The Philosophy of Henri Bergson

During the 1st Semester I have made a study of the philosophy of Henri Bergson and consider it to have been a major and perhaps the most important direct influence on the development of the Cubist aesthetic - as well as central to the development of early twentieth century Modernism. It is my contention that it was on the back of Bergson’s philosophy that a set of philosophical ways of thinking with a fundamentally Platonic and Neoplatonic core were carried into at least a number of the leading art currents in the first two decades of the twentieth century - particularly that of Cubism - itself pivotal to Modernism.

The connection between Cubism, Bergson and Platonism has been written about since the early development of Cubism, notably by those involved with that development. Yet despite the evidence, to my knowledge it has only been explored to some degree by R. Antliff. Antliff’s writing is exemplary of the confusion and hesitancy of scholarship on this subject. On the one hand he argued that Bergson played a seminal role in shaping the art and politics of the Fauvist, Cubist and Futurist movements¹, that the first attempts to align Cubist theory with that of Bergson began in about 1912² and that ‘no sustained comparative examination of Cubism’s precepts with those of Bergson has been undertaken thus far.’³

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¹ R. Antliff, Inventing Bergson, Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde, New Jersey, 1993, 6
³ Ibid., 342
On the other, he wrote not only that Bergson’s influence on Cubism has remained enigmatic but that his question was not whether the progenitors of Cubism and Fauvism invented their art forms in response to Bergson, but how his ideas were received in a pre-existing (my emphasis) Fauvist and Cubist milieu. Other writers recognised an interesting connection between Bergson’s philosophy and Cubism or dismissed any possible influence of the former on the latter. Hence, since Bergson’s philosophy has long been ‘out of favour’, I consider it necessary to state the following as an exposition of that philosophy, focussing particularly on those aspects I consider relevant to my subject. I will also make a number of connections with Cubism and the relevant artistic and philosophical work of others.

Bergson was one of the most influential and widely read philosophers of the first decades of the twentieth century. His lectures at the College de France (where he was a professor from 1900) were immensely popular with students and wealthy intellectuals. By 1910 he was regarded as a national sage, receiving the Legion d’honneur in 1918 and the Nobel Prize for literature in 1928. His most influential works were written in between 1889 (*Time and Free Will*) and 1907 (*Creative Evolution*).

They are *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Laughter* (1900) and *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903). Many, particularly some religious and political zealots regarded him as an ally against positivism. In his introduction to an edition of *Creative Evolution*, Peter Gunter referred to

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5 Antliff, ibid., 3. In his important study on the relationship between Neoplatonism and certain artists involved in the development of early twentieth century abstraction, Cheetham omits discussing Bergson. ‘I do not discuss Bergson, because in spite of his tremendous interest in memory and his influence in modern painting (especially Futurism), he was overtly anti-Platonic in his theorising.’ In the next paragraph, ‘Notions of purity are also central to Cubism and Orphism, as Apollinaire makes clear.’ M. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity, Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting*, Cambridge, 1991, xiv,xv

6 Antliff cites G. Beck and M. Roskill in ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 347
that book as the first metaphysical system of the twentieth century. This book is regarded as Bergson’s most important work and it had a very strong impact when it was published.\textsuperscript{7}

Bergson’s philosophy played a major part in the ‘revolt against reason’ in French culture from the late nineteenth century. His epistemology was overtly anti-intellectual, putting ‘intuition’ in the place of thought. His notion of mind was plainly dualist - ‘consciousness is essentially free, it is freedom itself’\textsuperscript{8}, ‘consciousness does not spring from the brain’\textsuperscript{9}

the mind overflows the brain on all sides, and...cerebral activity responds only to a very small part of mental activity...mental life cannot be an affect of bodily life...it looks much more as if the body were simply made use of by the mind, and...we have, therefore no reason to suppose the body and the mind united inseparably to one another.\textsuperscript{10}

Bergson thought that existence moves as a flow and not dialectically. For him, the unity of opposites resulted in a false movement. Deleuze noted that in this there is a Platonic tone.\textsuperscript{11} The implication of Bergson’s philosophy is that he did to Plato what Marx claimed to have done to Hegel, yet his philosophy sought to maintain the development of Platonism standing upright. He opposed his eternity of creative evolution to Plato’s eternity of im-


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 270

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 262

\textsuperscript{10} H. Larrabee, ed., \textit{Selections from Bergson}, New York, 1949, 119

\textsuperscript{11} G. Deleuze, \textit{Bergsonism}, trans., H. Tomlinson, B. Habberjam, New York, 1988, 44; also ‘This multiplicity that is duration is not at all the same thing as the multiple, any more than its simplicity is the same as the One’, 46
mutability based on Ideas. Bergson defined ‘eidos’ as ‘the stable view taken of the instability of things’. 12

He wrote that Plato was the ‘first and foremost’ to seek true reality in the unchanging, whereas for Bergson, this reality lay precisely in what does change. For him, Plato did not take becoming seriously.

The whole of the philosophy which begins with Plato and culminates in Plotinus is the development of a principle which may be formulated thus: “There is more in the immutable than in the moving, and we pass from the stable to the unstable by a mere diminution.” Now it is the contrary which is true. Modern science dates from the day when mobility was set up as an independent reality. 13

Yet, on investigation, this eternal and ‘independent reality’ is revealed as precisely the immutable of Plato.

Bergson asked how it is possible, having posited unchanging Ideas, to make change come from them, then argued ‘there is more in the motionless than in the moving’, 14 that Ideas are contained in matter and that nothing, the source of becoming, moves between Ideas, creating ‘endless agitation’, which leads to the degradation of Ideas. Hence duration coexisted with Ideas. Forms are ‘snapshots’ of changing reality. ‘They are moments gathered along the course of time’. 15

12 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 315
14 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 316
15 Ibid., 317
Beneath the changing phenomena will appear to us, by transparence, a closed system of concepts subordinated to and co-ordinated with each other...It will be prior to human knowledge...prior also to things, which awkwardly try to imitate it... Its immutability is therefore, indeed, the cause of the universal becoming.\textsuperscript{16}

He argued

But when we put immutable Ideas at the base of the moving reality, a whole physics, a whole cosmology, a whole theology follows necessarily. We must insist on the point.\textsuperscript{17}

Bergson thought that we are all born Platonists\textsuperscript{18} and that there exists nothing positive outside Ideas.\textsuperscript{19} He gave the example of the Idea of a poem, how thousands of people write on an Idea and how our minds can leap from the words to the images and from these to the Idea.\textsuperscript{20}

the philosopher, ascending again from the percept to the concept, sees condensed into the logical all the positive reality that the physical possesses. His intellect, doing away with the materiality that lessens being, grasps being itself in the immutable system of Ideas.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 328. This is what C\é{}zanne sought to express in his late work.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 315

\textsuperscript{18} Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 64

\textsuperscript{19} Creative Evolution, op. cit., 316

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 320

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 321
In view not only of form in art but of the highly philosophic nature of Cubism, Bergson’s treatment of form is very important, and is both Platonic

the philosophy of Ideas...starts from the Form; it sees in the Form the very essence of reality...it posits Form in the eternal.

and most productive in comparison. For example the following

Things re-enter into each other. What was extended in space is contracted into pure Form. And past, present and future shrink into a single moment, which is eternity.

compared with Picasso’s statement in 1923

When I hear people speak of the evolution of an artist, it seems to me that they are considering him standing between two mirrors that face each other and reproduce his image an infinite number of times, and that they contemplate the successive images of one mirror as his past, and the images of the other mirror as his future, while his real image is taken as his present. They do not consider that they are all the same images in different planes.

Again, on the limitation and unreality of appearance

22 Ibid., 318
23 Ibid., 320
(Forms) tend to withdraw into their own definition, that is to say, into the artificial reconstruction and symbolical expression which is their intellectual equivalent. They enter into eternity, if you will; but what is eternal in them is just what is unreal.  

Nietzsche wrote

The more ‘Idea’ the more being. (Plato) reversed the concept ‘reality’ and said: ‘What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the ‘Idea’, the nearer we approach ‘truth’ - Is this understood? It was the greatest of rebaptisms...Fundamentally, Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being! lie and invention to truth! the unreal to the actual! But he was so convinced of the value of appearance that he gave it the attributes ‘being’, ‘causality’ and ‘goodness’ and ‘truth’, in short everything men val-

Picasso who had read most of Nietzsche’s works by seventeen and who co-edited a magazine recommending *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1901 stated

...Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise truth...The artist must know how to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.  

Bergson distinguished between the ‘everyday’, ‘positive’ sciences which are characteristic of the intellect, remain ‘external’ to the object with the use of symbols, are restricted to separate

25 *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., 317
27 Picasso to M. de Zayas in Fry, op. cit., 165-166
moments, giving us a relative, convenient knowledge, and ‘true’ science which is obtained by
the ascension to Ideas. This science is metaphysics which supposedly dispenses with symbols,
is ‘preformulated’ in nature and is capable of attaining the absolute.

Science is not then, a human construction. It is prior to our intellect, inde-
pendent of it, veritably the generator of Things.\(^{28}\)

Bergson acknowledged his profound obligation to Plotinus\(^{29}\) and gave a course of lec-
tures on him at the College de France in 1897-98. The metaphysical vision of Creative Evolu-
tion has been compared with that of Plotinus.\(^{30}\) In this book Bergson suggested the possi-
bility of applying the term ‘God’ to the source from which all things flow. In ‘The Two
Sources of Morality and Religion’, the primal energy at the heart of the universe is stated to
be love.

Creative Evolution is based on élan vital which for Bergson is the actualisation of memory in
duration. This élan vital drives life to ‘overcome’ matter. Bergson believed there is a ‘tremen-
dous push’ in nature which unites all nature and carries it along.\(^{31}\)

\(^{28}\) Creative Evolution, op. cit., 321

\(^{29}\) Selections from Bergson, op. cit., xiii

\(^{30}\) ‘And, faithful to the spirit of Plato, he (Plotinus) thought that the discovery of truth demanded
a conversion of the mind, which breaks away from the appearances here below and attaches itself to
the realities above: “Let us flee to our beloved homeland!”’, H. Bergson, The Creative Mind, trans., M.
Andison, New York, 1946, 163.

\(^{31}\) Creative Evolution, op. cit., 270. Bergson's vitalism was popular in literary circles, but was not ac-
cepted by many philosophers and scientists. Antliff quoted R. Grogin in noting that the greatest intel-
lectual assault on the rationalist bases of French democracy before World War One came from
Bergsonian vitalism. Antliff argued that Bergson's theories bore comparison with precepts underpin-
ing fascism. Inventing Bergson op. cit., 11.
As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organised beings, from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. 32

As in his theorising about science, Bergson’s dualism is again evident in his treatment of the concepts ‘time’ and ‘duration’ (durée) which are fundamental to his philosophy. There is ‘intellectual’ time - that which can be subject to analysis, and ‘real’ time - the time of psychological experience. There is ‘mere’ duration - the general flow in time of all things (‘the phantom of duration’33) and ‘pure’ duration, the non-material basis and origin of all things. It is dynamic, creative and irreversible - ‘Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances’. 34

Knowledge of duration can only be obtained by intuition - a direct, non-conceptual perception in which the act of knowing coincides with the person, experience or object in duration. Duration cannot be ‘spatialised’ i.e. divided into units. According to Bergson we do break movement and change it into simultaneous moments (‘simultaneity’) in order to act upon change. It is in our ‘inner’ life that the reality of change is revealed as indivisible, and it is this indivisible continuity of change which constitutes true duration. ‘Real’ time and ‘true’ duration are the same.

32 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 270
33 The Creative Mind, op. cit., 34
34 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 4
Bergson criticised Plato and Plotinus for turning away from practical life, for ‘escaping’ change and raising themselves above time, but this is precisely what Bergson did when he distinguished between time of the intellect and time of the immaterial mind. This ‘succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines’ is the site of Platonic reality.

Bergson wrote ‘(Plato) in his magnificent language...says that God, unable to make the world eternal, gave it Time, “a moving image of eternity.” The Time referred to here is ‘intellectual’ time, the ‘eternity’ is Bergson’s ‘real’ psychological time or ‘pure’ duration. He regarded duration and consciousness as inseparable. Inner duration is perceived by consciousness and ‘is nothing else but the melting of states of consciousness into one another.’

These distinct states of the external world give rise to states of consciousness which permeate one another, imperceptibly organise themselves into a whole, and bind the past to the present by this very process of connection.

Bergson equated consciousness with memory. Hence duration is essentially conscious memory. The preservation of the past and the interpenetration of which Bergson wrote is enabled by memory and belongs therefore to the mind only and not the objective world. In duration, there is no distinction between the present and the past and the emotions are paramount, entailing the addition to a present feeling of the memory of past moments.

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37 *Time and Free Will*, op. cit., 107

38 Ibid., 121
Inner duration is the continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, the present either containing within it in a distinct form the ceaselessly growing image of the past, or, more probably, showing by its continual change of quality the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older.  

For Bergson, there are different types of memory - memory applicable to daily existence (perception, ‘motor habits’, impulse) and memory attuned with the past (recollection). Referring to the two durations (not only do most commentators on Bergson incorrectly recognise only one - the ‘true’ or ‘inner’ duration, Bergson, as he frequently did, contradicted himself on this point) Bergson wrote of this *interpenetration of memories*

The duration wherein we see ourselves acting, and in which it is useful that we should see ourselves, is a duration whose elements are dissociated and juxtaposed. The duration wherein we act is a *duration wherein our states melt into each other* (my italics). It is within this that we should try to replace ourselves by thought.

Memory is a synthesis of past and present with a view to the future and duration is resistant to law and measurement. Our perceptions are infused with memories and our memories are activated by what we see - ‘these two complimentary memories insert themselves each into the other.’

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39 *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit., 40


41 *Selections from Bergson*, op. cit., 108

42 *Matter and Memory*, op. cit., 153
If, in order to count states of consciousness, we have to represent them symbolically in space, is it not likely that this symbolical representation will alter the normal conditions of inner perception?...our projection of our psychic states into space in order to form a discrete multiplicity is likely to influence these states themselves and to give them in reflective consciousness a new form, which immediate perception did not attribute to them.43

Not only do our different types of memory interpenetrate and interact in duration, any symbolic representation of this process will have further influence on our mental states. Further ‘there are always some dominant memories, shining points round which the others form a vague nebulosity.’44 On recollection, Bergson wrote

Subject and object would unite (my italics) in an extended perception, the subjective side of perception being the contraction effected by memory, and the objective reality of matter fusing with the multitudinous and successive vibrations into which the perception can be internally broken up...Questions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time, rather than of space.45

For Bergson, the synthesis performed by our consciousness of what is and what was, results in a permeation, completion and continuation.

Bergson held that change is the essence of life, that states of being do not exist distinct from each other, but as an endless flow - ‘there is only one unique duration, which carries every-

43 Time and Free Will, op. cit., 90. For Bergson, ‘space’ is a site of infinitely complex mental interaction, to which I will return.

44 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 171

45 Ibid., 70
thing with it - a bottomless, bankless river". But the change of which Bergson wrote takes place not in objective reality but in the duration of mind. This change applies even to a motionless object.

Let us take the most stable of internal states, the visual perception of a motionless external object. The object may remain the same, I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light; nevertheless the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates.

Bergson urged that change and duration need to be grasped in their mobility, that we need to recapture this essence of reality by moving back into duration.

No more inert states, no more dead things; nothing but the mobility of which the stability of life is made. A vision of this kind, where reality appears as continuous and indivisible, is on the road which leads to philosophical intuition.

Bergson’s dualism is again apparent in his notion of reality - that it is both external and given immediately to the mind - the latter being the reality of duration.

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46 An Introduction to Metaphysics, op. cit., 48
47 Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 58
48 Ibid. 111
In our perception, Bergson thought that we take ‘snapshots’ or ‘instantaneous views’ of flowing reality which we join together to give the appearance of becoming. He compared this with cinematography (‘the cinematographical instinct of our thought’). These solid points of support are necessary for living and for ‘positive’ science. They allow the essence of reality to escape.

Bergson argued that the elements of the spatial world are perpetually simultaneous with duration, whereas consciousness is pure duration and its states cannot be adequately represented as being extended in space. Objects in the material world are mutually external and only succeed each other in so far as they are remembered as doing so by an observer. Mental states succeed each other and to regard them as in anyway juxtaposed is to admit the validity of a translation of the continuity and interpenetration of mental life into spatial terms. Simultaneity is a thing of space and the external world, duration exists in the flow of memory.

We perceive the physical world and this perception appears, rightly or wrongly, to be inside and outside us at one and the same time; in one way it is a state of consciousness; in another, a surface film of matter in which perceiver and perceived coincide. To each moment of our inner life there thus corresponds a moment of our body and of all environing matter that is “simultaneous” with it; this matter then seems to participate in our conscious duration. Gradually we extend this duration to the whole physical world, because we see no reason to limit it to the immediate vicinity of our body.50

49 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 316

50 H. Bergson, Duration and Simultaneity, with Reference to Einstein’s Theory, trans., L. Jacobson, 1922, reprint., New York, 1965, 45
In its passage from what has been to what is, memory binds together and constitutes inner duration. Without the survival of the past in the present, there can only be a sequence of separate moments.

There is no doubt but that for us time is at first identical with the continuity of our inner life. What is this continuity? That of a flow or passage (my emphasis), but a self-sufficient flow or passage, the flow not implying a thing that flows and the passing not presupposing states through which we pass; the thing and the state are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself. It is memory...within change itself...that prolongs the before into the after, keeping them from being mere snap-shots appearing and disappearing in a present ceaselessly reborn. 

In reality, the body has no form (since form is immobile) and is changing constantly. Form can only be an instantaneous view of change. Similarly states of mind.

there is no state of mind, however simple, which does not change every moment, since there is no consciousness without memory; and no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments.

Bergson held that because the brain is a ‘biological instrument’ its capacity for intelligence is restricted to the taking of ‘snapshots’. Modern science likewise substitutes signs for the ob-

51 Ibid., 44. For Bergson, form is a snapshot of eternal truth in duration. But Plotinus put another Realm above the Intellectual which is formless - i.e. the One. Therefore for Plotinus, Form itself is an image of The One.

52 Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 23
jects themselves. These signs or Ideas are the moments of becoming and are plucked from eternity - ‘we end in the philosophy of Ideas when we apply the cinematographical mechanism of the intellect to the analysis of the real’.\(^{53}\)

The above may appear to contradict my thesis that Bergsonism was an adaptation of Platonism and Neoplatonism. However, not only did Bergson use Platonic terminology and do so in often contradictory ways as I have shown, his maintenance of the relationship between eternal truth (as duration) and appearance (as snapshots of that truth), and of the way by which that truth can be attained (through unreasoning intuition) derives from a Platonic and Neoplatonic heritage.\(^{54}\)

Bergson argued that an accumulation of points of view place one outside the subject and that the only way of attaining the subject’s essence (the absolute, perfection) would be by coinciding internally with the subject, by placing oneself within it. By entering it we attain absolute knowledge, by moving around it and remaining on its exterior we can acquire only relative knowledge.

*Were all the photographs of a town, taken from all possible points of view, to go on indefinitely completing one another, they would never be equivalent to the solid town in which we walk about.*\(^{55}\)

\(^{53}\) *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., 315. This quotation appears to contradict my thesis, but the contradiction is Bergson’s.

\(^{54}\) Numerous connections can be argued between Plato, Plotinus and Bergson. Some more will be argued by myself and quoted from Bergson in this essay. Also, for example ‘“And what about life? Is not that a function of mind?” “Very much so”, he said’, Plato, *The Republic*, trans. D. Lee, London, 1984, 100. This essay is primarily a setting out of Bergson’s philosophy.

\(^{55}\) *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit., 22
Through entering and identifying with the original, we become it. Bergson’s distinction between an accumulation of points revealing a subject and its perfect essence is the same as Plato made between the art of representation and truth. The former is a long way removed.\textsuperscript{56}

In his philosophy, Bergson sought to bring the flow of reality to consciousness as opposed to a succession of changing states. He thought that it is only by an effort that we can overcome our natural practice of taking ‘views’ of reality and apprehending a succession of changing states. Antliff suggests that these multiple views can be interpreted as a Kantian attempt to grasp the thing-in-itself.\textsuperscript{57} Bergson however referred to Kant’s thing-in-itself and stated we can know part of reality - ourselves, in our ‘natural purity.’ The taking of ‘snapshots’ is a function of the brain and is necessary for mere existence. Duration, which is entirely different, is a function of consciousness which in turn is distinct from the brain. Although Bergson acknowledged objective reality, ‘true’ reality lay only in conscious duration.\textsuperscript{58}

In \textit{Creative Evolution}, Bergson addressed the difficulty of portraying the marching past of a regiment. He wrote that we could take a series of snapshots and throw them on a screen so they very rapidly replace each other. But photography is not animation and from this we could never get movement. Even the motion in film can’t bring us to the full duration of this event. To do so, we must attach the images to an invisible becoming ‘situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself’.\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} ‘The art of representation is therefore a long way removed from truth and it is able to reproduce everything because it has little grasp of anything, and that little is of a mere phenomenal appearance. For example, a painter can paint a portrait of a shoemaker or a carpenter or any other craftsman without understanding any of their crafts.’ \textit{The Republic}, op. cit., 426. Also, the well-known example of the painter of a bed being at third remove from God’s creation.
\item \textsuperscript{57} R. Antliff, ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 342
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Creative Mind}, op. cit., 30
\end{itemize}
Even when they are successive, states of consciousness permeate one another ‘and in the simplest of them the whole soul can be reflected’. Memory, which is the progression from past to present, enables us to place ourselves immediately in the past.

We start from a “virtual state” which we lead onwards, step-by-step, through a series of different planes of consciousness (my emphasis), up to the goal where it is materialised in an actual perception; that is to say, up to the point where it becomes a present, active state - up to that extreme plane of our consciousness against which our body stands out. In this virtual state, pure memory consists.  

For Bergson, these planes of consciousness move between the plane of ‘pure’ memory and the plane of action. He believed that between these two planes are thousands of different planes of consciousness. The plane of ‘pure’ memory is the place of dreaming. The plane of action is the plane of ‘motor habits’. Bergson referred to these planes of consciousness as an infinite number of planes of memory. Further, ‘These planes...exist virtually, with that existence which is proper to things of the spirit’.

Bergson thought that there could be a possible interpenetration of human consciousnesses, that two consciousnesses can be united in a single experience, into a single duration and that

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60 Time and Free Will, op. cit., 98
61 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 239
62 Ibid., 170
63 Ibid., 242
64 Duration and Simultaneity, op. cit., 46-47
intuition possibly opens the way into consciousness in general.\textsuperscript{65} Again, he thought that an impersonal consciousness linked our conscious minds with all nature.

Such a consciousness would grasp, in a single, instantaneous perception, multiple events lying at different points in space; simultaneity would be precisely the possibility of two or more events entering within a single, instantaneous perception. What is true and what illusory, in this way of seeing things?\textsuperscript{66}

The more conscious we become of our progress in pure duration, the more we press against the future and know freedom.

For Bergson, memory is not a function of the brain but is independent of matter and ‘there is not merely a difference of degree, but of kind, between perception and recollection.’\textsuperscript{67} The brain is only an intermediary between sensation and duration - ‘in no case can the brain store up recollections or images’.\textsuperscript{68}

Memory, inseparable in practice from perception, imports the past into the present, contracts into a single intuition many moments of duration and thus by a twofold operation compels us, \textit{de facto}, to perceive matter in ourselves, whereas we, \textit{de jure}, perceive matter within matter.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{The Creative Mind}, op. cit., 36
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Duration and Simultaneity}, op. cit., 45
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Matter and Memory}, op. cit., 236
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 225
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 49
Memory gives us access to pure duration which is spirit - ‘pure memory is a spiritual manifestation. With memory we are, in truth, in the domain of spirit.’

In reference to Platonism Bergson wrote

an invisible current (duration) makes modern philosophy tend to lift the Soul above the Idea. In this as in modern science and even more so, it tends to move in the opposite direction from ancient thought.

Not only is his terminology Neoplatonic, his philosophical heritage is clear

And this double movement of memory between its two extreme limits...sketches out...the first general ideas - motor habits ascending to seek similar images, in order to extract resemblances from them, and similar images coming down toward motor habits, to fuse themselves, for instance, in the automatic utterance of the word which makes them one. (my emphases)

Bergson’s central thesis is that ‘reality’ must be grasped by intuition. Intuition is the immediate non-intellectual knowledge not of discontinuous moments but of the indivisible flow of ‘real’ time, comprising a plurality of multiple aspects and meanings. Bergson defined intuition as ‘the metaphysical investigation of what is essential and unique in the object’ and as the

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70 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 240
71 The Creative Mind, op. cit., 229
72 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 243
73 An Introduction to Metaphysics, op. cit., 28
ability to immediately discern our own inner being as well as the thoughts of others.\textsuperscript{74} In apprehending reality in its true duration, we \textit{enter into} the experience or thing itself.

Bergson referred to Schelling’s and Schopenhauer’s use of the concept ‘intuition’ in their search for the eternal whereas for him, it was a question of finding true duration. Not only is his work informed by Neoplatonism and peppered with concepts such as ‘essence’, ‘absolute’, ‘truth’, ‘perfection’ and ‘God’, for example

Coincidence with the person or object can alone give one the absolute. It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that \textit{absolute} is synonymous with \textit{perfection}.\textsuperscript{75}

Consider the final sentence in two of his most influential books

Spirit borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds and restores them to matter in the form of movements which it has stamped with its own freedom\textsuperscript{76}

The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death.\textsuperscript{77}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{74} \textit{Inventing Bergson}, op. cit., 40
  \item \textsuperscript{75} \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 3
  \item \textsuperscript{76} \textit{Matter and Memory}, op. cit., 249
  \item \textsuperscript{77} From \textit{Creative Evolution} in \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 105
\end{itemize}
Intuition unites science and metaphysics in ‘the absolute’. It deals with mobility, and as I have shown earlier, this mobility applies also to the motionless.

To grasp the essence of a thing is to intuit it in its becoming, its movement. We must place ourselves within this evolution. This amounts to the coincidence of consciousness with ‘the living principle’ from which it derives. So duration is the intuitive apprehension of the passage of time. Intuition is extremely difficult, since it requires us to use our minds in a direction and manner the opposite of which our brains are used to function in, to reach ‘the inward life of things’. It therefore requires not only the act of seeing (the already-made) but that this be combined with the act of willing (the being-made). Intuition enables us to grasp reality directly, not superficially but in depth, unmediated by intellectual apprehension. Through intuition we can probe the meaning and nature of life and of evolution itself.

While Bergson’s claim that ‘reality’ can be perceived by non-intellectual intuition appears to directly contradict the philosophy of Plato in which knowledge of Ideas is attained through ‘reason’, the issue depends on what exactly constitutes ‘intuition’ and ‘reason’. They amount to the same non-reasoning contemplation of perfection in mind. Both are dependent on the reality of mind being more real than and distinct from that of the senses. Plato, like Bergson, did not argue that the world perceived by the senses is unreal, but that it has a lower status than the realm of truth; the relationship Bergson and Plato drew between knowledge and the emotions is the same.

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78 _An Introduction to Metaphysics_, op. cit., 51

79 For example Plato on the imagination and divine inspiration of a poet (_Ion_), on the love of beauty and sexual love (_Phaedrus_). Plotinus developed this relation between inspiration, Form as focus for the emotions and truth. Deleuze noted that Bergson’s intuition is Platonic in inspiration, in _Bergsonism_, op. cit., 22.
Bergson believed that such intuitive knowledge could nourish and illuminate everyday life, since the world of our senses is no more than a shadow and is as cold as death.\textsuperscript{80} He wrote that a philosophy of intuition will be swept away by the ‘positive’ sciences ‘if it does not resolve to see the life of the body just where it really is, on the road that leads to the life of the spirit.’\textsuperscript{81} Intuition or mind introduces us to the unity of spiritual life (intuition and intellect).\textsuperscript{82} Bergson’s intuition amounts to knowledge of the soul in its eternal movement.

According to Bergson there are two ways to apprehend reality - by the analysis and understanding of partial notations (the way of science) or by the metaphysical intuition of real parts (the way of creation and art).\textsuperscript{83} Analysis breaks up duration into static fragmentary concepts and is compelled to move around the object it desires to embrace.\textsuperscript{84} Intuition or ‘intellectual sympathy’\textsuperscript{85} probes the flow of duration in its concreteness, by placing one within an object and giving an absolute.

Analysis reduces an object to elements common to it and other objects, intuition allows one to experience its inexpressible uniqueness. Analysis always deals with the immobile and cannot be reconstituted, intuition places itself in mobility and can be reconstituted in consciousness. It is a simple act, whereas

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 111. Compare with the simile of the cave in \textit{The Republic}, op. cit., 316-325.
\item \textit{Creative Evolution}, op. cit., 269
\item Ibid., 268
\item Carr suggests that perception is the revelation of matter and memory is the revelation of spirit, each being the awareness of a different reality. H. Carr, \textit{The Philosophy of Change}, London 1914, 90.
\item An \textit{Introduction to Metaphysics}, op. cit., 24. Representations taken from successive points of view belong to analysis which can never go beyond the surface of an object. A major point in my thesis will be that the application and retention of the misnomer ‘Analytic’ to the early development of Cubism by Picasso and Braque shows both how little understood is both Bergson’s philosophy and its enormous impact on Cubism and the origins of Modernism. The Cubists rejected the art of illusional appearance and I believe what they most directly built upon is expressed in Bergson’s philosophy.
\item \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 4
\end{enumerate}
analysis multiplies without end the number of its points of view in order to complete its always incomplete representation; and ceaselessly varies its symbols that it may perfect the always imperfect translation. It goes on therefore to infinity.  

Bergson thought that one can pass from the reality of intuition to the concepts of analysis, but never in reverse order. Even then ‘the intuition of duration, when exposed to the rays of the understanding...quickly congeals into fixed, distinct and immobile concepts.’

Bergson applied the term ‘subjective’ to what is given in intuition (that which can be completely known) and ‘objective’ to what is given through analysis (a constantly increasing number of new impressions). For him the intellect is bound to misunderstand motion and change, reducing such phenomena to points and instants. It is spatially orientated and unavoidably tends to separate states of mind. In duration, states of mind flow into and interpenetrate each other. Bergson believed that we have almost completely sacrificed intuition to intellect and wanted to develop a philosophy in which intuition subsumed intellect. ‘Intellect leaves us in the darkness of night.’

For Bergson, there are two levels of conscious life - ‘a superficial level composed of discrete sensations and separate states and a deeper level where there is no separation but a pure continuity.’ We constantly tend to assimilate the latter to the former through separating moments and the use of words. Language reduces the expression and particularity of individual experience to shared conventions. This criticism is most relevant to emotional expression. To 

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86 An Introduction to Metaphysics, op. cit., 24
87 The Creative Mind, op. cit., 228
88 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 268
89 A. Pilkington, Bergson and his Influence, A Reassessment, Cambridge, 1976, 5
put a feeling into words conveys only the shadow of the feeling since it is inevitably bound up with a multitude of feelings. Similarly with ideas (Ideas).

We see that the intellect, so skilful in dealing with the inert, is awkward the moment it touches the living. Whether it wants to treat the life of the body or the life of the mind, it proceeds with the rigour, the stiffness and the brutality of an instrument not designed for such use...The intellect is characterised by a natural inability to comprehend life.90

Since mental reality does not exist in space, the intellect, which does and deals with spatiality, cannot grasp it. Mental reality can only be intuited because it lies beyond spatial explanation. Although the intellect can give an increasingly complete account of the material world, it can only offer a reduction of life into terms of mechanics. Intuition is the faculty of grasping the pure flow of consciousness before the intellect fragments it into separate states and parts.

Bergson thought that geometry is immanent in the universe91 and that nature as a unity can be represented in an abstract and geometric form.92 Geometry as consciousness is prior to intellect and is the latter’s goal of perfect fulfilment.93 It is eternal and impersonal.94 The intellect through tendency to its goal carries ‘a latent geometrism that is set free in the measure

90 Selections from Bergson, op. cit.,88
91 Creative Evolution, op. cit., 361
92 Ibid., 190. Even in extension, the body is defined by geometry, Creative Evolution, op. cit., 349. Also, ‘Descartes reduced matter - considered at the instant - to extension; physics in his eyes, attained to the real insofar as it was geometrical.’ Duration and Simultaneity, op. cit., 160.
93 Ibid., 210-211
94 Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 63
and proportion that (it) penetrates into the inner nature of inert matter.\textsuperscript{95} This results in the geometrification of space.\textsuperscript{96}

Bergson thought that our minds give matter its true materiality\textsuperscript{97} since every aspect of matter acts on every other aspect of matter and that ‘all division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division.’\textsuperscript{98} There is something more but not different to matter than what is given by the senses, and this is geometry - ‘matter...is weighted with geometry.’\textsuperscript{99}

The space of consciousness is real motion\textsuperscript{100} and therefore doesn’t exist between things but in the relations between things and as such is part of duration and the absolute.\textsuperscript{101} The intuition of space and direction requires the same geometrisation of nature as the intuition of bodies.\textsuperscript{102}

Bergson wrote that ‘spatialised time’ is a fourth dimension of space. This occurs in consciousness where the mind brings together simultaneities or successive moments and gives them duration.

Thanks to philosophy, all things acquire depth, - more than depth, something like a fourth dimension which permits anterior perceptions to remain.

\textsuperscript{95} Creative Evolution, op. cit., 195
\textsuperscript{96} Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 135
\textsuperscript{97} Creative Evolution, op. cit., 202
\textsuperscript{98} Matter and Memory, op. cit., 196
\textsuperscript{99} Creative Evolution, op. cit., 369
\textsuperscript{100} Matter and Memory, op. cit., 217
\textsuperscript{101} Bergsonism, op. cit., 49
\textsuperscript{102} Creative Evolution, op. cit., 212
bound up with present perceptions and the immediate future itself to become partly outlined in the present. Reality...then...affirms itself dynamically, in the continuity and variability of its tendency. What was immobile and frozen in our perception is warmed and set in motion. Everything comes to life around us, everything is revivified in us.103

‘Space is no more without us than within us, and...all sensations partake of extensity.’ The problem with ‘ordinary realism’ is that sensations are extracted from each other and placed apart in an indefinite and empty space.104 In reference to contemporary psychology, Bergson wrote ‘It is maintained, not without an appearance of reason, that there is no sensation without extensity or without a feeling of “volume”.’105

Bergson used the achievements of science to refute the ‘positive sciences’ and to justify his theories. Not only are all atoms interpenetrating, with each atom occupying the whole of gravitational space, the materiality of the atom dissolves further, with the advance of knowledge, to a point where objective matter no longer exists, but force becomes ‘materialised’. This force returns continuity to the universe.106 Bergson referred to Faraday’s work

103 The Creative Mind, op. cit., 186
104 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 216
105 Ibid., 217.
106 Bergson and Modern Thought, op. cit., 83-84, Matter and Memory, op. cit., 199-200. Compare with Kandinsky, ‘This discovery (the further division of the atom) struck me with terrific impact, comparable to that of the end of the world. In the twinkling of an eye, the mighty arches of science lay shattered before me. All things became flimsy, with no strength of certainty...To me, science had been destroyed.’ Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 1911, reprint., New York 1977, 14. Also Marinetti, “Let’s go!” I said, “Let’s go friends! Let’s go out. Mythology and the Mystic Ideal are finally overcome. We are about to witness the birth of the centaur and soon we shall see the first angels fly!” The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism,1908, in H. Chipp, ed., Theories of Modern Art, A Source Book by Artists and Critics, California,1968, 284. Lenin wrote that ‘matter’ is a philosophical concept for objective reality.outside the mind and that ““Matter disappears” means that the limit within which we have hitherto known matter disappears and that our knowledge is penetrating deeper’. V. Lenin, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy, 1908, reprint., Moscow, 1977, 241.
For Faraday, the atom is a centre of force. He means by this that the individuality of the atom consists in the mathematical point at which cross, radiating throughout space, the indefinite lines of force which really constitute it: thus each atom occupies the whole space to which gravitation extends and all atoms are interpenetrating.\(^\text{107}\)

and to that of Lord Kelvin

Lord Kelvin, moving in another order of ideas, supposes a perfect, continuous, homogeneous and incompressible fluid, filling space: what we term an atom he makes into a vortex ring, ever whirling in this continuity and owing its properties to its circular form, its existence and consequently, its individuality to its motion...vortices and lines of force...point out the direction in which we may seek for a representation of the real.\(^\text{108}\)

Bergson stressed the interpenetration of all things.\(^\text{109}\) Although the material world can be extended in space and the mental cannot, they form an absolute interpenetration with no independent parts.

A priori and apart from any hypothesis on the nature of the matter, it is evident that the materiality of a body does not stop at the point at which we


\(^{108}\) *Matter and Memory*, op. cit., 201. In 1912 Apollinaire described Delaunay’s art as ‘Orphic Cubism’. In the same year Delaunay wrote an article titled ‘La Lumière’ in which he made frequent use of Bergsonian concepts - ‘simultaneity’, ‘rhythm’, ‘vital movement’, ‘visual movement’ and ‘dynamic’. His *Eiffel Tower* (1911) like Gleizes’ *Portrait of Jacques Nayral* (1911) was painted from collective memories. Antliff wrote that Delaunay’s *Eiffel Tower* had a Bergsonian genealogy. See ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’ op. cit., 345.

\(^{109}\) *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., 266
touch it: a body is present wherever its influence is felt...The more physics advances, the more it effaces the individuality of bodies and even of the particles into which the scientific imagination began by decomposing them: bodies and corpuscles tend to dissolve into a universal interaction.\textsuperscript{110}

The importance of Bergson’s philosophy to an understanding of the development of abstraction and early twentieth century Modernism cannot be overstated. The similarity in the treatment of form woven into pictorial space in the art of Cubism, Futurism, Cubo-Futurism and Rayonnism (Rayism) in particular, find their connection here. Obviously, my substantiation of this assertion will be central to my thesis. As I have stated previously, this essay is essentially an explication, owing to the subject’s neglect, of Bergson’s philosophy.

The following are two wonderful and substantial quotations which, I think, have immense bearing on my subject. The first deals with the inadequacy of perception for grasping truth, the second details the process required for bringing duration to consciousness.

That there are, in a sense, multiple objects, that one man is distinct from another man, tree from tree, stone from stone, is an indisputable fact...But the separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear-cut; there is a passage by insensible gradations from the one to the other: the close solidarity which binds all the objects of the material universe, the perpetuality of their reciprocal actions and reactions, is sufficient to prove that they have not the precise limits which we attribute to them.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 188

\textsuperscript{111} Matter and Memory, op. cit., 209
Matter (separate from consciousness) thus resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other and travelling in every direction like shivers through an immense body. In short, try first to connect together the discontinuous objects of daily experience; then resolve the motionless continuity of their qualities into vibrations on the spot; finally fix your attention on these movements, by abstracting from the divisible space which underlies them and considering only their mobility (that undivided act which our consciousness becomes aware of in our own movements): You will thus obtain a vision of matter, fatiguing perhaps for your imagination, but pure, and freed from all that the exigencies of life compel you to add to it in external perception. Now bring back consciousness...At long, very long, intervals, and by as many leaps over enormous periods of the inner history of things, quasi-instantaneous views will be taken, views which this time are bound to be pictorial, and of which the more vivid colours will condense an infinity of elementary repetitions and changes. In just the same way the multitudinous successive positions of a runner are contracted into a single symbolic attitude, which our eyes perceive, which art reproduces and which becomes for us all the image of a man running...The change is everywhere, but inward; we localise it here and there, but outwardly

The point Bergson made regarding our perception and the artist’s depiction of a man running differs from Plato on an artist’s representation in that the former deals with an action and the latter with an object. But both the perception of the action and the reproduction of the object

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112 Ibid., 208
amount to partial representations of a standard which exists in a higher, absolute and eternal reality.\textsuperscript{113}

On the purely physical aspect of perception, Bergson wrote that the cells of our eyes break down into thousands of squares our perception of an artist’s painting and that our final perception is a recomposition of the work into a united whole.\textsuperscript{114} Again, evolution itself is a process of fragmentation. It proceeds like a shell burst which in turn becomes further fragments. ‘We perceive only what is nearest to us, namely, the scattered movements of the pulverised explosions.’\textsuperscript{115} He wrote of the explosive force which life bears within it.

Creativity was a key concept for Bergson. He titled his major work \textit{Creative Evolution}. In this book he discussed his notion of artistic intuition and claimed that the creative urge is at the heart of evolution. He began \textit{Time and Free Will} with writing on aesthetic feeling. Bergson did not develop a systematic aesthetic. His thoughts in this area refer to ‘old-fashioned’ elements of grace, motion and rhythm as components of beauty. He did not champion a particular style of art. His ideas on art contain the same profound contradiction as did those of Plato, revolving around notions of art as ‘mere’ representation and art as an inspired and creative practice, around truth revealed \textit{in} art and truth revealed \textit{through} art.

On the former, Bergson held that all forms of representation are distorted refractions of the inner self, merely enriching our present, resulting in the inner self being spatialised.

A representation taken from a certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols, will always remain imperfect in comparison with the object

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} See note 56
\item \textsuperscript{114} \textit{Selections from Bergson}, op. cit., 70
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 70
\end{itemize}
of which a view has been taken, or which the symbols seek to express. But
the absolute, which is the object and not its representation, the original and
not its translation, is perfect, by being perfectly what it is. It is doubtless for
this reason that the absolute has often been identified with the infinite.\footnote{An Introduction to Metaphysics, op. cit., 23}

While the inner life cannot be represented by either concepts or images, an intuition of dura-
tion can be \textit{evoked} by an image. For this to happen the work of art must not be constructed
analytically (since one can only pass from intuition to analysis but not vice versa) but must
induce an alogical state of mind in the viewer.\footnote{Compare with Plato's 'For a poet is indeed a thing ethereally light, winged and sacred, nor can he compose anything worth calling poetry until he becomes inspired and, as it were, mad, or whilst any reason remains in him...(they compose) from the impulse of the divinity within them.' \textit{Ion} in \textit{Five Dialogues of Plato Bearing on Poetic Inspiration}. London, 1929, 7. Deleuze wrote 'Platonic inspiration makes itself profoundly felt in Bergson.' \textit{Bergsonism}, op. cit., 59}

For Bergson, the great souls are those of artists and mystics, true art is revelation and the artist
is 'this revealing agent.'\footnote{The Creative Mind, op. cit., 159} This is because these artists are in harmony with the inner life of
things, have greater sensitivity to colour and form and can draw us into their experience
through their work.\footnote{This theme is developed in \textit{Le Rire}.}

we live in a zone midway between things and ourselves, externally to
things, externally also to ourselves. From time to time, however, in a fit of
absent-mindedness, nature raises up souls that are more detached from
Bergson felt these artists should have a privileged position in society, followed by a public ‘whose perceptual capacities forever follow the artists’ lead.’

For hundreds of years...there have been men whose function has been precisely to see and to make us see what we do not naturally perceive. They are the artists. What is the aim of art if not to show us, in nature and in the mind, outside of us and within us, things which did not explicitly strike our senses and our consciousness?

Bergson thought that every work of art is the result of a process whereby the inner self in its duration is made accessible to others through intuition. Art tells others about ourselves and always aims at what is individual. Artistic intuition embodies nature’s spiritual essence. Bergson argued for creative action rather than contemplation, yet in his philosophy the two are indistinguishable. He held that the artist’s vision is free of conceptual or utilitarian influence - it is disinterested.

The artist’s vision is essentially detached from the need to act; he perceives things for their own sake and not for what can be done with them.

The creative product of intuition hopefully persuades the viewer or reader to transcend their daily mental habits and also experience intuition and these two intuitions co-mingle in intersubjectivity.

\[121\] Quoted in *Inventing Bergson*, op. cit., 60. Cf. Kahnweiler on this and the above point.

\[122\] *The Creative Mind*, op. cit., 159

\[123\] *Bergson and his Influence*, op. cit., 13. Bergson’s philosophy drew together the two currents in art I have identified - movement and still contemplation and both are contained in the visual art ‘isms’ of the first two decades of the twentieth century. The above paragraph and quotation outline the function of Bergson’s philosophy and the art based on it in capitalist visual ideology.
In ‘The Life and Work of Félix Ravaisson’ (1904) Bergson praised da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* as an example of artistic intuition (da Vinci’s experience of his model) in which the line, form and colour lead us ‘toward a virtual centre located behind the image.’\(^{124}\) By entering into or identifying with a character out of that indivisible feeling, as from a spring, all the words, gestures and actions of the man would appear to me to flow naturally... The character would be given to me all at once, in its entirety...Symbols and points of view...place me outside him; they give me only what he has in common with others and not what belongs to him and to him alone...his essence cannot be perceived from without...nor be expressed by symbols...Coincidence with the person himself would alone give me the absolute. It is in this sense and in this sense only, that *absolute* is synonymous with *perfection*.\(^{125}\)

While an image cannot replace the intuition of duration, a mix of distinct but balanced images can work together to stimulate a viewer to make the necessary effort to achieve an intuition.

many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their *action*, to direct consciousness to the precise point where this is a certain intuition to seize on. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, any one of them will be prevented from usurping the place of the intuition it is instructed to call forth, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals. By seeing that in spite of their differences in aspect they all demand of the mind the same kind of attention and, as it were, the same degree of tension, one will gradually accustom

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\(^{124}\) In ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 345

\(^{125}\) *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit., 22
consciousness to a particular and definitely determined disposition, precisely the one it will have to adapt to...to produce the desired effort and, by itself, arrive at the intuition.\(^{126}\)

The ‘austere’ and subtle use of tonality by Picasso and Braque in their so-called Analytic Cubism (and less capably by other Cubists) may derive from Bergson’s philosophy in order to not only focus the viewer’s attention on geometric form and space but to convey interpenetration and the ‘greyness’ of duration.

Philosophy consists precisely in this, that by an effort of intuition one places oneself within that concrete reality, of which the *Critique (of Pure Reason)* takes from without the two opposed views, thesis and antithesis. I could never imagine how black and white interpenetrate if I had never seen grey; but once I have seen grey I easily understand how it can be considered from two points of view, that of white and that of black.\(^{127}\)

For Bergson, artistic practice ‘aims at impressing feelings on us rather than expressing them (my emphases), it suggests them to us, and willingly dispenses with the imitation of nature when it finds some more efficacious means.’\(^{128}\) The artist aims at sharing his emotion with the viewer ‘so rich, so personal, so novel and at enabling us to experience what he cannot make

\(^{126}\) From An Introduction to Metaphysics in ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 345. Cf. the use of lettering etc. by the Cubists.

\(^{127}\) An Introduction to Metaphysics, op. cit., 60. A critic wrote less specifically, ‘The “gravity” of intuitive emotion caused them (the Cubists) to subordinate colour to form’, in Inventing Bergson, op. cit., 31. I seem to recall that Plotinus wrote on the ‘greyness’ of reality - perhaps Plato too.

\(^{128}\) Time and Free Will, op. cit., 16. Very important to cf. Bergson on this point with Plotinus on the function of the emotions. Also, to impress feelings rather than to express them suggests the notion of the artist seeking to control the viewer’s response. Cf. Republic.
us understand.'\textsuperscript{129} Bergson regarded emotion as transcendent. As Deleuze wrote, it ‘is like the God in us.’\textsuperscript{130}

emotion is creative (first because it expresses the ‘whole of creation, then because it creates the work in which it is expressed; and finally because it communicates a little of this creativity to spectators or hearers.\textsuperscript{131}

Consider the use of musical instruments and notation in Cubist art, in the light of Bergson’s words

> When music cries, it is humanity, it is the whole of nature which cries with it. Truly speaking, it does not introduce these feelings in us; it introduces us rather into them, like the passers-by that might be nudged in a dance.\textsuperscript{132}

For Bergson, this creative emotion is precisely a cosmic Memory that liberates man from ‘mere’ duration in order to make him a creator, through whom flows the whole movement of creation.\textsuperscript{133}

This liberation, this embodiment of cosmic memory in creative emotions, undoubtedly only takes place in privileged souls. It leaps from one soul to

\textsuperscript{129} ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 343

\textsuperscript{130} Bergsonism, op. cit., 110

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{133} In The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans., Audra and Brereton, 1935, Bergson wrote ‘create creators’. 243.
another...(and) it traces the design of an open society, a society of creators\textsuperscript{134}

Bergson’s view of man as a creator, above the approval of fellow humanity, reads as Nietzschean. In *Mind - Energy* he wrote ‘the joy he feels is the joy of a god.’\textsuperscript{135} He equated this person with ‘superman’\textsuperscript{136} - in Nietzsche’s philosophy the higher state of Übermensch embodies the ‘will to power’ and creation.

Another parallel between these two philosophies is that just as creative intuition entails a willed effort to transcend logical patterns of thought, Bergson’s élan vital and Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ both represent a struggle to gain freedom from the social and material environment. Bergson also distinguished between the artist or poet and ‘the common herd.’\textsuperscript{137} He wrote that the aim of art is to lay bare the secret and tragic element in our character,\textsuperscript{138} and that ‘True pity consists not so much in fearing suffering as in desiring it.’\textsuperscript{139}

Bergson wrote that the ‘inward states’ of creative emotion are the most intense as well as the most violent.\textsuperscript{140} His words ‘for what interests us in the work of the poet is the glimpse we get of certain profound moods or inner struggles’\textsuperscript{141} are closely echoed in those Picasso used with regard to Cézanne and Van Gogh.

\textsuperscript{134} *Bergsonism*, op. cit., 111
\textsuperscript{135} Selections from Bergson, op. cit., 114
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 101, from *Creative Evolution*, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{137} *Laughter*, op. cit., 151
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 160
\textsuperscript{139} *Time and Free Will*, op. cit., 19
\textsuperscript{140} *Laughter*, op. cit., 158
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 166
It is not what the artist does that counts, but what he is... What forces our interest is Cézanne’s anxiety - that’s Cézanne’s lesson; the torments of Van Gogh - that is the actual drama of the man. The rest is a sham.\textsuperscript{142}

Bergson held that the object of art is to put to sleep the resistance of the viewer’s personality (a spiritualised hypnosis), to bring the viewer ‘into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realise the idea that is suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling that is expressed.’\textsuperscript{143} To provoke an intuitive response, the elements of the canvas must first arouse the viewer’s emotions and sensitivity to the flow of true duration.\textsuperscript{144} This can be achieved in a number of ways. Devices include the rhythmical arrangement and effect of line and words

\begin{itemize}
  \item it is the emotion, the original mood, to which they (artists) attain in its undefored essence. And then, to induce us to make the same effort ourselves they contrive to make us see something of what they have seen: by rhythmical arrangement of words.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{itemize}

Bergson also gave the example of letters (of words) which are parts of a poem which one knows, but randomly mixed. Because one knows the poem, one can immediately reconstitute the poem as a whole. This is an example of the reconstitution of the real parts of intuition (and metaphysics), distinct from the partial notations of analysis and the positive sciences, which cannot be reconstituted.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{142} From an interview with M. de Zayas in \textit{Theories of Modern Art}, op. cit., 272
  \item \textsuperscript{143} \textit{Time and Free Will}, op. cit., 14. Cf. note 128 on the issue of control.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} Antliff wrote that for Bergson, the provocation of an intuition depends on the activation of the beholder’s subliminal mind. Bergson in fact sought the opposite, i.e. the activation of ‘consciousness’.
  \item \textsuperscript{145} \textit{Laughter}, op. cit., 156
\end{itemize}
It was Bergson’s philosophy that the Cubists drew on in their use not only of material not previously associated with art (sand, wallpaper etc.) but also of part words and lettering.

Now beneath all the sketches he has made at Paris the visitor will probably, by way of memento, write the word “Paris”. And as he has really seen Paris, he will be able, with the help of the original intuition he had of the whole, to place his sketches therein, and so join them up together.\textsuperscript{146}

\textit{Negation} also affirms and suggests aspects of an object.\textsuperscript{147}

Another device is the conveyance of the notion of passage. The \textit{technique} of passage derives from Cézanne, but its stimulus may well lie in Bergson’s philosophy.\textsuperscript{148} Not only did Cubism develop on this, a similar treatment can be seen in art contemporary with it and which has established connections with Bergson’s philosophy - that of Gleizes, Metzinger, the Futurists and Delaunay.\textsuperscript{149} Bergson wrote of flexibility, mobility, ‘almost fluid representations, always ready to mould themselves on the fleeting forms of intuition.’\textsuperscript{150} Evocative of the refined and far more relaxed methods of so-called Synthetic Cubism are Bergson’s words ‘Intuition, bound up to a duration which is growth, perceives in it an uninterrupted continuity of unforeseeable novelty.’\textsuperscript{151}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{An Introduction to Metaphysics}, op. cit., 33
\item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Creative Evolution}, op. cit., 288
\item \textsuperscript{148} See G. Hamilton, ‘Cézanne, Bergson and the Image of Time’ \textit{Art Journal}, xvi, Fall, 1956, 2-12
\item \textsuperscript{149} See Antliff on the use of passage to evoke the apprehension of the dynamism of form. Definition was not sought but suggestion ‘so that the mind of the spectator is the chosen place of their concrete birth.’ \textit{Inventing Bergson}, op. cit., 52
\item \textsuperscript{150} \textit{The Creative Mind}, op. cit., 198
\item \textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 39
\end{itemize}
So art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself...realism is in the work when idealism is in the soul and...it is only through ideality that we can resume contact with reality.152

Bergson’s entire philosophy, and the fundamental problem with it, lies in his distinction between the mind (consciousness) and the brain, between subjective reality and objective reality. This is encapsulated in the following

That there is a close connection between a state of consciousness and the brain we do no dispute. But there is also a close connection between a coat and the nail on which it hangs, for if the nail is pulled out, the coat falls to the ground. Shall we say, then, that the shape of the nail gives us the shape of the coat, or in any way corresponds to it? No more are we entitled to conclude, because the physical fact is hung onto a cerebral state, that there is any parallelism between the two series psychical and physiological.153

It is my contention that it was very likely to this most fundamental of philosophical issues than a play on illusion that the nail in Braque’s Pitcher and Violin 19109-10, referred. As Bergson and Braque would have been aware - a lot hangs on it.

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152 Laughter, op. cit., 157
153 Matter and Memory, op. cit., 13
Antliff wrote that the Symbolist poet Tancrède de Visan (who had begun attending Bergson’s lectures before 1904 and who wrote the first extended discussion of the theoretical parallels between Bergson’s philosophy and Symbolism) was the primary Bergsonian theorist within Cubist circles. Green thought the Cubists became familiar with Bergson’s theories through the writing of Jules Romains. Antliff dates Romains’ familiarity with Bergson to 1906 or earlier.

In 1911 Alexandre Mercereau affirmed Bergson’s support for Cubism (Vers et Prose, no. 27, October-December, 1913, 39). At the same time André Salmon wrote on Bergson and the Cubists (Paris-Journal, November 29, 1911). Émile Blanche wrote that Bergson was interested in Cubism in 1912 and that the Cubists encouraged that interest, at least Gleizes and Metzinger in the period they wrote Du Cubisme. Salmon wrote that Bergson tentatively agreed to write a preface for the catalogue to the Section d’or exhibition in 1912 (‘La Section d’or’, Gil Blas, June 22, 1912).

Yet the Cubists appear to have been much more aware of Bergson than he of them, although this too is most probably more complex than it seems. For example, Bergson’s difficulty in accepting the Cubists’ radical application of his philosophy to art could have to do with a possible reticence in acknowledging awareness of their work. In an interview pub-

154 ‘Bergson and Cubism: A Reassessment’, op. cit., 342
155 Ibid.
156 J. Blanche, Portraits of a Lifetime, New York, 1938, 244-45 in ‘The Relevance of Bergson’ op. cit., 8
157 For my subject, the interest of the former in the latter is of far greater importance.
lished in *L’Intransigeant* (Paris, November 26, 1911) Bergson stated he had never seen Cubist art. In 1913 he criticised the Cubists for analysing artistic practice instead of intuitively performing it. In the same year he said he could not understand a word of Gleizes’ and Metzinger’s writing on Cubism and that he had never seen a Cubist painting before that year. Fry wrote that Mercereau was only one of the first among many defenders of Cubism to declare that Bergson had given his approval to it and that Bergson did not agree to write the preface Salmon claimed he did.

A connection between Picasso, Braque and Bergson was, to my knowledge so far, not admitted by the artists, but on their behalf by fellow artists and critics. Yet there is very strong circumstantial evidence to support the connection, in addition to an analysis of their work. Picasso from his youth had a fascination for Nietzsche (like so many artists and writers of the time) and there was much in common between the theories of Nietzsche and Bergson. Picasso’s admiration for Jarry and his friendship with Apollinaire would have been two more direct connections with Bergson’s philosophy. Again, Salmon was photographed in Picasso’s studio with *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* and *Three Women* in 1908.

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158 'The Relevance of Bergson', op. cit., 1
160 *Cubism*, op. cit., 67
161 Reproduced in *Cubism*, op. cit., facing p.17