DELEUZE'S *BERGSONISM*

CRAIG LUNDY

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Contents

Abbreviations

Bergson

CE *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell. Mineola, NY: Dover, [1907] 1998.

CM *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison. Mineola, NY: Dover, [1934] 2007.

DS *Duration and Simultaneity: Bergson and the Einsteinian Universe*, ed. Robin Durie. Manchester: Clinamen Press, [1922] 1999.

ME *Mind-Energy*, trans. H. Wildon Carr. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, [1919] 2007.

MM *Matter and Memory,* trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. Mineola, NY: Dover, [1896] 2004.

TFW *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson. Mineola, NY: Dover, [1889] 2001.

TS *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, [1932] 1977.

Deleuze (single and co-authored)

B *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, [1966] 1991.

B1 "Bergson, 1859–1941", in *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina. New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [1956] 2004.

BCD "Bergson's Conception of Difference", in *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina. New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [1956] 2004.

C1 *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Athlone Press, [1983] 1986.

D *Dialogues II*, co-authored with Claire Parnet, trans. Barbara Habberjam and Hugh Tomlinson. London and New York: Continuum, [1977] 2002.

DR *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. London: Athlone Press, [1968] 1994.

LC "Lecture Course on Chapter Three of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*", in *SubStance*, Issue 114, Vol. 26, No. 3, [1960] 2007, pp. 72–90.

N *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, [1990] 1995.

NP *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London and New York: Continuum, [1962] 1983.

TMB "Théorie des multiplicités chez Bergson: une conference", at www.webdeleuze.com [1970].

TRM *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina. New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), [2003] 2006.

Introduction

BERGSONISM LOST AND FOUND

> There is a thinker whose name is today on everybody's lips, who is deemed by acknowledged philosophers worthy of comparison with the greatest, and who, with his pen as well as his brain, has overleapt all technical obstacles, and won himself a reading both outside and inside the schools. Beyond any doubt, and by common consent, Mr Henri Bergson's work will appear to future eyes among the most characteristic, fertile, and glorious of our era. It marks a never-to-be-forgotten date in history; it opens up a phase of metaphysical thought; it lays down a principle of development the limits of which are indeterminable; and it is after cool consideration, with full consciousness of the exact value of words, that we are able to pronounce the revolution which it effects equal in importance to that effected by Kant, or even by Socrates. (Edouard Le Roy, *A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson*, 1912)

Edouard Le Roy, it would appear, was not the best of fortune tellers. Future eyes did not look upon Henri Bergson so fondly. More damningly, his work was largely ignored by subsequent generations, to the point where most university students today complete their studies without once coming across Bergson's name. Le Roy was nevertheless correct about one thing when he wrote the above: in 1912, Bergson was the talk of the town. After the publication of his third book *Creative Evolution* in

1907, Bergson's fame rose to dizzying heights.[1] His lectures at the Collège de France became must-see events, not only for intellectuals but also for high society. As Gabriel Marcel recounts, he and others would arrive two hours early and sit through the lecture of Bergson's predecessor in the room, the political economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, to be sure of their seat for the main show (Marcel 1962: 124). It is also reported that servants would be sent ahead by their mistresses to reserve a place in the lecture hall (Grogin 1988: 123). Parisian periodicals recounted Bergson's lectures by comparing them to the tango, which had newly arrived in Western Europe, and fashion retailers suggested outfits in which society ladies might receive "the great metaphysician" (Grogin 1988: 175).

This fame was by no means restricted to the *à la mode* set of Paris, as illustrated by Bergson's 1913 trip to the northeast of America. For several of his lectures on this tour more than 2000 people submitted written applications for tickets (McGrath 2013: 601).[2] According to another source, at least 2000 students were present for his lecture at the City College of New York, with close to 5000 people attending one of his talks over the course of the tour (Grogin 1988: 177). To put these numbers in context, the audiences attracted by Bergson exceeded those who came to hear Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung during their 1909 trip to America (McGrath 2013: 615). So high was Bergson's reputation in America, enhanced in no small measure by the praise he received from William James and John Dewey, that come the outbreak of war in Europe Bergson was sent on two diplomatic missions by the French government to bend the ear of President Woodrow Wilson.[3] As this all suggests, for roughly a decade following the publication of *Creative Evolution* Bergson was the most celebrated intellectual in the world, with an unrivalled influence both inside and outside the academy.[4]

And yet, by the 1930s Bergson was effectively *persona non grata*. Several reasons can be given for this somewhat curious turn of events, beginning with none other than the extraordinary popularity of Bergsonism. While useful to begin with in

spreading his work, Bergson's mass appeal was arguably a hindrance in the long run, for it blurred the distinction between his actual writings and a vague cultural and spiritual movement that went under the moniker 'Bergsonism'. Bergson was of course wise to the damage that his popular success could bring. In 1914 he wrote to *Le Figaro* stating: "I never made a bit of concession to the 'grand public', my teaching addresses specialists, and I have even rendered it more and more technical as the influence of my courses increases" (cited in McGrath 2013: 616–17). But despite his best efforts, it is undeniable that the enormous influence of Bergson's work outside of academia, and the resulting trivialisation of his thought, were detrimental to his intellectual legacy. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty once remarked: "Bergsonism distorts Bergson. [. . .] Bergson was a contact with things; Bergsonism is a collection of accepted opinions" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 135).

Criticisms advanced by contemporaries of Bergson must be read with this contextual backdrop in mind. Bergson was not merely a philosopher, he was "the most dangerous man in the world" (Lippmann 1912: 100–1). Julien Benda, the self-proclaimed 'anti-Bergson', certainly felt this way, announcing that he "would happily have killed Bergson if this was the only way to destroy his influence" (Grogin 1988: ix). The vague-but-pervasive influence of Bergsonism also helps to account for why Bergson was criticised from all directions. Attacks on Bergson were mounted from the Left and the Right, the Catholic Church and Jewish intellectuals, the apostles of 'science' and defenders of philosophical tradition in the Sorbonne – "not only, then, his natural enemies, but the enemies of his enemies" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 133).

Although the work of Julien Benda has been largely forgotten today, the same cannot be said for two of Bergson's other major critics: Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein. Russell's unfavourable estimation of Bergson is most widely known from his best-selling *History of Western Philosophy*.[5] Of Russell's thirty-one chapters in this text, only the last four deal with contemporary

figures: Bergson, James, Dewey, and "the philosophy of logical analysis". But while Russell felt obliged to include an entry on Bergson, he did his utmost to tarnish Bergson's reputation in the process. Aside from claiming in his opening that Bergson's philosophy "harmonized easily with the movement which culminated in Vichy", Russell equates Bergson with ants and bees (in contrast to humans) – presumably an attempt at humour, but one that demonstrates how poorly Russell read Bergson (Russell 1945: 791 and 793).[6] Perhaps of even greater consequence for his reputation was Bergson's confrontation with Einstein. In April of 1922 Bergson and Einstein locked horns at the *Société française de philosophie*. After listening to Bergson speak for half an hour about the nature of time, space and his interpretation of special relativity, Einstein dismissively replied that the time of which the philosopher speaks does not exist – there is only a psychological time that differs from the time of physicists (Canales 2015: 5). In the ensuing controversy, vigorously pursued by advocates of the two intellectual giants, Bergson was perceived by many to have lost the debate.[7]

The direct harm caused by Russell and Einstein's personal opinions of Bergson, however, should not be overplayed. Of far greater import for the future reception of Bergson were the broader directions that academia took following the zenith of Bergsonism. As Jimena Canales notes, the debate between Bergson and Einstein marks an important moment in the twentieth-century process whereby 'science', whatever is meant by that term, is partitioned from 'the rest' of academia (Canales 2015: 7). Bergson's fate is thus caught up in the more general movement by which science eclipses philosophy, which perhaps explains why Bergson is barely mentioned in the existing biographies of Einstein despite the significance of their disagreement during the 1920s (Canales 2015: 359).[8] As for the discipline of philosophy itself, it too headed in new directions after the Great War that could not accommodate a place for Bergson: on the one hand the so-called 'analytic' tradition (which presently dominates most philosophy departments), and on the other

hand a tradition stemming from German existentialism, Hegelianism, and the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. While the former tradition viewed Bergson to be 'anti-intellectual', proponents of the latter frequently portrayed him as a naïve psychologist out of step with the new vogue.[9] As a result, Bergson was largely considered by the next generation of philosophers to be passé – that is, when he was considered at all.[10]

While interest in Bergson today is nowhere near the levels achieved in the last years of the *Belle Époque*, it is nonetheless considerably higher than it was in the doldrums of the 1930s–80s. Part of this turnaround can be attributed to developments in the physical and biological sciences. Bergson may have been the perceived 'loser' in his confrontation with Einstein, but it was not long before Einstein himself started to be usurped by findings in the field of quantum mechanics and other scientific areas that seemed to align well with Bergson's outlook. A much-cited example is the work of Ilya Prigogine on dissipative structures and irreversibility, but many are the connections that have been drawn between Bergson and the fields of chaos theory, complexity science, non-equilibrium thermodynamics and non-linear dynamical systems.[11] In saying this, the point should not be exaggerated. Although Bergsonians are unsurprisingly attentive to the amenable relations between recent trends in science and Bergson's philosophy of change, the percentage of contemporary scientists even aware of Bergson's name would be quite small.

As it happens, the revival of interest in Bergson can be sourced back to a far more traditional, as opposed to 'cutting-edge', conduit of thought: the *agrégation* exam in the French education system. Beginning in the 1940–1 academic year, Bergson's texts were added to the *agrégation* curriculum (Bianco 2011: 861). Bergson was still alive when this decision was taken, but his early texts, written in the late nineteenth century, were now considered to be 'classics' belonging to another age, thus making him a member of the 'history of philosophy'. The appearance of these texts on the *agrégation* forced prominent French philosophers to

confront Bergson again. Many of these engagements were quite favourable. As Giuseppe Bianco informs us, in Merleau-Ponty's 1948–9 classes at the *École Normale Supérieure* he "complicated Bergson's concept of intuition and the idea of a simple 'psychologism', and stressed the usefulness of Bergson in helping us to surmount the aporias of Husserl's 'ontology of the object'" (Bianco 2011: 861). In the same year Jean Hyppolite delivered a lecture course on Bergson at Strasbourg University, after which he published four articles on Bergson that brought his work into relation with Hegelian dialectics and emphasised the ontological dimension of Bergsonism (Dosse 2010: 110). Jean Wahl also taught Bergson's philosophy during this period. Wahl's estimation of Bergson was especially high: aside from dedicating his thesis to Bergson (Dosse 2010: 110), Wahl went so far as to claim that Bergson was one of "the four great philosophers" in the history of thought (the others being Socrates/Plato, Descartes and Kant) (Wahl 1962: 153). These engagements suggest that even if Bergsonism had become old-hat by the 1940s, many leading French philosophers from this period still had a good awareness of, and in some cases a healthy respect for, Bergson's work. As Hyppolite would later say: "[Bergson's] thought, whether recognized or not, dominates our era" (Hyppolite 1962: 106).

One young student during the 1940s most definitely did recognise the significance of Bergson: Gilles Deleuze. In 1948, when Deleuze was preparing for the *agrégation*, Bergson's *Matter and Memory* was one of the four texts on the programme for the Great Oral Exam. Olivier Revault d'Allonnes recalls that in a discussion with Deleuze he confessed to being irritated by Bergson. In response Deleuze said "No, you're mistaken, you've read him badly. He's a very great philosopher", after which Deleuze pulled out his copy of the text and began to extemporise (Dosse 2010: 97–8). From this anecdote we can see not only the route by which Deleuze first came to Bergson, but also how his appreciation of Bergson at this time placed him apart from the avant-garde. Deleuze describes the situation as follows:

> [T]here are people these days who laugh at me simply for having written about Bergson at all. It simply shows they don't know enough history. They've no idea how much hatred Bergson managed to stir up in the French university system at the outset and how he became a focus for all sorts of crazy and unconventional people right across the social spectrum. (N 6)

Deleuze was clearly unafraid to swim against the current. In 1954 he presented a paper titled "Bergson's Conception of Difference" to the *Société des amis de Bergson* (a group to which he had been introduced by Hyppolite). It would be published in 1956 – the same year that he contributed another piece on Bergson, simply titled "Bergson, 1859–1941", for Merleau-Ponty's edited collection *Les philosophes célèbres*. In 1957 Deleuze assembled for publication a selection of Bergson's writings under the heading *Memoire et vie* (with a second edition in 1963), and in 1960 he delivered a lecture course on chapter 3 of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. Finally, in 1966 Deleuze's monograph *Bergsonism* was published. With this book his focused study of Bergson was brought to a climax, however it should be noted that nearly all of the main points and manoeuvres contained in this text can be located in Deleuze's earlier essays. Thus while *Bergsonism* is the polished final product of Deleuze's encounter with Bergson, it would be accurate to say that Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson was effectively formed by the mid-1950s.[12]

The role of Deleuze in resurrecting enthusiasm for Bergson's work cannot be overestimated. As Bianco correctly asserts: "it is absolutely certain that Deleuze's work functioned as a kind of catalyst and provoked the revival of the texts of a thinker, who, in the wake of the criticism of phenomenology and structuralism, was treated as nothing more than a pitiful relic of antiquity" (Bianco 2011: 858). But if Deleuze is the major source for much contemporary interest in Bergson, it is not exactly due to his direct writings on Bergson. To put it one way, if Deleuze's publications on Bergson were the only texts that he ever wrote, it is doubtful that the return of Bergsonism would

have had anywhere near the same degree of intensity. Indeed, when Deleuze's *Bergsonism* first appeared almost nobody took notice. By the 1980s, however, Deleuze was regarded as one of the most significant thinkers of the twentieth century.[13] What Deleuze had to say about Bergson, therefore, suddenly became much more noteworthy, providing a platform in the process for the dissemination of Bergson's thought to new audiences. And it is arguably this fact, more than anything else, that has facilitated the full-fledged return of Bergsonism.[14]

To this can be added the observation that Bergson is no minor influence on Deleuze. In recent years there has been a lot of superb scholarship excavating the numerous influences on Deleuze's thought. While useful and interesting, it should be borne in mind that practically none of these influences approach the level of Bergson. Providing a comprehensive account of how Deleuze's Bergsonism manifests in his subsequent work would require a whole book in itself, and as such is beyond the purview of the present text; but as the attentive reader of Deleuze will concur, traces of his Bergsonism can be found in almost all of Deleuze's major texts. His admiration for Bergson, moreover, does not dim with time: when asked by Didier Eribon in his later years to name some concepts created by twentieth-century philosophers, Deleuze offers six, the first three of which are Bergson's notions of duration, memory and the *élan vital* (TRM 380–1).[15]

One could pick out any number of other important references by Deleuze to Bergson in aid of reinforcing this point, but it must be stressed that such train-spotting would not fully account for the extent of Bergson's influence on Deleuze. More revealing is the fact that several of Deleuze's most significant concepts and themes can be tracked back to his engagement with Bergson, including the virtual/actual, multiplicity, difference, differentiation, individuation, problematisation, superior (transcendental) empiricism and the critique of negation. Many of these concepts and themes, it must be said, can also be located in other thinkers that Deleuze convenes with. But as the publication dates listed above demonstrate, Bergson comes first. The only major text to predate

"Bergson's Conception of Difference" is Deleuze's book on Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1953).[16] It is also worth mentioning that this essay is first written a full eight years before the publication of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), for it dispels the not-uncommon view that Deleuze came to Bergson after Nietzsche.[17] As for the other figure commonly placed alongside Bergson and Nietzsche as one of the three great influences on Deleuze – Spinoza – this engagement once again post-dates Deleuze's obsession with Bergson; more than one esteemed commentator, furthermore, has suggested that Deleuze reads Spinoza through Bergson (see Durie 2002a and Ansell Pearson 2002: 112).[18]

Does this mean that everything Deleuze writes and thinks from 1954 onwards is reducible to his Bergsonism? Obviously not. It does however mean that claims about the influence of various thinkers on Deleuze should be checked against his Bergsonism. For example, it has been argued that Deleuze's interest in and understanding of individuation can be traced to Gilbert Simondon (see Iliadis 2013), but Simondon will not defend his *doctorat d'État* until 1958, which is several years after Deleuze's engagement with Bergson on this issue.[19] Deleuze's debt to Albert Lautman on the theme of problematic philosophy has also been remarked upon (see Bowden 2011: chapter 3), but again this connection is ancillary to the Bergsonian context in which Deleuze previously explores 'the problem'. This is not to deny that Deleuze extends and enhances his thoughts on such notions and themes through engagements with figures such as Simondon and Lautman, but it is rare to find instances where the Bergsonian frame, as understood by Deleuze, is repudiated or significantly deviated from.[20] A proper appreciation of Deleuze's Bergsonism is therefore necessary, if not *most* necessary, for an informed understanding of his work – a conclusion, one could add, that has been arrived at by both advocates and detractors of Deleuze.[21]

Having now established the import of Deleuze's encounter with Bergson for the contemporary shape of both Bergson studies and Deleuze studies, a brief overview of Deleuze's Bergsonism is in order.

DELEUZE'S BERGSONISM

As Bergsonians have frequently noted, Deleuze's Bergsonism is hardly orthodox. In many respects (though not all) it is a unique reading, an irreducible event in the reception of Bergson's work. It is therefore to be expected that Deleuze has at times been accused of perverting Bergson. The eminent Bergson scholar P. A. Y. Gunter, for example, has pointed out several ways in which Deleuze "misdescribes" Bergson using a "spirit of conceptual freedom" in order to create "what might be called a caricature of a philosophy" (Gunter 2009: 167–77).[22] This creative spirit of interpretation, to be sure, is a shared feature across Deleuze's various monographs on a single figure. As such, Deleuze's portrait of Bergson is not an exception in his oeuvre, but the rule, and maybe even that which *gives* the rule:

> But I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed. I think my book on Bergson is a good example. (N 6)

As this description of Deleuze's own method of engagement illustrates, he is most willing to accept the charge of intellectual fecundity; this does not mean for one moment, though, that his portrayal of Bergson is 'wrong' or that he is an inattentive reader. Nor does it mean that Deleuze twists the words of Bergson to make him suit a pre-established agenda shared across his other texts. While this accusation could be levelled at Deleuze for some of his other books, it is important to remember that Deleuze's encounter with Bergson happens at a very early stage in his career. When Deleuze wrote "Bergson's

Conception of Difference" in 1954 it would be difficult to say that he had a developed philosophy of his own. It would thus be more reasonable to conclude that Deleuze's perversion of Bergson is undertaken for its own sake, and that this experience is formative for Deleuze's later thinking rather than the result of an already formed line of thought.

At this juncture, the title of Deleuze's book on Bergson becomes instructive: *Bergsonism*, not 'The Philosophy of Bergson' or something of that sort. Deleuze would definitely agree with Merleau-Ponty on distinguishing between Bergsonism and Bergson, but when Deleuze adopts the former as the title of his book we can be certain that his intention is not to refer to the 'collection of accepted opinions' inspired by Bergson that dominated the intellectual and cultural scene in the lead-up to the First World War. Such was no doubt the intention of Benda in his book of the same name, published in 1912. Perhaps Deleuze's book title is a play on Benda's, but I would suspect not as this would involve giving far too much credit to one commentator, even if he was Bergson's nemesis. More believable is that the title of *Bergsonism* was chosen by Deleuze for its ability to convey the driving ambition of his study: to give new life to the movement of Bergson's thought. 'Movement' is the key word here. In a 1985 text Deleuze will remark in passing that the various efforts to denounce and efface Bergson can be traced to a simple source – the desire to block movement (N 127). This assessment reprises a similar statement made by Deleuze eight years earlier:

> in him [Bergson] there is something which cannot be assimilated, which enabled him to provide a shock, to be a rallying point for all the opposition, the object of so many hatreds: and this is not so much because of the theme of duration, as of the theory and practice of becomings of all kinds, of coexistent multiplicities. (D 15)[23]

Deleuze is not the first to make an observation of this kind. In fact, the full quote of Walter Lippmann's infamous remark

about Bergson actually reads: "if I were interested in keeping churches, constitutions, and customs fixed so that they would not change, I should regard Bergson as the most dangerous man in the world" (Lippmann 1912: 100–1). Deleuze is clearly attracted to this danger, and hopes to aid its proliferation. As he writes in the opening to the Afterword for the English translation of *Bergsonism* (1988): "A 'return to Bergson' does not only mean renewed admiration for a great philosopher but a renewal or an extension of his project today" (B 115). From this we can see that Deleuze's aim is not to provide a 'straight' or 'correct' reading of Bergson (assuming that such is even possible), as a dutiful disciple of the master might. His allegiance, we must therefore say, is to Bergsonism and not Bergson. But this 'Bergsonism' is not that of the *à la mode*. If Deleuze's engagement with Bergson is worthy of our attention today, it is because he brings forth an *élan* of Bergsonism – a nexus of movements and becomings – that is distinct from others and extremely generative in turn. Insofar as this is the case, occasional leaps in reasoning, alterations in focus and at times even corrections of Bergson are to be expected. These instances, however, should be taken as evidence of Deleuze's devotion to Bergson's work. For as Charles Péguy has capably shown, one can be Bergsonian whilst disagreeing with Bergson, since there is more in Bergsonism than Bergson.[24] Our challenge, as Deleuze sees it, is to explore where these movements and becomings can take us. Keith Ansell Pearson has perhaps said it best:

> What we find in Deleuze's commentaries and writings on Bergson, however, is never a mere historical retrieval of a great thinker, but an attempt to give philosophy a future. Deleuze's 'ethical' commitment to philosophy is, I believe, largely Bergsonian in its inspiration: philosophy's duty consists in showing that the future means nothing other than an opening onto new creations and inventions. (Ansell Pearson 2015: 68)

In attempting to render Bergson into a vibrant and productive assemblage of coexistent becomings, Deleuze's method is

by no means chosen at random – it is itself Bergsonian to the core. It is an approach that strives to consider Bergson's work as a *whole*. This is said in several respects. Starting with the mundane sense of the term, we can note that Deleuze provides a reading of Bergson's philosophy that incorporates all of his major texts together.[25] But there is also a more profound sense in which the word is used – namely, Bergson's notion of the *open* whole. Because Bergson's whole is open and not closed, it is never fully 'given' or 'giveable' and subject to change. In his first book on cinema Deleuze will explain it as follows: "if the whole is not giveable, it is because it is Open, and because its nature is to change constantly, or to give rise to something new, in short, to endure" (C1 9). Deleuze is here inspired by Bergson's evocative claim that "*Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed*" (CE 16). What makes something whole, therefore, is not the extent to which it is hermetic but on the contrary the manner in which it opens onto an outside – other wholes and the Whole of the universe, which is itself open and unfinished. So described, *relationality* could be said to be the critical characteristic of Bergson's open whole. By relationality, however, Deleuze specifically means *externality*:

> Relation is not a property of objects, it is always external to its terms. It is also inseparable from the open, and displays a spiritual or mental existence. Relations do not belong to objects, but to the whole, on condition that this is not confused with a closed set of objects. (C1 10)

Deleuze's Bergsonism, I would suggest, must be engaged with in this manner: as an open whole that aspires to form fruitful relations with the open whole of Bergson's thought and the various wholes that we find therein. It follows that gaining an 'understanding' of Bergsonism cannot be delivered by objectifying it as an artificially closed set. We must rather seek to gain knowledge of Bergson's thought by exploring its holistic nature in all respects – including the way in which Bergson articulates

and relates various wholes, the way in which they inform one another, the way in which they give rise to the Whole of Bergsonism, and the way in which this Whole itself opens out. To cite Le Roy one more time:

> An original philosophy is not meant to be studied as a mosaic which takes to pieces, a compound which analyses, or a body which dissects. On the contrary, it is by considering it as a living act, not as a rather clever discourse, by examining the peculiar excellence of its soul rather than the formation of its body, that the inquirer will succeed in understanding it. (Le Roy 2015: 1)

Having just stressed the nature of Deleuze's Bergsonism as an irreducible and open whole, it is perhaps predictable that our task now is to dissect it. Deleuze follows convention, to some extent, in his choice of the main themes and topics of his Bergsonism: intuition, duration, memory and the *élan vital*. But as several of the chapter titles of his book reveal, in each case Deleuze will pair the key term with another that is less conventional – respectively: method, multiplicity, the virtual and differentiation. A chapter is devoted to each of these pairings, with an additional chapter (4) that serves to summarise Deleuze's findings thus far and raise/address the 'so what?' question. From these five chapters can be gleaned five essential points that Deleuze works to establish:

(1) intuition is the rigorous and problematic method of Bergsonism, with three (or five) rules;
(2) Bergson's primary notion of duration is in fact underpinned by a more fundamental theory of multiplicities;
(3) the virtual, most fully developed in Bergson's study of memory, is the key concept of his ontology;
(4) Bergsonism is both dualistic and monistic in several different and complementary ways; and
(5) the movement of life is a movement of differentiation, whereby the virtual is actualised in a creative process of divergence.

It is crucial to note that all five of these points are significantly interwoven. This means that a full assessment of any one requires an equivalent assessment of the others *vis-à-vis the whole that they are a part of*. This is not an easy demand to satisfy, which is no doubt why most scholars who draw on Deleuze's Bergsonism invariably engage with and utilise only one or two aspects in isolation. In a similar vein, though more unfortunately, most criticisms of Deleuze's reading that I have come across suffer from a failure to adequately appreciate the whole of his Bergsonism; in the simpler cases, the 'answer' to a supposed deficiency can often be found in a location of Deleuze's Bergsonism not considered by the detractor, while in many other cases a fuller consideration of the whole is often capable of averting the perceived confrontation.

This brings us to a final major feature of Deleuze's Bergsonism that needs mentioning here: its *progressive* nature. Again, the word 'progress' is said in a number of senses. To start with, as we have already discussed, it is Deleuze's hope that his work on Bergson will contribute to the advancement of Bergsonism, by extending it in new ways and forging new relations. But at a more technical level, the reader must bear in mind that the essential points or moments of Deleuze's Bergsonism are sequentially progressive. For example, the theory of differentiation outlined in the last chapter of his book relies upon the previously explained theory of virtual coexistence, which in turn relies upon the previously explained theory of multiplicities, all of which are underpinned by the method of intuition described in the first chapter of the book. And in the other direction, elements introduced in the earlier stages of Bergsonism will need to wait for developments further down the track before they can be fully understood, making it equally difficult for the reader to cherry-pick discrete concepts and arguments without consideration for where it is they lead and why. Deleuze's Bergsonism is thus *not* like his co-authored *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is composed of chapters that can be read in any order the reader fancies. There is only one way to read Deleuze's book on

Bergson – the old-fashioned way, from page one to the end – and it is difficult to see how Deleuze could have explicated his Bergsonism in an order other than he did. This is not to say, though, that the unfolding or unravelling of Deleuze's Bergsonism is straightforwardly chronological; aside from commencing with a chapter on method that is primarily informed by one of Bergson's last publications (the two-part introduction to *The Creative Mind*), Deleuze's reading of Bergson exhibits pronounced reflexivity, with newly emerged elements augmenting the complexion of the whole. The imagery of links being connected into a chain would thus be entirely inappropriate. Rather, Deleuze's Bergsonism must be approached and thought of in the same way that Bergson thinks of time: as an open whole that gnaws into the future, swelling as it advances and leaving on things the mark of its tooth (CE 4 and 46).