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THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE & VALUE OF THE
PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON.
H519

Grey Heywood '20

INTRODUCTION.

For an adequate consideration of this important subject three things seem essential. First, what we mean by Religion; Second, what are the essential features of Bergson's teaching. Third, what relation, if any, has Bergson's teaching to Religion. We say three things seem essential, because it is manifest that we cannot know how Bergson's teaching will affect Religion except we understand what Religion is. Nor on the other hand can we know how Religion is likely to be affected by Bergson's philosophy, except we understand what that philosophy teaches. We therefore presume this three-fold division as necessary.

- I. Then let us consider our first question. What is Religion? And in seeking to find an answer to this question it must be understood that what we hope to secure is not an exhaustive answer for that is impossible, but rather one sufficiently adequate for the larger purpose of the whole enquiry. An exhaustive answer to this great question is impossible for at least two reasons. First, because no investigator can grasp Religion in its essential nature, and in all its aspects at any particular stage of its development. Secondly, because while we are investigating, it is developing; so that anything we might hold forth as a portrait of the whole would be at best but a snap-shot, which Religion would have outgrown before we had developed the picture. But we must



not confuse the wood with the trees. We must not confound Religion with religions. "Religions are many" says Müller and he who knows one knows none, (1) meaning of course, he who knows only one knows none. For what Müller means to suggest is that only through the most thorough study of its various manifestations or embodiments, at their various stages of development, can the essential nature of the principle or spirit, progressively embodying itself in each, be adequately grasped. He presupposes, therefore, (as we shall see later) a principle or spirit of which the various religious phenomena or embodiments are manifestations. Our immediate purpose, then, will be best served if we seek first that movement, principle or spirit which has given rise to such phenomena as are generally designated the historical religions of mankind.

Let us seek first, then, that which distinguishes man from the animal and makes him a worshipping being. For, as Müller says "As there is a faculty of speech independent of the historical forms of language, so we may speak of the faculty of faith in man independent of all historical religions....which in spite of sense and reason enables man to apprehend the Infinite under various disguises. Without that faculty no religion would be possible; and if we will but listen we can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, the longing after the Infinite.

(1) Science of Religion. p.II.

a love of God (1) and evidently what Müller has here in mind is that the particular embodiment of Deity or God in man is grasping after harmonious union in thought, feeling and activity with God in all, or God as all. Bergson, himself, while willing to admit that the religious sense has been gradually enriched and complicated by very diverse elements, declares that "none the less it is in essence a simple thing, sui generis, and resembles no other emotion of the soul." (2)

(2) But perhaps the words of M. Reville will express more succinctly the fact we are trying to establish. "If religions are mortal he says religion never dies, or we may say, it dies under one form only to come to life again under another." (3)

Now in seeking this religion which is eternal in humanity (Renan) we do not deny, of course, the objectivity of its form, nor shall we disregard the significance of its historical content. But our main concern with phenomena at this stage of our enquiry is to grasp in its many-sidedness their essence or spirit. Our chief concern with manifold expressions is to grasp the thing expressed, so that what we are at present concerned with is to win assent to what seems to us a fundamental

(1) S of R, p 12.

(2) A reply to the *Mercury de France* quoted by Algot Ruhe and N.M. Paul in work "Henri Bergson, an account of his life and philosophy," p 12.

(3) *History of Religion*, p 3. (English Trans:)

truth: that just as surely as French or Hebrew are expressions of language; and just as surely as democratic forms of government are but expressions of democracy in politics, so also the various, and almost endless, forms of religion are not religion itself. (1) but its effects, partial expressions of a vaster power, movement or spirit, much of which may still be ^{was} expressed. or if expressed, imperfectly comprehended.

Our search, then, is for the principle or spirit manifest in all its embodiments. Religion of which religions are expressions, that permanent and substantial element, something stable and imperishable, which takes a firm hold on human nature itself. (2). For what we need for the purposes of this enquiry is what Orr describes as "Such a comprehension of the inner principle and essential character of religion as will enable us to discern its presence under *forms* that very rudely and imperfectly express it." (3).

And when we seek some of the more outstanding characteristics of what we call Religion what do we find? We are attracted first of all by its universality, look where we will we cannot deny it this character. (4)

(1) Compare Eucken T of R, p.13. As certainly as there is but one ~~same~~ truth, there can be but one absolute religion, and this religion in no way coincides entirely with any one of the historical religions"

(2) History of R's p.3. (M. Reville)

(3) Orr's Christian View. p 381.

(4) Compare Eucken, T of R. p 192.

(5).

Wherever there are human beings there is what may be called a religious instinct. It is the universal which leads to the characteristic. So that whether we go back to the rough rude dawn of history, (1) which Eucken assures us is ^{un}necessary, or stand with that investigator upon the lofty summits Religion has attained, the same thing is manifest. Some great common cause has actuated men at different times in history with divergent effects, and has produced what we know as the religions of man. (2). And when we look back from the present to the past we see that, in the words of Illingworth, the power in question is an earlier form of, and essentially identified with the power of religion as we see it in the world to day. (3) Moreover, its effect upon history is of great significance. Indeed, Muller thinks ~~=====~~ that it is Religion which primarily makes a people, and instances the Jewish race. Hegel arrived at a similar conclusion in his philosophy of History. "The idea of a God constitutes the general foundation of a people". While Eucken, speaking of historical religions, admitted ^{by} the product of Religion in general declares that "Through the concentration which they accomplish and represent, they have conferred upon history incomparably greater intrinsic value, contrast and movement, things which otherwise threaten to dissolve into sheer unintelligibility.they have raised, in the midst of our world, an over-world of a most mighty power." (4). It would seem then, that Religion,

(1) Eucken T of R p I.

(3) Compare Illingworth. Personality H & D, pp 146-7.
(3) " H & D . p 153.

(4) T of R, p 373.

(6).

actuating life has made history from being an affair of the heart it has become the heart of affairs.

It is also a developing power, or shall we say a power that accomplishes development. If we "trace its blurred beginnings in time" we are tempted to say it is not of the same stream that flows so majestically before the observer of the present, so rude and imperfect were its initial windings. But, as *Franeus* reminds us when man was a child he assimilated as a child and expressed himself as a child. And it is only through man that we can trace religious development. *Müller* has said "there is no religion- or if there is I do not know it- which does not say "Do good, avoid evil". (1).

Again, "in one sense every religion was a true religion, being the only religion possible at the time". (2). And again, if we bear in mind that a religion must accommodate itself to the intellectual capacities of those whom it is to influence, we shall not be surprised to find so much of true religion where we only expected degrading superstition or absurd worship of idols. (3). The phrase "a religion must accommodate itself" is not a very happy one, but the sense is clear. And the claim of *Eucken* that the modern investigator may take his stand upon the summit of Religion's development is an admission of the point we seek to prove. So that whether or no we accept all that *Müller* says on this matter, this much becomes evident. Religion advances with man, and

(1) S of R. p 108.

(2) S of R, p 115. Compare also *Baring Gould* quoted by *Orr*, *Christian View* P 12.

(3) S of R, p 16.

(7).
is certainly a cause, and probably the cause, of man's advance; since it makes for the elevation of the human spirit towards the Divine.

For Religion is also an uplifting power. The intention of Religion wherever we meet it is always holy. (1). "However imperfect, however childish a religion may be it always places the human soul in the presence of God.

Religion, therefore places the human soul in the presence of its highest ideal, it lifts it above the level of ordinary goodness and produces at least a yearning after a higher and better life" (2). Whence, then, is this power we are seeking to know? a power prehistoric in its origin, universal in its operation, historic in its expression, revolutionary in its development, and, above all, uplifting and ennobling in its influence?.

Sabatier thinks " The historic source of religious life is in the religious society,..... Without doubt he says " the Spirit of God is its Author." The mysterious action of the Spirit of God is found in the agitation of the spirits of men. (3). Again, properly understood, religion is only a social bond between man and the superior powers upon whom he feels his own existence to depend". (4). Prof; Watson sums it up as a life as well as a creed, and a ritual. (5). The implication being, of course, that the life is lived in the light of the creed, and

(1). Muller, S of R.

(2). Muller, S of R. p

(3). Religions of Authority, p.354.

(4) Interp; of Rel;Exp; p 3.

(8)•

expressed in the acts of the ritual. Sch leirmacher describes Religion as " The immediate consciousness of the infinite in the Finite, and of the Eternal in the temporal" (1). and Müller as the perception of the Infinite. Yet, these opinions , helpful as they are, and expressing as they do the results of earnest study, seem but partial definitions of the great truth we seek. And if we would find words to express both the source and the nature of what we call Religion, we shall not do better than accept the profound words of Eucken, who, after a most exhaustive search, is led to conclude that, " Religion rests on the presence of the Divine life in man.", it manifests itself in the appropriation of this life as one's own nature. " It subsists in the fact that man in the inmost foundation of his being is raised into the Divine life, and participates in the Divine nature. Christianity was right when it found the kernel of religion in the union of the natures of the human and Divine." (2). And when we consider Eucken's important reservation that "Religion can never (fully) originate unless the Divine enters into the conviction of man, unless the whole of his soul turns towards the new world" (a new world to each individual, of course), we shall understand that this statement includes the thought of most of those opinions we have considered, and affords us an answer to our question. It is a conclusion, moreover, that finds support

(1). Quoted by Orr, Christian View, p 382.

(2). T of R, pp 206--7.

in essentially Christian writers such as Orr, who while concerned mainly with the Christian view of Religion could yet say "Religion assuredly is not a theoretical product". It did not originate in reasoning, but in an immediate perception or experience of the Divine in some of the spheres of its natural or supernatural manifestations, for the reception of which seeing a native capacity or endowment must be presupposed in the human spirit" (1). While Illingworth, also speaking of quite another matter declares that, "we have ample reason for maintaining that throughout the religions of the world the primary fact is God's attraction of man, and not man's discovery of God. The extreme case of Buddhism would be no real exception to this view". (2). "The power which is not ourselves that makes for righteousness had hold upon man's heart" "Thou hast made us for thyself and we are restless till we rest in Thee

Therefore , before we advance further in our inquiry, let us understand that what we mean by Religion for the purpose of this thesis, is that vast spiritual movement in human life which has its origin in the human consciousness of, and participation in, the Divine life; and which manifests itself more especially in the various historic religions known to the world. Some lofty, aspiring, deeply spiritual and highly moral; others crude and primitive, yet undoubtedly the effects of the same spiritual movement; others again seemingly grown tired with their initial

(1). Christian View, p.28.

(2). Divine Transcendence, p . 149.

endeavours, and falling back on themselves in " gradual moral degradation", (1). yet not without hope of a new beginning, in other words , Religion appears as the result of Spiritual leaven plunged into the lump of human life at its beginnings, and added to, perhaps, at various stages in history; the efforts of which are expended in the gradual transformation of the whole, but meeting with varying success in divergent directions; yet on the whole slowly but surely recreative. Religion is thus the leavening process itself-- the continuous action and reaction of the leaven and the lump, the Divine and human.

But having arrived so far upon the first stage of our enquiry we dare not rest here. It is not enough for the purpose we have in view that we have discovered the source and something of the nature of Religion, we must also know something of the effects of its operation, as they are expressed in the religious life of the world to-day. First, because we cannot hope to see the significance and value of Bergson's teaching for Religion except as it promises to influence, modify or change the action of that power.

Manifestly , no teaching can affect Religion as we have discovered it, except through its embodiments or manifestations. For, to quote Bergson once again in this regard, " The progressive deepening of the idea may make the religious sense clearer and ever clearer; it cannot modify that which is essential in it, still less affect its disappearance". And secondly, because whatever significance or value Bergson has for Religion must be for the effects of that power as they are produced in the world at present or in the future. Our attention ought then to be turned to those

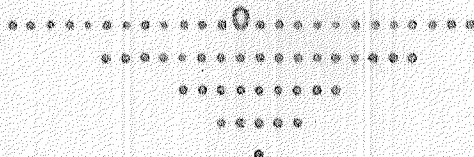
living historical forms in which the religious power has found expression in our age; for it is these that we might hope to discover such characteristic products of the action of Religion as are likely to be affected by Bergson's teaching. From such a procedure, however, we are debarred by the nature of our paper. We must therefore consider the most characteristic and influential of these forms, and there endeavour to discover such effects which, produced by Religion, are likely to be affected by the teaching we shall describe. We turn, therefore, to Christianity.

Now quite apart from the need of brevity in such a paper as this, additional justification is found for the consideration only of Christian phenomena in two out-standing facts. The first of these is that Christianity is admittedly the highest and most powerful expression of Religion the world has ever known. Huxley describes it as "the religion of religions" and as certain of permanent duration. (1) And the second fact is that Christianity is likely to be more affected by modern teaching than any other historical religion, not only because of its range and the universality of its claim, but also because it is the religion of the higher types of civilisation, and therefore more susceptible to their culture. We need make no apology, then, if we confine Bergson's religious significance and value very largely to modern Christianity ~~as the basis of our thesis~~. That we did not begin with Christianity as the basis of our thesis the development of our argument will justify.

And when we come to consider the outstanding effects produced by Religion and embodied in Christianity we must note the following:-

- (1) An undying faith in a Divine Being who is regarded as Infinite, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Providential.
- (2) A consciousness that this Divine Being is in relation with our world which is His Creation, and in intimate personal relationship with human beings who are represented as one of the highest known efforts of His creative power.
- (3) The conception that the nature of this Being is love which is expressed in all His acts whether they be creative or redemptive.
- (4) The conception that man is the special object of Divine Love and goodness, and that therefore within man is engendered a conflict by a Spiritual power opposed to God, which is generally regarded as Evil, Satan or the Devil.
- (5). The faith that God has revealed His will to man and that His revelation was consummated in the Incarnation.
- (6). That the purpose of God is the redemption, the Spiritual perfection and the immortality of the human race in a divine-human order, the prototype of which is Jesus Christ.
- (7). The consciousness that in the worship of God, and in co-operation with Him in His Righteousness, man finds his highest freedom and the noblest expression of his being.
- (8). The conception that Faith is the way to knowledge of the Divine. And with this brief outline of Christian conceptions we must leave this part of our enquiry for the time being, and turn to the philosophy

the philosophy of Bergson, in the hope that we may bring forth from the work ^{of that} fascinating thinker, teaching of significance and value for the Christian Religion.



In approaching the second part of our main enquiry we have set ourselves the ~~the~~ question, What are the essential features of Bergson's teaching?. And we have set ourselves the question for reasons stated above. It will be well therefore to understand from the outset that "Bergson's Philosophy is essentially a method"(1). But it is a method he not only believes in and adopt for himself, but also recommends to the consideration of others as the best means at the disposal of philosophy for continuous and positive progress.. Its significance for philosophy is thus very important.

Now what is this method? It is the intuitive method of knowledge. The foundation of Bergson's philosophy, says Mr McKellar Stewart, ' is his method of intuition. (2).

(1) Mc Kellar Stewart. A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy. p.3.

(2).

(2) Crit. Expos. of B's Phil. p.5.

(3) C.E. p 186.

(14).

By intuition, Bergson means "instinct that has become disinterested, selfconscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and enlarging it indefinitely" (1). And the reason Bergson has adopted this method is both because of its intrinsic merit, and also because of what might be described, from his point of view, the proved insufficiency of all else.

For what, after all, is the purpose of a philosophic method unless it be the discovery of reality? And where shall we discover reality except it be discovered in life? It is, therefore, because Bergson believes that intuition alone may apprehend reality, and that because intuition is akin to life, that he adopts this method of knowledge as the basis of his philosophic system. For he describes intuition repeatedly as though it were life itself coming to a consciousness of its own activity. But before we deal more fully with the doctrine of intuition, we had better sketch, in outline, his whole system, and explain intuition as it falls into place within the whole.

Now if we begin this outline by asking what Bergson understands to be the nature of Reality, we shall enter the very heart of his teaching; for about this question there plays the light of his intuition of duration.. Beginning with an investigation of individual consciousness, and urging in this regard that "Duration *in* the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances"(2) he concludes that for a being endowed with memory, and therefore conscious, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly".

(1) C. O. the question to consider, therefore, is whether this con-
(1) Critical Exposition p 186.

(2). C.P. p8.

(15).

The question to consider, therefore, is whether this conclusion may be applied to existence in general. So after a consideration of material objects generally, Bergson investigates the nature of a privileged object, such as the living body, and after a searching analysis is able to show that "individuality is never perfect" It is never shut up as a closed system. Life appears as "A current passing from one germ to another through the medium of a developed organism" (1). The organism seems to act as a thoroughfare for life; for the important thing is "the continued process indefinitely pursued". And the more we fix our attention on this continuity of life, the more we see that organic evolution resembles the evolution of a consciousness, in which the past presses against the present, and causes there the upspringing of a new form of consciousness incommensurate with its antecedents. (2). Here, then, is the germ of creative evolution, for we see that "Life 's history is embodied in its present.....The characteristics of biological evolution are thus the same as those of human progress. Once again we find the very stuff of reality in duration. (3). So that it is not to be wondered at that Bergson describes his teaching as "a philosophy which sees in duration the very stuff of reality."

" Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual

(1). Crit. Expos. p.28.

(2). C.P. p 29.

(3). Le Roy. The New Philosophy of H.Bergson p 92.

(16).

becoming. It makes itself or it unmakes itself, but it is never something made. (1).

All this, of course, must run counter to the powerful conceptions of Mechanism and Finalism, and a brief digression will be necessary to consider why Bergson rejects these theories. His charge is that for both "all is given". Their essential difference being that Finalism replaces the *impulsion* of the past with the attraction of the future. The one is the inversion of the other. Both destroy freedom which is the essence of life. (2). It is because "we perceive duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live. It is of no use to hold up before our eyes the dazzling prospect of a universal mathematic; we cannot sacrifice experience to the requirements of a system. That is why we reject radical mechanism" But radical Finalism is quite as unacceptable, and for the same reason". (3). "The error of radical finalism, as also that of radical mechanism, is to extend too far the application of certain concepts that are natural to our intellect". (4). Concentrated upon that which repeats, solely pre-occupied in welding the same to the same, intellect turns away from the vision of time" (5). It dislikes what is fluid.

(1). C.E.p 237. (2). Compare Carr. Phil of Change. p 150.
(3). C.E.p 41. (4). C.E.p 46.
(5). C.E.p 48.

(17). (1)

and solidifies everything it touches. We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect. (1).

We are now able to gather together the fundamentals of Bergson's teaching. For him Reality is Duration or Movement in the meaning of change. (2). Real duration is identical with the progress of Spirit or Consciousness. "It is Consciousness or supra-consciousness which is at the origin of life" (3). But Consciousness is ^(3a) Spirit -
ual, and in conscious flow. This flow is best described as an evolution creatively progressive. Only we must be careful to understand that this evolutionary spiritual consciousness is not something that flows. It is the flow. It is change, movement, duration. What we see then is best summed up by understanding Consciousness (or God) as the source and origin of all existence. (4). But because the essential nature of consciousness is ceaseless creation and freedom it is conscious flow. Duration, therefore, is reality itself. But there are two main orders of reality, and the presence of one is the absence of the other. (5). These are life and matter. They are forms of duration which generates both. The one is the inversion of the other. Life represents the success of consciousness, matter its failure. It is a movement ascending and descending. As consciousness thrusts ceaselessly upward in the form of life it meets

(1). C.E. p49.

(2). Compare Carr. Hist of Change .p 176.

(3). C.E. p 275.

(3.a) Compare C.E. pages 283. & 218.

(4) " Stewart. p 144.

(5). " Carr p 176.

Consciousness falling back in the form of matter; and such is its nature that it seeks to re-create matter into consciousness, or life. Thus organisms are born. They are created by life as it finds lodgement in matter. (1). The most successful creative efforts of consciousness or life are human beings. In the human organism consciousness takes the form of mind. And so successful has been its effort in this organism that it has created an instrument out of matter to assist in recreating matter. (2). This instrument is the highly complex nervous system and brain of the human body. Through this instrument consciousness operates in the form of intellect. ~~the~~ ~~brain~~ " The brain is the sharp edge by which consciousness enters into the compact tissue of events, but the brain is no more co-extensive with consciousness than the edge is with the knife. (3). We have said that Consciousness or Spirit in the human organism is mind. That it operates in the form of intellect is due to a kind of condensation in order to act upon"matter., which is necessity itself".^(3a) Thus in man , and in man alone, consciousness sets itself free. (4). For man not only maintains his machine, he succeeds in using it as he pleases" (5). So that intuition which is of the nature of pure consciousness and which goes in the very direction of life, is largely elbowed out in man, for"Consciousness in man is preeminently intellect." (6). " In the humanity of which we are part intuition is, in fact, almost completely sacrificed to intellect It seems that to conquer matter, and (thus, surely?) to reconquer

(1)

Compare C.E. 263--5.

(2) " C.E.p 278.

(3). C.E.p 277. (3a) C.E.p.265.

(4). C.E.p.278.)5)C.E. p.279.

its own self, consciousness has had to exhaust the best part of its power. This conquest.....has required that consciousness should adapt itself to the habits of matter and concentrate all its attention on them, in fact determine itself more especially as intellect. Intuition is there, however, but vague and above all discontinuous. It is a lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most. But it glimmers whenever a vital interest is at stake." (1). Intuition was, then, co-extensive with mind. (2). but in proportion as mind becomes intellect intuition tends to dissipate and disappear. The presence of one must mean the absence of the other. It would seem, then, that if we wish to become intuitionists we must cease to be intellectual. But if we would remain intellectual we must suffer correspondingly in our power to intuit. Bergson's teaching will bear no other interpretation. It is true that he says in one place that "A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development" (3). But it is only fair to remind him that our present unequal state is due to the powerlessness of the very principle he advocates to hold sway in the human organism.

But this is not the place to point out apparent inconsistencies. We must trace his thoughts as faithfully as we can, and reserve, for the present, any humble criticism we have to offer. A final statement of the respective powers and functions of

(1) C.E. p.282.

(2). C.E. p.281.

(3) C.E. p 281.

Intuition and Intellect is necessary for even a slight understanding of the essentials of his teaching. Let us then remember that intuition is life itself coming to a consciousness of its own activity, while intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life. These two forms of consciousness are turned in opposite directions, the former towards life, the latter towards inert matter. So that while intuition may only deal with the flowing intellect is confined to the static, "of the discontinuous alone does the intellect form a clear idea". But matter is also duration. Intellect can therefore only obtain snapshots of reality. It can only touch it at certain points, and consequently must miss the essential rhythm. This intuition grasps, because it lives it.

In man, therefore, the two methods are complementary. Each is necessary to the other for the comprehension of reality. Intuition gains the vision, and intellect preserves it in conceptual forms.

Such an outline of Bergson's metaphysic and theory of knowledge is all we can reasonably attempt for the purpose of this paper. But before we begin to apply this teaching for the purposes we have in hand, we must be allowed to suggest two fatal omissions in his doctrine. The first has to do with his metaphysic, and the remarkable thing in respect to it, is the almost total disregard of its seriousness in the many writers on Bergson. The omission we refer to is his failure to explain why consciousness

which, on his own authority, is pure creative spiritual activity.
should ever take the form of matter.

^ Why should the original impulse of life ever become matter ?

Why should spiritual freedom ever become material necessity?

Bergson's thought cannot be misunderstood. Original spirit has taken two forms, life and matter. Matter represents the failure to

remain life. But why should it fail? Obviously it had no right to

since its essential nature is freedom. Wildon Carr's appeal to the principle of ^(a) dichotomy does not agree with Bergson's own teaching. Our author never suggests that matter is implicit in original spirit. Rather he represents it as a degradation of original spirit

an unmaking of itself at most. (1). He represents it as the

falling back of the dead embers of a partly spent rocket. "Consciousness, or Supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter." (2). He also speaks of Extension as a tension which is interrupted (3). And in all these statements there is the unconscious suggestion that opposition has been

encountered. A rocket absolutely unopposed ought to hold its way

ad infinitum, especially if it possessed the attributes of Bergson's consciousness. Again, take Bergson's illustration on page 261 C.E.

"Let us think rather of an action like that of raising the arm; then let us suppose that the arm, left to itself, falls back, and yet there subsists in it, striving to raise it up again, something of the will that animates it." Now note his conclusion. "In this image of a

(1). W.Carr. pp 185.

(2). C.E. p.275.

(3). C.E. p.258.

creative action which ^{un}makes itself (italics Bergson's) we have already a more exact representation of matter." But may we respectfully suggest that this action does not unmake itself. It is unmade by the pull of gravity on the raised arm. The arm does not fall back, it is pulled back. So, then, must spirit be into the form of matter. But Bergson has omitted to name the force. Again, does not his statement that "Everywhere but in man consciousness has had to come to a stand" (1) suggest the same thing? His intuition of duration has not gone far enough. Being will hardly unmake itself without cause.

The second objection has to do with his theory of knowledge. Intuition is represented as an act of will. (2). Bergson's main claim on behalf of intuition is that by the use of this method we obtain deeper insight into reality. By sympathetic identification we may live the real that we cannot think. The question is whether there is anything more than the resignation of our being to impressions from without or within. Is it ^eanything more than intellectual quiescence. Is the activity we enter upon ^{anything} more than the patting of the intellectual beyond bounds, that we may "Be still and know that I am God?". That we may simply live temporarily without active thought is the experience of poets and artists. But this is rather a surrender of ourselves to impressions than a willed action of mind. ~~§§ Bergson suggests~~ It is impossible to conceive a division of mind as Bergson suggests. Into whatever direction we project the

(1). C.E. p.280.

(2). Compare Carr, p.277. & on page 35. Carr says "The way in which we alone can obtain an intuition of this original movement is by installing ourselves within it." But why install ourselves since we are part of the movement?

Compare Stewart, p 293.

intuitional part of mind, the intellectual will follow as surely and more closely than "Mary's little lamb". Mind cannot go to school without intellect. It is doubtful whether anything more can be claimed for living intuitive sympathy than the opening up of the being to impressions of reality, a lifting up of the intellectual doors that the King of Glory may come in; for it should be easily demonstrable that we do not find Reality, but Reality finds us, providing our minds are open to receive (I). And what Bergson claims may be obtained by an act of will, is probably received through an act of grace. For let us consider his statement: "Intuition is life itself coming to a consciousness of its own activity" i.e. its own flow. Does this need an act of will? Does will add anything to pure living? Life is conscious of its own flow, i.e. its own life, by definition. And the conclusion to which we are forced by the sum of Bergson's teaching is that what he means by intuition is simply living for periods uninterrupted by active thoughts, but living, of course, expectantly. All that our will seems able to accomplish for intuition is a kind of making ready of the guest-chamber to receive the guest; or the attuning of the mental ear to the harmony of Reality. His omission, then, consists in his failure to state simply and explicitly what is really implicit (I) in his thought. This omission has cost him the support of the poets whose testimony, of course, he claims.

"Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.
Think you, mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking".

(I). Compare Carr. pp 122.

(24).

Again,
" Enough of Science and of Art
Close up these barren leaves;
Come forth and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives". (I).

" With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony
Of harmony and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things".

.....
.....
(I) Wordsworth. "The tables turned." & Expostulation & Reply.
.....

(3)

In our review thus far of the fundamentals of Religion and Bergson's Philosophy, certain conceptions have emerged as common to both. In each a fundamental principle has been discovered. In the first place we were led to conclude that the basis of everything religious is that vast movement or interaction inaugurated through the agitation of the human spirit by the Divine. In the second place we found that the basis of Bergson's Metaphysics is also a reality which is movement, principle in motion or the motion of a principle with a relationship so close as to defy analysis. So that we are forced to say from Bergson's teaching that his fundamental principle is Change, Movement, Duration, Hence in both Religion and in Life as described by Bergson we have a movement creative in its effects. An important distinction must, however, be noted. Whereas the movement described as Religion is admittedly the result of Divine agitation of the human spirit, that is to say, presupposes a mover known as God, and generally accepted by some of the most influential thinkers as Himself unmoved,

Bergson's fundamental movement is God. (1). It seems therefore that the Unmoved mover of Religious philosophy, the "God who changes not" of the Christian Church, is identical with the original movement described by Bergson as the source and origin of Life.

We meet at once, then, a fundamental difference in the Religious and Bergsonian conceptions of original reality of tremendous significance to Christian theology. For there can be little doubt that the paramount modern religious conception of God is the Christian conception, and the orthodox conception of God is well summed up in the words of St James "The Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" and Who has said of Himself through the prophet Malachi, "I am the Lord, I change not". And whether or not there is real justification for so conceiving this Him there can be little doubt that He is usually so conceived by the most powerful religion of modern times. Neither, on the other hand, is there any doubt that Bergson's God is Change; for in a letter to Father de Longuebec, wherein he emphasises the main endeavours of his larger works, Bergson concludes "From all this emerges clearly the idea of God, Creator and Free, the generator of both matter and life." (2). And within the pages of his main work he conceives that a God is nothing who does nothing, "an ineffectual God who sums up in himself all the given" (3) and again, he says, God thus defined has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom." (4). While Weldon Carr, whose book

(2). Quoted by Ruhe & Paul, M. Bergson : p 43-4.

(3). C.E. p.207.

(4) C.E.-p 262.

(I.) C.E. p.262.

(5), Phil. of Change, pp 187-8.

bears the stamp of Bergson's approval is even more bold and explicit: "God....is not perfect in the sense that He is eternally complete, that He endures without changing." (1). Hence the first question of significance which meets us in this study is how to reconcile the Christian God who changes not with the Bergsonian God who is Change.

Now if the weight of Bergson's influence is claimed by that group of writers represented by such names as E. Herman, and H.G. Wells, whose teaching would indicate that God is only relatively absolute, ^Apluralistic finite God, *primus inter pares*,-- a Being whose experience is akin to ours" (2). then it is evident that Christian theology is faced with a mighty challenge to either vindicate or revise its conceptions. It is scarcely within the ~~proving~~ of this paper to attempt a reconciliation of these contradictory conceptions, even though we believe such to be possible. Our task is to point the significance of Bergson's teaching for Religion in this ~~ma~~tt^{er}, and this we have done. But it is permitted us to suggest that if the Bergsonian conception of God gains ground, Christian theology must give ground. If God is Change, Christian thought must change. And it at least follows that those religious theories which represent God's ~~plan~~ and purposes as ^{determined} ~~pre-destined~~ from eternity, and as predestinating His creatures to an irrevok^{able} destiny can no longer hold the faith of men, but must rapidly lose what influence they have. Such things will follow, we think, in the

(1), Phil: of Change, pp187-8.

(2). Herman, Eucken & Bergson, p.171.

event that Bergson's teaching finds wide acceptance and development, and is recognized as a better explanation of the nature and being of God than the generally accepted view that He is absolute, eternally complete, the beginning and the end of all things created and uncreated. But such an event is hard to predict, and more especially so because the effects on religious thought produced by the vast international struggle which now engulphs the world--the most far-reaching crisis in the world's history-- are likely to transcend all other influences in the reconstruction of the faith of men. Who is able to say whither men's eyes will be turned? Who can say that we are not, even now, about to receive such re-creative flashes of Divine light as shall illumine the farthest reaches of human thought, and perhaps send scuttling into the caverns of obscurity the most highly prized of our human conceptions and traditions?--when God's thoughts shall indeed become man's thoughts, and His ways our ways.

But another and equally important matter awaits our consideration. It is the Bergsonian conception of Creation. For although Bergson has described God as creator and free, he is ~~not~~ a limited God, meeting and wrestling with a kind of inner necessity of his own nature, and by his creative action attaining ever greater and greater freedom. It would be extremely hard in this connection to pick out from the mass of Bergson's metaphor quotations to illustrate his teaching, but Wildon Carr supplies us with sufficiently clear and succinct statements, for our purpose, when he says,

" If therefore we say that God is Spirit we must recognize that He can only act in and through matter, which though distinct from

(28).

His being, is inseparable from His acting. If we say that God is free activity we must recognize that this very freedom can only operate by means of the automatisms it is its own nature to form and overcome" (I). This passage is a true statement of Bergson's thought and shows clearly the nature of the limitation we above referred to. According to Bergson God is not a being who creates although He is spoken of as Cr^eator and free. He is the creative activity itself. For mark the interpretation he gives to his own metaphor on page 262 of Creative Evolution. Now, if the same kind of action is going on everywhere, whether it is that which is unmaking itself, or whether it is that which is striving to re-make itself, I simply express this probable similitude when I speak of a centre from which worlds shoot out like rockets in a fireworks display-- provided, however, that I do not present this centre as a thing, but as a continuity of shooting out. God, thus described has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom, Creation, so conceived, is not a mystery; we experience it in ourselves when we act freely.

Now it is scarcely necessary to remark that Religion will accept such statements with considerable reserve. Religion readily believes that in God we live and move and have our being, but it cannot lose God in Creation. Religion, as we have seen, must conceive of God as in some sense transcendent to his creatures, but Bergson's teaching would indicate that He is identical with them. For to quote Wildon Carr once more in this connection. "An entirely new meaning comes into the idea of communion with God. "In Him we

live and move and have our being" means that He is the enduring impulse of life of which we form part and of which as individual creatures we are the product and the instrument of activity, and which ~~and which~~ is one and individual in the universal creative impulse which endures in continual new creation." (1). It is a difficult statement, but bears out the general tendency of Bergson's teaching, Creation is a necessity of God's nature. If he did not create He would not be a God (2). In fact He is creative actively and nothing other, while creation is nothing more than a form He takes, and is consequently God Himself at that stage of creative evolution we have under consideration at the time. Such is the meaning of creation in the philosophy of Change. But the religious conception is entirely opposed to this. To the modern religious mind the fact of creation, whether considered as instantaneous or evolutionary is rather the expression of God's will and love than the means of self-realization. In any case Religion must always conceive of God as not only something more than, but also in some sense distinguishable from, His creation. In fact our earlier consideration led us to the view that the Divine life in man engendered an opposition in the spirit of man ever against the world, in seeking to raise man to its own nature, which shows clearly that Religion conceives the Divine life as a thing apart. and except it were worship would be impossible; for the logical development of Bergson's teaching would leave man without a God to worship, inasmuch as it leaves nothing but shootings-out or movement the

(1). Phil. of Change. p189.

(2). Compare C.E. p.207.

(30).

direction of which one could not determine, and, consequently, the essence of which you could not worship.

A further question that Religion must ask of Bergson's teaching has to do with the moral nature and purpose of Bergson's God. Does Bergson conceive of God as a moral Being and if so what is His purpose? For a moral being is generally understood as a being who wills the good, and a being who wills the good is one who acts with conscious purpose. Now since Bergson's metaphysic postulates God as identical with original consciousness, ^{which} ~~which~~ is Reality itself evolving, it is only natural that Religion should ask what is God's nature and purpose. For Religion, God is ideal goodness, and Religion conceives it as God's will that men should become like God in willing the good. "He hath shewed thee O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (1). And, "if any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine etc" (2). which represents conduct as the key to knowledge. So that not only does Religion conceive of God as a being of the highest moral purpose, but also as a moral Governour who has a purpose for those He governs "For this is the will of God even (our) sanctification." (2). And once we enter the realm of the moral as of the nature of God, and as His purpose for man, numerous related considerations arise as affecting the nature of God, and His relationship to man which are usually described as

(1). Micah. 6-8. and John 7-17.

(2) 1. Thes; 4-3.

ethical. But in a paper such as this we are forced to keep as close as possible to general principles. Let it suffice, therefore, if we attempt an answer to the question as to the nature and purpose of Bergson's God by a consideration of Bergson's main principles.

Religion seems bound up with a teleological view of the world. And if we ask what Bergson thinks of teleology we shall probably adopt the best means of gaining insight into his views of moral being and purpose, as they are likely to affect religious thought. Now, as Dodson says, "The very essence of religious faith has perhaps received its concise and classic expression in Browning's lines:- " This world's no blot for us
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good,
To find its meaning is my meat and drink."

History is, for Religion, tense with meaning, and religious faith is generally fixed on:-
"That God which over lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves".

And when we turn to Bergson's teaching and understand that for him the ultimate reality is a creative evolving life, to which the life we know in ourselves is akin; and when we consider further that life as we know it ⁱⁿ ourselves is a thing of purpose, it would seem that Bergson is moving straight towards a teleological philosophy, especially since he says explicitly that "life is of the psychological order". Yet Bergson rejects teleology as we have seen, although his rejection of this conception is not absolute; for he allows that "one accepts something of it as soon as one rejects pure Mechanism". His reason is well known. According to

() Tennyson. In Memoriam.

Bergson Finalism implies a rigid scheme, "a programme previously arranged." whereas life moves as ^a river does, shaping its bed by its flow. "It takes directions without aiming at ends, and remains inventive even in its adaptations."

Another reason why Bergson rejects the teleological view of reality is because he discovers that evolution is not along one line only. Finalism tends to ignore this. Bergson thinks that whatever unity life has is due rather to an original impetus than to an ideal harmony, "a far-off divine event to which the whole Creation moves." And here he seems to have the facts on his ~~side~~ side; for we can neither be blind to the discord in nature, and "man is Lord of nature," nor to the fact that it seems an increasing discord. Yet how the life principle can take directions striving to fix the greatest amount of indetermination upon matter, without aiming at ends, will remain a puzzle to logical thought; for the life principle is conscious. And, as Dodson says; "If the cosmical elan keeps a direction through whole geological ages, and is "inventive in its adaptation," if through millions of years, and in spite of countless defeats and failures, it "strives" in the direction of the freedom it attains in man, it is impossible not to attribute to it some knowledge of its end." (I). And how can there be effort maintained for ages by a psychological cause without purpose?". To admit nothing more than that consciousness is striving towards greater self-realisation is surely an admission of purpose, and, indeed, of moral purpose, since consciousness is the highest principle, and this admission is readily made by Bergson.

The great difference between religious teleology and Bergson lies chiefly in the fact that for the former the end to which creation moves is the cause of the movement, while for the latter the end has yet to be created and can indeed never be set or fixed. According to Bergson, therefore, absolute perfection can never be attained, and rest never comes from labour, unless it be the rest of a relatively perfect activity. Bergson would doubtless allow that God does will the good; for, LeRoy points out, universal evolution "is a becoming with direction, undoubtedly due..... to the actual tendency of the original thrust" (1) While later he says "taking life in its first tendency, and in the general direction of its current, it is ascent, growth, upward effort, and a work of spiritualizing and emancipating creation: by that we might define Good, for Good is a path rather than a thing." (2). Hence in taking directions God may be said to will the good. But Bergson could not allow that God fulfilled any purpose thereby; for in that case He would have aimed at an end. So that God must appear from Bergson's teaching as, at best, a moral Being without purpose. The religious understanding must indeed be born again to grasp this; for it suggests that God means well, but He does not see where He is going. It is needless to say, therefore, that the greatest opposition to Bergson's teaching from Religion will be directed against Bergson's conception of teleology, which results in robbing God of all purpose.

(1). The New Philosophy of M. Bergson. p.122.

(2) LeRoy. p.229.

And here, if this paper were not already over-long, it would be profitable to develop the situation, as it issues from this teaching, in which man as a religious being would find himself. Let it suffice if we point out that if God has no purpose for Himself He can have none for man. And while man may will the good in the sense above described, that is, by being true to original movement and taking the upward direction, there seems to be no reason why he should do so, unless it be the natural tendency of his spirit, due to the initial thrust. But it would be difficult to define such action as virtuous in the commonly accepted sense of that term, the choice of the best of a number of possible actions. Such action does not appear as chosen. It is represented as due to the impetus from behind,--as Bergson would say, a man's "past gnawing into the future"--and not to attraction from before. In no sense could man be said to be attracted by "the future in the distance"; for that would be an end, and Bergson's teaching allows no ends. Man, therefore, in common with original consciousness may only take directions, he cannot aim at ends. And, we believe, that the consistent application of Bergson's teaching will lead to the conclusion that these directions are determined by a man's past rather than the choice of his present. Freedom of will, then, would amount to necessary harmony with the original impulsion as it ever ^{recreates} ~~secretely~~ itself through or in man. It seems a pity that Bergson, in refuting the finalism in which, "all is given" should at the same time seem to deny any purposive action to life. For as Dodson says: "our human lives can be controlled by purpose,

and still retain the adventurous nature by which Bergson sets such store. Why may not the life of all our lives have a purpose in this sense, an "increasing purpose" as Tennyson says?, i.e. "We never foresee all the situations we have to meet in pursuing our goals. There is usually abundant need for all the ingenuity and inventiveness we can command". (1). Yes, and let us also remember that when we achieve an end, we never quite realize what we anticipated the end would be.

We have now reached in our enquiry where we may sum very briefly the religious value of the teaching we have studied; and this should prove the easiest, as well as the most pleasant portion of a strenuous and half-confused effort. And when we come to the question of the religious value of Bergson's philosophy the first point that suggests itself is the spiritual interpretation our author has placed upon the doctrine of evolution. Dodson says; "there can hardly be any question that the thinking of educated people is to be more and more along evolutionary lines, and this for the simple reason that such thinking is the most effective." (2). Nor can there be any doubt that religious thinking is becoming more and more evolutionary in character, and that Religion and morals are being studied anew in the light of the hypothesis of evolution. It is, therefore, an event of great importance for religious thought when a *thinker* of Bergson's undoubted ability gives a distinctly spiritual meaning to the doctrine of

(1) Dodson p.274.

(2). Dodson p. 269.

evolution. For it is manifest throughout his teaching that original consciousness is pure Spirit; and it is this Spirit which evolves and from it human souls flow out as "little rills into which the great river of life divides itself". And the life of the body itself, he assures us, is on the road that leads to the life of the Spirit. (I). But such brief references do scant justice to his teaching on this point; for one must read his works in order to realize how great a service Bergson has rendered Religion by shewing that the original life which creates by its flow is spiritual in its essence. Had Bergson seen fit to give his spiritual creative principle the name of Love, and had he given it self-consciousness and also purposive activity, he would have given us a doctrine of evolution that would probably win approval from the highest Christian thought. And something like that may be expected should Bergson ever turn his thoughts to religion. Another contribution of great value to religion is Bergson's doctrine of Intuition. We have treated already what Bergson ~~for~~ considers intuition to be, we shall now show how it is likely to be of service to Religion.

Let us recall briefly what Religion is. It "rests on the presence of the Divine life in man.; it manifests itself through the appropriation of this life as one's own nature." It was thus ~~that~~ we quoted from Eucken to sum up our finding of what Religion is. Now it is evident that since Religion is manifested through the appropriation of the Divine Life as man's own nature, anything that assists man in this work of appropriation will be of the highest

value to Religion. It is here that Bergson's teaching regarding Intuition as the only way of knowing Reality will prove of inestimable value to Religion. For to know by Intuition is to enter by an effort of sympathy into the real. But the only real that we can enter in this way is that within us, which, being akin to original reality, thus gives us an intuition of the whole. We see at once what a close parallel we have between the need of Religion, and the need of knowledge. The need of Religion is man's appropriation of the Divine life within him, while the need of Knowledge is the mental appropriation by man of the real within man. Now since what Religion describes as the Divine life in man is manifestly the same as the real or original life in man as described by Bergson, Religion will find in Intuition a means of knowing God. It is true that what Bergson describes as Intuition, Religion has already possessed in "faith of heart and mind, but that does not destroy the value of the former. The value of the doctrine of Intuition for Religion lies chiefly in the renewed emphasis it gives to faith as a means of knowing God, but also in that it offers suggestions as to how Faith should work. Again and again one hears a religious man say " I know I should have more faith, and I do try, but it seems so hard". And in his trying the religious man generally looks up and he finds:-

The skies make no disclosure,
While earth keeps up its terrible composure.

But what he should do is not only to look up, but look in; for by looking in he may touch that Divine Life, unceasingly

agitating man's heart. No doubt, therefore, Bergson's call to modern thought to leave intellect to the static, and use intuition to know the real will find an echo in wide circles of religious thought, and much new light may result to Religion from obedience to his teaching in this respect. On the whole Religion must be richer because of the advent of Bergson's teaching into modern thought, although it will be some time before the value of his teaching for Religion is widely appreciated, and still longer before the significance of his principles are understood and felt.

No doubt the war has had the effect of diverting religious thought from Bergson into other channels, and it ~~will~~ will be interesting to observe the extent to which all thought is influenced by this fascinating thinker in the great reconstructive period that must follow the war. For the present it must seem that Bergson would have rendered greater service to modern thought had he given self-conscious personality, and unlimited goodness and purposiveness, or its equivalent, to his original evolving life.

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