

10. *A Diagram of the
Finite-Infinite Relation:
Towards a Bergsonian
Production of Subjectivity*¹

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... *there is in matter something more than, but not something different from, that which is actually given.* Undoubtedly, conscious perception does not compass the whole of matter, since it consists, in as far as it is conscious, in the separation, or the 'discernment' of that which, in matter, interests our various needs. But between this perception of matter and matter itself there is but a difference of degree and not of kind.²

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS: MATTER AND
MEMORY

Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* amounts to a revolution in thought, a radical 'switch' in how we understand ourselves, and especially our relation to the past (understood as that which is 'outside' our present experience). For Bergson, we are not composed of a body and of a mind inhered within the latter. Indeed, we are not a vessel or a container for our memories (Bergson's thesis is a critique of interiority in this sense), but more like a point or probe that is moving through matter and which is itself part of the very matter through which it moves. In order to negotiate this strange landscape, with its challenges to common (or Cartesian) sense, two principles are useful. The first, as Bergson himself suggests in his Foreword, is that we remember that all mental life, ultimately, is determined by action. An absolutely speculative function of the mind, divorced from experience and action, does not, for Bergson, exist (although, as we shall see, this does not prohibit a kind of speculation understood as intuition). The second principle, that in some sense follows from this, is that the past has not ceased to be, but has merely ceased to be useful as regards this action. It is in this sense, again as we shall see, that the past is co-extensive with the present. It survives in a pure, albeit unconscious, state.

In what follows I will be especially concerned with the status of, and

possibility of accessing, this pure past, which might also be understood as a kind of ontological ground of our individual being. It is my contention, following Bergson, and especially Deleuze's reading of him, that this past might be a resource of sorts in the production of a specifically different kind of subjectivity. Another way of saying this is that in what follows I am interested in the possibility of breaking habit, since the latter, in its extreme form, staples us to the present and stymies access to this realm of potentiality (indeed, typical subjectivity *is* a habit, constituted as it is by a bundle of repeated reactions).

Bergson's particular philosophical method allows for a form of 'travel' beyond our habitual, or all too human, configuration. It involves the dividing of composites – in this case matter (objectivity) and memory (subjectivity) – along lines that differ in kind, following these lines beyond the particular composites to the extremes before returning, armed with a kind of superior knowledge of what, precisely, constitutes the mixtures. Habitually, we do not 'see' these divergent lines because we are condemned, in Deleuze's terms, 'to live among badly analyzed composites, and to be badly analyzed composites ourselves'.³ We are subject to certain illusions about who and what we are, and about the world in which we find ourselves – caught within representation as it were. Bergson's intuitive method hence involves a kind of thinking, or more precisely, intuiting, of a larger reality 'beyond' this confused state of affairs, beyond our particular 'human' mode of organisation and our specific form of intelligence that is derived from utility. Following Spinoza – who will appear a few more times in the account I give of Bergson below – we might add that this intuition is also a kind of knowledge of that which lies 'beyond' our own very particular (that is, human) spatio-temporal coordinates.

It is in this sense that, despite Bergson's idea of the utilitarian nature of thought, or, more precisely, of intelligence, philosophy itself is an attempt at a kind of speculation – an intuitive speculation as it were – beyond Kant's conditions of possible experience (in Bergson's terms, simply habit) towards the conditions of 'real experience'. This is what Deleuze calls 'transcendental empiricism': 'To open us up to the inhuman and the superhuman (*durations* which are inferior or superior to our own), to go beyond the human condition: This is the meaning of philosophy.'⁴

This work of speculative intuition might also lead to a pragmatics of experimentation in so far as attempting to 'think' beyond the confused mixture that we are opens up the possibilities for constituting ourselves differently. Indeed, if capitalism controls the matrices of emergence, or simply determines what is possible (what we can buy, what there is



‘to do’, and so forth), then Bergson allows a kind of thinking outside these parameters. In understanding the mechanisms of actualisation of the virtual – I will go further into these terms in a moment – it becomes possible to think of, and perform, different actualisations. In an echo of Spinoza there is then an implicit ethics here, since Bergson’s philosophy addresses the question of what our bodies, understood as actualising machines, are capable.⁵

My commentary, which attends specifically to Chapter 3 of *Matter and Memory*, ‘On the Survival of Images’, coheres around one diagram – taken, initially, from Bergson’s book – that will be built up in the following two sections of this chapter. The final part of the chapter extends this diagram through a brief commentary on another of Bergson’s major works, *The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*. Here, I am especially interested in the mystic as the one who accesses/actualises this pure past/virtuality, and ‘utilises’ it in the production of a specifically different kind of subjectivity.

THE PLANE OF MATTER

For Bergson the past has not ceased to exist, but has merely ceased to be useful in the present. As Bergson remarks: ‘My present is that which interests me, which lives for me, and in a word, that which summons me to action; in contrast my past is essentially powerless.’⁶ In fact, this present, in which we are situated, always occupies a certain duration, the actual present moment itself being an unattainable mathematical point. My present is precisely a ‘perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future’.⁷ It is in this sense that we are determined by our pasts, but are also specifically future-orientated beings. It is also this orientation that determines our particular world, our consciousness being nothing other than the awareness of this immediate past, and especially of this impending future.

Another way of saying this is that ‘my present consists in the consciousness I have of my body’, which, ‘having extension in space’, ‘experiences sensations and at the same time executes movements’.⁸ My body, in this sense, is simply a ‘centre of action’, or locus of stimulus and reaction: ‘Situated between the matter which influences it and that on which it has influence, my body is a center of action, the place where the impressions received choose intelligently the path they will follow to transform themselves into movements accomplished.’⁹

I will return to this question of intelligence below, but we might note here the similarities that this sensori-motor schema has with Spinoza’s first kind of knowledge: both name our general condition of being



in, and reacting to, the world. In both accounts we are, simply put, extended bodies amongst other extended bodies on a plane of matter. Indeed, this sensori-motor schema – as Bergson calls it – constitutes our experience of material reality.¹⁰ Again, the similarities with Spinoza, and especially with Deleuze's reading of the latter, are remarkable, for what Bergson is saying here is that our capacities to affect, and be affected by, the world constitute our world in so far as it is a world of matter.

Our body, understood as this 'system of sensation and movements', occupies the very centre of this material world since the latter is necessarily arranged around it. The body, in Bergson's terms, is then a 'special image', situated amongst other images, that constitutes a 'section of the universal becoming' of reality itself.¹¹ 'It is . . . the *place of passage* of the movements received and thrown back, a hyphen, a connecting link between the things which act upon me and the things upon which I act – the seat, in a word, of the sensori-motor phenomena.'¹² This 'sectioning' of reality is determined by perception, and the interests of the organism that determine the latter. The body might then be thought as a kind of hole in the universe: that which does not interest me, and thus that which is un-sensed, passes through me and carries on in that network of contact and communication in which all things participate. It is 'I' that disrupts this contact and communication of the universe. 'I' am the interruption. 'I', as a centre of action, am a partial obstacle in the endless becoming of the universe.

It is also in this sense that the universe is bigger than any consciousness we, or any other organism, might have of it. Indeed, we are like a series of shutters closed against different aspects of this universe. This is not, however, to posit an unbridgeable gap between my own world and a universe 'beyond', for my own world is capable of being expanded (or indeed narrowed).¹³ In passing we might note here Bergson's side-stepping of the Cartesian trap that posits an 'I' *and then* a world. For Bergson – and it is *this* that gives his writings their speculative character – it is always the world, or universe, that comes first and then the 'I' as a subtraction from it.

The plane of matter that we perceive, or indeed *can* perceive (given our particular psycho-physical structure *as it is*), might then be doubled by another plane that contains all that has no interest for us *as we are*. A kind of spectral (and dark) double to our own universe. The plane is infinite in character in both cases. 'Our' plane of matter – our world as it were – carries on indefinitely: there are always further objects behind the present ones. We might call this first plane the system of objects. It constitutes our 'natural' world, but also our manufactured one: a

plane of capitalism in so far as it is the plane of bodies and markets, of commodities, shopping and other ‘possibilities’ of life. It contains, in a word, that which has interest for me as a human organism, but also as a subject of capitalism. Since we have a body, or bodily functions, we have an existence in this world and on this plane. The other plane – the double – is also infinite in character in so far as it ‘contains’ an infinite field of not-yet-actualised virtualities (things that are unperceived – unsensed – by me).

It is then the interests of the organism that dictate the arrangement of its world, since ‘the objects which surround us represent, in varying degrees, an action which we can accomplish upon things or which we must experience from them’.¹⁴ And it is this spatial organisation that also determines a particular temporality. As Bergson remarks:

The date of fulfillment of this possible action is indicated by the greater or lesser remoteness of the corresponding object, so that distance in space measures the proximity of a threat or of a promise in time. Thus space furnishes us at once with the diagram of our near future, and, as this future must recede indefinitely, space which symbolizes it has for its property to remain, in its immobility, indefinitely open. Hence the immediate horizon given to our perception appears to us to be necessarily surrounded by a wider circle, existing though unperceived, this circle itself implying yet another outside it and so on, ad infinitum.¹⁵

We might diagram this plane of matter, with an ‘I’ at the centre and the circles of the future arranged concentrically around the latter as in Figure 10.1.

But this plane, and its spectral double, is not everything, for things also exist that do not have an interest for me and thus that do not produce sensations (which is to say are not in my consciousness), but that are also not, as it were, on the plane of matter at all. The past is precisely this: inextensive and powerless, it still exists albeit in an unconscious state. As Bergson remarks: ‘We must make up our minds to it: sensation is, in its essence, extended and localized; it is a source of movement. Pure memory, being inextensive and powerless, does not in any degree share the nature of sensation.’¹⁶

This past might become useful and thus conscious, but when it does so it ceases to belong to this realm of the past and becomes present sensation. The actualisation of a virtual memory – recollection – is precisely this becoming-present of the past. Just as we do not doubt the existence of objects that we do not perceive, as long as they are objects that have been perceived or are at some point capable of being perceived (such objects being merely outside of our immediate concern), likewise Bergson suggests that our past exists – or subsists – even though it is

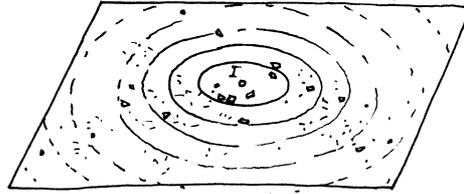


Figure 10.1 Bergson's plane of matter (with 'I' at centre).

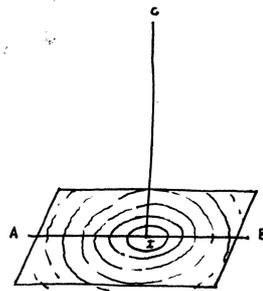


Figure 10.2 The line of matter and the line of memory.

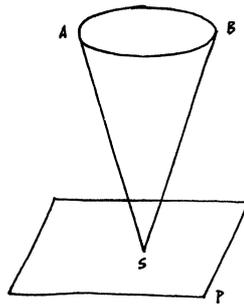


Figure 10.3 Bergson's cone of memory (from 'On the Survival of Images', *Matter and Memory*).

not fully present to consciousness at that time. Again, the past has not ceased to exist in this sense but has only ceased to be of interest to us.

In passing we might posit the existence of a further spectral double to this past that is unconscious, a spectral past that contains the pasts of other consciousnesses – pasts that are not mine, and that perhaps are not even human. I will return to this towards the end of my chapter, but we might note here, again, that it is intuition, and not intelligence, that allows access to these other non-human durations.

Just as in Deleuze's Spinozist definition of a tick (with its small world determined by just three affects), or, indeed, in Leibniz's definition of a monad, any given world is constituted against a dark background, the 'immensity of the forest' that holds no interest for the organism in ques-

tion. This dark background is not simply composed of those objects that are yet to be perceived, but is composed of that matter which holds no interest whatsoever, at least to the particular organism as it is at that moment of perception. Once more, however, the crucial point is that this 'larger world' is not inaccessible, not barred from experience, but is indeed a given in experience. It is the background, or simply ground, from which the body/organism, and its particular perception, is a subtraction.¹⁷

Following Bergson's own diagram, we can then draw this image of matter and memory on two axes that can be superimposed on our earlier diagram of the plane of matter that is itself constituted by ever wider circles of those objects that interest us (capitalism) – an infinitely receding horizon that constitutes our future – superimposed on the dark background of that which holds no interest (Figure 10.2).

In Figure 10.2 line AB represents objects in space, whilst line CI represents objects in memory (objects which no longer interest us). As complex bodies – or subjects – we exist at the point of intersection between these two lines, this point being the 'only one actually given to consciousness'.¹⁸ These lines are then drawn against the two dark backgrounds mentioned above: of that which has no interest for me in the future, but also of that which has no interest for me in the past. In fact, these two backgrounds are one and the same: the powerless past and the future in which I have no interest constitute the virtual worlds that surround my actuality.

We are active on the plane of matter, which is to say, following Spinoza once more, we are not just the passive receivers of shocks. Nevertheless, it is an activity that is still premised on passive affects, and especially on fears and desires, threats and promises, themselves determined by pleasure and pain. We might say then, again following Spinoza, that it is still the realm of the first kind of knowledge in so far as in it – on the plane of matter – we are still subject *to* the world.

Indeed, memory itself, as it is called forth by a present action, might also be thought of as part of the first kind of knowledge since it only becomes effective on the plane of matter when it operates to aid an already determined action on that plane (I will return to this process of recollection in a moment). This is habit, and, at an extreme, it determines our character, understood as a kind of extreme compression of all our past habitual reactions. Looking once more at Figure 10.2 the point here is that it is only those memories that are useful that become conscious. So, as for the infinitely receding circles of the plane of matter, so too there are receding circles for the past. Indeed, 'the adherence of this memory to our present condition is exactly comparable to the

adherence of unperceived objects to those objects which we perceive; and the *unconscious* plays in each case a similar part'.¹⁹

THE CONE OF MEMORY

It is as if then there are two memories, different but connected. The first, 'fixed in the organism, is nothing else but the complete set of intelligently constructed mechanisms which ensure the appropriate response to the various possible demands'.²⁰ This is a memory stored in the body as habit. A memory whose proper terrain of action is the plane of matter or system of objects. This is the realm of reactivity, of typical responses in which we follow, blindly as it were, our desires and turn away from our fears. It is an animal realm of sorts, or, at least, a realm determined by a pleasure principle.

The second is 'true memory', which, 'coextensive with consciousness', 'retains and ranges along side of each other all our states in the order in which they occur, leaving to each fact its place and, consequently, marking its date, truly moving in the past and not, like the first, in an ever renewed present'.²¹ This is a memory that is more neutral, and ultimately, apersonal. We might even say inhuman in that it is not selective or connected to the needs of the organism as the latter exists on the plane of matter. It is less memory as such than a general 'pastness'. Ultimately, it is also a species-memory, or even a kind of cosmic memory of the universe in that it extends far beyond the individual (and it is in this sense that both 'my' cone of memory, and that of any life beyond me – the double I mentioned above – are one and the same). The individual is nothing more than a local stoppage within this pure past, which we might also call, following Deleuze-Bergson, the virtual.

In many ways it is more appropriate no longer to think of this as the past at all – and the plane of matter as the future – but simply to think about these two realms in terms of what is useful and what is not. After all, notions like past, present and future constitute, for Bergson, particularly confused illusions about the world and our own situation within it. This virtual realm might then be understood as a realm of infinite potentiality, whereas the plane of matter – the actual – is very much the terrain of our finitude, tied as it is to the specific interests of the organism. Indeed, following Spinoza's understanding, death only occurs on the plane of matter. The realm of the pure past, on the other hand, precisely, survives. Part of our own incorporeal reality partakes of this realm, or, again following Spinoza, part of ourselves has an existence under a species of eternity. We are not just the finite organism (we are somehow 'part' of this virtual) – although in another sense this

is precisely all we are (a habitual set of mechanisms). The connecting link between these two distinct kinds of memory is simply our body that exists on the plane of matter but which, in the very act of perception, calls up images from memory. Thus we have Bergson's celebrated cone of memory (Figure 10.3), where this true memory hangs, 'like a gyre', over the plane of matter – anchored by a body on that very plane, but with its base extending far into the virtual realm.

Here are Bergson's comments on his diagram:

If I represent by a cone SAB, the totality of the recollections accumulated in my memory, the base AB, situated in the past, remains motionless, while the summit S, which indicates at all times my present, moves forward unceasingly, and unceasingly also touches the moving plane P of my actual representation of the universe. At S, the image of the body is concentrated, and, since it belongs to the plane P, this image does but receive and restore actions emanating from all the images of which the plane is composed.²²

The cone then, fixed to the plane of matter by the sensori-motor schema but extending far into the past, is specifically dynamic involving two kinds of memory that are nevertheless connected. The first, 'bodily memory', or habit, is the apex of the cone, ever moving, inserted by the second, 'true memory', in the 'shifting plane of experience'.²³ Each kind of memory lends the other its support:

For, that a recollection should appear in consciousness, it is necessary that it should descend from the heights of pure memory down to the precise point where *action* is taking place. In other words, it is from the present that the appeal to which memory responds comes, and it is from the sensori-motor elements of present action that a memory borrows the warmth which gives it life.²⁴

For Bergson it is the 'constancy of this agreement' between these two movements, between the apex and the base, that characterises what he calls a 'well balanced mind', or a 'man nicely adapted to life'.²⁵ A lived life involves the coming and going, the oscillation, between these two states.²⁶

There are two extreme positions that help define this process. First, the 'man of impulse' who lives predominantly on the plane of matter and for whom memory's role is solely the exigencies of immediate action: 'To live only in the present, to respond to stimulus by the immediate reaction which prolongs it, is the mark of the lower animals: the man who proceeds in this way is a man of *impulse*.'²⁷ Following Spinoza once more, this would be an individual consigned to live solely in the first kind of knowledge. A purely reactive mode of being. Second, there is the dreamer: 'But he who lives in the past for the mere pleasure of living there, and in whom recollections emerge into the

light of consciousness without any advantage for the present situation is hardly better fitted for action: here we have no man of impulse but a *dreamer*.²⁸ In passing we might note here Nietzsche's comments in *The Gay Science* about those who remain spectators of life rather than active creators.²⁹ As Bergson remarks: 'Between these two extremes lives the happy disposition of memory docile enough to follow with precision all the outlines of the present situation, but energetic enough to resist all other appeal. Good sense, or practical sense, is probably nothing but this.'³⁰

Nevertheless, good sense might also be understood as a kind of limiting common sense that adapts to things the way they already are. Again, this would be the 'use' of memory to serve the present and any action determined by the plane of matter as it is already constituted. To a certain extent this is the production of an efficient and functional being (within capitalism as it were). It is in this sense that it might be 'useful' to think about those cases when memory actualises the pure past, but not necessarily for any utility. In fact, Bergson goes on to write about such cases, and specifically the dream state mentioned above: 'But, if almost the whole of our past is hidden from us because it is inhibited by the necessities of present action, it will find strength to cross the threshold of consciousness in all cases where we renounce the interests of effective action to replace ourselves, so to speak, in the life of dreams.'³¹ This is the temporary suspension of the sensori-motor schema that allows the past to be actualised, *not* in the service of the present but in and as itself. Following my comments above we might say that this is the actualisation of the virtual in and of itself, outside of the immediate interests and concerns of the organism. We might turn again to Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* here, this time to his more positive definition of idleness – or 'leisure and *otium*' – as being the progenitor of genuine creative thought.³² Walter Benjamin also says something similar in his own aphoristic style: 'Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away.'³³ Here non-productivity – hesitation, stillness – is in and of itself creative.

In fact, this hesitation of the sensori-motor schema – situated at point S between the actual and virtual – is also that which is constitutive of us *as* humans beyond habit as it were. The gap between stimulus and response is produced, almost as side effect, by our brain-body assemblage (or, simply, our nervous system), which in its complexity, instantiates a temporal gap in so far as any reaction to a given stimulus has the 'choice' of a variety of pathways in response. A moment of indeterminacy is introduced into the system. A 'stopping of the world'



we might say, that constitutes our difference from the ‘lower animals’ and brings about a certain freedom of action (in so far as we are no longer tied to immediate reactivity). This is not a difference set in stone, for it might be the case that such a hesitation can be produced in other ‘higher animals’ and certainly that it might be produced in life forms to come, or in AI for that matter.

In any case this gap, which can be further opened up by slowness or stillness (or indeed other ‘strategies’ of non-communication), might in itself allow a certain freedom from the call of the plane of matter with its attendant temporality (as we have seen, the plane of matter, or system of objects, implies a certain temporality – of past, present, future – and of time that passes between these). Again, this is the actualisation of an involuntary memory, via a gap in experience, that has no utility for the present.³⁴ In an echo of Spinoza, this gap is then a passageway of sorts ‘out’ of the plane of matter that determines a certain reality. It is an access point, or portal, to the infinite as that which is within time, but also outside it.

In passing we might note that the content of this Bergsonian cone can also be understood in Lacanian terms as the Real in so far as it ‘contains’ everything not part of the sensori-motor schema (habit), which here can be understood – in its most expanded sense – as the realm of the symbolic (language, as it is typically employed, consisting of a certain adaptation, however complex this might be, to the concerns of the plane of matter). In Badiou’s terms we might understand the ‘content’ of the cone as ‘inconsistent multiplicity’ in that it ‘contains’ everything not counted in the situation/world as it is (within ‘consistent multiplicity’, located on the plane of matter and within the system of already counted objects). It also explains why certain elements of the past *are* counted – simply that they ‘aid’ the present situation. Here history is always a history of a given ‘present’, counted by and for that ‘present’. We might note the importance of circumnavigating this particular ‘history of the present’ and of excavating a different history, what we might call a ‘present of history’.³⁵ Indeed, the present in this latter sense is *produced*, in part, by the reactivation of past present moments.³⁶

We return to Figure 10.3 and add, following Bergson, more detail to obtain Figure 10.4.

And, once more, Bergson’s comments:

between the sensori-motor mechanisms figured by the point S and the totality of the memories disposed in AB there is room . . . for a thousand repetitions of our psychical life, figured as many sections A'B', A''B'', etc., of the same cone. We tend to scatter ourselves over AB in the measure that



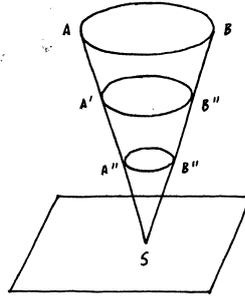


Figure 10.4 Bergson's cone of memory with 'levels'
(from 'On the Survival of Images', *Matter and Memory*).

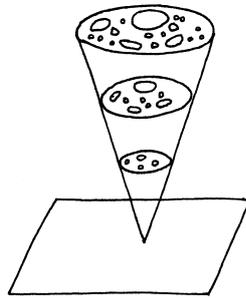


Figure 10.5 'Shining Points'/fractal ecology in cone.

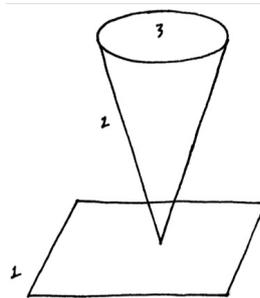


Figure 10.6 Cone of the mystic: 1. Static religion (habit/ritual) 2. Dynamic religion (introspection/intuition) 3. The mystic.

we detach ourselves from our sensory and motor state to live in the life of dreams; we tend to concentrate ourselves in S in the measure that we attach ourselves more firmly to the present reality, responding by motor reaction to sensory stimulation.³⁷

The realm of memory is then fractal in nature. Depending on the level 'accessed', less or more detail comes into focus, or, in Bergson's terms: 'So a nebulous mass, seen through more and more powerful telescopes reveals itself into an ever greater number of stars.'³⁸ Indeed, as I briefly intimated above, on the 'highest' level all recollections are shared. This



is also the most dispersed level, where every memory – every virtuality – has its own place complete in every detail. The content of the cone is a veritable universe of galaxies, each a complex constellation of different durations.

Depending on its location towards the summit or the base this repetition is smaller or larger, but, in each case, is a ‘complete representation of the past’.³⁹ The lowest point of the cone, point S, ‘corresponds to the greatest possible simplification of our mental life’.⁴⁰ At AB, on the other hand, we ‘go from the psychical state which is merely “acted,” to that which is exclusively “dreamed”’.⁴¹ Here, in a ‘consciousness detached from action’ there is no particular reason why any given memory will actualise itself – no reason that we would ‘dwell upon one part of the past rather than another’.⁴² ‘Everything happens, then, as though our recollections were repeated an infinite number of times in these many possible reductions of our past life.’⁴³ We have here an explanation of the different ‘tones’ of mental life – slices through the cone – a whole temporal mapping as yet unexplored.

Just as there are relations of similarity, that is to say, ‘*different planes*, infinite in number’ of memory,⁴⁴ so there are relations of contiguity on these planes:

The nearer we come to action, for instance, the more contiguity tends to approximate to similarity and to be distinguished from a mere relation of chronological succession . . . On the contrary, the more we detach ourselves from action, real or possible, the more association by contiguity tends merely to reproduce the consecutive images of our past life.⁴⁵

In this sense there is a whole complex ecology of memories – or what Deleuze calls ‘regions of being’ – inhabiting each plane,⁴⁶ with ‘always some dominant memories, shining points round which others form a vague nebulousness. These shining points are multiplied in the degree to which our memory expands.’⁴⁷

We might note again that we have here a different theory of history (indeed, we could imagine Bergson writing a philosophy of history using the cone as diagram). At different degrees of detail different moments/events will be foregrounded and take on relevance and importance. We also have something stranger with the idea that there might be different ‘personal’ histories – composed of intensive states – ‘contained’ within the cone. Is this not Klossowski’s Nietzsche, who in the eternal return passes through different intensive states – precisely as an oscillation between base and apex – that he ‘identifies’ as different historical characters? This also has some bearing on Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of subjectivity as processual (and the subject itself as a residuum) as it appears in *Anti-Oedipus*.⁴⁸



We might then draw this complex ecological subjectivity, and the plane of matter on to which it is pinned, as in Figure 10.5.

THE MYSTIC

It is only at its topmost point that the cone fits into matter; as soon as we leave the apex, we enter into a new realm. What is it? Let us call it the spirit, or again, if you will, let us refer to the soul, but in that case bear in mind that we are remoulding language and getting the word to encompass a series of experiences instead of an arbitrary definition. This experimental searching will suggest the possibility and even probability of the survival of the soul . . . Let us betake ourselves to the higher plane: we shall find an experience of another type: mystic intuition. And this is presumably a participation in the divine essence.⁴⁹

The plane of matter, or what I have also been calling the system of objects, is also the realm of ‘static religion’ as it is laid out in Bergson’s *The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*. Here habit includes intelligence and the myth-making function as modes of utilitarian adaptation to the world. Indeed, just as instinct meets its terminal point in insects and the hive, so intelligence is also a terminal point that finds its ends in man. But Bergson’s ‘vital impulse’, in man at least, finds ways of extending itself beyond this intelligence. Indeed, it is from the plane of matter – and through the especially complex organisms that inhabit it – that the journey of life continues. This is precisely intuition in Bergson’s sense, an intuition that operates *contra* intelligence and that allows an access to that which lies ‘beyond’ the plane of matter, rediscovering, as Deleuze puts it ‘all the levels, all the degrees of expansion (*détente*) and contraction that coexist in the virtual Whole’.⁵⁰

Indeed, the ‘creative emotion’ of *The Two Sources* is ‘precisely a cosmic Memory, that actualizes all the levels at the same time, that liberates man from the plane (*plan*) or the level that is proper to him, in order to make him a creator, adequate to the whole movement of creation’.⁵¹ Again, it is a certain hesitancy that allows for this journey. The gap between stimulus and response is here an ‘interval’ that is opened up within the habits/rituals and intelligence of society (a specifically disinterested interval as it were). Just as the body, at a certain degree of complexity, allows for this hesitancy, so the myth-making function itself (or, static religion) puts the conditions in place for a further gap – again, a ‘stopping of the world’ – and a concomitant movement ‘beyond’ itself. This is Bergson’s definition of ‘dynamic religion’.

Deleuze notes that ‘This liberation, this embodiment of cosmic memory in creative emotions, undoubtedly only takes place in privileged souls’.⁵² Indeed, it is the mystic that embodies the latter, and, in



a direct echoing of Spinoza, the experience of such a mystical persona, or personified intensive state, is characterised by joy. To quote Bergson:

It would be content to feel itself pervaded, though retaining its own personality, by a being immeasurably mightier than itself, just as iron is pervaded by the fire which makes it glow. Its attachment to life would henceforth be its inseparability from this principle, joy in joy, love of that which is all love. In addition it would give itself to society, but to a society comprising all humanity, love is the love of the principle underlying it.⁵³

In a further echo of Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, this mystical experience is then also seen as divine: 'In our eyes, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests. This effort is of God, if it is not God himself.'⁵⁴ Indeed, for Bergson, mystical experience *is* God – or the 'creative effort' – acting through an individual soul. This then is the movement of intuition beyond intelligence. The latter stymies the former, but also puts the conditions in place for its activation. The cone of the mystic might then be drawn as in Figure 10.6.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: CAPITALISM AND THE ATTENTION TO LIFE



The above might lead one to believe that contemplation is the final moment of the *élan vital* and, as such, that inaction is the privileged mode of a different production of subjectivity. Certainly, capitalism encourages and extracts surplus from an endless productivity, and, in this sense, a certain slackening in the sensori-motor schema (and concomitant dreaming) works to upset a utilitarian outlook, to counter-act the dominant injunction to live at a certain speed of life (the 'always-being-switched-on', or, more generally, the regulative speed of the market) and to resist the world of commodities that accompanies the latter.⁵⁵ With no movement beyond the plane of matter there is no freedom from this capitalism as it were, at least, no freedom from the present plane of purely utilitarian interest.

This then is to suggest a strange kind of agency in which non-agency is key. A production of subjectivity in which production, at least of one kind, is refused, or simply halted. It is to privilege an involuntary memory that does not come to the service of the plane of matter but allows a circumnavigation of the concerns of this terrain. It is a call to slow down, to hesitate, to open and occupy what Deleuze calls 'vacuoles of non-communication'.⁵⁶ Ultimately, it is a kind of super-productivity that arises from non-productivity; the sidestepping of given subjectivity – that is already determined by the plane of matter – and a surrender-





ing of a kind to that which lies ‘outside’ the subject-as-is.⁵⁷ Bergson suggests in *The Two Sources* that this intensive state is also produced by wine, drugs, hashish, ‘protoxide of nitrogen’, indeed any Dionysian mechanism that disables the intelligence (the latter, again, being that which stymies access to the divine).⁵⁸

On the other hand, to dream is to remain passive. This passivity is the second peril that arises from too great a detachment from life. It lacks the activity – or participation – that the plane of matter gives life. One might think here of the Situationist thesis on the Spectacle understood as not just the world of commodities, advertising and so forth, but also the way these inculcate a position of being a spectator of one’s own life. We might also return here to Bergson’s thesis in *Matter and Memory* and note what he says about a certain ‘attention to life’ that is determined *by* action:

Our body, with the sensations it receives on the one hand and the movements which it is capable of executing on the other hand, is then, that which fixes our mind, and gives it ballast and poise . . . these sensations and these movements condition what we might term our *attention to life*, and that is why everything depends on their cohesion in the normal work of the mind, as in a pyramid which should stand on its apex.⁵⁹

Following Bergson then, and despite what I have said above about a common sense that is limiting, we might say that although the gap and the passage to the virtual is crucial, on its own this is not enough. It must, in fact, be translated back into action on that plane from which it departed. This is the case for an individual who returns from memory to action, but also for the mystic who returns from cosmic-memory to action:

there is an exceptional, deep-rooted mental healthiness, which is readily recognizable. It is expressed in the bent for action, the faculty of adapting and re-adapting oneself to circumstances, in firmness combined with suppleness, in the prophetic discernment of what is possible and what is not, in the spirit of simplicity which triumphs over complications, in a word, supreme good sense. Is not this exactly what we find in . . . mystics?⁶⁰

Indeed, for Bergson mystics are characterised less by contemplation than by a ‘superabundant activity’.⁶¹ They are filled with the ‘superabundance of life’ and thus have a ‘boundless impetus’ for action.⁶² Crucially however, this is not, it seems to me, the recollection of a past in the service of a predetermined action – that is habit. Rather, it is precisely the opposite of this: the return circuit is used as a means for freeing up a habitual repetition which has lost some of this circularity and mobility. In passing we might suggest that it is the latter – a kind of freezing of actual-virtual circuits – which, it seems to me, characterises capitalism’s terrain of operation to the extent that this extends



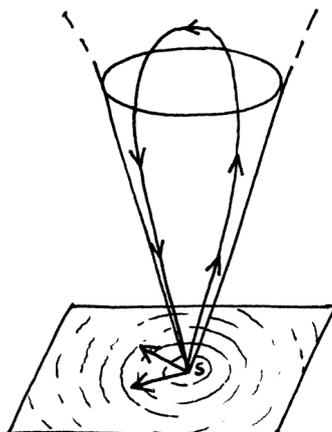


Figure 10.7 Return path/circuit of the mystic/militant.

‘into’ the virtual (the much heralded immaterial turn of capitalism, etc.).

This travel, it seems to me, is precisely from the finite to the infinite, but involves a return back to the finite (following my brief mention of Klossowski’s Nietzsche above might we not also name this circuit the eternal return?). In more prosaic terms we have here the beginnings of an ethico-political account of memory: the actualisation of past events in the present in order to counteract that present. A kind of calling to, or re-calling of, the past. The past operates here as resource against the present, at least to the degree that such a present is limited to a logic of the possible – determined by a perspective of what, precisely, already constitutes the plane of matter. We might also think here of Badiou’s militant who has a fidelity to an event that might have happened in the past but that is actualised in the present in order to transform the latter. The militant ‘lives’ history in this sense.

Again, following Badiou, we might suggest that the two circuits – of the mystic and militant – are similar, each accessing that which is beyond the plane of matter/the situation or world as it is in order to return and transform that very plane ‘using’ whatever has been learnt on the ‘journey’ (Figure 10.7). In each case it is action – or the attention to life – that determines the circuit, although this action must be understood as one that is undetermined by habit. It is, in fact, the possibility of a *different* future action that directs the circuit of the mystic and the militant and that in itself implies and produces a different world (in passing, we might also say that it is this return to the plane of matter that constitutes the realm of politics in general in so far as the latter is concerned with the former).

It is a human – at point S – that is then both the possibility of this journey and that which prevents it. It is what we do on the plane of matter – again, at point S – that determines whether we can exit this plane, as well as the consequences of this exiting (and of our subsequent return). In terms of thinking through the consequences of our exit it might be worthwhile bringing Badiou and his concepts of fidelity to bear on the above diagram.⁶³ In terms of the possibilities of the exit itself, is it the case, for example, that certain arrangements of matter might work as a platform for the journey? Certain specific practices for example? Indeed, what is the role of preparation in this diagram? Lack of space prevents me addressing these important questions here, but one such answer might be found by bringing Bergson's cone into conjunction with both Lacanian psychoanalysis *and* Michel Foucault's 'Technologies of the Self'.⁶⁴ Indeed, it seems to me that ultimately it is only through this kind of synthetic programme – of bringing heterogeneous philosophical, psychoanalytical and other materials into productive encounter – that we begin to truly draw the contours of an effective production of subjectivity in and against today's reductive and homogenising neoliberal landscape. In conclusion we might then say that the Bergsonian cone is now ready to be spliced on to other diagrams, other kinds of thought. If this non-philosophical practice is not exactly what Bergson himself does in his own writings (although intuition *contra* intelligence might be said to call for procedures such as this) it is, it seems to me, precisely what the art of immanence – at least in one of its instantiations – necessarily entails.

NOTES

1. A version of this essay was published as the section 'Bergson's plane of matter and the cone of memory' in Chapter 1, 'From Joy to the Gap: the Accessing of the Infinite by the Finite (Spinoza, Nietzsche, Bergson)', of my monograph *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012), pp. 38–57.
2. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 71.
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 28.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Has capitalism now colonised this virtual? My own take on this is that certain technologies, for example the mapping of the human genome, do indeed partake of a kind of future-within-the-present, but that in fact this is a logic of the possible, tied as it is to a certain linear temporality and to already existing knowledges and procedures.

6. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 137.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Or, as Bergson puts it: ‘in that continuity of becoming which is reality itself, the present moment is constituted by the quasi-instantaneous section effected by our perception in the flowing mass, and this section is precisely that which we call the material world’ (*ibid.*, p. 139).
11. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–2.
13. And in this specific sense Bergson’s philosophy operates as a precursor to the claims made by ‘Speculative Realism’ about being able to access – or think – the ‘great outdoors’ of pre-Critical philosophy in so far as it refuses the Kantian phenomena-noumena gap that itself determines what Quentin Meillassoux has famously dubbed ‘correlationism’ (Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. R. Brassier [London: Continuum, 2008], p. 7). Importantly, here it is not science – or, indeed the matheme – that allows this radically a-subjective ‘thinking’, but the organism itself in so far as the latter is, as it were, already a part of the ‘great outdoors’ (what else could it be?). For further discussion of Meillassoux in relation to the production of subjectivity see the section ‘Quentin Meillassoux and the correlation’ in the Conclusion, ‘Composite Diagram and Relations of Adjacency’, to O’Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*, pp. 205–10.
14. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 144.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
17. One need only think of cinema, as indeed Deleuze himself famously does, or indeed other new technologies that open up these virtual worlds by altering the spatial and temporal registers of human perception (cinema, in this sense, continues the task of philosophy – or ‘transcendental empiricism’ – ultimately moving towards an imaging of the pure past itself in the time-image).
18. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 152–3.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
26. I attend to this particular oscillation, and the intensive states – or singular personae – that are ‘produced’ by it, in the section ‘Desiring-machines and the body without organs’ of Chapter 5, ‘Desiring-Machines, Chaoids, Probe-heads: Towards a Speculative Production of Subjectivity (Deleuze

- and Guattari)', of O'Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*, pp. 169–82. See especially the diagram on p. 174.
27. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 153.
 28. Ibid.
 29. For Nietzsche the contemplative life might be counterpoised (in a dovetailing also, as we shall see, with Bergson's thesis on the mystic) with a more active participation in life that follows from it. Here one is not merely a spectator of life, however attentive, nor, in fact, simply an actor in the drama of life, but rather the author of this drama: 'As the poet, he certainly possesses *vis contemplativa* and a retrospective view of his work; but at the same time and above all *vis creative*, which the man of action lacks, whatever universal belief may say' (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. J. Nauckhoff [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], p. 171). Nietzsche continues: 'It is we, the thinking-sensing ones, who really and continually *make* something that is not yet there: the whole perpetually growing world of valuations, colours, weights, perspectives, scales, affirmations and negations' (ibid.).
 30. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 153.
 31. Ibid., p. 156.
 32. Amongst other things *The Gay Science* offers a powerful diagnosis and critique of the speed of contemporary life – and of its profit-driven character. To quote Nietzsche: 'already one is ashamed of keeping still; long reflection almost gives people a bad conscience. One thinks with a watch in hand, as one eats lunch with an eye on the financial pages – or lives like someone who might always "miss out on something"' (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 183). It is here that Nietzsche opposes this 'life in the hunt for profit' with a life of leisure, or, we might say, simply of *slowness* that is counter to the regulative speeds of the market (ibid.).
 33. Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov', in *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zorn, ed. H. Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 90.
 34. It is the summoning up of an incorporeal universe. Guattari will say something similar about Duchamp's readymades, specifically the *Bottlerack*, and the universes of reference opened up by this trigger point, in his essay 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects': 'Marcel Duchamp's *Bottlerack* functions as the trigger for a constellation of referential universes engaging both intimate reminiscences (the cellar of the house, a certain winter, the rays of light upon spider's webs, adolescent solitude) and connotations of a cultural or economic order – the time when bottles were still washed with the aid of a bottle wash . . .' (Félix Guattari, 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects', trans. J. Schiesari and G. Van Den Abbeele, in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. G. Genosko [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996], p. 164). For a compelling discussion of Guattari's take on the readymade – understood as an 'expressive mechanism capable of creating a people yet to come' – see Stephen Zepke, 'The Readymade: Art as the Refrain of Life',

- in S. O'Sullivan and S. Zepke, eds, *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 39.
35. Deleuze writes about this first – and typical – idea of history in his essay 'Control and Becoming': 'What history grasps in an event is the way its actualized in particular circumstances; the event's becoming is beyond the scope of history. History isn't experimental, its just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history . . . Becoming isn't part of history; history amounts only the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become", that is, to create something new. This is precisely what Nietzsche calls the Untimely' (Gilles Deleuze, 'Control and Becoming', in *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. M. Joughin [New York: Columbia University Press, 1995], pp. 170–1.
 36. We might go further than this and suggest that if the plane of matter constitutes our 'reality' and those aspects from the cone that are actualised are our 'history' then the actualisation of other aspects of the cone (or, indeed, other aspects of the plane of matter) that were hitherto 'invisible' might be thought of as a 'fictioning'. It seems to me that this is fertile territory for thinking art practice, but also a militant subjectivity that is intent on living a life not already proscribed by dominant narratives of 'reality'.
 37. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, pp. 162–3.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Bergson gives us the example here of hearing a word spoken in another language. It might summon up the memory of an individual that once spoke that word, in which case the memory is located closer to the base. It might also however make one think of the language itself, in which case the memory is located towards the summit, which is to say is more 'disposed towards immediate response' (*ibid.*).
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
 46. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 61.
 47. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 171.
 48. Again, this is the subject matter of part of Chapter 5 of O'Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*.
 49. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. A. Audra and C. Brereton with W. Horstall-Carter (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1935), p. 264.
 50. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 106.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. Bergson, *The Two Sources*, p. 212.

54. Ibid., p. 220.
55. It might be countered that the ‘creativity’ produced through ‘dreaming’ is precisely that element that contemporary capitalism is most eager to both generate and exploit, but crucially, I would argue, it is only a certain kind of creativity, one that can be instrumentalised, that is encouraged. Can this difference be sustained, or does cognitive capitalism, in fact, describe a general exploitation of the human faculty for dreaming/creativity, or actualising the virtual in new ways? The question here would be whether pinning capitalism to the world of the sensori-motor schema runs into difficulty in relation to cognitive capitalism, which exploits the *intense* aspects of production – affect and creativity. My argument, following Bergson-Deleuze, would be that it is not the virtual that is here being colonised, but simply the possible, or, we might say – at a stretch – a specific set of virtualities, or even a certain actual-virtual circuit (I want to thank Stephen Zepke for discussions related to this particular note).
56. Deleuze, ‘Control and Becoming’, p. 175.
57. This question of strategy – of how we might, as it were, invite the outside in – is compellingly addressed in Reza Negarestani’s thesis of ‘schizostrategy’: ‘To become open or to experience the chemistry of openness is not possible through “opening yourself” (a desire associated with boundary, capacity and survival economy which covers both you and your environment); but it can be affirmed by entrapping yourself within a strategic alignment with the outside, becoming a lure for its exterior forces. Radical openness can be invoked by becoming more of a target for the outside’ (Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* [Melbourne: re.press, 2008], p. 199). I explore this further in the section ‘Reza Negarestani and affordance’ in the Conclusion, ‘Composite Diagram and Relations of Adjacency’, to O’Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*, pp. 210–12.
58. Bergson, *The Two Sources*, p. 218.
59. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 173.
60. Bergson, *The Two Sources*, p. 228.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 232.
63. This is something I attempt in Chapter 4, ‘The Strange Temporality of the Subject: Life In-between the Infinite and the Finite (Deleuze *contra* Badiou)’, of O’Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*, pp. 125–68. See especially the diagram on p. 161.
64. And this is precisely the concern of Chapter 2, ‘The Care of the Self versus the Ethics of Desire: Two Diagrams of the Production of Subjectivity (and of the Subject’s Relation to Truth) (Foucault versus Lacan)’, of O’Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity*, pp. 59–88. See especially the diagram on p. 79.