

# Darkened Counsel: The Problem of Evil in Bergson's Metaphysics of Integral Experience

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# Darkened Counsel

## The Problem of Evil in Bergson's Metaphysics of Integral Experience

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Who is this who darkens counsel in words without knowledge?

Job 38:2, trans. Robert Alter

Metaphysics, then, is the science which claims to dispense with symbols.

Henri Bergson, "An Introduction to Metaphysics"

[Philosophy] must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept.

Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

### Pessimism within Integral Metaphysics

In his programmatic essay "An Introduction to Metaphysics," Henri Bergson defines metaphysics as integral experience.<sup>1</sup> Metaphysics understood as integral experience is distinguished by Bergson from a collection and cataloguing of discrete and immobile facts that can be instrumentalized and made use of in a simple practical sense. This understanding of metaphysics remains largely consistent throughout Bergson's career as he investigates the nature of time, matter, memory, biological life, and the socio-political ontology of religion and morality. This metaphysics of integral experience has often been read as a kind of holism in simplistic, often unsympathetic summaries of Bergson's philosophy. While these misreadings are largely absent from more careful studies of his work, in the school of interpretation owing much to Deleuze's recuperation of Bergson we find a certain emphasis on the positive or productive nature of Bergson's philosophy. For those working with Deleuze's interpretation Bergson's metaphysics is

thought alongside of Nietzsche's philosophy of yes to life, in distinction to dialectical philosophies of lack (psychoanalysis), negation or substantive nothingness (Hegel), and primacy of the void or negation (Badiou, Bachelard). Even those commentaries unconcerned with Deleuzian themes and focused more on the philosophy of Bergson in itself—like the masterwork of Vladimir Jankelevitch's 1931 (revised 1959) *Henri Bergson*—arguably take optimism as a hermeneutic key for reading Bergson's philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

This essay proposes a counter-reading to this accepted narrative, acting as a darkened counsel. Not in the hopes of saying that Bergson was actually a philosopher of the negative or a pessimist in outlook. That would be foolish since those adroit readers of Bergson, whatever their particular personal philosophical commitments, are certainly not concocting this sense of optimism or integral holism from thin air. Yet, if Bergson's philosophy is simply optimistic, or simply derives meaning from the wholeness of experience, then it risks a theodical structure which undercuts its ability to speak to contemporary social and political problems of suffering. These problems are not simply academic problems, but as suffered they are lived problems. A theodical structure is one that, at bottom, justifies the experience of suffering by way of a concept of the whole or some concept that functions to subsume everything within it.<sup>3</sup> Suffering is subsumed and given meaning by placing it within a relation, often with a telos that redeems or sublimates the experience of suffering. This takes such a singular experience such as suffering and renders it merely relative to the part it plays within the system of everything.<sup>4</sup> On my reading, Bergson's philosophy contains a supplement of what we might call pessimism or negativity inherent in his metaphysics as integral experience. This supplement undermines the theodical structure that may be assumed to undercut Bergson's philosophy when confronted with evil or suffering and is seen most clearly in his critique of the notion of "everything."

I surface that supplement by reading his metaphysics in dialogue with Theodor W. Adorno's negative dialectics. This choice is perhaps surprising, but it is deliberate. In surfacing we bring to mind what lies unthought. In conjugating Bergson and Adorno I do not aim to defend (or not defend) Bergson from Adorno's criticisms as elaborated most clearly and directly in *Against Epistemology*, nor do I intend to argue that Adorno ironically carries out a Bergsonism despite his criticisms.<sup>5</sup> There may be value in such readings, but my conjugation of the two is meant rather to help us emphasize what Bergson's metaphysics implies despite his downplaying or not making explicit an anti-theodicy at work in his philosophy. In fact, the strict separation between pessimism and optimism, between negativity and constructivism is a temptation that some readers of Bergson at times fall into, just as some readers of Adorno read all his work through a depressive form of pessimism. This is an instance of what Adorno refers to as "shallow

depth" and, ironically with regard to Bergson, Adorno defines this shallow depth as thinking according to concepts of stoppage rather than thinking pessimism/construction within duration.<sup>6</sup> Against such shallow depth, I put forward another description of integral experience as "suffering the wrong state of things." The "wrong state of things" is a phrase from Adorno who writes, "Regarding the concrete utopian possibility, dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction."<sup>7</sup> Adorno's sense of the right state of things here is purely negative and points towards something "ideal" foreclosed to narration. This is not altogether different from a kind of apophaticism that can only speak of the real identity of God through a negation of its claims that points towards the impossibility of representing such an identity through language. The reality always outstrips language.

Interestingly this right state of things appears to be something Bergson's mystic is able to foresee and prefigure, as he illustrates when he says of the "metaphysical anguish" produced by philosophical systems and the contradictions of intelligence in nature that "for a mystic these questions simply do not exist, they are optical illusions arising, in the inner world, from the structure of human intelligence."<sup>8</sup> Of course Bergson provides a different conception of this wrong state of things than one will find in Adorno's negative dialectics, but what remains common is a refusal to subsume this wrongness into meaning, symbols, or even a simplistic redemptive end. We can further see the fittingness between Bergson's integral metaphysics and Adorno's negative dialectics when we consider the structure of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Adorno's negative dialectic provides a philosophy for understanding the structures of the world (specifically freedom, nature, and spirit) and in particular the wrongness of that world, constituted as it is by the break between concrete and ideal or (in more direct terms) injustice. Bergson's *Two Sources* is mostly remembered for its final two chapters dealing as they do with an investigation of a positive dynamic religion and the possibilities such dynamic religion produce for future human society. But this ignores that half the text is devoted to tracing the defensive functions of morality and religion that are essentially compromises and capitulations to the failure of ideals to match up to the concrete. These two chapters on moral obligation and static religion are essentially tracing a negative dialectic within the *élan vital* before turning to thinking the form of life found in dynamic religion that beyond the concept of "life."

We will deepen this counter-reading of Bergson's philosophy via Adorno in the following section in dialogue with the concept of *durée* before turning back to the task of surfacing the way suffering the wrong state of things manifests in Bergson's socio-political ontology as traced in the experience and social institutions of religion and morality. This presents a challenge to my reading since Bergson's ending cry to "fulfill" the "essential

function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods” suggests a redemptive end.<sup>9</sup> However, I will attempt to show that any such simplistically optimistic reading of Bergson’s work does not attend to suffering and trauma in the same way that his own work does. As John Ó Maoilearca writes, “Leafing through the pages of *The Two Sources* on fabulation, one cannot miss its connection with trauma, especially the trauma of excess novelty: that is, novelty or difference beyond our foresight.”<sup>10</sup> When the reader follows Bergson’s own method of refusing to play the game of theodicy, we are brought to see how the fundamental insight of Bergson’s metaphysics does not lapse into an unethical philosophy. Instead, Bergson’s metaphysics informs an ethic of how one might go on living despite intolerable conditions. I will attempt to show this by surfacing something akin to a negative dialectic between the mystical and the mechanical which unveils a profound awareness and attention to anguish made present in his own life through the evil manifest in the lingering effects of a disastrous war (World War I) and the horrific events beginning to form on the horizon during the writing of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

## The Critique of Theodicy in Adorno and Bergson

Adorno’s philosophical project is explicitly pitched against the theodical form within philosophy. This is a surprising element of his work since so much of it is derived from the Hegelian construction of dialectics and the subsequent Marxist development. Hegel’s undeniably optimistic philosophy of progress takes dialectics as the engine that drives forward that progress. There is a sense in Hegel’s philosophy that all things work towards the good, that all the suffering produced by inter-European wars and the overwhelming violence unleashed outside Europe by European colonialism is justified from the start or comes to be redeemed by making that suffering relative to the objective good of a redeemed history. Undoubtedly Hegel’s written work is vast and useful to many, but nevertheless at his most thoughtless we see him deploy scenes of subjection and abject terror as simple plot points in an unfolding narrative of a claimed right state of things. All those sacrificed on the altar (*Schlachtbank*, literally “slaughter-bench”) of history are justified by the final end of freedom that humanity will achieve through the unfolding of a teleological history.<sup>11</sup> They come to be simply negative moments that are brought into an overarching relational end that requires and thereby justifies those moments. He writes, “That world history is governed by an ultimate design, that it is a rational process—whose rationality is not that of a particular subject, but a divine and absolute reason—this is a proposition whose truth we must assume; its proof lies in the study of world history itself, which is the image and enactment of reason.”<sup>12</sup> The very idea of freedom (a positive good) first requires the production of a subject cast as a slave by another subject that

casts himself as the master.<sup>13</sup> Such a crime against humanity is justified by the positive good produced.

Against this positive form of dialectics, we find Adorno's development of what he calls a "negative dialectics." He writes "Regarding the concrete utopian possibility, dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things."<sup>14</sup> Taking this in mind we might posit that positive dialectics is the ontology of the right state of things and it produces this theodical ontology by regarding subject and objects in relation to one another: the slave is in opposition to the master within the world of subjects and enlightened civilization is in opposition to nature within the world of objects. In developing the ontology of the wrong state of things negative dialectics takes time and gives attention to the inevitable suffering produced by placing subjects and objects in oppositional relation. Adorno here acts as the Prophet Job (the main figure of the first written book of the Hebrew Bible) does in the midst of his own suffering. Job's friends counsel Job with thinking that obscures his suffering, that turns away from the real of his suffering and instead casts that suffering within frameworks that would justify it, that would produce a reason for suffering that is essentially meaningless in its subjective experience. When presented with the arguments of Job's friends Adorno's negative dialectics would counsel instead that we refuse the false image of redemption produced by subsuming that suffering into some already-decided system of progress and instead give voice to that suffering if the truth of it is to ever be thought. Adorno states this principle forcefully in *Negative Dialectics* writing, "The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience, its expression, is objectively conveyed."<sup>15</sup> We might say that if the history of philosophy has too often produced master readings of history and its own great texts, our small task here is to produce a slave reading.

Let us unpack further Adorno's criticism of the theodical form of philosophy in order to fully understand this challenge and how it might help produce a reading of the importance of suffering within Bergsonism. Adorno's pessimism regarding philosophy is perhaps best known through his aphorism regarding the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz. In his lectures on metaphysics he returns to the controversy and consternation this declaration occasioned. We will turn to the subtlety of that below, but it should be noted that he clearly evaluates the possibility of metaphysics by the same standard. I will quote his remarks here at length as they express a moral power and clarity worth noting and reminding ourselves of going forward in our attempt to read Bergson:

Metaphysical experience, or the concept of metaphysics—both in one—present themselves quite differently today. And as a *sign* of this—the word symbol would be wretchedly inadequate, since we are concerned with the most symbolic thing of all—I will take

Auschwitz. Through Auschwitz—and by that I mean not only Auschwitz but the world of torture which has continued to exist after Auschwitz and of which we are receiving the most horrifying reports from Vietnam—through all this the concept of metaphysics has changed to its innermost core. Those who continue to engage in old-style metaphysics, like everything merely earthly and human, there prove themselves inhuman. And the inhumanity which is necessarily present in such an attitude must also infect the concept of a metaphysics which proceeds in this way. It is therefore impossible, I would say, to insist after Auschwitz on the presence of a positive meaning or purpose in being. [...] To assert that existence or being has a positive meaning constituted within itself and oriented towards the divine principle (if one is to put it like that), would be, like all the principles of truth, beauty and goodness which philosophers have concocted, a pure mockery in face of the victims and infinitude of their torment.<sup>16</sup>

The force of this argument is not “merely” rhetorical, though one should not simply dismiss arguments presented in such a rhetorical form as if a disinterested or apathetic exploration of Auschwitz would somehow produce something closer to the truth of Auschwitz. But Adorno’s argument, which here condenses aspects of *Negative Dialectics*, is a profound argument that posits the necessity of taking account of suffering within a metaphysics as part of the experience of the metaphysical structure of the world.

Later in the same lecture Adorno makes explicit reference to Leibniz’s philosophy where arguably the first explicit philosophical theodicy is produced within European thought. There he points out that people often misrepresent Leibniz’s theodicy since it is not as optimistic as it appears in the dictum “the best of all possible worlds.” Instead it refers to the “optimum, the minimum optimum.”<sup>17</sup> Yet even this limited optimism was shaken and ultimately destroyed for a reader of Leibniz like Voltaire after he witnessed the ultimately meaningless deaths caused by the Lisbon earthquake. Such an event can perhaps be accounted for within a metaphysics, seeing as it is a limited natural catastrophe and even within a philosophy that sees positivity in existence it can settle for that positivity being concentrated in human subjects. But, Adorno asks, what really is such a catastrophe when “compared to the natural catastrophe of society”?<sup>18</sup> In other words, while the purpose of some metaphysics has been to engender a certain rationality that controls nature, what are we to do when “when socially produced evil has engendered something like a real hell?”<sup>19</sup>

Theodicy fails in the face of an integral metaphysics. While we are stepping outside of Adorno’s preferred terminology and thinking here along with Bergson, we can call Adorno’s conception of a “natural catastrophe” univocal precisely because it includes the whole of nature. It includes those

aspects of nature that are non-human (the brutality we see in the animal world in the relationship between prey and predator, the meaningless of events like earthquakes, tornado, hurricanes, and the like, and even at a more cosmic scale the eventual heat death of the universe) as well as those aspects of nature that are human (society being produced within the natural world according to certain natural conditions and limits to society as well as the production of metaphysics itself). Taking seriously the notion (one might perhaps call it an intuition despite Adorno's protests) that the production of metaphysics is itself a metaphysical production means that metaphysics (both the thought and its object) is itself affected by suffering.<sup>20</sup>

Importantly, especially for the fittingness with Bergson's own relative optimism (which he calls "empirical optimism"), Adorno's rejection of theodicy as encapsulated in his negativity does not lapse into what he calls "false depth" or false profundity.<sup>21</sup> In dialogue with afro-pessimism, a powerful articulation of the negative in critical theory regarding race (an articulation that is more powerful even than what I think exists even in Adorno's philosophy), I have referred to this false profundity as anglo-pessimism.<sup>22</sup> Such a version of pessimism does not proceed from attention to suffering, but a certain kind of theodical narrative regarding suffering. Though rather than justifying this suffering through appeals to the divine principle within reason, as we saw with Hegel, suffering is justified through the appeal to truth after the death of God. "According to this way of thinking," Adorno claims, "all thought that takes happiness seriously is deemed shallow, whereas thought is said to be deep if it treats denial and negativity as something positive gives it meaning."<sup>23</sup>

The rejection of theodicy is not driven by such cheap pessimism. It flows from the real anguish given in the attention to suffering itself. Adorno's realist pessimism is mirrored in Bergson's own rejection of theodicy. This occurs late in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, when Bergson admits that "attributing the place we do to man, and the significance we do to life, it may well appear optimistic."<sup>24</sup> But despite the implication some might mistakenly draw from his integral metaphysics, his vision of nature is not univocal. Rather, like we often find in Bergson, there are two senses or two meanings for nature that operate in his work.<sup>25</sup> He himself references Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*.<sup>26</sup> But we might better understand the two meanings by taking the first to refer to a transcendent form of life that gives itself in a mental representation as static or fixed and the second as the experience of nature that is given through living life as a natural entity that is necessarily dynamic since it is by nature in duration. As part of nature we see suffering. Philosophy often does not give attention to such suffering for "our pain is indefinitely protracted and multiplied by brooding over it."<sup>27</sup>

Yet, the whole practice of metaphysics as integral experience is described by Bergson in his introduction to metaphysics as imbricated with

the experience of such pain. So it comes as no surprise that even though Bergson recognizes that new situations produce the possibility of adding “a few paragraphs” to Leibniz’s theodicy he has “not the slightest inclination to do so.”<sup>28</sup> Instead he evokes the image of a mother who has lost her child and says that it is an “unwarrantable optimism to define evil *a priori*, even reduced to what it actually is, as a lesser good.”<sup>29</sup> That is, to think evil, to produce a metaphysics of evil, one has to experience it just as one does with anything that might be understood within integral metaphysics. Even if there is a rational image of evil as a lesser good, the real of evil can only be attended to in the pain of integral metaphysics. This has a similar form to the Christian, specifically Catholic, doctrine of evil as a twisted good. For Christian theologians the argument is that it would contravene God’s omnibenevolence if evil is taken as radical or substantive. Radical evil would have a substantial being, whereas the view of evil as privation, as found in Catholic teaching, says that evil is dependent upon the good in the last instance for its very being.<sup>30</sup> This is of course pure theodicy. Yet, if Bergson is to be consistent, then his own conception of evil here is not theodical. Instead, Bergson’s point might be seen to be more damning than radical evil. For at least with radical evil there might be something like a cosmic battle that ends evil once and for all (a future oriented theodicy), not unlike certain visions of the final stage of communism where the withering away of the State defeats capital’s impoverishing effects. Bergson’s point though is that even within the concept of good there is movement, there is constant change, there is the necessity that goodness may itself be evil, just as evil as the death of a child.

Let us turn to his conception of *durée* now and see how something like this negative dialectic is at play there already. After we will turn back to *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* where Bergson’s final refusal of theodicy is found in his critique of the idea of “everything” that is implied in theological claims regarding God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence. Instead of some kind of redemption within the “everything” we will see that Bergson’s empirical optimism is based upon a joy in joy, without narrative.

## Conjugating *Durée* with Negative Dialectics

At the heart of the concern that Bergson’s integral metaphysics is theodical is the recognition that in Bergson’s metaphysics suffering and evil are produced by the same unique or singular duration. Rather than *durée* justifying that suffering or evil it points to the way that *durée* may be fruitfully understood along the lines of Adorno’s notion of non-identity where there is a contradiction *in* the concept or thing, rather than *between* various concepts and things.<sup>31</sup> Adorno’s notion of negative dialectics thus posits a similar undercutting of static unity as Bergson’s *durée* or integral

experience and places thought within the very movement of thought rather than seeing thought as standing outside and thus moving between moments.

In order to come to see how duration may produce something akin to a “negative dialectic” (what we might call “negative duality” to be more idiomatic to Bergson’s own work) we must outline Bergson’s conception of duration itself. The recognition of duration is often said to be Bergson’s most fundamental insight.<sup>32</sup> And certainly he gives testimony to this fact in a letter written on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1908 to William James where he explains his parting of ways with the mechanistic philosophy of Herbert Spencer, “It was the analysis of the notion of time such as it appears in mechanics, or physics, which revolutionized all my ideas. I realized, to my great amazement, that scientific time has no *duration* [...]. This was the starting point of a series of reflections which led me, step by step, to reject almost all that I had previously accepted, and to completely change my point of view.”<sup>33</sup> But Bergson’s conception of duration is not given once and for all, it too takes time. There is a shift in thinking about duration from his first major work, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, to that of *Creative Evolution*. This ultimately moves from the idea of duration as psychological time to an ontological understanding of duration. But following Henri Gouhier we may see this movement as ultimately continuous with itself in the same way that a musical score is given through duration. According to Gouhier the philosophy of Bergson can be considered a “spiritual realism” in the tradition of French spiritualists like Ravaisson and Lachelier.<sup>34</sup> Gouhier writes, “Thus, in the moment where Bergson poses the problem of liberty, there is in his thought much more than in his book. The reader of *Time and Free Will* has the feeling of being initiated in a new philosophy of spirit: in fact, this one emerges from a philosophy of nature which preceded it and discretely frames it.”<sup>35</sup> Gouhier holds that the philosophy of mind present in *Time and Free Will* is framed by the failure of Spencer’s philosophy of nature and not purely by an interest in psychology.<sup>36</sup> Indeed Gouhier is quite forceful that Bergson’s thought is not at all a part of psychology, but that he comes to psychology by way of his philosophy of nature. He says, “The thesis of *Time and Free Will* represents an intermediary stage between a failed philosophy of nature, that of Spencer, and the true philosophy of nature, *Creative Evolution*.”<sup>37</sup> This is perhaps what Adorno means when he says that Bergson resisted the imprisonment in the realm of pure domination, “the mere control of what has not been comprehended [...] in opposition to the endless pressure of the positive sciences and the reified world, and he did so with an abstractness and stubbornness equal to that pressure.”<sup>38</sup> Duration may therefore be Bergson’s most fundamental insight but it is so because it interweaves philosophy of spirit in a philosophy of nature within an integral metaphysics of experience that both engages with the positive sciences (like physics, mathematics, and biology) and resists the spontaneous philosophy

of science that is at the same time a social and political philosophy. Bergson goes beyond his predecessors in that his is a philosophy of nature *and* spirit, at the same time without, as Ravaisson did, determining everything by way of spirit in an idealist manner. Gouhier says it thusly, "It is, if we dare to speak of it, spirit which gives the key to nature."<sup>39</sup> Philosophy of spirit, in this case understood via the concept of duration rather than history, opens up our understanding of nature rather than presenting metaphysics simply as a closed system.

When Bergson first conceives of duration it is primarily in terms of the real subjective experience of time as opposed to objective scientific time. To understand this more clearly it is necessary to see that Bergson's is a very idiosyncratic notion of what is subjective. Bergson writes, "We apply the term *subjective* to what seems to be completely and adequately known, and the term *objective* to what is known in such a way that a constantly increasing number of new impressions could be substituted for the idea which we actually have of it."<sup>40</sup> To know something completely and adequately is to know it qualitatively. Turning to our own experience of time, we see evidence of this in the experience of boredom or excitement. The duration of boredom has a different quality of passing than the duration of excitement. In philosophy and science we tend to ignore this experience of time in favor of the objective scientific time since the reduction of time to abstract space is heuristically helpful when attempting to solve mathematical problems (though calculating too takes time, even for sophisticated machines unencumbered with human subjectivity).

But it cannot be denied that though this spatialization of time is heuristically helpful in certain situations, it remains a confusion of the quantitative or extensive with the qualitative or intensive. Bergson spends his first chapter of *Time and Free Will* differentiating the qualitative (intensive) from the quantitative (extensive). According to Bergson philosophers have tended, in their reflection upon reality, to think of things in terms of intensity, but there are different kinds of intensity; namely the intensity of a feeling and that of a sensation or an effort.<sup>41</sup> Sensations properly so called, and Bergson means the inner or intensive sensation, are connected to their external cause, even though the intensity of these sensations cannot be defined by the magnitude of their cause.<sup>42</sup> Indeed we see that they are connected because as consciousness manifests (for instance in the feeling of joy or hate) it appears to spread and develop into extensity (smile, shaking, clenching, etc.). Extensity and intensity must be connected in a fundamental way for Bergson says that if you eliminate all the organic disturbances (shaking, etc.) from anger you are only left with the idea and can not assign it any intensity.<sup>43</sup> So, though many critics of Bergson hold that he rejects space or extensity in favor of a merely psychological, and thus not real, notion of time and intensity, we may respond that already in the first

chapter of his first major work Bergson connects the extensive and the intensive *at the same time* in reality.

It is quite clear that the “organic disturbance” comes before the idea and even more so that the idea and the action form a whole intensive sensation:

We [...] maintain that these movements [organic disturbances] form part of the terror itself: by their means the terror becomes an emotion capable of passing through different degrees of intensity. [...] There are also high degrees of joy and sorrow, of desire, aversion and even shame, the height of which will be found to be nothing but the reflex movements begun by the organism and perceived by consciousness.<sup>44</sup>

Bergson seems to be silently invoking an unconscious intuition prior to consciousness. A further quotation will serve to illustrate this: “Where emotion has free play, consciousness does not dwell on the details of the accompanying movements, but it does dwell upon them and is concentrated upon them when its object is to conceal them.”<sup>45</sup> Emotion is here located in muscular contractions coordinated by an idea that remains unreflected upon, or unconscious, in this case the unconscious nature of acting. Only when the object of the organism is to conceal sweating, shaking, or any other set of organic disturbances, is the idea then reflected upon in consciousness.

In consciousness we tend to think in terms of space rather than time. According to Bergson this spatialization is necessarily coextensive with the use of the intellect. He uses the example of number. Number is a synthesis of the one and the many, in that every number is one through unity, but this unity is a sum which covers a multiplicity of parts which can be considered separately.<sup>46</sup> Bergson states that while we do indeed count moments of duration rather than points in space, we do so by means of points in space thereby abstracting or distancing the reality of duration: “We involuntarily fix at a point in space each of the moments which we count, and it is only on this condition that the abstract units come to form a sum. [...] Every clear idea of number implies a visual image in space.”<sup>47</sup> This is because we conceive of number as a discrete multiplicity that admits of being divisible to an unlimited extent and *ipso facto* as spatialized within homogenous space. But this is not the only way of thinking a multiplicity or unity. Bergson says,

We must distinguish between the unity which we think of and the unity which we set up as an object after having thought of it. The unit is irreducible while we are thinking it and number is discontinuous while we are building it up: but, as soon as we consider number in its finished state, we objectify it, and it then appears to be divisible to an unlimited extent [...].<sup>48</sup>

Clearly what is at stake here is the difference between two kinds of multiplicities. This problem is more fundamental than that of the one and the many if we are to dissolve false problems. For instance, the problem of freedom as traditionally conceived is a false problem arising from the confusion of these two kinds of multiplicities.<sup>49</sup>

Prudently the question is asked if this difference between multiplicities is purely psychological or is it a real distinction? In the light of the whole of Bergson's work it is clear that the two multiplicities are real. Yet, to understand this one has to relinquish the philosophical illusion that the subject is not real. As Deleuze claims, the radical thesis of Bergsonism is that "all consciousness is something."<sup>50</sup> From *Matter and Memory* onwards Bergson extends the notion of duration past mere psychology to an ontological thesis about reality itself.<sup>51</sup> In *Matter and Memory* Bergson does not construct a strong dualism between matter and memory because, as John Ó Maoilearca says, "both belong to *durée* in terms of their substance."<sup>52</sup> Importantly, if we take duration to act as the substance (though again one must understand this concept through that of non-identity) underlining both matter and memory, we must not confuse memory or matter with space or we risk losing both memory and matter to mere epiphenomenalism.

There is space here for readers to confuse Bergson's critical remarks about space with a criticism of matter itself. It is thus important to note that Bergson differentiates between extensity and the homogenous space of Newtonian physics. The inadequacy of Newtonian physics shares the errors of our perception more generally. In our perception of the world, or in a more precise sense, our surrounding and immediate environment we tend to think in terms of a discrete multiplicity such that each individual is in itself discontinuous. The real extensity of matter must be distinguished from the abstract form of homogenous space and the homogenous time coextensive with it. The abstract form is useful in terms of action, but leads to insurmountable difficulties when confusing them with real properties of things.<sup>53</sup> What is real is duration, or the continuous process of forming a connected whole.<sup>54</sup> This is, in part, the Bergsonian integral reality of duration; duration shows us that there is no clear cut distinction between a thing and its environment.<sup>55</sup> At the same time we recognize that in reality there must also be distinct quantities in the ecosystem, but duration as a qualitative multiplicity subsumes quality and quantity by linking them together: "the humblest function of spirit [the qualitative] is to bind together the successive moments of the duration of [quantitative material] things [...] we can conceive an infinite number of degrees between matter and fully developed spirit [...] Each of these successive degrees [...] corresponds to a higher tension of duration."<sup>56</sup> Separating quality and quantity from one another is an act of spatializing by the intellect, while thinking from duration allows us to see the integral nature or non-identity of the two.

We may add another baroque element towards understanding duration. If Gouhier is correct in saying *Creative Evolution* represents the true philosophy of nature it would be a deep error to skip over this text with relation to duration since the concept of duration requires we rethink the concept of nature. Clearly the concept of duration is not finished being thought by Bergson at the end of *Matter and Memory* as he opens up *Creative Evolution* with yet another description of duration: "Our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be anything but the present—no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances."<sup>57</sup> To illustrate this Bergson employs what is now a rather famous example of sugar water. If one wants mix a glass of sugar and water one must wait until the sugar melts before they can have it.<sup>58</sup> This waiting is not simply mathematical time because it coincides with impatience, "with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something *thought*, it is something lived. It is no longer a relation, it is an absolute."<sup>59</sup> This is not to say that the glass, the sugar, the water, and myself are not related, but that relation itself is absolute and contracted into a whole. Importantly, to be the absolute, this whole cannot be *the* whole since it too is in duration. Indeed, Bergson will argue that the standard identity of the whole is false in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

## Mechanical and Mystical Suffering

Bergson's integral metaphysics it articulated in terms of the social and political content of metaphysics in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, to which we will now turn. As we begin to read that work I want to again bring to mind the way we have brought the work of Adorno in as a way to surface elements that are usually passed over in readings of Bergson. Foremost of all metaphysical questions, and Adorno insists that this is a metaphysical question, that is, "the question whether one can *live* after Auschwitz?"<sup>60</sup> As we might be reminded by Sylvia Wynter, another major critic of the theodical form in philosophy, this question has actually existed for much longer than the horrors carried out at Auschwitz.<sup>61</sup> How can one *live* after the institution of slavery, after European colonialism, is the question that must be responded to by any philosophy that hopes to give voice to truth and suffering. Such is the question, not simply because the horrors of slavery are absolutely overwhelming, like the horrors of Auschwitz. Unlike Auschwitz, the horrors of slavery constitute the conditions for existence today. As theorists like Wynter and others show, the framework or *episteme* we understand the world through emerges from this institution and as economic historians like Edward E. Baptist and others show our economic system only exists because of the wealth derived from

slavery.<sup>62</sup> In Chapter 26 of *Capital* Karl Marx famously identifies such a transition from primitive accumulation to its rationalization of oppression in the capitalist system as akin to "original sin" that is passed to each subsequent generation.

It would have been impossible for Bergson to address philosophy *after* Auschwitz since he died a victim of the everyday terror of the Nazi occupation of Paris. Sadly, there is also little evidence in Bergson's writings of any real awareness of the horrors of slavery and colonialism *before* Auschwitz, though a subtle reading of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* would note the many places where colonial scenes are referenced and how the singular figure of slavery functions on its margins. Nevertheless, it is clear that the question of how one can affirm life in the midst of trauma, anguish, and suffering is an important one. The object of his inquiry in this text is morality and religion. Bergson presents here, consistent with his general philosophical method, a duality at the heart of the identity of religion that centers upon the problem of suffering and the experience of evil within the world. Arguably, as I claimed in the preceding section, the identity of religion at play in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* is better understood through Adorno's conception of non-identity. For religion in Bergson is split between static religion and dynamic religion, though produced by the same driving engine of life and both rightly conceptualized as religion. Religion provides a certain response to the question of how one can live in the midst of suffering and that Bergson attends to the gap or fracture within religion's identity speaks to an aspect that is in fundamental agreement with Adorno's own conception of how one can do metaphysics after Auschwitz.

Bring to mind again Adorno's famous declaration that after Auschwitz one could no longer write poetry. This is important because fundamental to Bergson's understanding of static religion is fabulation (what his translators express with the English phrase "myth-making function," which can lead to certain misunderstandings when reading Bergson after Adorno's critique of myth). The more standard translation would be "storytelling" and we can begin to see already the connection such a practice has with the writing of poetry. Within the fundamentally reactive space of static religion in particular and the wrong state of things more generally, there is an antinomy between the prohibition against the creative act (be it writing poetry, storytelling, or the practice of religion regardless of its static or dynamic character) and the necessity of that same creative act in the declaration of the prohibition. In response to the consternation and derision his declaration occasioned, Adorno says that he could not have anticipated the reaction since it is the nature of philosophy to not mean things quite so literally. In a statement that resonates with Bergsonism he claims, "Philosophy always relates to tendencies and does not consist of statements of fact."<sup>63</sup> The gap between these tendencies is where philosophical

reflection is produced, according to Adorno, again resonating more with Bergsonism than with the post-Kantian tradition Adorno references in the midst of his lecture. But this leads him to the statement that, at least within the wrong state of things, it is both true that after Auschwitz one cannot write poetry and that after Auschwitz one must write poetry.<sup>64</sup> It is subject to this same double injunction produced by life that we find in religion according to Bergson's philosophical reflections.

What defines the dominant mode of religion, static religion, is fundamentally reactive. Bergson says, "*It is a defensive reaction of nature against what might be depressing for the individual, and dissolvent for society, in the exercise of intelligence.*"<sup>65</sup> At the heart of static religion and this defensive reaction of nature is fabulation. Fabulation is the most active aspect of this mode of religion, but it comes second in the order of functions and is subordinate to this defensive reaction of nature.<sup>66</sup> The argument runs that life has endowed humanity with intelligence to such a degree that it can recognize its own death. This ability to rationalize can run counter to the impetus of life, which is to create more life, in that it can depress the human person. Life then develops fabulation as a second order function of intelligence that resists the excesses or damaging aspects of intelligence.<sup>67</sup> Such fabulation makes sense and provides meaning in the midst of events that intelligence would tell us are meaningless. Such fabulation is not distinct to the realm of religion as even his example of a tile coming loose from a roof to fall and, by chance, nearly kill a passerby on the street is taken by the passerby as purposeful. Yet intelligence allows us to understand that such actions are not purposeful. All the factors that went into the tile coming loose from the roof were not conspiring to murder the passerby and their conspiracy was not somehow thwarted by a divine action. Yet such realization, though relatively minor in this example as it relates to a single life, may become depressing (in the true and most profound sense of the term) when one comes to think of the ultimately purposeless movement of life. Thus, static religion, like the ascetic ideal, names the preserving element of religion *for life*, which also implies that religion is fundamentally connected to the whole of nature and not something which exists outside of it. But, as we have seen, all of the terms that populate Bergson's integral metaphysics are attempts to capture movements with a concept while trying to keep as part of that concept that those movements exceed those concepts.

Let us stay with this thought for a moment before turning to explicate certain elements of the *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. When I write about suffering it is not suffering itself, yet the experience of theorizing suffering is in fact part of the movement of suffering. The attempt to conceptualize it enters into the time of suffering and in conceptualizing that suffering through this method it does not construct a theodicy. For a theodicy requires that there be something outside of that movement that may justify the suffering. Such a judicious distance is not possible within the

practice of an integral metaphysics as Bergson describes it. The thinker is imbricated within the thought in movement, taking great effort—even painful effort—to collapse the distance between thinker and thought, between subject and object, and other standard metaphysical dualities. Instead she moves between them, is caught between them, builds borrowing from one tendency before moving to the next. She may, by simple chance and without hope of escape, live within the world, yet she does not gaze upon the blood soaked slaughter-bench and think of the distance. She does not conceptualize away the violence, the suffering, or the evil, however relative such a concept must be within an integral metaphysics. The challenge that is often raised, especially from the perspective of modern Jewish thought, is to ask how it would be possible to denounce evil if there is no outside, no transcendence, to experience or nature. To further bear out the implications of Bergson's integral metaphysics under the condition of suffering, I will now turn to the distinction between the mechanical and the mystical and their imbrication for Bergson.

The final chapter of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* is remarkable for its foresight. Written in the aftermath of World War I and before the next wave of mass suffering, Bergson turns to the problem of mechanization and the way that science had been captured by the demand to create machines. Bergson is deft in his analysis. On the one hand, he recognizes the fear regarding mechanization and, on the other hand, he recognizes that the same process unleashes powerful possibilities for freedom.<sup>68</sup> Bergson is clear that the demands upon science are precisely that. There is nothing intrinsically evil about what machines may unleash, for they too are caught within the dichotomous flux of an integral experience. Bergson in this chapter takes a position against the anti-democratic forces of "authority, hierarchy, and immobility."<sup>69</sup> Such are the forces that may direct those actions we may collect under the archaic name "the mechanical." Such direction is what we see increasingly within our own control society, despite some desperate attempts to valorize the libertarian vision of some technicians and entrepreneurs in the tech industry.

Yet, Bergson's optimism is fundamentally at work in this moment. He recognizes the way the mechanical may be called upon to industrialize the suffering that once took place slowly and spectacularly on the slaughter-bench, turning it into a warehouse of death banal in presentation. Yet, he also claims that "the mystical summons up the mechanical. [...] mechanism should mean mysticism."<sup>70</sup> Bergson's point here is poetic, but ultimately simple and in line with certain technophilic positions today in various theoretical works. Ultimately there must be something directing the process of mechanization towards greater freedom, towards joy. Human beings must make the effort to direct and shape matter in order to longer be subject to the narrowness of contemporary material conditions. This is clear when he writes, "Man will rise above earthly things only if a powerful equipment

supplies him with the requisite fulcrum. He must use matter as a support if he wants to get away from matter."<sup>71</sup>

While the emphasis on mysticism might call forth certain elements of the cyberpunk culture of the 1990s, the emphasis on enlarging the "soul" and deriving greater "moral energy" might make some contemporary writers bristle. Yet, this emphasis on the mystical is precisely what makes Bergson's work on the mechanical different than so much of other work in the field of technology and social theory. For his discussion of the mechanical calling up the mystical takes place right before a discussion of imperialism where he makes the claim that "if we keep to true mysticism, we shall judge it incompatible with imperialism."<sup>72</sup> Imperialism is always about the exercise of sovereignty over others.<sup>73</sup> Such an exercise of sovereignty always takes place within its own kind of fabulation, like "securing a future for the nation" as if these were actual things. But by subjecting the mechanical to a moral energy driven by mysticism we move away from such teleologically constrained fabulations to those narratives that are "without a why" (as the mystical theologian Meister Eckhart expresses it). Moving towards an end is a kind of immobility, since the experience of the movement is constrained and experiencing the movement as movement is foreclosed. The true mystic stands in complete distinction to such a teleological fabulation. Bergson says, "True mystics simply open their souls to the oncoming wave."<sup>74</sup> There is no telos for the mystic in this opening or, to state it slightly differently, there is no narrative for the mystic.<sup>75</sup> Joy is simply experienced as joy.

By now I hope that the argument has been convincing that Bergson's integral metaphysics not only is not theodical in shape and moreover that it is anti-theodical. There is a rejection of moral panic in Bergson's writings regarding elements of social life as inherently evil. Yet, there is also a sense that there is indeed real suffering written into the fabric of that social life. The question then that perhaps may still remain is how an integral metaphysics may recognize such suffering in the midst of the *durée*. Such a question remains open at the close of this essay. Bergson provides for us a powerful philosophy of how to deal with the integrality of nature without recourse to transcendence in order to escape theodicy. Regarding the recognition of evil within such a philosophy it may come down to the fact that evil will only be recognized in the stopping of movement or arresting of *durée*, in the way that narratives of progress are imposed upon the real movement of life. What does it mean to recognize evil except to exit from suffering and impose upon the lived experience of suffering a narrative of evil? The parent who loses their child may reflect upon the experience of that child's death and name it as evil, but only by exiting *durée*. In the midst of suffering there is no recognition, but only the cry. In the same way that the mystic opens up to joy, in the experience of suffering one simply opens to the unnameable loss. The demand to recognize evil arises only if you

assume it is possible to speak from a position outside of it, as if there was a position outside of the whole of experience, as if there was a world to live in that had not been built through the suffering of slaves. If we were forced to respond to the question, “how can one recognize evil” the response from within Bergsonism might be that one must undergo evil and, in the midst of that dichotomy, find cracks in its imposition of authority, hierarchy, and immobility. Within those cracks a body may survive pending joy or even simply live as joy without concern for the world. Such a darkened counsel can be the only response when one dispenses with symbols and simply makes the painful effort to attend to that which matters most.

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme, eds. John Ó Maoilearca and Michael Kolkman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54.

<sup>2</sup> See Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: PUF, 1959), 244-52.

<sup>3</sup> Theodicy traditionally refers to the justification of the existence of a benevolent God in the face of the problem of evil or suffering. In my use of it here, extended outside of its traditional milieu of natural theology, I intend it as the justification of any totalizing system by placing suffering within a narrative of justification or redemption.

<sup>4</sup> While there is not space here to show the many places this theodical structure may be found, it is at least suggestive to note that this structure is seen in John Milbank’s construction of ontology within Christian theology and in Ray Brassier’s nihilist realism as developed according to the principles of European enlightenment. In Milbank’s *Being Redeemed: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003) we find that both rape and the colonial transatlantic slave trade are relativized within the redemptive process of Being as such being completed and redeemed in Christianity (p. 21, 51). This horrific defense follows the usual Augustinian argument that there can be no radical or substantive evil since what we take as evil is only ever a corrupted good. And indeed in the *City of God* there is a similar defense of rape in the “nuancing” of the rape of Lucretia (See *City of God*, 1.18-1.9) Brassier’s theodicy is a bit different, perhaps a bit sexier, but it is still a theodicy or perhaps better a “naturdicy” as Brassier’s totalizing philosophy functions without God. In his *Nihil Unbound: Extinction and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) he argues that all philosophy must begin from the thought of the cosmic heat death of the universe as absolute extinction. This may seem sexier than the theologian’s barbarism, as there is a certain appeal to finally being done with this world, with the best of all possible worlds being none. But to reduce all human beings to already dead, to see the world with the eyes of one suffering from Cotard’s syndrome, is to ultimately to free the philosopher from the systems of singular suffering he is implicated in.

<sup>5</sup> The term conjugation has many senses, from the grammatical to the biological to the mathematical. Always in general it means forming a connection between things, though this connection is more than a simple relation. Rather, this connection marks a change in its elements, sometimes as a union and sometimes in terms of a new mood surfacing as in grammar. I am following the methodology of François Laruelle in reading Bergson through Adorno. He summarizes this process of conjugation in an interview saying, “I have always used two philosophies at the same time. Heidegger and Nietzsche, then Derrida and Deleuze. So it is always a matter of how to eventually combine several philosophies. [...] I had the feeling that in order to completely change the concept of philosophy, two philosophies were always necessary,

as if each of the philosophers represented half of philosophy, basically, which I felt to be the non-completeness of a particular philosophy; this problem would have to be resolved each time by the combination of two philosophers. I have followed this way of doing things, a little bit in spite of myself, always combining two philosophies as if each of them was lacking what the other had. You could think that this is a dialectical relation. But in fact that was not that at all, because it was, each time, two philosophies and not one philosophy and the entire history of philosophy in addition. Thus, I am part of a conjugation, I like this term a lot, of philosophies which replaced the missing concept. What was missing was the One, the One-in-One.” (François Laruelle, “Non-Philosophy, Weapon of Last Defence: An Interview with François Laruelle” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 239.) A Bergsonian translation of conjugation might be “sympathy.”

- <sup>6</sup> Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics: Fragments of a Lecture Course 1965/1966*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 102-05. There Adorno expresses something similar to the “realist optimism” of Bergson at the end of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and that Jankélévitch deftly explores in his study. Adorno says that “there is little in traditional thought” to which he is opposed than “idea of tragedy according to which everything that exists deserves even to perish because it is finite, and that this perishing is at the same time the guarantee of its infinite nature. [...] It is shallow, furthermore, because it reinforces the idea that failure, death and oppression are the inevitable essence of things—whereas important thought all these elements are and, connected as they are to the essence of things, they are avoidable and criticizable, or at any rate the precise opposite of what thinking should actually identify with (104).”
- <sup>7</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 11.
- <sup>8</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 251.
- <sup>9</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 317.
- <sup>10</sup> John Ó Maoilearca, “Life, Movement, and the Fabulation of the Event” in *Theory, Culture, & Society* 24.6 (2007): 57.
- <sup>11</sup> See Glenn Alexander Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 218-19.
- <sup>12</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 28.
- <sup>13</sup> On this point I am following Orlando Patterson’s argument in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).
- <sup>14</sup> Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 11.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-8.
- <sup>16</sup> Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 101-02.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>21</sup> Again Leibniz's theodicy is invoked here as profundity or depth is part of his justification of suffering. See Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 103.
- <sup>22</sup> See Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), Chapter 5.
- <sup>23</sup> Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 104.
- <sup>24</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 260.
- <sup>25</sup> One of the most insightful readings of Bergson traces the movement between two senses or two meanings of life in Bergson. See Frédéric Worms, *Bergson ou les deux sens de la vie* (Paris: PUF, 2004). This study by Worms has been invaluable for my own attempts to understand the seemingly contradictory statements about nature in Bergson's work.
- <sup>26</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 58.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.
- <sup>30</sup> Radical evil is of course a term in Kant's philosophy of religion. However, my use of the term owes more to the tradition of Job given voice by Martin Beck Matušík in his *Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). There he writes, "Yet what I call 'radical evil' in this book appears at first, contra Kant, in a religious intensity bursting through the bounds of mere reason. [...] A cruel agent can be punished, just as a morally wicked one can repent. But no amount of repentance and even accepted and completed punishments can in and of itself restore shattered bonds." (15) In other words, radical evil refers to an experience of harm or harming that exceeds the logic of restoration. For Matušík this constitutes a "negatively saturated phenomenon" à la Jean-Luc Marion. (16)
- <sup>31</sup> See Adorno, *Lectures of Negative Dialectics*, 6-7.
- <sup>32</sup> See Jankélévitch, 5-6. Jankélévitch is here making a case against thinking of Bergson's philosophy as an "ism," in this case "intuitionism." Claiming instead that duration is the "living centre" of his philosophy.
- <sup>33</sup> Henri Bergson, *Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Ó Maoilearca, trans. Mellissa McMahon (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 362-363.
- <sup>34</sup> Henri Gouhier, *Bergson et le Christ des évangiles* (Paris: Le Signe, 1961), 30. As many will already know, spiritualism in French philosophy does not have the same connotations as it does in English. It shares more in common with non-materialist philosophy of mind than it does with early 20<sup>th</sup> century esoteric societies. Gouhier tells us that Bergson pursued the dream of a philosophy of spirit which would constitute the interior of a philosophy of nature. In this way Bergson is the fulfillment of the first of two traditions of spiritualism in French philosophy. The first tradition, of Ravaisson and Lachelier, held that spirituality coincides with the interiority of the vital, while the second, inaugurated by Biran and based in anthropology, is defined as subjectivity radically differentiated from vitality (24).
- <sup>35</sup> Gouhier, 19. All translations from Gouhier are my own. As with the German *Geist* the French *esprit* may refer to both "mind" or "spirit." Gouhier at times clearly means "mind" in the sense of the object studied in psychology and other times to the more expansive concept "spirit." In the selections quoted here I have tried to determine when each choice is appropriate.

- <sup>36</sup> Gouhier tells us that it amused Bergson to have his work considered under the title of psychology. “From the outset his work was not at all turned in that direction, but rather towards the philosophy of the sciences of nature” (18).
- <sup>37</sup> Gouhier, 20.
- <sup>38</sup> Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 85.
- <sup>39</sup> Gouhier, 31.
- <sup>40</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Company, Ltd, 1913), 83-84.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 7
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-6.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.
- <sup>49</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. High Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 19.
- <sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 56.
- <sup>51</sup> See John Ó Maoilearca, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 55-56.
- <sup>52</sup> Ó Maoilearca, 55.
- <sup>53</sup> “Homogenous space and homogeneous time are then neither properties of things nor essential conditions of our faculty of knowledge: they express, in an abstract form, the double work of solidification and of division which we effect on the moving continuity of the real in order to obtain there a fulcrum for our action, in order to fix within it starting points for our operation, in short, to introduce into it real changes. They are the diagrammatic design of our eventual action upon matter.” Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 211.
- <sup>54</sup> See Chapter 1 of *Matter and Memory* where Bergson shows that perception must be taken as a whole.
- <sup>55</sup> “That there are, in a sense, multiple objects, that one man is distinct from another man, tree from tree, stone from stone, is an indisputable fact; for each of these beings, each of these things, has characteristic properties and obeys a determined law of evolution. But the separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear-cut; there is a passage by insensible gradations from the one to the other: the close solidarity which binds all the objects of the material universe, the perpetuality of their reciprocal actions and

reactions, is sufficient to prove that they have not the precise limits which we attribute to them.” Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 209.

- <sup>56</sup> Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 221. See also Ó Maoilearca, 144-146 on the nature of qualitative multiplicity.
- <sup>57</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005), 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Deleuze makes the somewhat humorous point that one can always stir the water with a spoon to help the sugar dissolve. See Deleuze, *Cinema*, 9.
- <sup>59</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 8.
- <sup>60</sup> Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 110.
- <sup>61</sup> See Sylvia Wynter, “1492: A New World View” in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, eds. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) and Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation” in *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (Fall 2003): 257-337.
- <sup>62</sup> See Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).
- <sup>63</sup> Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 110.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 205.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 119. Compare this analysis with that of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) where they trace the ways in which the dream of Enlightenment self-mastery has slipped into the worst sort of barbarisms and that “enlightenment’s mythic terror springs forth from a horror of myth” (22). Moreover they claim that “enlightenment itself, having mastered itself and assumed its own power, could break through the limits of enlightenment” (172).
- <sup>68</sup> Bergson should perhaps be credited—as far as these things go—for his nascent alliance with feminist concerns regarding reproductive rights. See Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 302-03 and Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism: Phenomenology, Ontology, Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 91-97. For Bergson something like birth control would free women from certain “natural inequalities” that is forced upon women via motherhood. While these comments are found in a discussion of the need, in his view, to control human population growth, he thankfully does not appear to have any of the sympathy for eugenics that has marred the legacy of early birth control advocates like Margaret Sanger. His scant comments on peoples outside of Europe do not suggest Bergson favored any kind of essentialist “racial difference” that might be controlled for genetically.
- <sup>69</sup> Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 282.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Arguably in Bergson's discussion of exercising sovereignty over things rather than persons, he falls into the classic position of an Enlightenment philosopher like those of whom Adorno is critical.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>75</sup> On this point it is worth challenging Bergson's historical understanding of Christianity since the Christian mystics he references since so much of their thought is carried in narratives of their lives and, in general, his reading of Christianity is far less nuanced and dynamic than it ought to be.