneer;

for him the battle with the analytical tendency must have been far more formidable, requiring the most magnificent powers. It is something like the case of an artist of outstanding genius and students of his art. The artist seizes on a truth beyond our powers of perception; he expresses it in the immobile medium of paint. We study his picture critically, and after the apprenticeship involved in so doing, we obtain a vision akin to his. Without having his creative genius, we share his insight. It required genius to discover and express the truth—genius and travail of soul; it requires immeasurably less creative power and less labour to enter into the discovery.

Intuition compared with introspection.

Before I start on a new phase of this essay, it may, I think, be useful to suggest a comparison between the intuition of duration and "introspection" in the narrow sense—I mean the mental process which has for its object the discovery, by intellectual analysis and intuition, of our individual moral motives or qualities. Mr. Bertrand Russell, in the course of a peculiarly shallow[1] criticism of Bergson's

[1] *Vide* Appendix, in which I attempt to justify the use of this epithet.

theory of knowledge, contained in his essay *Mysticism and Logic*, makes a comparison of this kind and uses it to discredit intuition. He writes that "most men, for example, have in their nature meannesses, vanities and envies of which they are quite unconscious, though even their best friends can perceive them without any difficulty." He suggests that the revelation of the self by intuition must be equally untrustworthy. Now introspection is clearly an intellectual exercise, and it is therefore to be noted that Russell's argument is entirely irrelevant as against intuition in the Bergsonian sense, which is definitely non-intellectual. It is relevant, however—although it has singularly little force—as against the view I have put forward that duration is grasped by the *normal intuitive function of the intellect.*

What is the peculiar difficulty of introspection? It demands an impartial judgment and a certain disinterested attitude. But our outlook, our moral attitude, is part and parcel of our character which we have to judge; it is impossible to be mean, vain or envious in our character and to be free from the tendency to those qualities in our judgments and moral perceptions. It is exceed-

ingly difficult for the mean man to view himself without bias : meanness of soul distorts the vision, for every man is prone to regard his own characteristics as normal. The magnanimous man, who on some occasion performs a mean action, inconsistent with his established character, easily detects his fault. Not so the mean man ; his mean action is taken for granted like the air which he breathes—he finds it difficult to see its quality at all. It is quite true that his friends can usually see it much better. The mean man is in this respect typical of all men : each of us has his own habitual faults, and these are much more difficult to perceive than our lapses into faults which have not been consolidated in our character. Our souls need to be purified by the perception of an ideal, if they are to know themselves. We need the light of a high and disinterested ideal, the vision of the holiness of God. This vision may enable us to see afresh—it may profoundly influence our character and, in so doing, will alter of necessity our moral attitude. We shall be able not merely to see ourselves as our friends or enemies see us, but to see ourselves better than is possible for anyone else. The other person—the outsider—can merely observe us, take us to

pieces and analyse us, classify the pieces and attach certain moral labels to them which do duty for the faults of numberless people besides ourselves. We, on the other hand, can realise the unique quality of our motives—unique, peculiar to ourselves alone—which makes all labelling, all moral categories and concepts, wholly inadequate. This introspection is a high form of intuition and may justly be compared with the intuition of duration. In each case the prime difficulty is to get rid of an acquired defect of vision, to win, like the artist, an innocence of eye. But mere half-hearted self-analysis is no parallel at all; it is a semi-mechanical work of the intellect, not the intellect's true intuitive activity, by which alone we can apprehend the living energising truth.

We have already discussed the peculiar difficulty of the intuition of duration. The knowledge of our moral self is difficult because the unique quality of our character colours our individual moral vision. The intuition of duration, on the other hand, is an intuition of the groundwork of all vital experience as such. This is a distinction to be kept in mind. The mean man and the magnanimous man, the man who

knows something of his own faults and the man who is even despicably ignorant of them, are all equally enduring beings, because duration is the essence of life. The mean man is not likely to be aware of his meanness, but his meanness does not disqualify him for the intuition of real time. The object of knowledge here is common to all men, inasmuch as it underlies the life of all: the hindrance to knowledge is also common to all, being a tendency to distorting vision, a disability we have contracted through our double nature as creatures both of spirit and of body, of time and of space,—the tendency, in short, of our common intellect to unbridled analysis.

CHAPTER III

RELATION TO EXPERIENCE

I HAVE suggested that we can obtain an intuition of our own duration simply by means of reflection on our remembered experience, and that the intuition so obtained is intellectual. At the same time I have not wished to make light of the difficulties. It is only by an intellectual struggle that we can shake off the habits of thought which obstruct our speculative vision; it is only by unrelaxed vigilance that we can prevent them from returning and winning entrance in some plausible disguise. If therefore any method exists of strengthening our intuition, it should be hailed as a welcome ally. I propose to consider whether we can get into closer touch with experience than is possible by reflection in its common meaning — *i.e.* reflection on memories which are separated by some distance of time from the present

In the last chapter I have used "intuition" in a wide sense as signifying direct apprehension by the intellect of an object. This I believe to be its true use. It is time, however, to give further attention to the specialised meaning in which Bergson employs it. The intuition of our duration is, in his view, to be obtained not by reflection, but by *a coincidence of the self as knowing with the self as living*. The mind is no longer set over against life, as in the reflective activity of the intellect, but is actually moving within life's stream. Intuition is the knowledge we have of life in living. It is the self-consciousness of the universal vital *élan* appropriated to the individual. It is an "inner absolute knowledge of the duration of the self by the self,"[1] the "direct contact of the self with the self."[2] "It places itself in mobility, or, what comes to the same thing, in duration."[3] It is the "simple and privileged case" of *knowledge by sympathy*, which corresponds with the instinct of insects

Intuition in Bergsonian sense: coincidence with the living self.

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 20.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 78.

[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 40.

and animals, and which is derived from the original unity of all life; it is "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely." [1]

Intuition is radically distinct from any other activity of the mind: it is the only faculty by which it is possible to attain to absolute knowledge. On the other hand it gives us only fugitive and evanescent visions of its object, it is "vague and above all discontinuous. It is a lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most." [2] How is the passing vision to be won? Running all through Bergson's account of it, we find emphasis laid on the idea that it is only to be won by great effort, "the ever-renewed effort to transcend our actual ideas and perhaps also our elementary logic." [3] "The method of intuition demands for the solution of each new problem an entirely new effort." [4] "If a man is incapable of getting for himself the intuition of the constitutive duration of

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 186.

[2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 282.

[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 70.

[4] *Matter and Memory*, p. 241.

his own being, nothing will ever give it to him."[1] If we listen to an account of duration, in which its nature is suggested by means of varying concrete images instead of by fixed concepts, " we shall gradually accustom consciousness to a particular and clearly defined disposition—that precisely which it must adopt in order to appear to itself as it really is, without any veil. But then consciousness must at least consent to make the effort. For it will have been shown nothing : it will simply have been placed in the attitude it must take up in order to make the desired effort, and so come by itself to the intuition."[2]

Let us consider whether it is possible to achieve contact with the living self, and, if not, how close it is possible to get. We are told that, if our minds are to enter into the stream of duration, we must " 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." We must " place ourselves at the *turn* of experience," and " profit by the faint light which, illuminating the passage from the *immediate* to the *useful*, marks the dawn

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 13.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 14.

of human experience."[1] Piercing thus, by a violent effort, to the deeper levels of life, we are bidden to hope for a fleeting intuition of reality, a fugitive but authentic contact of knowledge with life. It can last only a few moments at best, for the innate tendency of the mind to reflection will inevitably assert itself, and we shall pass rapidly from the immediate simplicity of absolute vision to the successively lower levels of imagination and conceptual thought.

Now personally I believe that, by getting into close touch with experience, we *can* get an intuition of the self as enduring in time, and so strengthen the intuition which we have obtained by mere reflection on our memories. But when I examine this intuition, I am led irresistibly to the conclusion that the reflective element is not only present in it, but is in truth the only active element present. When I am completely absorbed in some activity, I have not *at the same moment* any consciousness of the nature of that activity. It is only at the moment when I am beginning to pass from that activity to the different activity of reflection upon it that I obtain a flash

Coincidence is not possible; but intuition can be obtained in close proximity to experience.

[1] *Matter and Memory*, p. 241.

of insight. Then, in a fugitive moment, before I have any awareness of the self as enduring in time, it is possible for me to be aware simply of duration, mobility, interpenetration. The distinction between subject and object, and with it the intuition of the self, comes a stage later.

This intuition is, however, intellectual from the first.

Thus it appears to me that the first flash of insight is simultaneous with the birth of reflection: we only become conscious of duration when the intellect has already begun to be active. It is perhaps reasonable to infer that, immediately on the entering in of reflective intelligence, a latent consciousness of life, up to that moment entirely neutralised by the activity of living, is suddenly released. But, if so, as soon as intelligence begins to filter in and liberate consciousness from its absorption, consciousness undergoes a change. It is no longer in contact with its object; its object is already in the past, and only so can the object begin to be realised or known. Intelligence is the sole active element of knowledge, but memory is fresh and vivid, and intelligence, however quick its operation, cannot accomplish its habitual task all at once. First, it gives an awareness of

duration, not of the self which endures; the work of abstraction has at this stage hardly begun, for the duration is still partially invested with the particular quality of the particular experience. Next comes awareness of the enduring *self*, and then a much more definite awareness of *interesting points* in the process of its duration. On these interesting points, just because of their utility, attention is more and more concentrated. Thus intelligence comes to articulate the experience: the unity of our insight is broken up into images of increasing clearness, and finally we distinguish separate attributes and qualities, about which we can converse freely. Experience, in all its individuality, cannot be communicated by speech: intelligence has first of all to crystallise certain elements in it. We may imagine the different stages thus: the neutralised consciousness may be pictured as a mirror held up in complete darkness to the changing activity of life: it can reveal nothing until the dawn of intelligence which illumines life first of all with a lustre faint but evenly diffused, then—gradually becoming focussed to definite points and throwing up definite outlines—with separate rays of increasing brilliance and intensity.

I have been speaking of the intuition of our duration in the deeper levels of our experience. Bergson takes the view that "by an increasingly violent effort" we can dilute our experience so as to obtain an intuition of our duration in an extremely attenuated form: in that form it approximates to a series of discrete states, each self-complete and external to the others: it approaches to the ideal limit of pure repetition or materiality. I am quite unable to take any such view. To me it seems that, if we exercise our imagination to recall holiday experiences such as that described by Stevenson in the passage I have quoted earlier, ordinary quiet reflection is completely adequate to enable us to realise the nature of the experience. We can indeed only realise our duration by means of reflection: every day we pass so easily and so quickly from unreflective experience to reflection upon it that we are in danger of regarding the two as simultaneous aspects of a single state or process of mind. In the most loosely organised hours of life there may be moments when we faintly realise our condition, and, if we are philosophically minded, dally perhaps with thoughts of *ego* and

As regards life at its lower tension ordinary reflection is sufficient.

non-ego. But we only do so by means of reflection, and we can only improve upon our knowledge by less lazy reflection and analysis afterwards. The self, in its disintegrated quasi-material state, is a proper subject for the intellect to deal with in its ordinary analytical fashion.

In this connection it appears to me significant that Bergson has difficulty in distinguishing the intellectual, *i.e.* analytical, apprehension of matter from the intuitive apprehension. "If there are," he writes, "two intuitions of different order (the second being obtained by a reversal of the direction of the first) and if it is toward the second that the intellect naturally inclines, there is no essential difference between the intellect and this intuition itself."[1] This statement should be read with certain others, viz. that "positive science is in fact a work of pure intellect,"[2] that "in principle positive science bears on reality itself, provided it does not overstep the limits of its own domain, which is inert matter,"[3] and that "there is an order approximately mathematical immanent in matter, an objective order, which our science

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 381.

[2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 206.

[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 218.

approaches in proportion to its progress."[1] These passages indicate the ambiguity in which Bergson finds himself involved, when he attempts to bring a non-intellectual faculty to bear on the nature of matter.

We may accept Bergson's statement that "space is not so foreign to our nature as we imagine,"[2] in the sense that, in times of our greatest relaxation, our mind approaches that divisibility into mutually external parts which is a basic characteristic of matter. Something "approximately mathematical" is indeed revealed in us, and this aspect of our being can be adequately dealt with by the analytical intellect. In order to know it, our right course is to push analysis thoroughly, even to its extreme limit: the intuition of duration in our deeper experience will safeguard us from concluding that our superficial experience ever becomes entirely disintegrated, that its moments ever cease entirely to interpenetrate.

I conclude then that, for the intuition of our duration, we must rely on two things and two things only: first, simple reflection on our

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 230.

[2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 214.

remembered experience ; secondly, close attention to the elusive moments when we pass from absorption in vital experience to reflection upon it. In both cases intuition is intellectual, although in the second case, where the mind is at the closest possible quarters with life, intellectual reflection is only nascent. The activity of intuition, so far from being the violent activity of a non-intellectual faculty, is wholly intellectual. We must regard intelligence not as an inert faculty " characterised by a natural incapacity to comprehend life,"[1] but as the vital energy by the highest exercise of which we penetrate to the truth.

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 174.

CHAPTER IV

INSTINCT AND INTELLIGENCE

UP to the present I have dealt only with the intuition of the self by the self. I must now pass on to the question how this intuition affects our knowledge of reality in general.

If the intuition is of the intellectual nature I have suggested, and is obtained by reflection on our individual human experience, then it can only be extended to experiences beyond our own either (1) by imaginative inference or (2) by a unification of our own experience with other experience, such as the mystic claims to achieve.

Intuition and knowledge beyond the self.

If, on the other hand, the intuition of the self transcends intellect, as Bergson teaches, there is a third possibility. It might be held that we can, while retaining the separate (or partially separate) nature of our own experience, penetrate intuitively

into inner reality other than our own, and so gain an insight, denied to intellect, into the meaning of the universe. Bergson, as I will endeavour to show, hesitates between the first possibility—extension of the results of intuition by *inference*—and the third. There is, in this respect, an ambiguity running all through his philosophy; it is greatly to be hoped that in future work he will clear it up.

Bergson's contrast between instinct and intelligence.

The view, elaborated in *Creative Evolution*, that intuition is a development of instinct as seen in Nature—instinct being a faculty which correlates the activity not merely of different individuals but of different species—tends to suggest that we can, by intuition, penetrate direct into other experience. Before, therefore, I discuss the way in which the apprehension of duration in the self may help us to understand reality *beyond* the self, I must examine the contrast which Bergson draws between instinct and intelligence. He presents them to us as complementary but opposed faculties of knowledge which have been differentiated in the course of evolution. We are invited to believe that through the study of instinct, our own intuitive faculty will become clear to us. Hitherto

I have not considered the argument in favour of his theory of intuition which Bergson claims to find in the evolution of life.

Features of instinct.

Anyone who glances at the life history of insects must be amazed at the unhesitating precision with which, in certain circumstances, they act. This precision might be taken to imply a high degree of intelligence. Bergson gives some notable examples, such as that of the paralysing wasp which operates on its victim as if it were "a learned entomologist and a skilful surgeon in one,"[1] and of the *Sitaris* beetle which, with all the appearance of cunning prevision, insinuates itself into the domestic life of a certain kind of bee and, in the larval stage, feeds first on the egg of the bee and then on its honey. But although these "instinctive" actions can be very amazing, it is matter of common observation that the insects which perform them are often utterly helpless in unfamiliar circumstances. The paralysing wasp, except in the one operation by which it provides for its offspring, cannot pose either as entomologist or as surgeon. Thus it is easily seen that instinctive action, while it is commonly more precise than action guided

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 153.

by intelligence, is also far more limited in its scope, far less adaptable.

According to the theory of Bergson, instinct and intelligence are two faculties which have become dissociated in the course of evolution: each may be regarded as a faculty of action and also as a faculty of knowledge. Both were implicit in the original unity of life, and it was only when life launched itself into matter that they had to part company. The nature of matter is opposed to that of life; it does not endure, but dies and is born again each instant; it does not grow, it is not creative, it merely repeats its past; it is not free but rigidly determined. The evolution of living species on the earth represents the effort of life to subdue the nature of matter and introduce the principle of freedom, or at least of indetermination, into the very stronghold of necessity. Evolution has proceeded by dissociation; an infinite variety of organisms has been produced, and the original tendencies of the vital *élan* have been distributed among them.

Life has won its most remarkable successes in two directions—in the evolution of the insects, and in the evolution of the vertebrates, culminating in man. Each line displays a radically different

solution of the same problem. The bodily organs of the insects are designed to a nicety for a narrow range of special functions; the activity of the vertebrates is far less dependent on the form of their natural organs, and man (whose body is poorly equipped with instruments of offence or defence) is endowed with the faculty of making tools, which opens up to him an indefinite range of possibilities. "Instinct perfected is a faculty of using and even constructing organised instruments; intelligence perfected is the faculty of making and using unorganised instruments."[1] "As regards human intelligence, it has not been sufficiently noted that mechanical invention has been from the first its essential feature."[2]

There is, in instinct, no sign of that deliberation or choice which marks intelligence and denotes the presence of consciousness. In intelligent behaviour consciousness is most intense where there is most room for choice to be exercised. It may be inferred that instinct, which acts unhesitatingly and for which there is one (and only one) right way of acting, tends to be unconscious. Instinctive behaviour however, even if it is unconscious, implies the presence of

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 147. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 145.

knowledge; knowledge indeed is an essential aspect of it, but the representation of the action to be performed is so adequately and exactly filled by the action itself as to be completely neutralised. "Representation is stopped up by action."[1] The knowledge of the insect "is reflected outwardly in exact movements instead of being reflected inwardly in consciousness."[2]

Now the instinctive actions of the insect are properly only a continuation of the activity which designed its organism: they are one with the vital *élan*, which is behind all the forms of life. The vital *élan*, although a tremendous force, is not unlimited, and "each species, each individual even, retains only a certain impetus from the universal vital impulsion and tends to use this energy in its own interest."[3] Correspondingly, instinct viewed as knowledge derives its quality from the nature of the vital *élan* as a "whole sympathetic to itself." The knowledge is extremely narrow in range; it has shrunk to a particular object. That object, however, it knows from within by sympathy; it knows it directly in its unique and concrete fulness, not indirectly

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 151. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 154.
[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 53.

and from the outside by a process of analysis or abstraction. "*Whatever, in instinct and intelligence, is innate knowledge, bears in the first case on* things, *and in the second on* relations." [1]

We never find either instinct or intelligence entirely pure and free from admixture of the other. Instinct has not been entirely obliterated in man, but it has been eclipsed by the development of intelligence and appears but little as a faculty of precise action. At the same time it has been profoundly affected by intelligence; it has been saved from bondage to a material object, its implicit and potential knowledge has begun to be unfolded in consciousness, and it has been rendered capable, at its best, of a direct insight into life itself. Instinct is thus raised to a high level of intuition. The intuition must, it is true, remain vague and nebulous as compared with the clear hard light of intelligence: nevertheless it is an approach to the realisation in consciousness of that absolute knowledge, potential but impotent, which is externalised in the almost unerring activities of the insect.

"By intuition," writes Bergson, "I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 156.

conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object, and of enlarging it indefinitely." [1] Instinct in turn may perhaps be defined as a tendency, due to the fundamental unity of life, towards sympathetic or correlated action; at this level it is not "disinterested" but severely practical, its one goal being the action necessary for self-preservation and the preservation of the species; it is not "self-conscious,"—any knowledge it possesses is only implicit, being neutralised by the action with which it is preoccupied; it is not "capable of reflecting upon its object"—it acts upon the object without question or hesitation, as by an inner necessity; it is not capable of "enlarging" its object, being obsessed with the particularity of the object. It is admirably precise, but it is confined to action, confined to a particular action, a blind unconscious force.

Features of intelligence.

Intelligence, we have seen, is very different. It is versatile and adaptable, it is accompanied by consciousness, and is concerned not so much with particular things as with the relations between things in general. "If nature gives up endowing the living being with the instrument that may serve him, it is in order that

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 186.

the living being may be able to vary his construction according to circumstances. The essential function of intelligence is therefore to see the way out of a difficulty in any circumstances whatever, to find what is most suitable, what answers best the question asked."[1]

But although intelligence has these advantages over instinct, it is incapable of understanding life. It has been modelled on matter in order to win control over it, or rather "intellect and matter have progressively adapted themselves one to the other in order to attain at last a common form."[2] "The same movement by which the mind is brought to form itself into intellect, that is to say into distinct concepts, brings matter to break itself up into objects excluding one another. *The more consciousness is intellectualised, the more is matter spatialised.*"[3] The nature of life is opposed to the nature of matter, for in life there is no externality of parts corresponding to the division of matter into mutually exclusive objects. Hence the intellect is thoroughly at home only when it has to do with the material, the solid, the immobile; here the spatial relations which it

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 158. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 217.
[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 199.

establishes are valid, having their counterpart in reality, but they cease to be valid when applied to the fluidity and movement of life. In matter there is repetition, in life there is creation and no sameness: the intellect is "the faculty of connecting the same with the same, of perceiving and also producing repetitions."[1] It is "a formal knowledge" which is "not limited to what is practically useful,"[2] *i.e.* it can extend its enquiry into any domain, and can speculate on the nature of life. It can, however, only view life from the outside. It is incapable of thinking real time. It is bound to interpret motion in terms of immobility, time in terms of space, quality in terms of quantity. It cuts life up artificially and applies its law of identity. It cannot apprehend "true continuity, real mobility, reciprocal penetration,—in a word, that creative evolution which is life."[3]

In fact, if there were any such thing as pure materiality, devoid of all duration, intellect would reveal its nature to us with absolute truth. So long as it deals with life which is nearly engulfed in matter, it can give us an account of its object

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 55. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 159.
[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 170.

not only useful but approximately true. But the further it trespasses into the domain of life, the more inadequate and misleading it becomes. Life always eludes it. It can only give us stiff, motionless pictures of life, as cold, static and colourless as the stone figures that adorn the base of the Albert Memorial.

The contrast which Bergson draws between intuition and intelligence as faculties of speculative knowledge is, of course, greatly in favour of the former ; intuition alone is capable of appreciating what is new, vital and individual. It is true that the intellect spoken of is pure intellect, *i.e.* intellect pushed to its ideal limit : but intellect as we actually find it is, according to Bergson's view, only redeemed by the element of intuition never quite separable from it. Intellect proper is a devitalised faculty, which finds its apotheosis on the level of association. I cannot refrain from drawing on Oliver Wendell Holmes for an anecdote, and suggesting it as an illustration.

" A certain lecturer, after performing in an inland city, where dwells a *littératrice* of note, was invited to meet her and others over the social tea-cup. She pleasantly referred to his many wanderings in his new occupation. ' Yes,' he

replied, 'I am like the Huma, the bird that never lights, being always in the cars, as he is always on the wing.'—Years elapsed. The lecturer visited the same place once more for the same purpose. Another social cup after the lecture, and a second meeting with the distinguished lady. 'You are constantly going from place to place,' she said.—'Yes,' he answered, 'I am like the Huma,' and finished the sentence as before.

"What horrors when it flashed over him that he had made this fine speech, word for word, twice over! Yet it was not true, as the lady might perhaps have fairly inferred, that he had embellished his conversation with the Huma daily during the whole interval of years. On the contrary, he had never once thought of the odious fowl until the recurrence of precisely the same circumstances brought up precisely the same idea. He ought to have been proud of the accuracy of his mental adjustments. Given certain factors, and a sound brain should always evolve the same fixed product with the certainty of Babbage's calculating machine."[1]

There we have the triumph—or the degradation—of intellect, "the faculty of connecting the same

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.*

with the same, of perceiving and also producing repetitions." On the other hand intuition, "if it could be prolonged beyond a few instants would not only make the philosopher agree with his own thought, but also all philosophers with each other. Such as it is, fugitive and incomplete, it is, in each system, what is worth more than the system, and survives it. The object of philosophy would be reached if this intuition could be sustained, generalised and, above all, assured of external points of reference in order not to go astray." [1]

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Criticism of Bergson's contrast. Points of affinity.

It is then claimed by Bergson that the study of instinct and intelligence in nature confirms his theory of knowledge. As I have set myself to question this theory, I propose to call attention to certain difficulties and to suggest that *no case is made out for the existence of any way of knowing other than intelligence*. Instinct and intelligence are said to have been developed from the vital *élan* as from a common source, in spite of the fact that intelligence is out of touch with life and, indeed, represents

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 252.

a movement in precisely the opposite direction—the movement towards materiality and space. This, however, is what Bergson says. There is, "around our conceptual and logical thought a vague nebulosity made of the very substance out of which has been formed the luminous nucleus that we call the intellect."[1] "This nucleus does not differ radically from the fluid surrounding it. It can only be reabsorbed in it because it is made of the same substance."[2] Further, when we compare the account of instinct with the account of intelligence lower than human intelligence, we find that the two betray remarkable points of likeness. Bergson is not always consistent with his own dictum that whatever is innate knowledge in instinct bears on *things*, while whatever is innate knowledge in intelligence bears on *relations*. As regards the latter half of the proposition he is clear enough. Intelligence is, we are told, "only a natural power of relating an object to an object, or a part to a part, or an aspect to an aspect."[3] "More precisely, intelligence is, before anything else, the faculty of relating one point of space to

[1] *Creative Evolution*, Introduction, p. 13.

[2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 203. [3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 157.

another, one material object to another." [1] As regards instinct on the other hand, we read of it (in a passage close to that last quoted) as also expressing a relation. Referring to the instinct of the Ammophila in operating on its victim, he writes : " This feeling of vulnerability might owe nothing to outward perception, but result from the mere presence together of the Ammophila and the caterpillar, considered no longer as two organisms, but as two activities. It would express, in a concrete form, the relation of the one to the other." [2] It appears indeed that if instinct is sympathy, as it is affirmed to be, then any instinctive activity must express a sympathetic relation. And if instinct is potentially self-conscious, then the object which would rise to consciousness, if it could be cleared of impediments, would be a relation, a relation of this sympathetic kind. It is true that instinct is said to express relation *in a concrete form*. But what does this mean except that the instinctive act expresses, without analysis or abstraction, certain internal relations of life ? Such an expression, allowing it to be exact, cannot be more

Instinct, like intelligence, expresses a relation, and any knowledge it implies is therefore intellectual.

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 185. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 183.

concrete than the relation which it expresses, and a relation—from the very fact that it is a relation, a connection with one thing or aspect rather than another—cannot be entirely concrete, *i.e.* it cannot represent life in its fulness, without abstraction, or without emphasis at some special point. If we can conceive of life in its original unity, as an undifferentiated whole, then we can think of *life as a whole sympathetic to itself as a whole*, and we can think of self-knowledge—whether potential or consciously realised—as transcending intelligence. But, if we conceive of life as entering in some way into matter and exhibiting *a tendency towards individuation*, we see that life, when it does so, must at once lose something of its concrete unity: self-knowledge already implies a knowledge of certain internal relations of the self, a knowledge of something abstracted from the fulness of life. If intelligence as opposed to instinct is a knowledge of relations, this self-knowledge is already intellectual knowledge.

I suggest therefore that if we attribute to the vital *élan* already launched into matter any sort of knowledge, it must be a knowledge which is already intellectual. This seems to be borne

out by another feature of insect life. Instinct is dependent for its efficacy on the relations which it represents repeating themselves: insects act with the appearance of foresight, as if they counted on repetition. But repetition is characteristic of life on a low level, tending towards materiality, and, on Bergson's own showing, the faculty which is especially fitted to deal with relations which can be repeated is not instinct but intelligence. Instinct, as anyone may observe, has no power to act with appreciation of what is *new* in a situation: and it is difficult to see how intuition, if it is developed out of instinct, can be credited—as Bergson credits it—with such a power.

It is to be observed that even assuming the relation represented by instinct to be "concrete" in the full sense, we still require proof that it can come before consciousness without the intervention of abstraction or analysis. The tendency of instinct is towards unconsciousness; even if the unconsciousness of the insect is not complete, how is the faint consciousness to be assigned to instinct rather than intelligence? For it is admitted that instinct is never entirely pure, is "always more or less intelligent." [1]

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 143.

Another point of resemblance between instinct, as described by Bergson, and infra-human intelligence, is that the latter, like the former, is largely externalised in action. Thus, although much more versatile than instinct, it is still very limited in its range. "Absorbed at every instant by the actions it performs and the attitudes it must adopt, drawn outward by them and so externalised in relation to itself, it no doubt plays rather than thinks its ideas."[1] Until revolutionised by language, intelligence is "always turned outwards": it is only through language that "the spectacle of its own workings"[2] is revealed to it. This means to say that consciousness emerges very little. On its lower levels intelligence is more clearly a faculty of action than of knowledge: as a faculty of action it differs from instinct mainly in that its activity is less determinate. On the line of evolution leading to the vertebrates life seems to have aimed at widening the range of possible activity, so that, in any particular situation, there should be a greater degree of

Intelligence, like instinct, is largely externalised in action—

but its action is less determinate.

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 197.

[2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 168.

indetermination in the organism's answer to the call for action. This indetermination could only be an advantage in the struggle for life if consciousness were developed and choice made possible. Hence arose the practical necessity for a conscious faculty of knowing and it may be assumed that intelligence and consciousness have been evolved *pari passu*.

Consciousness and choice.

There is no warrant to infer that there has been any absolute break in the continuity of the process from instinct to intelligence, that intelligence is anything except instinct developed and conscious. Various degrees of intelligence can be observed, and these may reasonably be interpreted as *a progressive widening of instinctive action by means of consciousness*—the growth of consciousness being accompanied by an increasing complexity in the sensori-motor system, so as to allow the reactions of the organism to be delayed and varied. This interpretation explains the gradual supersession of instinct by intelligence; for instinctive action becomes intelligent action as soon as it is accompanied by consciousness and the rudiment of choice. No occasion can arise for the exercise of choice, unless there is first an

uncertainty of reaction; choice presupposes uncertainty. Instinctive action, on the other hand, is, as we have seen, unhesitating. The call for its exercise is imperious and is immediately obeyed: there is no room for consciousness to be interposed between the stimulus and the response. Clearly it was necessary that the force of instinct should be weakened if choice was to become effective.

Similarly it seems reasonable to infer that some of the human senses have become either atrophied or less keen, in order that their urgency might not impede the evolution of the power of choice. Bergson suggests, in *Time and Free Will*, that the power of animals to find their way home over unknown ground may perhaps be due to a sense of qualitative direction (comparable with the sense of sight) which, higher in the progress of evolution, has given way to the advanced intellectual idea of a homogeneous space. "The higher we rise in the scale of intelligent beings, the more clearly do we meet with the independent idea of a homogeneous space. It is therefore doubtful whether animals perceive the external world quite as we do, and especially whether they represent externality in the same way as ourselves. . . . Animals have been seen to return

almost in a straight line to their old home, pursuing a path which was previously unknown to them over a distance which may amount to several hundreds of miles. Attempts have been made to explain this feeling of direction by sight or smell, and more recently, by the perception of magnetic currents which would enable the animal to take its bearings like a living compass. This amounts to saying that space is not so homogeneous for the animal as for us, and that determinations of space, or directions, do not assume for it a purely geometrical form. Each of those directions might appear to it with its own shade, its peculiar quality. . . . In truth, qualitative differences exist everywhere in nature, and I do not see why two concrete directions should not be as marked in immediate perception as two colours. . . . Instead of saying that animals have a special sense of direction, we may as well say that men have a special faculty of perceiving or conceiving a space without quality."[1] In *Creative Evolution* it is observed that the savage " understands better than the civilised man how to judge distances, to determine a direction, to retrace by memory the often complicated plan of the road he has travelled,

[1] *Time and Free Will*, p. 96.

and so to return in a straight line to his starting-point."[1] To whatever faculty we ascribe these obscure powers—whether to instinct, or to some special sense, or to an automatic "parrot" memory which registers past experience evenly and without discrimination—we see that they differ from the deliberate methods of civilised man. Their perfection is to achieve the object in view without deliberation. It was necessary that they should decrease in vitality and loosen their hold upon man, if he was to become a pioneer, choosing his own road freely and planning his own method of travel. *It was necessary, in a word, that tendencies to immediate reaction should be subdued in any sphere where intelligence was to dominate. In this connection it is immaterial whether or no we call the tendencies "instinctive."*

Instinct in man: not a faculty of knowledge.

It is Bergson's view that traces of instinct remain in man, although dwarfed by the hypertrophy of intelligence. Now we should expect this to be so, but the question is whether any instinct which has survived is a faculty of knowledge or only a faculty of action. As a faculty of action, it would be strange if instinct had suffered total eclipse.

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 223.

Complete freedom of choice in all matters, including those which might safely be left to automatism, would be complete embarrassment, and human freedom could not thrive on a basis of absolute indetermination. We should naturally look to find conscious action built up on unconscious action. Much of our activity is, it will be admitted, unconscious : but it may be objected that it is unconscious merely because it is habitual. This is true within limits, but *from the point of view of the individual* some of man's unconscious activity appears to be *innate*, i.e. *rigidly determined by the structure of the human organism as it has been moulded by the universal* élan *of life : unconscious action of this kind we should recognise as instinctive. Habitual action is analogous to instinctive action, but is due to the modifications of structure for which the repeated actions of the individual are responsible.* The distinction, however, must not mislead us ; what is instinctive from the point of view of the individual should perhaps be regarded, like the instinctive activity of insects, as habitual from the point of view of the vital *élan* ; moreover, although human beings are by far the most individual of all creatures, it is impossible to define the extent to which they act as indi-

viduals and not rather as vehicles of the universal energy of life.

The close relation between the activity of the insect and the precise form of its organism has a parallel in certain functions of the human body. "The truest analogy to the ant-state or bee-state," writes Joseph McCabe in his book, *The Evolution of Mind*, "is not in the mental region at all, but in the human body. Those who profess inability to regard the complex social life of the higher insects as automatic, do not seem to reflect on what evolution has accomplished in the wonderful cell-state of the human frame. The extraordinary specialisation of, and division of labour among, the cells of the body are just as impressive as the features of ant-life. In that great republic we have a hundred castes of workers, each blindly accomplishing its share of the harmonious work, and with a great power of adaptation to special uses and environments. Recent research has even shown that the community has its armies of leucocyte warriors, ready to gather at any point in resistance to invasion. In precision of action, in simulation of prevision and intelligence, in complexity of structure and function, the one community is as wonderful as the other."

Bergson, in spite of his arguments in favour of instinct as a faculty of knowledge both in insect and in man, supplies us with weapons which we can turn against him. In one passage he actually affirms that "the most essential of the primary instincts are really vital processes," and that, "in extreme cases instinct coincides with the work of organisation."[1] Referring to the lives of animals, he states that "it is instinct still which forms the basis of their psychical activity," although "intelligence is there and would fain supersede it."[2] Again, in *Matter and Memory*, he expresses the view that "we can follow from the mineral to the plant, from the plant to the simplest conscious beings, from the animal to man, the progress of the operation by which things and beings seize from out their surroundings that which attracts them, that which interests them practically, without needing any effort of abstraction simply because the rest of their surroundings takes no hold upon them: this similarity of reaction following actions superficially different is the germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas."[3] Here we have

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 175. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 150.

[3] *Matter and Memory*, p. 207. Cf. also *Creative Evolution*, pp. 225-6.

what seems to be a statement of the complete continuity in evolution between instinct and intelligence: intellectual ideas are said (or so it seems) to have been developed, with the help of consciousness, out of the relations which exist between the structure of particular organisms and their environment: for it is only by reason of the structure of the organism that certain things take no hold upon it: and instinct is a "vital process," a function of the organism, an expression of "a concrete relation" between it and other organisms or activities. Readers of *Matter and Memory* will be aware of the part played in that work by the argument that an essential substructure is laid for our psychical activity by the bodily attitudes which we are always unconsciously adopting. Here, in these subtle inclinations of the human body, no less than in the marvellous cell-processes concerned with the preservation of bodily health, the province of instinct ought, I suggest, to be acknowledged.

We conclude then that the term instinct should properly be used to denote that unconscious activity which is primarily an expression of the form of the organism as created by evolution, or, ultimately, of the purpose of life existing behind

that form. Intelligent action is a development out of instinctive action; it is action released from subservience to organic form, widened in range and accompanied by consciousness,—*i.e.* by the power of reflection, which expresses itself *before action* in choice and *after action* by criticism of the result. Intelligence is the faculty which exercises that power and is *the only faculty of knowledge*. Within it may be contrasted intuition and analysis. Intuition is the direct apprehension of an object, always more or less abstract. Analysis stands for the habitual method of the intelligence, the proper object of which is to prepare the way for intuition. Analysis, however mechanical some of its rules may be, is itself based on intuition: in any process of thought the two, analysis and intuition, continually interact.

Common-sense view of instinct.

Common sense will always hesitate to accept the idea that instinct is not a form of knowledge. It looks upon each insect as a separate individual, simply because it has a separate body: it sees the "individual" insect act with a simulation of intelligence which is often amazing. It does but follow its anthro-

pomorphic tendency in imagining some knowledge, akin to human intelligence, behind the admirable act. It is therefore worth pointing out that instinct is not infallible. Bergson himself is constrained to admit this. In the second place the limitations of instinct, even when it carries out its work with absolute precision, are so great that we ought not to let our enthusiasm carry us away. Let us consider the ant—proverbially wise among insects. "The behaviour of ants," writes Joseph McCabe, "toward the beetles which they curiously tolerate in their nests is . . . declared by Wasmann to be very unintelligent. They care for the larvæ of the beetles in the same way as for their own, though the beetle-larvæ devour their own very freely. On the other hand, the balance is restored by a curiously unintelligent feature of the ant's philanthropy. The beetle-larva needs entirely different treatment from the ant-larva. The ant-nurses, however, take it from the dome of earth they have made over it, just as they do their own larvæ, and so unwittingly kill most of the young beetles."[1] Instinct is here shown as a complete muddler. Another example

Limitations of instinct. Ant and beetle.

[1] Joseph McCabe, *The Evolution of Mind*, p. 175.

of ant-folly, similar in character, has recently come to light. It appears that the caterpillar of *Lycæna Arion*, the Large Blue Butterfly, whose life-history has at last been discovered, is closely associated with a kind of ant, *Myrmica Scabrinodes*. The butterfly lays her eggs on plants of wild thyme growing on or near ants' nests. The caterpillar, for the first three weeks or so after it emerges, feeds on the flowers of the wild thyme, although it sometimes indulges in cannibalism. During this period it moults three times ; after the third moult it has a well-developed honey-gland on the back of its tenth segment. At this stage in its career it ceases to feed on the thyme, and wanders aimlessly about until met by an ant. The ant is at once interested and soon begins to imbibe from the honey-gland. After a little while the caterpillar hunches itself up into a peculiar shape and the ant carries it off, much as a cat carries her kitten, into the nest of the ant-community. There the caterpillar passes the rest of its existence—no less a period than nine months : it is carefully watched over and tended, still apparently by the particular ant which originally found it. Meanwhile it grows fat on ant-larvæ, feeding on them

Ant and butterfly.

for the first five or six weeks after its arrival, and resuming the same diet after its winter sleep. It pays for its upkeep by continuing to yield honey to the guardian ant, and both sides appear to be well satisfied with the bargain. The caterpillar is full grown early in June: when it was first brought into the nest, in August of the preceding year, it was only one-eighth of an inch long: it is now five times that length and very corpulent.[1]

An example like this should open our eyes to the unsatisfactory side of instinct. If we regard the activity of caterpillar and ant from the point of view of the individual interest of each, we are struck by the fact that the caterpillar gets the best of the exchange. We are not inclined to credit it with actual cunning, but that is because it seems to play so passive a part. Its success is very obviously due to a peculiarity of its organism—the honey-gland—which it does not even have to exercise itself. On the other hand, our opinion of the wisdom of the ant (if not of its morality!) suffers something of a shock. Here is the ant going out of its way to

[1] Vide *Country Life* for 17th July, 1920 ("The Large Blue Butterfly," by F. W. Frohawk).

introduce an enemy into its home, simply for the sake of a rare delicacy which it can very well do without ! Probably, however, we should regard the activity of caterpillar and ant *together*, from the point of view of the vital *élan*. Then, instead of accusing the ant of folly, we shall rather lay the blame on instinct—the force in the background : life proceeding by instinct appears to be at enmity with itself, for it can only forward the interests of one species by harming those of another.

It may be said that conflict such as this is to be found everywhere in life ; it is only the principle of the struggle for survival, which is exhibited equally among the most intelligent of the animals : intelligence is no more to be commended in this respect than instinct. The cases, however, are not parallel. Conflict between intelligent creatures, so far as they are intelligent, tends to the survival not only of the fittest species but of the *fittest individual* ; in other words, it tends towards the improvement of the species. Intelligence, as Bergson says, displays itself in finding the appropriate way out of any particular difficulty, whatever the circumstances may be. It is above all adaptable, and the intelligent creature is not

compelled to react in a determined way: the individuals whose actions are best adapted to their environment are those which succeed in the conflict and perpetuate their kind.

With the insects, except in so far as they may possess the rudiment of intelligence, there is no room for true individual development within the species. Instinct is limited by the structure of the organism which serves it. The structure can be made perfect and a small repertoire of accomplishments can be developed through it. There is, however, no adaptability. The individual succeeds or fails according to the play of circumstance; it is the play of circumstance which decides whether the instinct called into action is favourable or unfavourable. Conflict only tends here to the survival of the *luckiest individual*, the one who is most aided by fortune in escaping his enemy or finding his prey. The conflict continues, but it does not help to improve the species, and there can be, from the point of view of life, no positive advantage to justify it.

There is, then, ample reason to be dissatisfied with instinct.

I cannot accept Bergson's view that in instinct and intelligence life has found two equally fitting

ways of achieving its purpose. Rather, I suggest that the movement in the direction of the individual, which Bergson notices as one of the tendencies of life everywhere observable, may equally well be described as a universal movement towards intelligence. Intelligence alone really enables life to introduce freedom into the world of matter, as it sets outs to do: the road to intelligence lies through instinct, but instinct is an unsatisfactory stopping-place; the gaze of life is, from the first, set beyond.

Instinct not a solution of life's problem.

CHAPTER V

IMAGINATIVE INFERENCE AND DIRECT INSIGHT

In the last chapter I have attempted to show that, even when we consider the phenomena of evolution, nothing can be found to justify the Bergsonian view that there is a faculty of intuition, distinct from and opposed to intelligence, which is capable of insight into reality. But if it were held that such a faculty does actually exist, could it be regarded as enabling us to pierce directly into secrets of the universe outside our individual selves? Bergson, as I have pointed out, seems to hesitate between two views:

Extension of intuitive knowledge beyond the self.

(1) that the knowledge gained by intuition of the self is extended outside the self by imaginative inference, and

(2) that the mind, while not losing its own individuality, can gain direct insight into

reality outside the self, without any mediation of the intellect.

Bergson's ambiguity.

The most specific account of the method of intuition is contained in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. It is, however, not at all free from ambiguity, and Bergson's metaphorical style adds to our difficulties. How are we to interpret him when he says that "philosophy consists in placing oneself within the object itself";[1] that "by intuition is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible";[2] that it is possible to "place oneself directly, by a kind of intellectual expansion, within the thing studied"?[3] There are numerous other expressions of a like order. The natural interpretation would seem to be that we proceed by direct vision from within, not by inference.[4]

But is this interpretation right, or is it too literal? In favour of it we may note that Berg-

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 37.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 6.

[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 47.

[4] The use of the term "intellectual,"—"intellectual sympathy," "intellectual expansion"—has no significance to the contrary. It is used in the wide sense. See p. 7 of the present essay.

son applies the term " sympathy " to knowledge of ourselves as well as to knowledge of other objects, and knowledge of ourselves is undoubtedly, in his view, a knowledge by direct vision. Moreover, he declares that " an absolute could only be given in an intuition, *whilst everything else falls within the province of analysis.*" [1] It is clear that he does not consign to the " province of analysis " either the self or those objects other than the self within which we can place ourselves in order to coincide with what is unique in them. Again, we find it stated that " the main object of metaphysics is to do away with symbols " ; [2] " it can, and usually must abstain from converting intuition into symbols " ; [3] " a true empiricism is that which proposes to get as near to the original itself as possible, to search deeply into its life, and so, by a kind of intellectual auscultation, to feel the throbbings of its soul ; and this true empiricism is the true metaphysics." [4]

On the other hand, we are told that we cannot sympathise with the innermost part of reality

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 6. (Italics mine.)

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 67.

[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 60.

[4] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 31.

" unless we have won its confidence by a long fellowship with its superficial manifestations. . . . In this way only can the bare materiality of the facts be exposed to view " :[1] that, " when I speak of an absolute movement . . . I imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them *by an effort of imagination* " ;[2] that, in the intuition of ourselves, " we have the feeling of a certain very determinate tension, in which the determination itself appears as a choice between an infinity of possible durations. *Henceforward we can picture to ourselves as many durations as we wish*, all very different from each other " ;[3] that " the consciousness we have of our own self in its continual flux introduces us to the interior of a reality, *on the model of which we must represent other realities*." [4] These statements are surely in favour of the view that intuition is extended beyond the self not by direct vision but by imaginative inference.

The two sets of passages seem indeed to be quite irreconcilable. Little help is to be found

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 78.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 2. (Italics mine.)

[3] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 50. (Italics mine.)

[4] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 55. (Italics mine.)

in *Creative Evolution*. The general tenor of this work would seem to support the theory of direct vision; for Bergson allows that man is the most individualised of all creatures, and yet believes that he is able to exercise in a higher and a conscious form that sympathetic faculty which is supposed to lie behind the action of one insect upon another. This attitude might naturally lead to the conclusion that man can obtain direct access to the interior not only of his own life, but of life higher and lower than his own.

Again, the doctrine that man can transcend his own nature both upwards and downwards looks, *prima facie*, as if it would support the theory of direct vision. The doctrine, put forward in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, is expanded in *Creative Evolution*. In the earlier work we read that "the intuition of our duration . . . brings us into contact with a whole continuity of durations which we must try to follow, whether downwards or upwards; in both cases we can extend ourselves indefinitely by an increasingly violent effort, in both cases we transcend ourselves."[1] "Philosophy can only be an effort to transcend

Doctrine of transcendence does not clear up this ambiguity.

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 53.

the human condition." [1] We read also of "the constant expansion of our mind, the ever renewed effort to transcend our actual ideas and perhaps also our elementary logic." [2] *Creative Evolution* develops this doctrine further. "A beneficent fluid bathes us, whence we draw the very force to labour and to live. From this ocean of life, in which we are immersed, we are continually drawing something, and we feel that our being, or at least the intellect that guides it, has been formed therein by a kind of local concentration. Philosophy can only be an effort to dissolve again into the Whole. Intelligence, reabsorbed into its principle, may thus live back again its own genesis. But the enterprise cannot be achieved in one stroke; it is necessarily collective and progressive. It consists in an interchange of impressions which, correcting and adding to each other, will end by expanding the humanity in us and making us even transcend it." [3] "When we make ourselves self-conscious in the highest possible degree and then let ourselves fall back little by little, we get the feeling of extension; we have an extension of the self

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 65.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 70. [3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 202.

into recollections that are fixed and external to one another, in place of the intension it possessed as an indivisible active will." [1] "The further I pursue this quite negative direction of relaxation, the more extension and complexity I shall create."[2] "Our personality thus descends in the direction of space. It coasts around it continually in sensation." [3]

Lastly, I will quote at length a passage which deserves particularly close attention. "In free action when we contract our whole being in order to thrust it forward, we have the more or less clear consciousness of motives and of impelling forces, and even, at rare moments, of the becoming by which they are organised into an act; but the pure willing, the current that runs through this matter, communicating life to it, is a thing which we hardly feel, which at most we brush lightly as it passes. Let us try, however, to instal ourselves within it, if only for a moment; even then it is an individual and fragmentary will that we grasp. To get to the principle of all life, as also of all materiality, we must go further still. Is it impossible? No, by no means; the

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 219. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 221.
[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 212.

history of philosophy is there to bear witness. There is no durable system that is not, at least in some of its parts, vivified by intuition. Dialectic is necessary to put intuition to the proof, necessary also, in order that intuition shall break itself up into concepts and so be propagated to other men; but all it does, often enough, is to develop the result of that intuition which transcends it. The truth is, the two procedures are of opposite direction: the same effort by which ideas are connected with ideas, causes the intuition which the ideas were storing up to vanish. The philosopher is obliged to abandon intuition, once he has received from it the impetus, and to rely on himself to carry on the movement by pushing the concepts one after another. But he soon feels he has lost foothold; he must come into touch with intuition again; he must undo most of what he has done. In short, dialectic is what ensures the agreement of our thought with itself. But by dialectic—which is only a relaxation of intuition—many different agreements are possible, while there is only one truth. Intuition, if it could be prolonged beyond a few instants, would not only make the philosopher agree with his own thought, but would also make

all philosophers agree with each other. Such as it is, fugitive and incomplete, it is, in each system, what is worth more than the system and survives it. The object of philosophy would be reached if this intuition could be sustained, generalised, and, above all, assured of external points of reference in order not to go astray. To that end a continual coming and going is necessary between nature and mind.

When we put back our being into our will and our will itself into the impulsion it prolongs, we understand, we feel, that reality is a perpetual growth, a creation pursued without end."[1]

It is, I think, beyond dispute that the Bergsonian doctrine of transcendence does not merely mean that we can transcend our intellect. We have to do that in the first place; but it is not enough that we should, as knowing, coincide with *ourselves* as acting: we have to pass beyond human duration towards the highest duration of creative life on the one hand, and the lowest duration of inorganic matter on the other. We have to coincide with the *supra-human* and the *infra-human*. It might be thought, in the light of this theory, that the view really representative

[1] *Creative Evolution*, pp. 251-2.

of Bergson is that intuition of truth beyond the individual and beyond the human is to be won by direct vision, unaided by inference. It appears to me, however, that no such conclusion is justified. For the question still remains to be asked whether by transcending ourselves, we can obtain a direct introduction to the duration *of any particular being* other than that of our individual self. On the analogy of instinct we should be able to do so ; for instinct betrays to one creature the inner constitution of another, and intuition is a higher form of instinct. Bergson does not make this point clear ; but it rather seems as though the intuitions we are said to obtain when we violently contract or relax ourselves are *intuitions of duration in general—that is to say, we obtain a direct insight into durations more concentrated, and also into durations more diluted, than the human duration. These durations* correspond with *the actual duration of other orders of being, but we do not obtain any vision of a particular duration, of the duration of,* e.g. *a demigod or a cow or a beetle as such. An intellectual link still appears to be necessary in order that we may penetrate to the secret of any being not our own. We have an insight into "a whole continuity of durations," but*

it is only by imaginative inference, founded on observation, that we can assign any particular duration to any particular creature.

The question we are examining is, at bottom, the question of the relation between intuition and intelligence. Bergson tends to put all knowledge of life to the credit of intuition and to reduce intelligence to a faculty which can only deal with immobility, and connect the same with the same. Intelligence is often treated as the negation of intuition. The knowledge that has been acquired by scientists and philosophers in the past is attributed to intuition, although it must be clear that many of them would have repudiated the notion that it was due to anything except reason or intelligence. Further, Bergson believes in intuition as the revealer of truth about matter as well as about life, although in this connection he has difficulty in distinguishing intuition from intellect; and intuition is supposed to move upwards and downwards between the extremes of intense life and inert matter, so that there is no apparent reason why it should fail to discover, unaided, the truth about every intermediate stage.

Relation between Bergson's intuition and intellect.

Thus Bergson exalts intuition at the expense of intelligence, till intelligence ought to be powerless. One cannot help feeling that he would like to show that we can reach every kind of truth by direct vision, without the need for imaginative inference or conceptual analysis. He is, however, inconsistent with himself. The passages in his philosophy which seem to indicate that intelligence is necessary for the development and extension of knowledge are frequent and not merely exceptional; they appear to be in direct conflict with other passages which mean, or ought to mean, that intuition is all-sufficient. The last of the passages I have quoted from *Creative Evolution* is a good example, but only an example. It allows dialectic—by which is meant the conceptual work of the intellect—an important rôle in the building up of knowledge. Dialectic is necessary in order to "*put intuition to the proof*," intuition which, as a rule, appears in the guise of proud independence, if not of infallibility. It is necessary too in order that intuition may "break itself up into concepts." The conceptual work of the intelligence is proclaimed to be essential for the development of what is grasped in immediate intuition.

There is one illustration of the ambiguity of Bergson's views which I should like to mention. In 1911 two interesting books on his philosophy were published in England —*A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy* by J. M'Kellar Stewart, and *The Philosophy of Bergson* by A. D. Lindsay. Mr. Stewart brings out very clearly the anti-intellectual aspect of Bergson's theory of knowledge, emphasising it perhaps rather too strongly. Mr. Lindsay, on the other hand, intellectualises Bergson, without being conscious, apparently, that he is doing so. Stewart, dealing with the various relations which might be held to exist between intuition and intelligence, concludes that the opinion of Bergson, at least in the main line of his thought, is "that the intuition of reality and the conceptual representation of it are arrived at by two processes of knowledge, each of which is the inverse of the other." He adds, however, that there are passages which suggest the incompatible view "firstly, that immediacy is reached at the end of conceptualization," and "secondly, that the initial act of knowledge is an immediate grasp, out of which conceptual knowledge develops,

Conflicting interpretations. Mr. M'Kellar Stewart and Mr. Lindsay.

but in which it existed in germ from the beginning, and that, therefore, the conceptual representation is in no way foreign to the immediate knowledge."[1] "When he argues that an intuition is achieved only when the totality of observations and experiences gathered up by positive science is surveyed, this points to the view that the intuition is the perfection of conceptual knowledge, that, at least, it is certainly not the inversion of it."[2]

In brief, Stewart regards as inconsistent with the main line of Bergson's thought the passages which seem to indicate that intelligence plays any positive part in the knowledge of life. Lindsay, on the contrary, regards the same passages as, *par excellence*, those which give us the clue to Bergson's real attitude. In their light we are to look at intuition as a "power of gathering from observation of many details an insight into the reality which they manifest. It is a process which cannot be reduced to rules, for it is always in itself a creative act."[3] "Intuition implies sympathy, in the sense at least of caring enough

[1] *Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy*, p. 133.

[2] *Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy*, p. 134.

[3] *The Philosophy of Bergson*, pp. 238-9.

about things to know them in their own nature." When, however, Bergson "seems to say that intuition implies sympathy in a further sense, the sympathy that enables us to assume the nature of other things and feel with them," we are apparently to understand that, in fact, "he is thinking of that close acquaintance with an object which is gained only by long experience with it, an acquaintance constructed out of a synthesis of innumerable details and subtle discriminations." [1]

Thus Lindsay takes to be typical and representative the attitude which Stewart regards as exceptional. Lindsay is certainly wrong; the real fact seems to be that he misinterprets the Bergsonian intuition. In one place he refers to duration as being "what each of us apprehends when he reflects on his own conscious life." [2] This is in accordance with the view which I have put forward in the present essay—the view that the intuition of duration is intellectual and is reached by reflection—but it is emphatically opposed to Bergson's theory of knowledge. Starting from intuition as, in essence, intellectual,

[1] *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 236.

[2] *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 114.

Lindsay is bound to interpret the process of knowledge as a development of intuition by means of conceptual thought. As we have seen, there are passages in Bergson's philosophy which can be quoted in support of this interpretation. Moreover, they are not quite so exceptional as Stewart seems to suggest. The view that intuition is developed by intelligence, though it is rarely given anything like definite expression, is to be found running through a great part of Bergson's work; but it exists there side by side with the view that intuition alone is capable of understanding life and that any mediation of the intellect can only result in a distortion of the truth.

This confusion in Bergson's philosophy is perhaps the inevitable result of any theory of knowledge which begins with a non-intellectual foundation. It is to be hoped, however, as I have already said, that Bergson may still do something to remove it.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Let me now summarise briefly the preceding chapters of this essay. While accepting the Bergsonian doctrine of the reality of time, I combat the theory that this reality is apprehended by a *non-intellectual* intuitive faculty. When we reflect on our past experiences, although we are inclined to analyse them into events or moments of feeling external to one another, we cannot help recognising that when we lived them they formed in some way a continuous unity, more or less closely organised.

Intuition by reflection.

We are not quite certain how to interpret this unity. Taking the standpoint of common sense, we recognise that any vital experience is misrepresented if we try to articulate it sharply, imposing a rigid system upon it as if it were not already organised from within. On the other

hand, we have an exceedingly strong natural tendency to view all reality, whether material or spiritual, as a fit subject for analysis and dissection. Human thought has clung to the idea of the immovable and unchanging, free from the flux of becoming, as the ultimate reality. For science, too, the whole of reality is present at any one moment just as much as at any other—that is to say, the flow of time is of no account, it makes no difference; and science, without abandoning this point of view, has achieved dazzling successes. So we are confirmed, by the wisdom of the wise, in our tendency to split our experience up into a number of states, following one upon another; our conscience protests that we are denying our belief in continuous personality. What then? we satisfy our conscience by picturing the separate states we have set up as held together by a colourless unchanging thread; our conscience is easily duped and does not perceive the obscurity of the picture.

But all this may be changed if we are led to look at the habitual tendency of intelligence with suspicion. Bergson by his brilliant exposition of the antinomies of philosophy and also of the limitations of science, makes this comparatively

easy. Moreover, he brings forward very good reasons to explain how it is that thought has been misled. The analytical tendency of the mind has been developed not for the purpose of speculation, but in order to enable man to win a mastery over his material environment and so succeed in the struggle of evolution. When man attempts to explain the universe, he is subject to a severe disability which, on the objective side, may be described as the tyranny of space and, on the subjective side, as the tyranny of the practical—*i.e.* the analytical—tendency of his own mind. This tendency is so deeply ingrained that it sufficiently explains why, *if* the nature of life is "true continuity, real mobility, reciprocal penetration," it has been constantly misunderstood.

So we have the chance to examine our experience with fresh eyes. If we do not pursue analysis unremittingly—if, giving our attention to the organic aspect of experience which we have always recognised, we seek only to lay it bare of its particular colouring—we may succeed in apprehending our own duration as it really is, a unique indivisible movement, changing, growing and, at its deepest level, continually bringing to birth the new. *This truth is apprehended*

intuitively by the intellect; it is obtained by ordinary reflection on our memories, not by any faculty of insight opposed to the intellect. The difficulty of the process consists in clearing the intellect of sophistication and keeping it clear. The intellect must not be identified with its habitual mechanism. In grasping duration we do violence, no doubt, to the habits of the intellect, but we do no violence at all to the intellect itself; on the contrary, we assert its true scope and power.

Relation to experience.

The intuition of duration which we so obtain by reflection on our memories can be strengthened if we bring it into closer touch with our experience. It is not possible to make our faculty of vision one with our faculty of acting, as Bergson suggests: we cannot, at the very moment when we are absorbed in action, obtain any insight, even the vaguest, into the nature of the self; nor, at a lower tension of energy, when we live lazily by the moment, can we have any simultaneous awareness of the nature of our slackened duration. Awareness of the self as enduring in time is always an awareness of the past: it may, however, be an awareness of the immediate past which is strong and vivid in the memory, and which does not require any effort

to recall it : and, if we direct our attention to the fugitive moments when we begin to pass from absorption in some activity to reflection upon it, we may get a glimpse of the enduring essence of that activity before the natural tendency of our intellect has been able to arrest its flow and decompose it into elements. In these moments of transition the intellect has only just commenced to come into operation. Nevertheless it is the intellect alone which obtains the vision. *The difference between this intuition by reflection on the immediate past and intuition by reflection on more distant memories is simply that in the former case we can grasp the truth before it has been spoilt by analysis, while in the latter we have to reject the interpretation which analysis presses upon us ; we have to undo the work of analysis.*

So much for the intuition of the self—an intuition which is always intellectual. Bergson supports his theory that it is a non-intellectual faculty by connecting it with instinct. This connection rather suggests that we ought to be able, by intuition, to penetrate direct into reality beyond the borders of our individual selves ; such a view is indeed to be found—though Bergson is neither clear nor

Instinct and intelligence.

consistent—both in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* and in *Creative Evolution*.

First, however, a good case has to be made out for recognising instinct as a separate faculty of knowledge, opposed to intelligence. Instinctive activity is more perfect and precise than intelligent activity, but is narrowly confined to particular actions, which are closely related to the particular structure of the organism. Intelligent activity is distinguished by its greater adaptability, and by the accompaniment (in a higher and higher degree, as intelligence develops) of consciousness and choice. Bergson, however, regards instinctive action, although in fact unconscious, as springing out of knowledge; consciousness is not entirely absent, but "representation is blocked up by action"—the action is so perfect that choice could not improve upon it; there is no call for consciousness, nor is there any room for its exercise. None the less knowledge is latent, and is directed to the inner reality of life, to howsoever minute a fragment it may be limited. The knowledge of intelligence, on the contrary, is directed towards the nature of matter; intelligence is a practical, not a speculative faculty, inferior in exactitude, but

indefinitely wider and freer in range. It has been developed in man to such an extent as almost to extinguish the light of instinct; yet instinct has gained from the interaction between the two: it has been saved from bondage to a material object, its implicit and potential knowledge has begun to be unfolded in consciousness, and it has been rendered capable of a direct vision of life.

This is Bergson's teaching. The conclusion that instinctive action points to a knowledge other than intelligence does not seem, however, to be well founded. Instinct is said to be concerned with *things*—with life in its concrete fulness—while intelligence is concerned with *relations* abstracted from life. But instinctive action expresses a relation between the organisms which it affects, and, if the knowledge supposed to lie behind the action could be actualised in consciousness, it would be knowledge of a relation. Any knowledge of a relation is already, in essence, intellectual.

The only distinction which observation of insect and animal behaviour entitles us to draw between instinct and intelligence is that intelligent action is more indeterminate, less dependent upon the precise form of any bodily organism.

Indeterminate action, in order to be effective, must be accompanied by consciousness and the power of choice. The progress of intelligence is marked by an increasing ability to choose and to reflect: this implies the perception of more and more general relations. *The development of instinct and intelligence in evolution is, however, unilinear. Instinct is in no essential respect different from intelligence; provided that it does not become stereotyped, intelligence may at any moment spring from it. Instinct is not obliterated by association with intelligence: it has survived in man. But it is to be found in the organic functions of his body, and in those unconscious bodily attitudes which are a condition of his psychical activity; nowhere is it to be found, either in insect or in man, as a realisable faculty of knowledge.*

Imaginative inference and direct insight.

Now as to the extension of intuition beyond the self. If the intuition of the self as enduring in time is intellectual, then there is no question as to the way in which, *normally* at any rate, we must proceed. *The intuition of the self is a privileged intuition; we can only apply our theory of duration beyond our individual selves and beyond humanity, by imaginative inference*, and the results must be

tried by the usual tests of coherency and of consistency with known facts. In Bergson's philosophy it is possible to detect two theories: according to one, intuition can dispense with intelligence and penetrate into reality by pure direct vision; according to the other, intelligence is necessary in order that the knowledge gained by intuition may be verified and expanded. These two theories are nowhere reconciled—they are indeed irreconcilable.

If my contentions are sound, it is possible—indeed, it is necessary—to accept in essence the Bergsonian doctrine of duration, without believing in the existence of any faculty of knowledge other than the intellect. The intellect is adequate for the apprehension of duration: there is no need to transcend it—all that is necessary is that we should not be slaves to intellectual *habit*. We can still pursue the old dialectical methods, but we have the help of a great new guiding principle, by which we can check and revise our elaborate analysis and synthesis. I believe that, while the doctrine of a special faculty of intuition is doomed to perish, the principle of duration will stand firm as the great gift of Bergson to future philosophy.

CHAPTER VII

INTELLECTUAL INTUITION AND THE MYSTIC

PHILOSOPHY is then, and always must be, a work of the vital intelligence. But we must not overlook the importance of another aspect, the personal experience which is not itself intellectual but is presented to the intellect in memory. I have suggested that the intellectualist may accept and profit by Bergson's theory of duration. In conclusion I would suggest the possibility that the mystic of the future may also benefit.

Mysticism.

Mysticism is a dangerous word, and I will not attempt to define it closely. It stands primarily for a way of life—for all that distinguishes a certain supernormal type of being or activity from the ordinary experience of man. No definition therefore can be at all adequate. I wish, however, to invite attention to certain well-known features of mystical life and doctrine, particularly to the escape of the

individual from the prison of his separate self and his mergence in a life greater than his own.

Up to the present we have considered two ways in which it is possible to hold that our intuition of duration can be extended beyond the individual self—the way of direct vision and the way of imaginative inference; we have decided that of these two only the latter is open to us. We have, however, mentioned a third way—open to a few—the unification of our experience with other experience; this would be the way of the mystic. *The intuition of the mystic would always remain intellectual; the method would be the same as with other men, but the experience to which the intuition was applied would be an experience more wide and rich than that of an individual man.*

Philosophic attitude of suspicion.

It is a somewhat curious fact that Bergson and his disciples are very shy of mysticism and not at all disposed towards an alliance. At the end of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* we are assured that "There is nothing mysterious in the faculty of intuition. Every one of us has had occasion to exercise it to a certain extent." Dr. Wildon Carr, in his *Philosophy of Change*, writes that "intuition in the sense in which this philosophy affirms it has

nothing either mystical or even mysterious about it,"[1] and that "it is not only a fact, but that so far from its being a mystical experience, it is the most common and unmistakable fact."[2] "There is one ridiculous objection," writes the indignant M. Le Roy, "which I quote only to record. I mean that which suspects at the bottom of the theories we are going to discuss some dark background, some prepossession of irrational mysticism."[3]

Yet it has been said (and I think the definition would be quite widely accepted) that "mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else."[4] Is there nothing mystical then in the philosophy of Bergson, who defines metaphysics as the "science which claims to dispense

[1] *Henri Bergson, The Philosophy of Change* (1911, in the People's Books Series), p. 21.

[2] *The Philosophy of Change* (1914), p. 22. It may be questioned whether this contrast is legitimate. "The mystical sense," writes Dean Inge, "is so far from being a rare endowment, or an abnormality which we may hesitate whether we should class as pathological, that it is, in one or other of its forms, almost universal." (*Mysticism in relation to Philosophy and Religion*, a paper published in the first number of *The Pilgrim*, Oct., 1920.)

[3] Edouard Le Roy, *A New Philosophy*, p. 113.

[4] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 86.

with symbols,"[1] and states that "an absolute could only be given in an intuition"?[2] It is at least puzzling. But the fact that mysticism is a much-abused word goes far to explain the apparent anxiety to be dissociated from it. It is often understood to imply an attitude of hostility to science, and Bergson disclaims any "mysticism" such as this. No philosopher is more entitled to do so. It is typical of his attitude that he remarks, when referring to the question whether acquired characters can be transmitted from parent to child, that "it is nowhere clearer that philosophers cannot to-day content themselves with vague generalities, but must follow the scientists in experimental detail and discuss the results with them."[3] We have his own statement, in connection with his book *Matter and Memory*, that he took five years to sift the enormous literature on aphasia.[4] But we require no such assurance: all his works prove his anxiety to bring science and metaphysics into the closest possible touch. He is constantly

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 8.

[2] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 6.

[3] *Creative Evolution*, p. 82.

[4] Statement before the French Philosophical Society, quoted by M. Le Roy in *A New Philosophy*, p. 8.

throwing light on metaphysical problems by his keen examination of scientific data. It is an essential part of his method.

Elements of mysticism in Bergson. Transcendence.

Yet there are undoubtedly mystical elements in Bergson's philosophy. The doctrine that we are able, by a violent effort, to transcend human knowledge—to "put back our being into our will and *our will itself into the impulsion which it prolongs*" —is, so far as it goes, essentially mystical. But it does not, as I conceive, go the whole way. It is not claimed that such transcendence can introduce us into the heart of any particular order of being: all it can do is to give us a momentary glimpse of durations other than our own, of which we can predicate nothing except that they are more concentrated or more feeble than ours. Moreover the mind, although it becomes like its object and takes up its position within it, is yet supposed to remain distinct enough for the act of metaphysical intuition: a degree of individuality is retained. This hardly appears conceivable. On the higher level consciousness would surely be absorbed in activity, on the lower it would be dissipated in inertia. I allow that the process of withdrawal from the forms of

intellect, from concepts and from images—"a stripping off of extraneous images and a denudation of the heart, so that a man may be free from images, and attachments to every creature"[1]—is a process which brings us towards a closer contact with life. But, as we approach, the consciousness of self grows feeble and vague. Only the intellect, not yet entirely discarded, keeps that consciousness alive. As soon as we have really transcended our intellect, awareness of the nature of our activity must vanish in the activity itself, and intuition has disappeared. This is tantamount to saying, as I have said before, that in any actual intuition we obtain intelligence is present as the only active element. When mind is actually "placed within" its object, the intellect is no longer active and we can, at the time, have no knowledge. Knowledge is not to be obtained simply by a thrusting of the mind into the reality which it desires to know: for mind, while so merged in its object, will give us no intuition of life or of matter: it will tell us nothing.

If intuition is to reach out beyond our individual selves to a higher level of reality, it will

[1] Ruysbroek, *The Adornment of the Spiritual Nuptials*, bk. ii.

not be by the penetration of our *minds* into a reality outside us, but by the mergence of our *whole being* in a greater whole. This state of union cannot be a state of knowledge in any human sense, for it must be an experience where knowledge is transcended—a joyous and perfect activity above all knowledge. For knowledge can hardly be perfectly fused with action and yet retain its character. As Kant conceived that "good" will gives place in God to a "holy" will—a will above the moral antithesis of good and evil—so we might conceive that in God, so far as He is transcendent, knowledge (in any sense we can appreciate) is superseded by an activity undeviating and perfect.

With such activity the mystic may be unified. For him, however, there will come the return to the individual life, to the senses, to the intellect. In the rapid transition consciousness will begin to awake and to reveal to him the nature of the life with which he has been identified. The transition, however swift, can hardly be entirely abrupt: in the moment when mind is most nearly in contact with the overwhelming experience, it is possible that there may come a sudden, vague, fleeting vision—an intuition of

the greater, the universal self. As the transition continues, the intellect comes more fully into play, and the vision breaks up into units of imagery, growing clearer but losing touch with the original. After this point is reached, mystical experience can only be apprehended by reflection upon it, as upon any other memory.

The unity of life.

Bergson's theory of transcendence has for its complement a belief in the original unity of life. Transcendence of the individual and of the human is made possible for man by the fact that behind all the diverse forms of life there is one and the same tremendous vital *élan*. The doctrine of the unity of all things is a well-known feature of mysticism. It is to be noted, however, that Bergson does not believe in any rounded-off unity: he does not worship any static Absolute. For him the conception of God is the conception of a perpetually creative activity. "The universe is not made, but is being made continually. It is growing, perhaps indefinitely, by the addition of new worlds."[1] The unity is imperfect, again, because there is a discernible tendency towards the individual, although the tendency does not go so far as

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 255.

common sense would suppose. In the insects there is little individuality. "When we see the bees of a hive forming a system so strictly organised that no individual can live apart from the others beyond a certain time, even though furnished with food and shelter, how can we help recognising that the hive is really, and not metaphorically, a single organism, of which each bee is a cell united to the others by invisible bonds?"[1] The vertebrates are far more individual; "an organism such as a higher vertebrate is the most individuated of all organisms, yet if we take into account that it is only the development of an ovum forming part of the body of its mother and of a spermatozoon belonging to the body of its father, that the egg (*i.e.* the ovum fertilised) is a connecting link between the two progenitors since it is common to their two substances, we shall realise that every individual organism, even that of a man, is merely a bud that has sprouted on the combined body of both its parents. Where, then, does the vital principle of the individual begin or end? Gradually we shall be carried further and further back, up to the individual's remotest ancestors: we

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 175.

shall find him solidary with that little mass of protoplasmic jelly, which is probably at the root of the genealogical tree of life. Being, to a certain extent, one with this primitive ancestor, he is also solidary with all that descends from the ancestor in divergent directions. In this sense each individual may be said to remain united with the totality of living beings by invisible bonds. . . . This life common to all the living . . . is not so mathematically *one* that it cannot allow each being to become individualised to a certain degree. But it forms a single whole, none the less."[1] Of the love of a mother for her child, Bergson writes that it "may possibly deliver us life's secret. It shows us each generation leaning over the generation that shall follow. It allows us a glimpse of the fact that the living being is above all a thoroughfare, and that the essence of life is in the movement by which life is transmitted."[2]

Nowhere, in fact, is the isolated individual to be found. The unconscious sympathy which is the basis of instinct is simply the drawing close between this and that so-called individual, or between this and that species, of the mystical

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 45. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 135.

relation which exists between all living beings. We may, in the manner of Bergson, picture life as a charioteer stooping forward behind all the diverse multitudes of the living, urging them on along the blind intricate courses of their yet untravelled road. The charioteer holds the reins and co-ordinates the vast team. All their plungings and strugglings cannot shake them free from his masterful control. In different degrees, whether of hatred or of amity, they are all bound together. Man alone approaches to free individuality, and even man has not escaped so far as he imagines.

We may, I think, justly claim to find a strong mystical element in Bergson's insistence on the unity of life. We cannot, it is true, properly call a man of science a mystic simply because he comes to the conclusion that the universe is one vast system of interacting and inseparable forces. We cannot call a philosopher a mystic simply because he believes in a perfect unity, made in the image not of himself but of the mechanism of his intellect, which he names the Absolute. In order to decide whether a man's belief is mystical, we have to consider his whole outlook: it is not enough that he believes in a

truth which we hold to be mystical. Yet the reader of *Creative Evolution* ought, I think, to recognise in it the work of a complex genius in whom there is a definite mystical vein.

The mystic's account of Reality as timeless.

But in what manner may the mystic of the future benefit from Bergson's philosophy? The mystic has commonly spoken of an Absolute, whole and complete; Reality is timeless and unchangeable, the mystical experience is one of rest. So far he seems to be at one with the analytical philosopher. The conception of Bergson is apparently in direct opposition to both. For him reality is movement, and movement is time. Eternity is "no longer conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. A living, and therefore still moving eternity, in which our own particular duration would be included as the vibrations are in light; an eternity which would be the concentration of all duration, as materiality is its dispersion."[1]

How is this conflict to be explained? I suggest the possibility that Bergson's theory of duration (founded anew on intellectual intuition

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 54.

and extended by imaginative inference to a superhuman sphere) is truer to the experience of the mystic than the mystic's own stammering self-expression.

The theory of duration may be truer to his experience.

For let us speculate as to the nature of mystical experience. We should think of the human spirit, caught up into the great movement of Life, as liberated from its ordinary dependence on matter. The senses and the brain are instruments of selection with a view to utility: out of the moving continuum of the real they select discrete movements. *Thus the spirit in its ordinary perception of the world has an artificially diminished reality to translate into experience.* It is this impoverished reality that it contracts into fixed and solid bodies on which it may the more conveniently act. The mystical perception must be conceived as fundamentally different. *As soon as we think of the material body as ceasing to limit the spirit, we must think of the spirit as having an undiminished reality to deal with.* The practically irrelevant is no longer excluded from its realisation. It is no longer obliged to neglect the inner constitution of things. Even if it "contracts the development of humanity into the great phases of its evolution," it will not ignore its

humblest movement. We shall not agree here to Bergson's dictum that "to perceive means to immobilise."[1] Rather will we believe that the mystic may realise vital activities, akin to the Supreme Life, in what we commonly and falsely regard as inactive and mechanical. On the other hand, he will not suffer from that false appearance of change which besets our ordinary life, that illusion to which we are lamentably subject, resulting from the uneasy flitting to and fro of our intellect among the multiplicity of phenomena. He will realise rest where we feign motion, motion where we feign rest. He is one with the great vital impulse moving continually on its creative path, and all the details by which we are distracted are, for his realisation, restored to their proper setting in the flux of the universe.

His experience is restful because it is not fragmentary.

I have been careful to use the words "realise" and "realisation" rather than "know" and "knowledge." For the realisation is a realisation in experience and not in knowledge. Knowledge for us implies articulation. The experience of the mystic, while it continues, transcends articulation, and therefore transcends knowledge.

[1] *Matter and Memory*, p. 275.

The brain is normally active, I have said, in diminishing the fulness of the world we perceive. It is similarly active in shutting out from consciousness the greater part of our memories. Hence, in ordinary life, we go on our ways with even our own individual personalities only partly realised. We meet the various circumstances of day by day now with one, now with another, greater or lesser fragment of our selves. For practical purposes it is indeed essential that we should attend to the present moment and the immediate environment—that we should exclude from attention all the past except so much of it as may be useful now. The things of the present are prominent out of all proportion in our outlook. They falsify our notions of time, so that time appears to be a succession of disjointed fragments, instead of a ceaseless growth where nothing is lost; of change, so that change appears to be a synonym for capricious annihilation of the old and generation of the new, instead of a ceaseless modification of a past which cannot die by a moving present in which all is gathered up. They strive to violate the natural piety by which all hours and all seasons are in fact linked together.

With the mystic all is different. The brain no

longer thins out the content of his experience. *He feels the slow expansion of a personality infinitely greater than his own which is gathered up in its whole force. The real gradual growth will be the change which he now realises, unlike the capricious surface-movement with which he is chiefly familiar on the level of normal life.* This growth of a vast personality which he implicitly realises must be a restful experience by comparison with the practical life. It is the experience of an infinite personality gathered up into a time which he will afterwards essay to describe as an Eternal Now—a personality infinitely active, yet so infinitely great as to need no readjustment, no break or pause, in the passage from activity to activity. Hence the contradictions into which human intelligence and human speech must fall.

For how is the mystic to speak of his experience, when he is able to speak, that is, when he has descended from the watch-tower of his mystical vision? The expression "time" will mean for him what it means for other men—a spatialised time, full of the geometrical partitions which we see in space. He cannot therefore express his mystical experience in terms of time

It is perhaps "timeless" only in the sense of being non-spatial.

without using grossly spatial metaphor. *His attitude is far from being one of radical opposition to the Bergsonian philosophy. The time to which he denies reality is the concept of spatialised time: he has no truer conception of time by which to correct it.* Hence he may naturally refer to his experience as "timeless," meaning—at bottom—that it was non-spatial. On the other hand, the epithet "timeless" suggests inertia or, as Bergson would say, an "eternity of death," while the experience he remembers was certainly no state of union with an inactive reality. Is he then to speak of an *active* state? So calling it, he will immediately picture a condition of *spatial* activity. So he very likely calls it, in something like despair, an active inactivity.

It is possible to see the genesis of the doctrine of Nirvana, and also of the paradoxical expressions which are common in the writings of the mystics who reject it. The doctrine of Nirvana is perhaps more easily accepted by the uncorrected human intellect, with its love of clear-cut analysis and its hatred of contradictions, but the truer mysticism is that which confesses without reserve that reality is inexpressible, and dares openly to fall into self-contradiction. Were it not better, it

may be asked, that the mystic should observe the golden rule of silence? That is a question, however, which it is useless to ask. The tendency to self-expression is innate in man, and too powerful ever to be subdued: Cassandra, unable to communicate her vision to others, will rave incoherencies rather than be mute. Moreover, the intellect, as we have seen, is capable of being corrected. It can come to realise its native powers of intuition. The conception of duration is a revolutionary conception which resolves many antinomies, and there is hope that, by its aid, the mystic of the future may throw a clearer light on the nature of mystical experience. The mystic may find that the conception of eternity as a concentrated ever-moving duration closes with his remembered experience better than the conception of a static unity, whole and complete. He may find it possible, to the inestimable benefit of human knowledge, to carry the exploration of his intellect farther and farther into the heart of life, finding a solution for the problems which have hitherto baffled him when he has tried to recapture, in articulate imagination, the transcendent experience of truth.

Real time and the mystic of the future.

APPENDIX

MR. BERTRAND RUSSELL AND M. BERGSON

It is amazing that Bertrand Russell should be capable of argument so loose and superficial as that employed by him in attacking Bergson's theory of knowledge. In illustration I propose to comment on a passage from his essay *Mysticism and Logic* (*Mysticism and Logic and other Essays*, published in 1918 by Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., *vide* pp. 15-16).

I will take the passage bit by bit, and look at it *from the attitude not of a critic of Bergson but of an orthodox disciple.*

1. "Of Bergson's theory that intellect is a purely practical faculty, developed in the struggle for survival, and not a source of true beliefs, we may say, first, that it is only through intellect that we know of the struggle for survival and of the biological ancestry of man: if the intellect is misleading the whole

of this merely inferred history is presumably untrue."

If Russell is using the term " intellect " in the narrow Bergsonian sense, he is not entitled to start from the premiss that " it is only through intellect " that we know about evolution. Bergson would not admit it, for he holds that intuition is essential to the discovery of scientific truth : he writes that " a profoundly considered history of human thought would show that we owe to intuition all that is greatest in the sciences as well as all that is permanent in metaphysics." [1]

If, on the other hand, Russell is using the term intellect in a wider sense, so as to embrace intuition, he is not entitled to found any conclusion on the suggestion that Bergson regards intellect as " misleading." If the history of the past is elicited by intellect in the sense of intuition and inference combined, then there can be, from the point of view of the Bergsonian philosophy, no presumption of its untruth : Russell's argument falls to the ground.

A sentence in the essay two pages earlier suggests that when Russell speaks of knowing " only through intellect," he is, as a matter of

[1] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 59.

fact, using intellect in a wide sense. "Instinct, intuition or insight," he writes, "is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes." His argument appears then to amount to this, that x is only known through intellect *including* intuition, and that if intellect *excluding* intuition is (as Bergson says) misleading, all knowledge of x is presumably untrue.

2. "If, on the other hand, we agree with him in thinking that evolution took place as Darwin believed, then it is not only intellect, but all our faculties, that have been developed under the stress of practical utility. Intuition is seen at its best where it is directly useful, for example in regard to other people's characters and dispositions."

It is admitted that so far as intuition has been developed, it has been developed "under the stress of practical utility." But what does this prove? Certainly not that "intuition is seen at its best where it is directly useful." The idea of intuition which Russell has to overthrow, and which he cannot ignore or assume to be false, is that of a faculty pre-eminently fitted by its *original*

nature for the speculative understanding of life. If intuition is such a faculty, its development with a view to utility will not necessarily improve it as a giver of absolute truth.

If you take a physically unfit scholar and train him solely with a view to running, you may succeed in developing him from a bad into a moderate runner, but it does not follow that he will be seen at his best on the running-track.

As an example of intuition at its best, Russell mentions intuition "in regard to other people's characters and dispositions." Now such intuition is probably far from being pure. Bergson writes that "in the phenomena of feeling, in unreflecting sympathy and antipathy, we experience in ourselves—though in a much vaguer form, *and one too much penetrated with intelligence* —something of what must happen in the consciousness of an insect acting by instinct."[1] Intuition in course of being developed for utility is probably intuition becoming merged with intellect: the development that takes place is not a development of intuition pure and simple.

3. "Bergson apparently holds that capacity for this kind of knowledge is less explicable

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 184.

by the struggle for existence than, for example, capacity for pure mathematics."

In what sense does Bergson hold this view? Clearly in the sense that intuition is less far developed than intellect: the struggle for existence has done less to develop intuition, and has therefore less to explain. Any development of intuition with a view to utility is just as explicable by the struggle as the development of intellect is: but intuition itself, as we find it, is (as compared with intellect) *less to be explained by the evolution of life, because it is more to be explained by life's original nature.* It is here that the real difference between Russell and Bergson lies: Russell appears to regard our faculties as wholly explicable by evolution, while, according to Bergson, they have to be explained also by the original nature of the vital *élan* with its implicit power of sympathetic knowledge. This root idea of Bergson seems to be ignored by Russell (cf. section 2 above).

4. "Yet the savage deceived by false friendship is likely to pay for his mistake with his life; whereas even in the most civilised societies men are not put to death for mathematical incompetence."

For the sake of argument we will ignore the intellectual element in the savage's power of penetration, and agree with Russell to regard him as the representative of intuition.

Now the comparison between the intuitive savage and the mathematical genius would suggest that intuition ought to be exceedingly useful for survival, and intellect, on the contrary, of very little use. The question is therefore forced upon us why intuition has not in fact been developed to anything like the extent of intellect.

Ultimately, the only satisfactory explanation is that which Russell rejects, viz. that intuition is a faculty of absolute knowledge and not, like intellect, a practical faculty. Intuition is, according to Bergson, a sympathetic knowledge due to the original unity of life: life is a whole sympathetic to itself. As soon as life, entering into matter, divides itself up—as soon as the tendency to individuation begins to assert itself—the wide range of intuition (originally co-extensive with reality) begins to be contracted. Intuition is dependent on a magnetic *life-bond* between the subject and object of it. In order to have a *wide* and *developed* intuitive knowledge, man would have to lose his individuality.

Intuition, again, is the faculty which gives absolute truth, not diminished by analysis or abstraction: there are some situations where absolute truth would be of the highest practical value, but for our ordinary little purposes it would be largely irrelevant and often exceedingly embarrassing. What we usually want is to be able to *abstract* from a situation some particular element which affects our interest at the moment: and intellect, of course, is the faculty of abstraction.

Thus, even if the complete development of intuition were compatible with individual life, there is no reason why intuition should be developed except for special situations; this explains why intuition lacks all the versatility of intellect.

Now let us look at the intuitive savage and his false friend. The false friend is, of course, an intellectual, for disguise and deceit belong to the calculation of the intellect. The intuitive savage might be saved from his false friend one day: the next day, in some new crisis, his intuition would probably fail him. We may picture him, for instance, failing to conceal his merriment when the chief of his tribe makes himself ridiculous. Not so the false friend—he is far more versatile,

far better able to vary his behaviour according to the needs of the situation. "The savage deceived by false friendship is likely to pay for his mistake with his life." Why not? for the false friend survives, and it is no doubt a case of the survival of the fitter.

If it be objected that the deceiver is anti-social and that evolution is interested in the society as well as in the individual, I would point out that a cunning tribe will be likely to defeat its more justice-loving neighbour. I would point out, too, that there is an obvious value to the individual in being able to disguise and control his intentions and feelings. What chaos would there be if we all saw through one another!

5. "All the most striking of his instances of intuition in animals have a very direct survival value."

Of course this is so: Bergson shows it to be. His instances also illustrate how narrow and inflexible instinct is, when developed and specialised for utility. What is development in one aspect is degradation in another.

6. "The fact is, of course, that both intuition and intellect have been developed

because they are useful, and that, speaking broadly, they are useful when they give truth and become harmful when they give falsehood."

There is *something* useful in intuition as well as in intellect. But the small degree to which it has been developed suggests that it is by far the less useful of the two.

" Speaking broadly " : this is just where broad generalisation is misleading. Russell should speak, at this point, ὡς ἀκριβῶς.

7. " Intellect, in civilised man, like artistic capacity, has occasionally been developed beyond the point where it is useful to the individual ; intuition, on the other hand, seems on the whole to diminish as civilisation increases. It is greater, as a rule, in children than in adults, in the uneducated than in the educated. Probably in dogs it exceeds anything to be found in human beings. But those who see in these facts a recommendation of intuition ought to return to running wild in the woods, dyeing themselves with woad and living on hips and haws."

It is perhaps *education* rather than evolution which, as a rule, is responsible for developing intellect beyond the point of utility to the individual. Man may choose to what purpose he will apply his intellect. There are, no doubt, circumstances in which the fullest intellectual development of, say, a mathematical genius might be directly useful to him : his full *natural* endowment at least is not greater than he might conceivably need in order to secure his practical triumph in difficult surroundings.

In any case the genius of the mathematician (and equally the analytical genius of the scientist or the philosopher) is made possible by the wonderfully developed genius of the artisan. "If we could rid ourselves of all pride, if, to define our species, we kept strictly to what the historic and the prehistoric periods show us to be the constant characteristic of man and of intelligence, we should say perhaps not *Homo sapiens* but *Homo faber*."[1] "We are born artisans as we are born geometricians, and indeed we are geometricians only because we are artisans."[2] Men may not, it is true, "be put to death for mathematical incompetence." Never-

[1] *Creative Evolution*, p. 146. [2] *Creative Evolution*, p. 47.

theless men have succumbed in the struggle for existence when that practical " artisan " capacity which is at the root of mathematical genius has not been sufficiently developed in them.

I have already commented on the significance of the fact that intuition has failed to develop far. Russell's not very dignified attempt to ridicule the Bergsonian theory hardly deserves notice. Bergson's ideal of intuition, " instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely," is certainly not to be looked for among wild men of the woods !

It is worth comparing Russell's jibe at intuition with the passage already quoted (occurring two pages earlier in his essay) in which he states that " instinct, intuition, or insight is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes." Perhaps he would advocate the civilised philosopher visiting the savage in order to profit by the latter's more abundant insight, and then returning to his study desk in order to " confirm or confute " what he has heard !

Russell must, of course, be using intuition in two different senses ; but there is no definition or distinction. Could loose writing go much farther ?

8. "Let us next examine whether intuition possesses any such infallibility as Bergson claims for it. The best instance of it, according to him, is our acquaintance with ourselves; yet self-knowledge is proverbially rare and difficult. Most men, for example, have in their nature meannesses, vanities, and envies of which they are quite unconscious, though even their best friends can perceive them without any difficulty."

Does Bergson hold that the best instance of intuition is "our acquaintance with ourselves"? Russell so interprets the statement in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (which he quotes on p. 14) that "there is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time—our self which endures."

The difficulty of self-knowledge is a truism; γνῶθι σέαυτόν is a hard precept, as men have tragically proved, generation after generation. Is Bergson really such a fool, and such an artless fool, as to say that at least we can all know ourselves? Certainly not. Russell flagrantly misinterprets him when he substitutes for the

knowledge of "*our own self in its flowing through time —our self which endures*" the terms "acquaintance with ourselves" and "self-knowledge." Bergson does not affirm that this primary intuition gives us knowledge of our own characters. Obviously knowledge of our moral qualities, "our meannesses, vanities and envies," implies dissection, analysis, the work of the intellect; if we attempt to know ourselves in the sense of knowing our faults, the failure—supposing we do fail—is the failure of the intellect.

Introspection, however, is not the same thing as intuition. Bergson qualifies the self that we know through intuition, and the qualification is essential. The foundation of his theory of knowledge is that intuition reveals to us our own nature as enduring beings; it reveals the nature of life as "true continuity, real mobility, reciprocal penetration"—in short, it introduces us to the reality of duration, of time.

Russell's mistake is enough in itself to condemn his criticism of Bergson. It is clear that he altogether fails to understand the very foundation of Bergson's theory of knowledge.

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