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THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF

HENRI BERGSON.

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Introductory.

Sec. 1 The point of approach.

It is the purpose of this thesis to give the results of an examination of the philosophy of Henri Bergson in the interests of finding what are its religious implications. In other words, supposing Bergson's philosophy established and generally accepted by thinking men how is it going to affect our general religious conceptions such as for example, God, freedom, immortality?

At the outset I feel it incumbent upon me to give the general point of view of the writer, or rather his way of approach. This may seem at first as beside the point, but after all, no matter how impartial and dispassionate the investigator and how little reason for bias or partiality, his general point of view, his temperament must affect in some degree his approach to any investigation.

Nor can I say that I took up the study of Bergson with any such cold-blooded, scientific, critical spirit of impartiality. I held a certain view of life and I had certain interests at heart and with these I took up the study of Bergson that I might see how this modern philosopher stood related to them

I approached the study of Bergson by the way of Positivism. Positivism as I understand it is primarily a method. The Catholic Encyclopedia gives a good definition of what I mean by Positivism, in speaking of the eminent Positivist, Emile Littre, "for whom Positivism," says the Encyclopedia, "was essentially a method, viz, that method which limits human knowledge to the study of experimental facts, and neither affirms, nor denies anything concerning what may exist outside of human experience." In accordance with this definition I had purposed making a distinction between two types of Positivism, viz, a materialistic type, and what I might call a spiritualistic type. I purposed doing this not because I felt clearly that this division is applicable to Positivism, but rather in accordance with what seems to be a loose general understanding of Positivism, a conception which seems to be prevalent even in Philosophical circles. I have always felt that there was here a loose definition and a gross misinterpretation of Positivism. A recent reading of Fred Harrison the foremost exponent of Positivism has established this conviction and I feel no longer compelled to discuss the materialistic type of Positivism, for I am convinced that this involves a contradiction in terms, the materialist is a materialist the holder of a philosophy, a metaphysic, to which Positivism is opposed. Frederic Harrison in reply\* to a criticism of Positivism made by Mr. Arthur Balfour shows that this general misunderstanding of Positivism is due to a misconception of what it means by experimental

\*vidi. The Philosophy of Common Sense. Fred. Harrison.

facts, by phenomena. "Phenomena" says Fred. Harrison, "comprehend all things which we can perceive, think of, feel, or be conscious of." In accordance with this he says further, "Positivism embraces as the subject matter all things of which any thinking or sentient being is conscious. All facts of consciousness, all mental impressions and ideas of any kind are just as much its subject matter as they are that of any theologian or metaphysician." I am fortunate enough, however, to have here a clear expression (by its greatest modern exponent) of my own opinions. So much for my own point of view.

## Section 2. BERGSON'S METHOD.

It is necessary also that one should have a general understanding of the method of any philosopher that one studies for reasons similar to those given above. One's acceptance of the results of any worker in philosophy must depend largely upon one's belief in the validity of his method. What then is the method of Bergson? To answer this question some distinctions are necessary.

I have spoken of the philosophy of Bergson, but in a narrower sense. Bergson has given us no philosophy. He disclaims anything of the sort himself or any attempt at it. If we attempt, therefore, to turn Bergson's work into a philosophy, we wrong him, we sterilize him, we doom him to the same fate which has befallen the philosophers of the past, the creators of final and closed systems, the product of

isolated individuals. Bergson has something entirely different in view, he seeks to escape the curse of philosophy, isolated and individual creation, and make a humble contribution to a greater work, a collective and progressive philosophy. What he has attempted he explains in his introduction to Creative Evolution. "But a philosophy of this kind will not be made in a day. Unlike the philosophical systems so-called, each of which was the individual work of a man of genius and sprang up as a whole, to be taken or left, it will only be built up by the collective and progressive effort of many thinkers, or many observers also, completing, correcting and improving one another. So the present essay (Creative Evolution) does not aim at resolving at once the greatest problems. It simply desires to define the method and to permit a glimpse on some essential points of the possibility of its application." Bergson then, has essayed to give us not a philosophy, but a method by which a dynamic philosophy may be progressively and cooperatively developed. So the outcome of Bergson's work so far is only a method, and this would hardly concern us here, not at this juncture at any rate. What we are concerned with here is the method he has used in this work, the method used in his keen analysis of life. This method, I believe, is thoroughly Positivistic, that is Positivistic in its true sense.

Bergson's method is Positivistic in keeping strictly to human experience, he is Positivistic in his determined efforts to keep clear of all preconceived metaphysical theories. Whatever the finished product, whatever the final conclusions, he is most scrupulous in bringing

everything to the touchstone of experience. For example, in the closing pages of Creative Evolution (Page 362) he says, "We must appeal to experience-- an experience purified, or, in other words, released, where necessary, from the molds that our intellect has formed in the degree and proportion of the progress of our action on things." And more significantly still in the very last words of the same essay. "So understood, philosophy is not only the turning of the mind homeward, the coincidence of human consciousness with the living principle whence it emanates, a contact with the creative effort: it is the study of becoming in general, it is true evolution and consequently the true continuation of science -- provided that we understand by this word\* a set of truths either experienced or demonstrated, and not a certain new scholasticism that has grown up during the latter half of the nineteenth century around the physics of Galileo, as the old scholasticism grew up around Aristotle. \* Italics mine.

### Section 3. GENERAL OUTLINE OF BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY.

So much for Bergson's method, what in general has he gleaned by it, what are the results so far of his work? As it is in no way the intention of this thesis to give a review of Bergson's thought en toto, I shall be as brief as possible here and confine myself to what is relevant to the general purpose of my discussion.

Bergson, with the proper Positivistic spirit makes man the starting point for his investigation. Our perception of ourselves is internal and profound and cannot be sensibly questioned by us. What then is the nature of

our consciousness? Perhaps our fundamental experience of it is unceasing change, impulses, feelings give place to one another in unceasing flow. We sometimes speak of conscious states but this one place where our arbitrary materialistic language forms betray us, because there is nothing static about consciousness. Fixity is the foe of consciousness, bringing pain and even destruction to it, it's demand is for unceasing creative activity. Even the most sublime feeling if continued unmixed, unaltered beyond a certain time loses its sublimity, begins to annoy and eventually causes distress. Our states are not static, they overlap, they flow into each other, and they progress. Time or duration is the fundamental factor of consciousness, duration, the accumulation of the past, memory, bearing on the present, pushing into the future. This function of memory is that which distinguishes consciousness from the material world. Consciousness carries into the present all the past, for matter there is nothing but the present, all its processes can be summed up in a moment, for matter there is, implicitly, no time, no duration.

Besides memory of the past we also find implicitly in consciousness, anticipation of the future. We realize this especially, Bergson points out in listening to a friend, we are intent not only in what our friend is saying, but also <sup>in</sup> what is coming. This is due to the essential nature of consciousness as activity and is aided by memory. "So that consciousness serves as a tie between the past and the future." What then is the use of such a tie, and what is consciousness called upon to do.

Bergson suggests we find our answer to this question by asking what in the whole of nature are conscious beings. Of course, we individually can never be absolutely sure of any other consciousness outside ourselves, but we each infer, from certain resemblances in other individuals to ourselves, that is, we argue by analogy. We find our own consciousness to be bound up in some way or another with a brain and are led to believe that consciousness is found wherever there is a highly differentiated nervous system with appropriate nerve centres. But following this back through the animal kingdom, we find it gradually becoming more and more simplified until we come to the lowest forms of animal life and find the nervous substance entirely merged into the rest of the living matter, and are naturally led to believe that consciousness has become fused with the whole of this mass. This would suggest that wherever we find living matter there we have some degree or quality of consciousness. But Bergson thinks perhaps this would be going too far, and in order to show how this is, leads us back again to a consideration of the brain and asks what is its benefit. An examination of the organization of the brain shows it to be a part of the cerebro-spinal nervous system. Without going into detail, we may say that the spinal cord, in responding to an external stimulus, carries it to the brain before responding with an appropriate bodily reaction. The brain is in connection with most of the mechanisms of the spinal cord and is able to stimulate any of them to respond. "So that in sum and broadly speaking the spinal cord is a storehouse of ready made complex actions and the brain is the organ permitting choice, in any circumstance, of that particular complex

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action which is appropriate. The brain is the organ of choice."

If we again make our descent of the animal scale we find that this element of choice persists right down to the undifferentiated organism where it is vague, but <sup>it</sup> is still noticeable even in the amoeba, as a kind of indecision, suggesting some measure of intention, some selection of the appropriate movements.

Choice implies the possibility of action, and in plant life where action is comparatively small, we may believe that choice is not so important a factor and choice being implied by consciousness, we may naturally expect to find consciousness in the plant very low, a "sleepy consciousness" as some writer has called it, but as Bergson says the faculty of motion is always able to wake up when necessary. This faculty of spontaneous movement seems to exist everywhere in living organisms with the exception of a few that have become parasitic and given it up, in whom it has become atrophied. "It seems probable then that consciousness is in principle present in all living matter, but that it is dormant wherever such matter renounces spontaneous activity and on the contrary that it becomes more intense, more complex, more complete, just where living matter tends most in the direction of activity movement."

If we look at life at the point of the amoeba with its minimum of action and choice we can see that life has there before it a choice between two lines of development, either it might choose to give up action and fix itself and be content with a dormant receptive kind of existence, or it might push on to even greater and growing complexity, an ever widening range of activity and choice. The

vegetable kingdom in the main is dominated by the former, the animal kingdom dwarfed in the main by the latter choice. This faculty of choice, of indetermination, is something peculiar to the organized world, life seems to have brought into the determinate unorganic matter something which is opposed to it, it seems to have seized upon inert, fixed matter, and moulded it into flexibility and changeability. "Life, therefore," says Bergson, (L & C 34) "must be something which avails itself of a certain elasticity in matter -- slight in amount as this probably is -- and turns it to the profit of liberty by stealing into whatever infinitesimal fraction of indetermination that inert matter may present."

Similar conclusions are reached if we regard life in its aspect of consciousness, confronted with matter we find that "if we consider consciousness it is characterized by just this fact, that in an interval for which it is infinitely short and which constitutes one of our 'instants' it ~~seizes~~ seizes under an indivisible from millions and billions of events that succeed each other in inert matter." (L & C 36) So that consciousness also "behaves just like a power entering matter in order to draw the highest possible advantage from the elasticity it finds therein, to take possession of matter from the side of movement, as well as from that of sensation; from the side of movement by an explosive action setting free, in a flash, energy drawn from matter through years and years, and directing this energy in a chosen way from the side of sensation, by an effort of concentration which seizes as a whole, in one moment, billions of events happening in things, and thus allows us to control them." (L & C 37)

Summing up Bergson gives us a kind of practical dualism -- "on the one hand, matter subject to necessity, a kind of immense machine without memory ---, on the other hand, consciousness -- that is to say, on the contrary, a force essentially free and essentially memory, a force whose very character is to pile up the past on the past, like a rolling snowball, and at every instant of duration to organize with this past something which is a real creation. " (L & C 37)

Bergson believes that matter and consciousness have a common origin, that neither can be explained in or by themselves, but is unable at present, to say any more on the subject.

Perhaps we may get some light from him on this problem which his philosophy raises when he brings out his promised philosophy of religion. For the present, he says " let it suffice that I see in the whole evolution of life on our planet an effort of this essentially creative force to arrive, by traversing matter, at something which is only realized in man, and which, moreover, even in man, is realized only imperfectly." (L & C 38)

The facts of evolution point strongly to a vital impulse compelling a progress from lower forms of life ( which are perfectly adapted to their environment) to higher and ever higher forms, where organization is dangerously intricate. The mistake generally made is in thinking of this progress, as a development along a straight line. Bergson is insistent in pointing out this tendency of our thinking. Evolution proceeds not that way but the life force has at certain critical points in its history split off into divergent lines of development. Bergson denotes these main diverging lines

by Torpor and Activity, Instinct and Intelligence. The first represent a crisis which gave us the sleepy, inactive plant forms on the one hand, and the free mobile animal forms, on the other. The Life-Force evolving along the line of animal forms again made choice producing again two other diverging tendencies, namely, the tendency toward instinct and the tendency toward intelligence. Concerning these two tendencies, Bergson has much to say, they play an important part in his philosophy. He is strongly opposed to the prevalent idea that intelligence is but a development from instinct and insists that these are two diverging and opposing, but complimentary tendencies, instinct reaching its highest manifestation in the Hymenoptera, intelligence, reaching its highest development in man. These are, however, not mutually exclusive, but in each line of development there is something of its opposite and complementary line. Thus, there is probably exhibited by animals some degree of intelligence or something approaching intelligence, and man doubtless has some degree, usually latent, of instinct. Bergson defines these different tendencies thus,-- "Instinct perfected is a faculty of using and even of constructing organized instruments; intelligence perfected is the faculty of making and using unorganized instruments." The distinguishing trait of instinct is its ability to comprehend life, it has a "sympathy" with organized bodies, on these grounds alone, can we understand the wonderful power of animals, and especially insects, to operate with life. This faculty of instinct, Bergson tells us is a factor that refuses to be forced into previous schemes or theories of science, and anyone who has read those inimitable insect studies by

Henri Fabre must be forced to agree with Bergson on this point. Instinct is *sui generis* and cannot be defined either in terms of habit or intellect.

On the other hand it is the nature of intelligence to understand, to grasp, and use matter. We have seen that it aims at creating and using unorganized instruments, i. e. it is aimed not primarily, not principally at active, fluent, mobile life, but at inert, massive, stolid matter. This utility of intelligence unfits it to understand or grasp life, it touches it only when necessary or when it serves its primary purpose, and then, as compared with instinct, only clumsily and blunderingly. It seeks always to translate life into terms of static, mechanical matter, and this, says Bergson, has been the curse of all our philosophy. Our intellect weaves about life a network of mechanical and material phrases and think we have caught it, but every time we draw the net, we find that life has slipped through its meshes. In vain we weave and reweave the net making its meshes even finer and finer, life is too subtle, too limpid, too fluent to be caught thus, and at the end of every attempt we find we have nothing in our hands but the net.

Out of this fundamental error of the intellect arise all our theories of mechanism, determinism and finalism. Intelligence adapted to deal with matter finds this mechanistic, determined, then turning on life which it is not adapted to handle, seeks to apply the same categories to it, in the vain hope that it may grasp it too, but life escapes it, ~~and~~ because the life force is fluid, creative and free. In order, however, that it may find expression for its varying tendencies, in order that it may create, it enters into matter and seeks to put into it some of its own freedom,

its own creativeness. In doing this, however, it is caught to some degree in the meshes of matter which forces upon life, of it own automatism and determinism. "Thus along the whole course of ~~life~~ the evolution of life, liberty is dogged by automatism, and in the long run is stifled by it. With man alone the chain has been broken." (L & C 40) Man has succeeded in this by apposing to every contracted habit (the sign of life settling into automatism) another habit, by using necessity to fight necessity. "The spectacle of the evolution of life from its very beginning down to man suggests to us the image of a current of consciousness which flows down into matter as into a tunnel, which endeavors to advance, which makes efforts on every side, thus digging galleries most of which are stopped by a rock that is too hard, but which, in one direction at least, prove possible to follow to the end and break out into the light once more." (L & C 40) To the question, why does consciousness enter into this task, why does it grapple with matter, Bergson replies, that it does this because matter gives to, <sup>its</sup> vague tendencies, its purposiveness, percision and definite expression, even as the artist uses the material of his art to express his dreams, his thoughts. So it is with all of us, we each have the compelling desire to put into material expression any idea that really grips us, and it is only thus that we are able clearly to define and understand it.

Mr. Balfour in his criticism of Bergson, chides him for not explaining why life, consciousness, has this nature, this bent for moulding and forming matter, but it seems to me that Bergson has done sufficiently well in demonstrating so effectively that this is the nature of conscousness, and he is justified in leaving the why of it to those speculative

intellectualistic philosophers to whom he is opposed. Mr. Balfour also complains that this super-consciousness, this Life Force "is ignorant not only of its course, but of its goal," and others have criticised Bergson's philosophy on this point. The trouble with Balfour and others like him is that they wish both to have their cake and eat it. They want freedom and creative activity in life and yet wish to saddle upon it a plan, or a fixed goal, which must necessarily destroy all freedom, all creation. They wish the Life Force to be an artist giving expression to his free, vague, impulsive genius, and yet shackle it with the plans and specifications that we reserve for the mechanic. The fact that the Life Force has no course mapped out and goal set up, does not necessarily mean that it is absolutely blind and ignorant as to its direction, one has, it seems to me, utterly misunderstood Bergson if he gets that from him. The artist as he starts to give form to some impelling motif in his consciousness, cannot tell us exactly what it is he aims to create, for himself it only takes on definiteness and precision as he works it into material form, but he is clearly and painfully conscious when he fails to give it true expression, and we, in so far as we enter intuitively sympathetically into his spirit, realize it too. So it is with the Life Force, and so we may experience its direction. We may not know its goal, its course, because it is against the very essence of creation and freedom that these should exist, but we do know, if we are desirous of knowing, its general direction. We may know when our lives are in harmony with it by the satisfaction and joy that our lives bring to us, as the artist knows that he is expressing the

promptings of his inner genius by the quality of satisfaction and joy the expression brings to him. If we demand more than this, we must accept materialism which makes of us mere machinists feeding a machine, or idealism which turns into mere mechanics working by a given plan, turning out drudgingly our allotted spell of work. And as we bind ourselves, so we bind the Life Force.

## Part 1. INTELLECTUALISM AND CREATION.

It seems to me that one thing of primary religious value in Bergson is his criticism of the nature and function of the intellect. The past two centuries have been a time of stress and trouble for religion. The collapse of Scholasticism, with its dual standard of reason and revelation, brought about by the criticism of revelation by the early Deists, and the keener analysis of the Rationalists, and the marvelous growth and development of science with its wonderful discoveries and far reaching theories supported by demonstration, served to establish intellect and reason on a high pedestal, threatening to destroy the supremacy of that kind of religion which had hitherto leaned heavily on Revelation. Challenged by science, Christianity was led largely by the rationalistic theologians to shift its position and base its claim for recognition on rational foundations. Out of the negative, critical work of the Rationalists grew the more positive constructive work of the Idealists, who sought to force the findings of science into a religious frame, by adding to the material processes and laws that science demonstrated, beneficent, providential Reason, that had set in motion the process, layed down the laws, and planned the Universe of which Science was cognizant. Science dealing with phenomena, working by empirical methods, testing its generalizations by demonstration, substituted for a beneficent providence, evolution by adaptation, and found unnecessary and troublesome any hypothesis of a Creator. Both lines of endeavor result in a fixed static universe, in which there is no freedom, in which time and change are delusions, idealism reducing the universe to a fixed logical system, Science

reducing it to a self-existent, self-perpetuating mechanism. Both, in ruling out creative, free personality really destroy all real religious values. Vital, religious belief and feeling today is largely the possession of the unreflecting masses, ignorant and indifferent or even contemptuous of philosophy and science or those of the educated and cultured who cling to a religious experience in spite of intellectual difficulties. Bergson at this juncture comes to the aid of the religious instincts by challenging the arrogant claims of the intellect. By his theory of the bifurcation of the stream of conscious life into two aspects, instinct and intelligence, he lays the foundation of a criticism of the function of the intellect, insisting that intelligence was developed in order that the Life Force might grapple more effectually with matter. The intellect is therefore by necessity materialistic in its grasp, developed purposively to comprehend matter, it can comprehend nothing else, and naturally enough what it cannot comprehend, it negates. Confronted with life and consciousness it seeks to reduce these to material terms that it may bind them into <sup>its</sup> a system, but always finds that these have eluded it; confronted with creative purpose and freedom, it strives to freeze these into mechanism and necessity. But, always it fails, life and consciousness escape it and proclaim their creativeness and freedom. Given a problem involving the factor of life, and the pet theories of the intellect, the intellectual twins, finalism and mechanism, stumble and break down before it, its creativeness laughs at finalism, its purposiveness scorns mechanism. In the inorganic sciences the mechanistic or finalistic tendencies are supreme but when we come to deal with the organic, in

the field of biology their inadequacy is continually and increasingly being demonstrated, and admitted by scientists in the field. If in Science, the sphere of its own creating, intellect break down, shall we permit it to transcend that sphere, and arrogantly assert its supremacy here unchallenged. Shall we permit its suppression of the religious instinct in the deepest things of life if Bergson has proved that we can only grasp life, even in its simplest manifestations by the use of intuition, by an understanding that is not rational but sympathetic. The conception of a determined universe whether determined by an absolute God, or by a universal law, is the foe of all real religion. There must be creation or creativeness, as I think Bergson would rather say. This creativeness the intellect has eliminated because of its tendency to reduce all things to matter, to points, to space, and therefore to treat change, time and duration as unreal, as an abstraction. "But duration is something very different from this for our consciousness, that is to say for that which is most indisputable in our experience. We perceive duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live." (C.E.39)

"Real duration is that duration which gnaws on things and leaves on them the mark of its tooth. If everything is in time, everything changes inwardly and the same concrete reality never recurs. Repetition is therefore possible only in the abstract what is repeated is some aspect that our senses and especially our intellect, have singled out from reality, just because our action, upon which all the effort of our intellect is directed, can move only among repetitions. Thus concentrated on that which repeats

solely occupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of time. It dislikes what is fluid and solidifies everything it touches. We do not think real time, but we live in it, because life transcends intellect. The feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in pure duration is there, forming around the intellectual concept properly so called, an indistinct fringe that fades off into darkness." (C E 46)

Bergson's elucidation of Duration, and his thorough going demonstration of the reality of time from experience, once more permits us to believe in creative activity, and liberates religious feeling, and gives scope for action stimulated by it. We are no longer snared in a dead, completed world where movement is only an appearance, and action a delusion but in a world where there is free creative activity, provoking our interest and stimulating us to action.

No longer slaves to a machine-operating intellect, that understands no other language but that of the work-bench and machine shop, that thinks in terms of cogs and parts, we are free to develop another side to our nature, a side which in the practical exigences of the life process it had to keep in a subordinate position, but which has its legitimate place, without which we are incapable of comprehending life, a side in which religion has its roots. The words of the ancient Hebrew sage once more have a vital significance for us. "Keep thy heart with all thy diligence for out of it are the issues of life."

## Part 2, THE NATURE AND PLACE OF MAN.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him," asks the old Hebrew Psalmist. The Psalmist was a religious man, and his cry voices the paramount interest of religion. Theology may mouth over this as it pleases and talk learnedly and fatuously of the nature of God, but religion's deepest interest is the nature of man, and the place of man in the universal order, and its God, however we may pretend to deplore it, is always man writ large. Its search for a consciousness of God, is an indirect search for self-consciousness as Fuerbach has said "What is man?" asks religion of the intellect, and the intellect has replied either in terms of materialism, man is an accidental exeresence of the natural processes, a little insignificant appearance on the earth, which in itself is but a fleck of dust in the universe, in the terms of finalism, man is an integral part of a well ordered self-sufficient infinite series, or something to that effect. From both of these religion turns with disgust. Man, if religion is to exist at all, must have infinite worth, he must be infinitely more even than an integral and necessary part of an infinite series. To its own question "What is man," religion herself answers, "For thou hast made him a little lower than God-----and thou hast put all things under his feet." When we examine the God of religion and find with Feuerbach that in religion's deepest experience he is the objectification of man's own infinite qualities, we realize the exalted position that she demands for man in the universal

order. Man, for religion must be of infinite worth, as much as he falls below that, so much languishes religion.

In the light of this need of religion what value has Bergson's philosophy? Mr. Balfour says that Bergson's philosophy is distinguished by the fact that he takes account of values, and is content with no philosophy which wholly ignores them. \* This, I think is somewhat turning Bergson upside down, it is not so much that Bergson cherishes certain values and rejects all philosophy that makes no account of them, but rather that in a deliberate, positivistic study of reality he finds certain values there and therefore scores every philosophy as inadequate which fails to exploit them. One of these values he has discovered, as the result of his inquiry into the nature of life and consciousness, is that which religion finds central, namely, the paramount worth of man. Man, for Bergson represents not the end of the Life Force, but its triumph. He says, "It would be wrong to regard humanity, such as we have it before our eyes, as pre-figured in the evolutionary movement. It can not even be said to be the outcome of the whole of evolution, for evolution has been accomplished on several divergent lines, and while the human species is at the end of one of them, other lines have been followed with other species at their end. It is in a quite different

\* Hibbert Journal Vol x No. 1. Creative evolution and Philosophic Doubts.

sense that we hold humanity to be the ground of evolution."

"From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a centre, spreads outwards, and which on almost the whole of its circumference is stopped and converted into oscillation: at one single point the obstacle has been forced, the impulsion has passed freely. It is this freedom that the human form registers. Everywhere but in man consciousness has had to come to a stand; in man alone it has kept on its way. Man, then continues the vital movement indefinitely, although he does not draw along with all that life carries in itself. On other lines of evolution there have travelled other tendencies which life implied, and of which, since everything interpenetrates, man has, doubtless, kept something, but of which he has kept only very little. It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, man or superman, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way. The losses are represented by the rest of the animal world, and even by the vegetable world, at least in what these have that is positive and above the accidents of evolution."

"From this point of view, the discordances of which nature offers us the spectacle are singularly weakened. The organized world as a whole becomes as the soil on which to grow either man himself or a being who morally must resemble him. The animals, however, distant they may be from our species, however hostile to it, have none the less been useful traveling companions, on whom

consciousness has unloaded whatever encumbrances it was dragging along, and who have enabled it to rise, in man to heights from which it sees an unlimited horizon open again before it." (C. E. Pgs. 265--267) I might have quoted several pages from this section of Bergson's book all in a similar strain. Bergson does not put man in quite the same position as some of the more extreme and less guarded Positivistic have placed him, as the sum and crown of the universe, and on the other hand he does not find him a mere term in a series, or an infinitesimal cog in a vast, brute machine, but accords to him all that worth and dignity that is necessary to satisfy the reasonable demands of religion.

It is many moons since Frederic Harrison protested in the name of religion against a materialism that sought to reduce the most spiritual emotions of man to a secretion of cerebral matter, and reduce man himself to a mere animal. He stood his ground by insisting, and rightly I think, on the spiritual life of mankind as an ultimate fact. Bergson has vindicated his position, and justified his protest, by going further and entering into the materialist's own field showing him on what insufficient evidence his claims rest, and how inadequate his theories really are to explain some of the simplest facts of life. From these facts Bergson elucidates a theory more adequate for their explanation, a theory in which religion may find ample play for belief and faith and hope. "All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. 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 change able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death." ( C. E. 271)

Bergson approaches the disease through a critique of knowledge, showing that this whole problem is one that has been raised simply by the intellect's natural tendency to convert life into matter, duration in space. In allowing this best of the intellect full license, the materialist is not the only one at fault, but the radical finalist is equally culpable. "The error of radical finalism as that of radical mechanism, is to extend too far the application of certain concepts that are natural to our intellect—the human intellect in so far as it is fashioned for the needs of human action, to an intellect which proceeds at the same time by intuition, and by calculation, by ascending means to ends, and by thinking out mechanisms of more and more geometrical form." (C. E. 44) But against this geometrical thinking stands opposed our fundamental experience of duration, flowing and growing, as something with its

## Part 3.

## FREEDOM.

One thing has been involved in the preceding paragraphs which we may now proceed to discuss more explicitly and fully. If there be creation and freedom for the activity of the Life Force, and man be the triumph of that Life Force, we must necessarily expect freedom for man. "This is not Bergson's method of approach, but he does throw great light upon this problem. "Lastly, in metaphysical impotence" says Frederic Harrison, "we include the abysmal problem of Freedom and necessity." \*

Bergson approaches the discussion through his critique of knowledge, showing that this whole problem is one that has been raised simply by the intellects natural tendency to convert life into matter, duration in space. In allowing this bent of the intellect full license, the materialist is not the only one at fault, but the radical finalist is equally culpable. "The error of radical finalism as that of radical mechanism, is to extend too far the application of certain concepts that are natural to our intellect-----the human intellect inasmuch as it is fashioned for the needs of human action, is an intellect which proceeds at the same time by intention, and by calculation, by adapting means to ends, and by thinking out mechanisms of more and more geometrical form." (C. E. 44) But against this geometrical thinking stands opposed our fundamental experience of duration flowing and growing, as something with its

\*Phil. of C. S. Intro. xiii

that fluid homogeneity cannot be translated into terms of disparate elements or ideas. This we have already discussed under Creation, and the same experience which forces us to accept creation, is the same that carries within it the conviction of moral freedom. It is in vain that intellect assails this experience and attempts to rule it out. "It is of no use to hold up before our eyes the dazzling prospects of a universal mathematics; we cannot sacrifice experience to the requirements of a system. That is why we reject radical mechanism. But radical finalism is quite as unacceptable and for the same reason. The doctrine of teleology in its extreme form, as we find in Leibnitz for example, implies that things and beings merely realize a programme previously arranged. But if there is nothing unforeseen, no invention or creation in the universe, time is useless again. Finalism thus understood is merely an inverted mechanism." (C. E. 39)

"In short the strict application of the principle of finality, like that of the principle of mechanical causality leads to the same conclusion, that 'all is given.' Both principles say the same thing in their respective languages, because they respond to the same need." (C. E. 47)

These theories of the intellect, however, are not purely abstract they are in some degree interpretations, there is that in experience, there are certain elements in life, which give them some degree of justification. "For each of our acts we shall easily find antecedents of which it may in some sort <sup>be</sup> said to be the mechanical resultant."

And it may equally well be said that each action is the realization of an intention. In this sense mechanism is everywhere and finality everywhere in the evolution of our conduct." "But if our action be one that involves the whole of our person, and is truly ours, it could not have been foreseen, even though its antecedents explain it when once it has been accomplished. And though it be the realizing of an intention it differs as a present and new reality, from the intention, which can never aim at anything but recommencing or rearranging the past."

(C. E. 47).

Freedom for man, freedom in every creative act is the conclusion of Bergson. Nor is this limited to man, freedom is the nature of the Life Force. It is because we conceive of everything else below <sup>as</sup> man, bound by an iron necessity, mechanically reacting to environment, progressing by mere successive adaptation mechanically determined that we find difficulty in supposing any freedom for man. But as a matter of fact, this mechanistic conception of the evolution of organic life is wrong, something we carry over from the contemplation of inorganic matter where its application is justified, but for the Life Force there is choice, always potent, if not always operative, and in certain crisis its presence is plain. In such cases the mechanical view is entirely inadequate. Let us content ourselves with one example, namely, the choice that confronted the Life Force in its bifurcation into instinct and intelligence. How can this be accounted for on the grounds of mechanical

adaptation? It appears as if life put itself at an immediate disadvantage in order to achieve a final gain. This involves choice, not mechanical adaptation. Primitive man, lacking the keen instinct of the animal was undoubtedly less adapted to his environment than the latter. In the end he ~~is~~ the gainer by this, but we must insist that the first step cannot be accounted for by any theory of adaptation. And what was gained by the chance that Life took? The power of freer, wider individual choice. This is the great gift of the intellect. Given certain stimuli instinct has but one inevitable reaction, but the intellect may find several differing reactions or may inhibit any apparent reaction at all.

Choice then seems to be of the very nature of life, and more and more play for it, what life has striven for. It is only our one sided view of things that blinds us to this, and makes us deny freedom for man. "As they" (associationists and determinists on the one side, kantians on the other) "look at only the commonest aspect of our conscious life, they perceive clearly marked states, which can recur in time like physical phenomena, and to which the law of causal determination applies, if we wish, in the same sense as it does to nature. As, on the other hand, the medium in which these psychic states are set side by side exhibits parts external to one another, in which the same facts seem capable of being repeated, they do not hesitate to make time a homogeneous medium and treat it as space. Henceforth all difference between duration and extensity, succession and simultaneity

is abolished: the only thing left is to turn freedom out of doors, or, if you cannot throw off your traditional respect for it, to escort it with all due ceremony up to the supratemporal domain of 'things in themselves,' whose mysterious threshold your consciousness cannot cross. But in our view, there is a third course which might be taken, namely, to carry ourselves back in thought to those moments of our life when we made some serious decision, moments unique of their kind, which will never be repeated --- any more than the past phases in the history of a nation will ever come back again. We should see that if these past states cannot be adequately expressed in words or artificially reconstructed by a juxtaposition of simpler states, it is because in their dynamic unity and wholly qualitative multiplicity they are phases of our real and concrete duration, a heterogeneous duration and a living one. We should see that, if our action was pronounced by us to be free, it is because the relation of this action to the state from which it issued could not be expressed by a law, this psychic state being unique of its kind and unable ever to occur again. We should see, finally, that the very idea of necessary determination here loses every shred of meaning, that there cannot be any question either of foreseeing the act before it is performed or of reasoning about the possibility of the contrary action once the deed is done, for to have all the conditions given is, in concrete duration, to place oneself at the very moment of the act and not to foresee it. But we should also understand the illusion which makes the one party think

that they are compelled to deny freedom, and the others that they must define it. It is because the transition is made by imperceptible steps from concrete duration, whose elements permeate one another, to symbolical duration, whose moments are set side by side, and consequently from free activity to conscious automatism. It is because although we are free whenever we are willing to get back into ourselves, it seldom happens that we are willing. It is because, finally, even in the cases where the action is freely performed, we cannot reason about it without setting out its conditions externally to one another, therefore in space and no longer in duration. The problem of freedom has thus sprung from a misunderstanding; it has been to the moderns what the paradoxes of the Eleatics were to the ancients, and like these paradoxes, it has its origin in the illusion through which we confuse succession and simultaneity, duration and extensity, quality and quantity." (T & F pgs 237--240.)

Bergson has thus solved the problem that Frederic Harrison declares insolvable by dissolving it. His solution looks easy perhaps as I have stated it, but it must be understood that I have given merely the summary of a volume giving the results of a keen analysis of the nature of consciousness, more than this I could not give here. What I have given, however, I hope is sufficient to show that Bergson has brought to bear upon this subject a pertinent and potent criticism, and that religion at this point has found an able champion. For this is an issue in which religion is vitally interested. There are those who would say that without free-will there can

be no religion, and at best it would seem that if every act of our lives were determined or foreordained there could be but little for us beyond a submissive resignation to Destiny. That a religion of rigid Determinism flourished for a period in the form of Calvinism, we are aware, but — as a religion it can hardly be said to have been a success, its success has been more marked in lines of secular activity, Kuno Francke tells us, in the triumph of modern Capitalism, Real religion demands a free moral agent, a being confronted with choice, the power to will good or evil.

Modern religion, such as rests not simply on tradition, has been content, in the face of the deadlock between determinists and libertarians to take the position of Frederic Harrison, and say that the problem is insolvable but we have the experience of freedom and in that we must rest. In reply to the criticisms of the Determinists based on other facts of experience it has been weak.

Bergson has helped religion by showing that freedom is a fact of experience, and that the problem involved is an artificial one created by the intellect which is incapable of understanding it. On the other hand he answers the criticisms of the Determinists by frankly admitting the determined, mechanistic tendencies of matter, and by showing that man in so far as he has a material body is determined, and that even his consciousness in so far as it settles into the habitual, that is, the mechanical, life, which it does to a large degree, is determined. Man is not absolutely free, nor is he absolutely determined. At times choice confronts him, and his response to that choice is the result of his own free active will. This gives to

religion what it demands, the possibility of the free moral act, at the same time relieving it from the charge of being inconsistent with many other indubitable facts of experience.

## Part 4.

## EVIL.

What we have said in regard to freedom naturally leads to the problem of evil, and is suggestive to a certain extent of the nature of evil in Bergson's philosophy. Bergson has told us\* that he sees in the whole evolution of life an effort of the Life Force to arrive at something which is only realized in man, and in man only imperfectly. That is to say, this Life Force has reached, through the ages of its creative activity, after struggle, mishap and failure, its highest creative effort. We have seen in our outline of Bergson's philosophy, and in our discussion of the nature of man (Part 2) the exalted position man occupies in the manifestations of the Life Force. Man it is that has broken the chain of automatism that has clogged its movements along every other line of evolution. Again in his figure of life as a wave which starting from a centre spreading outward, is stopped throughout its circumference and converted into oscillation, (automatism) except at one point, man rides on the crest of the wave at the point of its triumph. Or consciousness is likened to a current boring a tunnel through matter and man marks the place where it has broken through into the light. In man then after ages of struggle and toil the Life Force has reached its highest achievement and only through men

\*Vide Thesis 10.

again can it reach to further heights and in man it is still struggling to reach ever higher planes of creative activity. This then is the high calling and destiny of man, to carry forward the primeval impulse of the Life Force, developing his spiritual powers, keeping his creative powers free and unclogged, seeking ever wider and fuller ranges of freedom and choice. The nature of evil in the light of this is clear, it is failure to respond to this impulse, failure to develop and use the creative energy which pulses through his soul.

But why should he fail? Because man while he represents the highest achievement of life, is still a manifestation of life's wrestling with matter. Man is not pure life, not pure consciousness, he has a material body and the characteristic of matter is automatism, and although in man life has achieved its greatest victory over matter, although in man it has achieved freedom, automatism even there latent, is always present, freedom is only maintained by a persistent effort, can only be preserved by unflinching application wherever possible. Bergson has given us the best insight into what he means in regard to this point in his *Essay on Laughter*. In his analysis of the comic in life, he shows that laughter is society's whip with which it endeavors to correct those who are guilty of the lighter offenses against her, those offenses such as bad habits which are too trivial or too general to treat with severe penalties of scorn, and penal punishment. "Rigidity, automatism, absentmindedness, and unsocialibility are all inextricably entwined; and all serve as ingredients

to the making up of the comic in character." (Laughter pge. 147) These bad habits, delinquencies and venial sins, however, do not differ so much in kind as in degree from the graver moral offenses, and if we push down below the former we shall find at the root of these the darker and serious moral evil which will have the same nature.

Automatism clogs the soul of man and threatens at all times to defeat it. "There is no pool, however, which has not some dead leaves floating on its surface, no human soul upon which there do not settle habits that make it rigid against itself, <sup>by</sup> making it rigid against others, no language in short, so subtle and instinct with life, so fully alert in each of its parts as to eliminate the ready-made and oppose the mechanical operations of inversion, transposition etc, which one would fain perform upon it as on some lifeless thing. The rigid, the ready-made, the mechanical, in contrast with the supple, the everchanging and the living, absentmindedness in contrast with attention in a word, automatism in contrast with free activity, such are the defects that laughter singles out and would fain correct."

(Laughter P. 130) Matter as we have seen before is inert, without life, we say. It is, so Bergson says, the inverse movement of the upward push of life. Does this correspond in any way to our experience of moral evil? Let us think of some conspicuous and decided case of moral defeat, doubtless some such has come to our attention, at some time. A man of considerable ability faces a moral crisis, and fails to meet the situation, he is defeated. If he be strong of course, he recovers, but too often the failure to meet a given situation means the first step in

a downward path, until the victim falls to a level where his life becomes a sickening round of sensual gratification, delirium and recovery, and gratification again. What have we here but first the failure, in a given moral crisis, to respond to the push of the Life Force, in its endeavor to attain a higher spiritual level, with the subsequent falling back due to the negation of the upward current, a gradual yielding to the downward pull of the material, the flesh, until the discredited one sinks to the level of the habitual, the level of unconquerable vice, and becomes the slave of automatism, and sinks into inertia, whose only escape almost is death, that is, total materialization.

"In the evolution of life-----the disproportion is striking between the work and the result. From the bottom to the top of the organized world we do indeed find one great effort, but most often this effort turns short, sometimes paralyzed by contrary forces, sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by the form it is engaged in, hypnotized by it as by a mirror. Even in its most perfect works, though it seems to have triumphed over external resistances and also over its own, it is at the mercy of the materiality it has had to assume. It is what each of us may experience in himself.\* Our freedom in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort; it is dogged by automatism. The most living thought becomes rigid in the formula that expresses it. The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit. And our most ardent enthusiasm,

\*Italics mine

as soon as externalized into action, is so easily congealed into the cold calculation of interest or vanity, the one so easily takes the shape of the other, that we might confuse them together, doubt our own sincerity, deny goodness and love, if we did not know that the dead retain for a time the features of the living." (C. E. pge. 127.) This quotation from Bergson seems to me to be ~~the~~ one of the most illuminating of his whole work, its consonance with our experience is such as to compel our admiration, and goes far to establish Bergson's philosophy. Accepting the evolutionary theory of life, I have experienced difficulty in applying to the problem of evil, the explanation of the evolutionist, namely, that moral evil in man is merely the survival of animal traits, carried over by man in his upward climb. Man, when he falls often falls below the level of the average beast. Still harder to understand by any such explanation, is the lapse and downward plunge of some individual who has attained a high level of spirituality. But how true to this situation are the words "this effort ---- is) sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by the form it is engaged in, hypnotized by it as by a mirror." The individual attains by cooperation with the Life Force to a high level, but even here automatism besets him, he settles into the habitual, and when a crisis suddenly confronts him, he has lost the power to respond. The most living though becomes rigid in the formula that expresses it. How true this is to history. How true especially to the history of the Christian Church. Think of the doctrines of Christianity.

One time they were living expressions of truth that won the enthusiasm of men and lifted them to higher spiritual levels, they became chrystalized into formulas and today, for the most part, form clogging chains that hinder the advance<sup>of</sup> the great bulk of mankind. These are only a number of the applications of Bergson's interpretation of evil to the moral problems of the individual and society, many others occur to me which would be equally illuminated by it but these are sufficient, I think to establish its credibility.

This interpretation of evil has one great merit from the religious point of view, namely it makes evil positive. It is interesting in this connection to note that in her excellent Prologomena to the Greek Religion, Miss J. E. Harrison finds in this idea the element that made for spiritual progress in the Greek religion, and because of this, values more highly the Chthonic cults than the religion of the Olympians. Speaking of Plutarch's deprecation of the former she says, "Plutarch is by temperament, and perhaps also by the decadent time in which he lived, unable to see the good side of the religion of fear, unable to realize that in it was implicit a real truth, the consciousness that all is not well with the world, that there is such a thing as evil. Tinged with Orphism as he was, he took it by its gentle side, and never realized that it was this religion of fear, of consciousness of evil and sin, and the need of purification, of which Orphism took hold and which it transformed to new issues. The cheerful religion of 'tendence' had in it no seeds of spiritual development; by Plutarch's time, though he

failed to see this, it had done its work for civilization." The recognition of positive evil, moral as well as physical, was the germ of the spiritual revival in Greek religion, a revival that prepared the soil for the spread of Christianity, a religion which went even deeper to the roots of this problem, a religion that gave men a greater power to grapple with sin, and because of this supplanted even these universal forms of Greek religion and flooded the Western World. We may affirm, dogmatically perhaps, that no religion can be vital and dynamic that fails to recognize evil as positive, that resolves it into good in the making, conceives it as illusory, or assigns to it a vague disciplinary function. This seems to be the logic of history and it also seems to be true to the experience of the multitudes, at least in the Western world. And evil in Bergson's philosophy is not illusory, it is as positive as good, it is not good in the making, it is the obverse side of good, it is the downward movement, of which good is the upward, it is the condition of the upward movement, it is its means of expression, it is that which offers to life a field of active creation, that which spurs it to activity, it is not transient it is eternal.

To many this may seem a hard doctrine. The increasing refinement of our modern civilization approaching almost, in its upper reaches at least, to an automatic equilibrium, has produced a type of mind which seeks similar but eternal equilibrium in the fundamental reality of the universe. To them this increasing push of life with its antithetical pull of matter, the upward drive of the moral will and the

resistance offered by evil, are to be deprecated, to be eliminated, and they seek to resolve both into an eternal harmony within an absolute that reconciles both good and evil and transcends them, and seek for their own souls a Nirvana, where for them this warfare and strife shall cease. There is, however, a type of mind that enjoys the din and smoke of the battle, that finds in all surcease from toil and conquest, stagnation and decay, and prays, after the crown of victory has been won, for new worlds to conquer. Most of us have both these sides; worn and weary with the strain and stress of life we are apt to long for a time of rest and peace, but in our strong and heroic moments we have the lust of battle, the joy of achievement, and religion is always strongest in its appeal to the heroic faculties of man. Evil must here be eternal, ever giving to man the opportunity to climb, ever offering his soul a foothold whence it may stop and gain fresh vision and start afresh. Evil thus seen is positive but no longer malevolent. There is discipline in it, even as there is discipline, doubtless for the artist in chiseling his stone, but there is more, as there is more <sup>than</sup> mere discipline for the artist in wrestling with matter. It turns from the talk of transmuting good and evil into that which neither is, as the mountain climber would smile at the suggestion of a Paradise in which mountain peaks could be attained without climbing. The attainment is the climbing, or climbing is one part of the attainment, so evil is but one side of good, without which there is no good.

I shall now take up the most difficult question in my discussion, the implications of immortality in Bergson's philosophy, difficult because it depends largely upon his most difficult work, "Matter and Memory."

In "Matter and Memory" Bergson combats all theories that seek to reduce memory to a function of the brain, or that make the brain a storehouse of memory. Bergson by a keen psychological analysis shows that such theories are incapable of dealing with the facts of consciousness, and especially in the realm of pathology, where so much was expected, has their breakdown been conspicuous. Bergson endeavors further, to show that the only conception of memory that is adequate to the facts of experience, is that it has an independent existence using the term existence loosely. "This survival of the past per se forces itself upon philosophers, then under one form or another, and the difficulty that we have in conceiving it comes simply from the fact that we extend to the series of memories, in time, that obligation of containing and being contained which applies only to the collection of bodies instantaneously perceived in space. The fundamental illusion consists in transferring to duration itself, in its continuous flow, the form of the instantaneous sections which we make in it."

(M & M 193.) In my outline of Bergson's philosophy I have shown how life and consciousness operated and

developed through an ever increasing complexity of nervous organization and the vital relationship especially between the rise of intelligence and the construction of the brain. This might lead us to hold Bergson to a theory of absolute dependence of mentality and spirit upon the organism with which it is associated. But this would be to misunderstand Bergson and do violence to Bergson's whole philosophy and his general argument. We must keep in mind that Bergson posits a Life Force which insinuates itself into matter and creates from it organisms which it uses for the purpose of further and greater creation. This is the opposite to supposing a matter on which life and spirit are dependent, we must then postulate a matter that in some way creates life, organisms that secrete consciousness.

That Spirit is in no wise dependent upon matter or upon the organisms which it creates is ably defended in Matter and Memory, and is consonant with his whole philosophy. But does this lead to the conclusion that there is personal immortality? Bergson seems to think so and apparently says so, in one place at least. "On the other hand, this rising wave of (life) is consciousness, and, like all consciousness, it includes potentialities without number which interpenetrate and to which consequently neither the category of unity nor that of multiplicity is appropriate, made as they <sup>are</sup> for inert matter. The matter that it bears along with it, and in the interstices of which it inserts itself, alone can divide it into distinct individualities.

On flows the current, running through human generations, sub-dividing itself into individuals. This subdivision was vaguely indicated in it, but could not have been made clear without matter. Thus souls are continually being created, which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed. They are nothing else than the little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity. The movement of the stream is distinct from the river bed, although it must adopt its winding course. Consciousness is distinct from the organism it animates, although it undergoes its vicissitudes. As the possible actions which a state of consciousness indicates are at every instant beginning to be carried out in the nervous centers, the brain underlines at every instant the motor indications of the state of consciousness; but the interdependency of consciousness and brain is limited to this; the destiny of consciousness is not bound up on that account with the destiny of cerebral matter." ( C. E. 269, 270.) And a little further on he says, "All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity in space and in 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." (C. E.271)

It is to be distinctly noted here that Bergson puts in a "perhaps," as though he recognized clearly

that although this idea is not entirely inconsistent with his philosophy, yet it has no necessary or integral place in it. There is no inconsistency in Bergson's belief that the spirit may survive the death of the organism through which it works, nor in believing that its individuality persists. It may be pointed out that Bergson has said that life seeks matter because only in matter can it realize individuality, and it might well be asked how, if life can realize individuality only through matter, is its individuality going to persist when it apparently becomes separated again from matter? Bergson replies that in the first place we must remember that individuality is implicit in life itself, and then if we admit that consciousness is not tied to matter, that it may persist beyond its material existence, is it not conceivable that life while associated with matter may be so strongly impressed with individuality and personality, that after the union is dissolved and spirit goes free, the impression forever remains. To put this into an analogy, supposing I have within me the artist impulse to play, this impulse taking the desire to master the grandest and most complex of instruments, the church organ. We will suppose, to promote the analogy, that I am situated where only one organ is ever to be available to my use. By practice on this organ I develop by my genius the the soul for music, and become master of the organ. Then supposing my solitary organ destroyed, what then, is the soul of music within me impaired? Not a bit. Is it reduced

again to the mere impulsive desire to play that I began with? No. All the richness and fullness of musical expression remains, all that I have acquired with my long wrestling and mastery of my instrument, <sup>need</sup> never be lost. Something similar to this is what Bergson is meaning by the persistence of personality after death. But it may be protested Life is essentially activity according to Bergson and matter is the only medium offered to it by which it can exercise this active impulse, how then can the free individual personality exist apart from matter. There is <sup>a</sup> difficulty here, but we may partly resolve it by turning again to the analogy of the musician. Is it not a fact that our great musicians reach a degree of genius where it is no longer necessary for them to have material expression of the creations of their soul?

It must be admitted, however, that even the few great ones do seek to give their grand themes material form and that they find joy, (which Bergson holds to be the sign of the accomplishment of the purpose of life,) in so doing. It would look then as though we were pushed finally to some theory of reincarnation, or rematerialization, either in this plane of existence, or in some higher. We can believe in following Bergson that the free personality may survive a separation from its material form, but if it is to exist, in any Bergsonian sense, it must inevitably seek to reenter matter to create a new organism.

It may be gathered from this discussion and from the quotation I have given from Creative Evolution (pge 43 ) personal immortality is not so much a fact as a possibility, and it is certainly not determined but contingent. That is, we may infer that the persistence of our personality after the destruction of the material aspect of our organisms, depends upon how much we really achieve individuality and personality as an organism. If the individuality and personality of consciousness are to persist after the association with matter comes to an end, these things must be indelibly stamped upon it while the union exists. In other words, in order that our souls may be immortal we must create real souls to be immortal. This is consonant with the trend of much modern religious preaching, and it would appear that this doctrine of conditional immortality is one that might be an effective instrument in producing moral and spiritual progress.

In conclusion we may say a little on another side of this subject, namely, concerning intuition. Bergson has argued keenly that intellect gives us only one view of the world, and it is aimed especially at matter, and is incapable of comprehending the flow of consciousness, the things of the spirit. The only way of approach to the deeper reality is by way of intuition. If, then, we find that a large proportion of mankind have the instinctive belief in immortality, if they assure us that they have an intuition that their

personal life is eternal, it would appear that at least the Life Force had this tendency and sought to realize it. The fact that another large proportion of mankind did not have this experience would in no way invalidate the faith of those who had, it would simply point in the same direction as the preceding argument, namely that immortality is not determined, but contingent, not certain but conditioned. This, while confounding some of the hopes associated with immortality, solves many of the difficulties that arise, and will be rejected as a hard doctrine by some on account of the first, and as gladly welcomed by others on account of the latter.

## Part 6.

## GOD.

It is fitting that we should consider in the closing paragraph of this discussion the relation of the conception of God with Bergson's philosophy. For while I for one do not admit that this is the central or the chief thing in religion, yet for there to be any religion in contradistinction to ethics or philosophy there must be some object of man's worship and devotion. Does Bergson's philosophy present to us any such object?

In the first place we may safely assume that there is no place in Bergson's philosophy for the traditional theological conception of God, the conception of an all wise, omnipotent intelligence that has planned the universe and has created or is creating it according to that plan. This, I take it is the conception of radical finalism which Bergson analyzes so critically, and rejects as opposed to our experience. Starting with our own personal consciousness, he finds the fundamental fact there to be duration. "The very basis of our conscious experience is memory, that is to say, the prolongation of our past into the present, or, in a word duration acting and irreversible." (C. E. 17) The theological conception of a planned universe, radical finalism, leaves no room for real creation, everything is complete from the beginning in the mind of God, and there is no real time. But this opposes the fundamental human experience of duration, for "duration is something very different from this for

our consciousness, that is to say for that which is most indisputable in our experience. We perceive duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and as we feel the very substance of the world in which we live." (C. E. 39) "Radical finalism" says Bergson, "is very near radical mechanism" (materialism) "on many points. Both doctrines are reluctant to see in the course of things generally, or even simply in the development of life, an unforeseeable creation of form,---- In short the strict application of the principle of finality, like that of the principle of mechanical causality, leads to the conclusion that 'all is given.'" (C. E. 45.) But our own experience is against this, the experience of our own actions is altogether different. "The free act is incommensurable with the idea, and its 'Rationality' must be defined by this very incommensurability, which admits the discovery of as much intelligibility within it as we will. Such is the character of our own evolution; and such also without doubt, that of the evolution of life." Radical finalism Bergson rejects as he rejects radical mechanism as untrue to experience, as incapable of giving any adequate explanation of the facts of life, and with the overthrow of radical finalism the theological conception of God tumbles to the ground.

But if Bergson fails to find anything in life to support this theological hypothesis, if this fails to explain the fact, what explanation has he to offer? Bergson gives us in place of <sup>the</sup> theological conception of

God, his conception of the Life Force. His examination of the explanations of life offered by finalism and mechanism, as we have seen compel him to reject them as both inadequate, and leads him to explain it not by the infinite accidental adjustments of mechanism or as the fulfillment of a great pre-existent plan or purpose, but as the manifestation of a growing, changing, creative purposive Life Force.

One is naturally led to ask, after reading Creative Evolution with its elaboration of the struggle of the Life Force to grapple with matter and mould it to its purposes, is not this a dualism, and to regard what Bergson says in the nature of shading off this dualism as inconsistent or as obscure, I felt this myself after my first reading of Creative Evolution, but a reading of Matter and Memory helped me to understand the seeming inconsistencies and resolve the apparent contradictions.

There, by an <sup>al</sup> analysis of perception, he abolishes the old dualism of subject and object, <sup>and</sup> with it the dualism between consciousness and matter. Further he shows how even our very intellect which we have represented as inherently tending to cut up and separate the universe, pushes on until it resolves it again into an undivided flux.

"But since a theory of matter is an attempt to find the reality hidden beneath these customary images which are entirely relative to our needs, from these images it must first of all set itself free. And, indeed, we see force and matter drawing nearer together the more deeply the

physicist has penetrated into their effects. We see force more and more materialized, the atom more and more idealized, the two terms converging towards a common limit and the universe thus recovering its continuity,--- The nearer we draw to the ultimate elements of matter the better we note the vanishing of that discontinuity which our senses perceived on the surface. Psychological analysis has already revealed to us that this discontinuity is relative to our needs; every philosophy of nature ends by finding it incompatible with the general properties of matter."

"In truth, vortices and lines of force are never, to the mind of the physicist, more than convenient figures for illustrating his calculation, but philosophy is bound to ask why these symbols are more convenient than others, and why they permit of further advance. Could we, working with them, get back to experience, if the notions to which they correspond did not at least point out the direction in which we may seek for a representation of the real? Now the direction which they indicate is obvious; they show us, pervading concrete extensity, modifications, perturbations, changes of tension or of energy, and nothing else. It is by this above all, that they tend to unite with the purely psychological analysis of motion which we considered to begin with, an analysis which presented it to us not as a mere change of relation between objects to which it was, as it were, an accidental addition, but as a true and,

in some sort, an independent, reality." (M & M. pgs 264--267.)

With this in mind we can understand such passages in Creative Evolution as "matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming. It makes itself or it unmakes itself, but it is never something made. Such is the intuition that we have of mind when we draw aside the veil which is interposed between our consciousness and ourselves. This also, is what our intellect and senses themselves would show us of matter, if they could get a direct and disinterested idea of it." (C. E. 272.)

And again, "Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter; consciousness, again, is the name for that which subsists of the rocket itself, passing through the fragments and lighting them up into organisms." (C. E. 261.) "That these two forms of existence, matter and consciousness, have indeed a common origin, seems to me probable. I believe that the first is a reversal of the second, that while consciousness is action that continually creates and multiplies, matter is action which continually unmakes itself and wears out; I believe also that neither the matter constituting a world nor the consciousness which utilizes this matter can be explained by themselves, and that there is common source of both this matter and this consciousness." (L & C. 38.)

The dualism of Bergson is thus nothing absolute, it is resolved into something different, something akin to

monism. I have belabored this point a little perhaps, partly because I found some difficulty here myself at first, and because I realize that in some paragraphs of this thesis I have deliberately emphasized the practical dualism between consciousness and matter.

God thus becomes identified with the universe in Bergson's philosophy in a sense, however, not completely pantheistic. "More particularly, if I consider the world in which we live, I find that the <sup>at</sup> automatic and strictly determined evolution of this well-knit whole is action which is unmaking itself, and that the unforeseen forms which life cuts out in it, forms capable of being themselves prolonged into unforeseen movements, represent the action that is making itself. Now, I have every reason to believe that the other worlds are analagous to ours, ~~that~~ things happen there in the same way. And I know they were not all constructed at the same time, since observation shows me, even today, nebulae in course of concentration. Now if the same kind of action is going on everywhere, whether it is that which is unmaking itself or whether it is that which is striving to remake itself, I simply express this probable similitude when I speak of a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a fireworks display---provided, however, that I do not present this centre as a thing, but as a continuity of shooting out. God thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is increasing life, action, freedom. Creation, so conceived, is not a mystery;

we experience it in ourselves when we act freely." (C. E. 248.) While in one sense God is not exclusively limited to consciousness, yet we must find his characteristic expression in the Life Force, and we can only have direct experience of him in and through Humanity. Bergson thus serves to link together the two schools of Positivism and Cosmic Humanism, giving them ground on which they may meet, provided each is willing to take a step forward.

God, concretely, then, is for Bergson the Life Force and we may definitely turn our attention to this conception to find what Bergson has to offer as the grounds of religious worship and trust. We have seen that the Life Force is controlled by no over-ruling all comprehensive purpose, that it proceeds by the method of trial and experiment, that it takes chances, that it sometimes fails, and thus is God. This conception of God, is repeated again and again in Bergson and (only he usually calls it the Life Force,) I have already give one quotation expressing it in this paragraph, and all that I said in my outline of Bergson's philosophy (Introduction Sec.3) bears on this point. I may perhaps quote a little further. "If the force immanent in life were an unlimited force, it might perhaps have developed instinct and intelligence together, and to any extent, in the same organisms. But everything seems to indicate that this force is limited, and that it soon exhausts itself in its very manifestation. It is hard for it to go far in several directions at once: it must choose.-----So, while

nature has frankly evolved in the direction of instinct in the arthropods, we observe in almost all the —the striving after rather than the expansion of intelligence. It is instinct still which forms the basis of their psychical activity; but intelligence is there, and would fain supersede it. Intelligence does not yet succeed in inventing instruments; but at least it tries to, by performing as many variations as possible on the instince which it would like to dispense with. It gains complete self-possession only in man, and this triumph is attested by the very insufficiency of the natural means at man's disposal for defense against cold and hunger. This insufficiency, when we strive to fathom its significance, acquires the value of a prehistoric document; it is the final leave taking between intelligence and instinct. But it is no less true that nature must have hesitated between two modes of psychical activity-----one assured of immediate success, but limited in its effects; the other hazardous, but whose conquests, if it should reach independence, might be extended indefinitely. Here again, then, the greatest success was achieved on the side of the greatest risk." (C. E. 143.) This conception of an immanent growing, struggling God is one that has the greatest significance and value for religion. Intellectualism in its different forms may tend to put God, (where it does not denominate him a mere superstition,) outside of the universe, to make him transcendent, to place him above the struggles and conflicts of life, a disinterested spectator of man's battle with evil; but religion just as

persistently demands for its object of worship, a Power immanent, moulding the Universe at one with life and consciousness, entering into and seeking to solve Life's problems, giving to man his visions and ideals, fighting with man the battle for righteousness, suffering in man's defeats, triumphing in his victories. Bergson reinforces religion by pointing out the breakdown of the intellectualistic trend, in his criticism of finalism, and by proving the superiority of his conception of the Life Force to explain the facts of experience, a conception which is consonant with the demands of religion.

If one should ask what is there here of absolute assurance of final victory over evil, what of ultimate absolute peace in this Weltanschauung of contingency? I can only reply there is none of these in Bergson's philosophy, nor if there were would it concern us here. I do not believe that these are the demand of religion, they are demanded by a certain type of thinking which has gone astray. What religion preeminently demands, Bergson gives it; a power seeking to express itself in the universe, seeking to express itself in ever increasing fuller terms of creation, finding in man its fullest expression and seeking in and through him to push on to still greater heights.

It may be further urged that religion can never take as its object of worship an impersonal force. In reply it might be questioned whether a force that contains implicit tendencies towards personalities can be termed

impersonal. It is not personal in the sense of being an individual personality, those who seek this it seems to me, are reverting to a kind of anthropomorphism. But when we find a Power that through ages of creative effort has been progressively working towards personality, when we find this personal expression at the apex of its evolution, when we find that in Humanity personality is the greatest concern, that fuller freedom and development of personality the ideal of its modern prophets, can we say that the Power behind this, the Power that has achieved this is impersonal? We may say then, that all religion demands for its object of worship is met by Bergson.

## CONCLUSION.

If one should undertake to follow up all the implications of Bergson's philosophy in its relation to the religious experience one might easily write a very considerable book. I have in the limited time at my disposal been able to take up only a few points, some of the more important perhaps, of the religious questionings of man. In the first part of my thesis proper I have endeavored to show how Bergson has freed us from the heavy bonds to which an extreme over-intellectualizing tendency has subjected us, bonds that hindered and prevented the free exercise of our religious nature. This emancipation of the soul is accomplished by the establishment beyond question of the fact of Creation in the world.

In part two I discussed the Nature and Place of Man in Bergson's philosophy and showed how in this matter so vital to religion Bergson has more than satisfied her demands, giving to man a dignity and worth in the universal economy that gives a solid foundation for religious faith.

In the third part I developed more fully what was suggested in parts one and two, namely, the moral freedom of man's soul, and without entering into the technicalities of Bergson's discussion, sought to show how he solved the problem of the libertarians and determinists by transcending it.

In part four I considered the conception of matter weighted by mechanism and fatality, and sought to establish a relation between this and the problem of evil.

For life entering into matter in order to express itself, although free and creative is always threatened with the danger of being overcome by these tendencies of matter, thus losing its own upward movement. We saw how man, an organic being, possessing a material body, was affected by this struggle for mastery, and how this affected his moral character, and gave a conception of evil as radical and positive.

In part five I took up a topic which has had such a central interest for the Christian religion, namely, that of immortality, and found Bergson, in spite of a strictly positivistic method speaking in favor of the survival of the personality after death. I sought to show that Bergson had not abandoned his critical scientific spirit, and that immortality of a kind was consistent with his whole system. I further elucidated the fact that consistency would lead us to believe that this immortality was conditional and contingent, and suggested that while this differed radically from the traditional belief in immortality, yet was not antagonistic to religious faith, and might be effectually used by religion as a means for awakening and quickening the religious consciousness of our modern life.

Finally, in part six, I discussed Bergson's philosophy in relation to the God concept, and showed that Bergson's analysis and criticism of radical finalism has a destructive effect on the intellectual formulations of traditional theology, which was offset however, to a large degree, by his overthrow of materialism through a similar criticism

of radical mechanism. The outcome was the concept of a God, finite in power, but infinite in possibility, a God immanent, identical with Life and Consciousness, struggling for fuller expression, arriving in man at its highest significance, and seeking through him fuller and nobler realms of experience. This conception while vastly different from what religion has operated with in the past, is, I endeavored to show, consonant with what the religious experience has always sought, and while flatly opposed to most of the intellectualizing of religion in the past, is consonant with the demands of religious feeling and aspiration.

In conclusion perhaps, I might say a few words in regard to the personal result of my study. In the beginning I stated that I had begun this with certain interests at heart, that I might see how Bergson's philosophy stood related to them, and it may be pertinent to give briefly the outcome.

I need say but little here in regard to its effect in relation to <sup>the</sup> traditional theology of Christianity. Before I began this study I had given up all belief in any great, creative, intelligent, personal First Cause at the back of the Universe, as contradictory to our whole knowledge of nature as elucidated by modern science. My reading of Bergson has only confirmed me in this renunciation.

It is on the other side that Bergson has helped me most. I have been loyal to true Positivism in asserting strenuously the irreducible spiritual qualities and powers of man's soul, of his unassailable moral

possibilities and responsibility, and yet I was painfully conscious of the plausibility and pertinence of much of the materialist's metaphysic, and its formidable appearance oppressed me, I feared that my pertinacity was due to prejudice or even timidity. But Bergson has cleared away these apprehensions, by cutting at the foundations of the materialistic metaphysic, by exposing its one-sided, limited view of things, its utter inability to touch living reality, its collapse in the realm even of organic science. I accept Bergson's assertions here most willingly because I believe that he has been scrupulously honest, testing all things by the touchstone of experience.

His conception of God, the Life Force, seeking to enter the realm of matter, the region of fatality and determination, in order to find self-expression by instilling into it, something of freedom and creativeness, traversing the whole region of organic manifestation, spreading tree-like into the divergent lines of primitive cell-life, of vegetable and animal existence, and attaining finally, in man, its highest and noblest expression, this conception is one that appeals to me most strongly. It appeals to my reason as being consistent with my experience, and appeals especially, in its regard for man, his place and dignity in the universal order, to my religious consciousness. For my religious consciousness is distinctly social and humanistic. To love my neighbor as myself is a command that carries with it an imperative, that has a significance, that the first

commandment, to love God, is unable to approach, in fact, only as it can translate the latter into terms of the former, has it, for my religious consciousness, any meaning. That is why I am impelled to suspect any philosophy that reduces man to a mere automaton, or machine. While not accepting the Comptean proscription of metaphysic and speculation, I do possess a Positivist's caution and scrupulousness in regard to these, and it is the conviction that Bergson likewise shares this, that has won my confidence. Some of his conclusions seem daring and almost extravagant, and yet, as one follows along with him, he appears to test every link by experimental logic. I feel that it is a philosophy that fits closest to my experience.

In some cases, I must admit his conclusions, although based on sound premises, transcend my own personal experiences, and here I am naturally cautious, while recognizing that in some places, at least, my experience is undoubtedly limited. Perhaps I may illustrate what I mean by an example. In discussing intuition Bergson speaks of consciousness turning back upon itself and getting a direct experience of the movement of life. There is a suggestion here that appears to be in harmony with some of the experiences of mystical religion, but here, while admitting the genuineness of the experience for others, I am out of my depth. The experiences which those of a mystical temperament report, have not entered into my life, they are more or less alien to my temperament, I am naturally inclined to take a critical attitude

towards them. But I believe that the experiences reported are mostly genuine and real, and favor a philosophy that takes account of them and gives them their proper value, and this is what Bergson has apparently accomplished.

My experience reports to me a physical universe dominated by fatality and determinism, a realm revealing nothing of an over-ruling intelligence, but indicating a blind force settling down to mechanical adjustment. In the realm of organic life I find expression of purposiveness, creation and freedom, which attains its highest and most perfect achievement in man. Man I find partaking of a spiritual nature, governed by laws, responding to religious aspirations, differing radically from the order of the material universe, yet not, I believe, diametrically opposed to it. Not being antagonistic to one another, there would seem to be no question of the defeat of one by the other. On the contrary, past experience has shown that there is a large field of concurrence, and we may believe that with the development of man's spiritual powers and the extension of his apprehension, a cooperation between these two spheres may be affected that shall approach ever more and more nearly complete harmony. The constructive work of the vitalistic school in biology, of men like William James in psychology, and of independent investigators like the specialist in instinct, Henri Fabre, is yet in its infancy, and it is presumptuous to attempt to forecast the outcome of their labors, yet their work has established beyond a doubt, a living reality, irreducible to laws of

mechanism and determinism, a reality as indubitable as that of matter. Bergson has taken the facts elucidated by these and uniting them with independent research of his own in the field of psychology, has outlined a philosophy, which, though scientific in spirit, gives to religion a basis for a spiritual renaissance, and in this respect I have found his work extremely helpful and inspiring.

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\*Letters in brackets are the abbreviations used in this thesis.