

Meta-Epistemology

VI

Introduction to Metaphysics²⁰

↓
Epistemology?

↓
Two Ways
of Knowing
a Thing

Relative
vs Absolute

↓
Movement
of an Object
in Space

↓
Mobility
Translation
Outside

↓
Absolute
Movement

If we compare the various ways of defining metaphysics and of conceiving the absolute, we shall find, despite apparent discrepancies, that philosophers agree in making a deep distinction between two ways of knowing a thing. The first implies going all around it, the second entering into it. The first depends on the viewpoint chosen and the symbols employed, while the second is taken from no viewpoint and rests on no symbol. Of the first kind of knowledge we shall say that it stops at the relative; of the second that, wherever possible, it attains the absolute.

Take, for example, the movement of an object in space. I perceive it differently according to the point of view from which I look at it, whether from that of mobility or of immobility. I express it differently, furthermore, as I relate it to the system of axes or reference points, that is to say, according to the symbols by which I translate it. And I call it relative for this double reason: in either case, I place myself outside the object itself. When I speak of an absolute movement, it means that I attribute to the mobile an inner being and, as it were, states of soul; it also means that I am in harmony with these states and enter into them by an effort of imagination. Therefore, according to whether the object is mobile or immobile, whether it adopts one movement or another, I shall not have the same feeling about it.²¹ And what I feel will depend neither on the point of view I adopt toward the object, since I am

→ in harmony with
States of Soul → enter into them
→ effort of imagination

I shall have hold of an absolute.

in the object itself, nor on the symbols by which I translate it, since I have renounced all translation in order to possess the original. In short, the movement will not be grasped from without and, as it were, from where I am, but from within, inside it, in what it is in itself. I shall have hold of an absolute.

Hero of
a Novel

Or again, take a character whose adventures make up the subject of a novel. The novelist may multiply traits of character, make his hero speak and act as much as he likes: all this has not the same value as the simple and indivisible feeling I should experience if I were to coincide for a single moment with the personage himself. The actions, gestures and words would then appear to flow naturally, as though from their source. They would no longer be accidents making up the idea I had of the character, constantly enriching this idea without ever succeeding in completing it. The character would be given to me all at once in its entirety, and the thousand and one incidents which make it manifest, instead of adding to the idea and enriching it, would, on the contrary, seem to me to fall away from it without in any way exhausting or impoverishing its essence. I get a different point of view regarding the person with every added detail I am given. All the traits which describe it to me, yet which can only enable me to know it by comparisons with persons or things I already know, are signs by which it is more or less symbolically expressed. Symbols and points of view then place me outside it; they give me only what it has in common with others and what does not belong properly to it. But what is properly itself, what constitutes its essence, cannot be perceived from without, being internal by definition, nor be expressed by symbols, being incommensurable with everything else. Description, history and analysis in this case leave me in the relative. Only by coinciding with the person itself would I possess the absolute.

Perfection

Photographs
of a City

It is in this sense, and in this sense alone, that absolute is synonymous with perfection. Though all the photographs of a city taken from all possible points of view indefinitely complete one another, they will never equal in value that dimensional object, the city along whose streets one walks. All the translations of a poem in all possible languages may add nuance to nuance and, by a kind of mutual retouching, by correcting one another, may

→ pure language, cf.

Benjamin, "Task
of the Translator"

ap - prehension
re - presentation

give an increasingly faithful picture of the poem they translate, yet they will never give the inner meaning of the original. A representation taken from a certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols still remain imperfect in comparison with the object whose picture has been taken or which the symbols seek to express. But the absolute is perfect in that it is perfectly what it is. → I am that I am.

Inner Meaning

transp. near
diff. Satisfy

transparence

Infinite

It is probably for the same reason that the absolute and the infinite are often taken as identical. If I wish to explain to someone who does not know Greek the simple impression that a line of Homer leaves upon me, I shall give the translation of the line, then comment on my translation, then I shall develop my commentary, and from explanation to explanation I shall get closer to what I wish to express; but I shall never quite reach it. When you lift your arm you accomplish a movement the simple perception of which you have inwardly; but outwardly, for me, the person who sees it, your arm passes through one point, then through another, and between these two points there will be still other points, so that if I begin to count them, the operation will continue indefinitely. Seen from within, an absolute is then a simple thing; but considered from without, that is to say relative to something else, it becomes, with relation to those signs which express it, the piece of gold for which one can never make up the change. Now what lends itself at the same time to an indivisible apprehension and to an inexhaustible enumeration is, by definition, an infinite.

Homer
→ translation
→ commentary
→ develop

Simple
perception
inwardly

an
absolute
is a simple
thing

piece
of
gold

It follows that an absolute can only be given in an intuition, while all the rest has to do with analysis. We call intuition here the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, common to that object and to others. Analyzing then consists in expressing a thing in terms of what is not it. All analysis is thus a translation, a development into symbols, a representation taken from successive points of view from which are noted a corresponding number of contacts between the new object under consideration and others believed to be already

known. In its eternally unsatisfied desire to embrace the object around which it is condemned to turn, analysis multiplies endlessly the points of view in order to complete the ever incomplete representation, varies interminably the symbols with the hope of perfecting the always imperfect translation. It is analysis ad infinitum. But intuition, if it is possible, is a simple act.

↳ the hope
of the flux
of pure
language

This being granted, it would be easy to see that for positive science analysis is its habitual function. It works above all with symbols. Even the most concrete of the sciences of nature, the sciences of life, confine themselves to the visible form of living beings, their organs, their anatomical elements. They compare these forms with one another, reduce the more complex to the more simple, in fact they study the functioning of life in what is, so to speak, its visual symbol. If there exists a means of possessing a reality absolutely, instead of knowing it relatively, of placing oneself within it instead of adopting points of view toward it, of having the intuition of it instead of making the analysis of it, in short, of grasping it over and above all expression, translation or symbolical representation, metaphysics is that very means. Metaphysics is therefore the science which claims to dispense with symbols.

visible
form
language

...

clarity and
distinctness

There is at least one reality which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own person in its flowing through time, the self which endures. With no other thing can we sympathize intellectually, or if you like, spiritually. But one thing is sure: we sympathize with ourselves.

sympathize
intellectually

When, with the inner regard of my consciousness, I examine my person in its passivity, like some superficial encrustment, first I perceive all the perceptions which come to it from the material world. These perceptions are clear-cut, distinct, juxtaposed or mutually juxtaposable; they seek to group themselves into objects. Next I perceive memories more or less adherent to these perceptions and which serve to interpret them; these memories are, so to speak, as if detached from the depth of my person and drawn to the periphery by perceptions resembling them; they are fastened on me without being absolutely myself. And finally, I become aware of tendencies, motor habits, a

CONSCIOUSNESS means

memory
↳ (matter and memory?)

↳ (ANW? ~~consciousness~~ and matter?)

crowd of virtual actions more or less solidly bound to those perceptions and these memories. All these elements with their well-defined forms appear to me to be all the more distinct from myself the more they are distinct from one another. Turned outwards from within, together they constitute the surface of a sphere which tends to expand and lose itself in the external world. But if I pull myself in from the periphery toward the centre, if I seek deep down within me what is the most uniformly, the most constantly and durably myself, I find something altogether different.

the surface of a sphere

What I find beneath these clear-cut crystals and this superficial congelation is a continuity of flow comparable to no other flowing I have ever seen. It is a succession of states each one of which announces what follows and contains what precedes. Strictly speaking they do not constitute multiple states until I have already got beyond them, and turn around to observe their trail. While I was experiencing them they were so solidly organized, so profoundly animated with a common life, that I could never have said where any one of them finished or the next one began. In reality, none of them do begin or end; they all dovetail into one another.

qualitative heterogeneity

It is, if you like, the unrolling of a spool, for there is no living being who does not feel himself coming little by little to the end of his span; and living consists in growing old. But it is just as much a continual winding, like that of thread into a ball, for our past follows us, becoming larger and larger with the present it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory.

unrolling of a spool
continual winding as thread into a ball

To tell the truth, it is neither a winding nor an unwinding, for these two images evoke the representation of lines or surfaces whose parts are homogeneous to and superposable on one another. Now, no two moments are identical in a conscious being. Take for example the simplest feeling, suppose it to be constant, absorb the whole personality in it: the consciousness which will accompany this feeling will not be able to remain identical with itself for two consecutive moments, since the following moment always contains, over and above the preceding one, the memory the latter has left it. A consciousness which had two identical moments would be a consciousness without

neither

consciousness without memory

unconsciousness

memory. It would therefore die and be re-born continually. How otherwise can unconsciousness be described?

We must therefore evoke a spectrum of a thousand shades, with imperceptible gradations leading from one shade to another. A current of feeling running through the spectrum, becoming tinted with each of these shades in turn, would suffer gradual changes, each of which would announce the following and sum up within itself the preceding ones. Even then the successive shades of the spectrum will always remain external to each other. They are juxtaposed. They occupy space. On the contrary, what is pure duration excludes all idea of juxtaposition, reciprocal exteriority and extension.

infinitely small piece of elastic mathematical point
 intercalate
 perception
 the act of tension or extension
 Instead, let us imagine an infinitely small piece of elastic, contracted, if that were possible, to a mathematical point. Let us draw it out gradually in such a way as to bring out of the point a line which will grow progressively longer. Let us fix our attention not on the line as line, but on the action which traces it. Let us consider that this action, in spite of its duration, is indivisible if one supposes that it goes on without stopping; that, if we intercalate a stop in it, we make two actions of it instead of one and that each of these actions will then be the indivisible of which we speak; that it is not the moving act itself which is never indivisible, but the motionless line it lays down beneath it like a track in space. Let us take our mind off the space subtending the movement and concentrate solely on the movement itself, on the act of tension or extension, in short, on pure mobility. This time we shall have a more exact image of our development in duration. → our development in duration

unity multiplicity
 spectrum of a thousand shades
 And yet that image will still be incomplete, and all comparison furthermore will be inadequate, because the unrolling of our duration in certain aspects resembles the unity of a movement which progresses, in others, a multiplicity of states spreading out, and because no metaphor can express one of the two aspects without sacrificing the other. If I evoke, a spectrum of a thousand shades, I have before me a complete thing, whereas duration is the state of completing itself. If I think of an elastic being stretched, of a spring being wound or unwound, I forget the wealth of coloring characteristic of duration as something

lived and see only the simple movement by which consciousness goes from one shade to the other. The inner life is all that at once, variety of qualities, continuity of progress, unity of direction. It cannot be represented by images.

But still less could it be represented by concepts, that is, by abstract ideas, whether general or simple. Doubtless no image will quite answer to the original feeling I have of the flowing of myself. But neither is it necessary for me to try to express it. To him who is not capable of giving himself the intuition of the duration constitutive of his being, nothing will ever give it, neither concepts nor images. In this regard, the philosopher's sole aim should be to start up a certain effort which the utilitarian habits of mind of everyday life tend, in most men, to discourage. Now the image has at least the advantage of keeping us in the concrete. No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, any one of them will be prevented from usurping the place of the intuition it is instructed to call forth, since it would then be driven out immediately by its rivals. By seeing that in spite of their differences in aspect they all demand of our mind the same kind of attention and, as it were, the same degree of tension, one will gradually accustom the consciousness to a particular and definitely determined disposition, precisely the one it will have to adopt in order to appear unveiled to itself.²² But even then the consciousness must acquiesce in this effort; for we shall have shown it nothing. We shall simply have placed it in the attitude it must take to produce the desired effort and, by itself, to arrive at the intuition. On the other hand the disadvantage of too simple concepts is that they are really symbols which take the place of the object they symbolize and which do not demand any effort on our part. Upon close examination one would see that each of them retains of the object only what is common to that object and to others. Each of them is seen to express, even more than does the image, a comparison between the object and those objects resembling it. But as the compari-

feeling
(memory?)

image

concept

dissimilar

tension

unveiled

doctrine
closurecategorization
generalization

"dogmatic slumber"

son has brought out a resemblance, and as the resemblance is a property of the object, and as a property seems very much as though it were a part of the object possessing it, we are easily persuaded that by juxtaposing concepts to concepts we shall recompose the whole of the object with its parts and obtain from it, so to speak, an intellectual equivalent. We shall in this way think we are forming a faithful representation of duration by lining up the concepts of unity, multiplicity, continuity, finite or infinite divisibility, etc. That is precisely the illusion. And that, also, is the danger. In so far as abstract ideas can render service to analysis, that is, to a scientific study of the object in its relations with all others, to that very extent are they incapable of replacing intuition, that is to say, the metaphysical investigation of the object in what essentially belongs to it. On the one hand, indeed, these concepts placed end to end will never give us anything more than an artificial recomposition of the object of which they can symbolize only certain general and, as it were, impersonal aspects: therefore it is vain to believe that through them one can grasp a reality when all they present is its shadow. But on the other hand, alongside the illusion, there is also a very grave danger. For the concept generalizes at the same time that it abstracts. The concept can symbolize a particular property only by making it common to an infinity of things. Therefore it always more or less distorts this property by the extension it gives to it. A property put back into the metaphysical object to which it belongs coincides with the object, at least moulds itself on it, adopting the same contours. Extracted from the metaphysical object and represented in a concept, it extends itself indefinitely, surpassing the object since it must henceforth contain it along with others. The various concepts we form of the properties of a thing are so many much larger circles drawn round it, not one of which fits it exactly. And yet, in the thing itself, the properties coincided with it and therefore with each other. We have no alternative then but to resort to some artifice in order to re-establish the coincidence. We shall take any one of these concepts and with it try to rejoin the others. But the junction will be brought about in a different way, depending upon the concept we start from. According to whether we start,

recompose
intellectual
equivalent

The
Cave
(shadow)

so many
much larger
circles

for example, from unity or from multiplicity, we shall form a different conception of the multiple unity of duration. Everything will depend on the weight we assign to this or that concept, and this weight will always be arbitrary, since the concept, extracted from the object, has no weight, being nothing more than the shadow of a body. Thus a multiplicity of different systems will arise, as many systems as there are external viewpoints on the reality one is examining or as there are larger circles in which to enclose it. The simple concepts, therefore, not only have the disadvantage of dividing the concrete unity of the object into so many symbolical expressions; they also divide philosophy into distinct schools, each of which reserves its place, chooses its chips, and begins with the others a game that will never end. Either metaphysics is only this game of ideas, or else, if it is a serious occupation of the mind, it must transcend concepts to arrive at intuition. To be sure, concepts are indispensable to it, for all the other sciences ordinarily work with concepts, and metaphysics cannot get along without the other sciences. But it is strictly itself only when it goes beyond the concept, or at least when it frees itself of the inflexible and ready-made concepts and creates others very different from those we usually handle, I mean flexible, mobile, almost fluid representations, always ready to mould themselves on the fleeting forms of intuition. I shall come back to this important point a little later. It is enough for us to have shown that our duration can be presented to us directly in an intuition, that it can be suggested indirectly to us by images, but that it cannot—if we give to the word concept its proper meaning—be enclosed in a conceptual representation.

Let us for an instant try to break it up into parts. We must add that the terms of these parts, instead of being distinguished like those of any multiplicity, encroach upon one another; that we can, no doubt, by an effort of imagination, solidify this duration once it has passed by, divide it into pieces set side by side and count all the pieces; but that this operation is achieved on the fixed memory of the duration, on the immobile track the mobility of the duration leaves behind it, not on the duration itself. Let us therefore admit that, if there is a multiplicity here, this multiplicity resembles no other. Shall we say then that this dura-

this multiplicity resembles no other

the multiple unity of duration

create fuzzy concepts

our duration

If not multiplicity, then unity?

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a continuity of elements prolonged into one another

tion has unity? Undoubtedly a continuity of elements prolonged into one another partakes of unity as much as it does of multiplicity, but this moving, changing, colored and living unity scarcely resembles the abstract unity, empty and motionless, which the concept of pure unity circumscribes. Are we to conclude from this that duration must be defined by both unity and multiplicity at the same time? But curiously enough, no matter how I manipulate the two concepts, apportion them, combine them in various ways, practice on them the most delicate operations of mental chemistry, I shall never obtain anything which resembles the simple intuition I have of duration; instead of which, if I place myself back in duration by an effort of intuition, I perceive immediately how it is unity, multiplicity and many other things besides. These various concepts were therefore just so many external points of view on duration. Neither separated nor re-united have they made us penetrate duration itself.

We penetrate it, nevertheless, and the only way possible is by an intuition. In this sense, an absolute internal knowledge of the duration of the self by the self is possible. But if metaphysics demands and can obtain here an intuition, science has no less need of an analysis. And it is because of a confusion between the roles of analysis and intuition that the dissensions between schools of thought and the conflicts between systems will arise.

Psychology, in fact, like the other sciences, proceeds by analysis. It resolves the self, first given to it in the form of a simple intuition, into sensations, feelings, images, etc. which it studies separately. It therefore substitutes for the self a series of elements which are the psychological facts. But these elements, are they parts? That is the whole question, and it is because we have evaded it that we have often stated in insoluble terms the problem of the human personality.

It is undeniable that any psychological state, by the sole fact that it belongs to a person, reflects the whole of a personality. There is no feeling, no matter how simple, which does not virtually contain the past and present of the being which experiences it, which can be separated from it and constitute a "state," other than by an effort of abstraction or analysis. But it is no less undeniable that without this effort of abstraction or analysis

epistemic quality analysis mines in Bergson and Descartes

moving
changing
colored
living
unity

unity
multiplicity
many other
things
besides

the
self

virtually
contain
the
whole
of
affection
history

part versus element

intuition is personal
(private?)

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aspect conveying
the whole
w/ varying intensivities (intensities?)

the person's
special
coloration

inexpressible
shading

internal
intuition
is not a
schema

there would be no possible development of psychological science. Now, of what does the operation consist by which the psychologist detaches a psychological state in order to set it up as a more or less independent entity? He begins by disregarding the person's special coloration, which can be expressed only in common and known terms. He then strives to isolate, in the person thus already simplified, this or that aspect which lends itself to an interesting study. If, for example, it is a question of inclination, he will leave out of account the inexpressible shading which colors it and which brings it about that my inclination is not yours; he will then fix his attention on the movement by which our personality tends towards a certain object; he will isolate this attitude, and it is this special aspect of the person, this point of view on the mobility of the inner life, this "schema" of the concrete inclination which he will set up as an independent fact. In this there is a work analogous to that of an artist who, on a visit to Paris, would, for example, make a sketch of a tower of Notre Dame. The tower is an inseparable part of the edifice, which is no less inseparably a part of the soil, the surroundings, the whole of Paris, etc. He must begin by detaching it; he will focus only on a certain aspect of the whole, and that aspect is this tower of Notre Dame. Now the tower is in reality constituted of stones whose particular grouping is what gives it its form; but the sketcher is not interested in the stones, he only notices the silhouette of the tower. He substitutes for the real and internal organization of the thing an external and schematic reconstitution. So that his design corresponds, in short, to a certain point of view of the object and to the choice of a certain mode of representation. Now the same holds for the operation by which the psychologist extracts a psychological state from the whole person. This isolated psychological state is scarcely more than a sketch, the beginning of an artificial recomposition; it is the whole envisaged under a certain elementary aspect in which one has become especially interested and which one has taken care to note. It is not a part, but an element. It has not been obtained by fragmentation, but by analysis.

part vs. element

Now at the bottom of all the sketches made in Paris the stranger will probably write "Paris" by way of reminder. And as

Silhouette ↔ automaton

intuition as grounding for emanance

he has really seen Paris, he will be able, by descending from the original intuition of the whole, to place his sketches in it and thus arrange them in relation to one another. But there is no way of performing the opposite operation; even with an infinity of sketches as exact as you like, even with the word "Paris" to indicate that they must bear close connection, it is impossible to travel back to an intuition one has not had, and gain the impression of Paris if one has never seen Paris. The point is that we are not dealing here with parts of the whole, but with notes taken on the thing as a whole. To choose a more striking example, where the notation is more completely symbolical, let us suppose someone puts before me, all jumbled together, the letters which go to make up a poem, without my knowing which poem it is. If the letters were parts of the poem, I could attempt to reconstruct it with them by trying various possible arrangements, as a child does with the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. But I shall not for an instant think of attempting it, because the letters are not component parts, but partial expressions, which is quite another thing. That is why, if I know the poem, I put each one of the letters in its proper place and link them together without difficulty in one continuous chain, while the reverse operation is impossible. Even when I take it into my head to try that reverse operation, even when I place the letters end to end, I begin by imagining a plausible meaning: I thus give myself an intuition, and it is from the intuition that I try to fall back on the elementary symbols which would re-create its expression. The very notion of reconstructing the thing by carrying out operations on symbolical elements alone implies such an absurdity that it would never occur to anyone if it were realized that he was not dealing with fragments of the thing, but in some sort with fragments of symbol.

That, however, is what philosophers undertake to do when they seek to recompose the person with psychological states, whether they confine themselves to these states or whether they add a thread for the purpose of tying the states to one another. Empiricists and rationalists alike are in this case dupes of the same illusion. Both take the partial notions for real parts, thus confusing the point of view of analysis and that of intuition, science and metaphysics.

expression
requires
intuition,
cf. Chora
Kristeva

The empiricists are right in saying that psychological analysis does not uncover in the person anything more than psychological states. And such is in fact the function, such is the very definition of analysis. The psychologist has nothing else to do but analyze the person, that is, take note of the states: at most he will place the rubric "Ego" on these states in saying that they are "states of ego," just as the sketcher writes the word "Paris" on each of his sketches. Within the sphere in which the psychologist places himself and where he should place himself, the "Ego" is only a sign by which one recalls the primitive intuition (a very vague one at that) which furnished psychology with its object: it is only a word, and the great mistake is to think that one could, by staying in the same sphere, find a thing behind the word. That has been the mistake of those philosophers who have not been able to resign themselves to being simply psychologists in psychology, Taine and Stuart Mill, for example. Psychologists by the method they apply, they have remained metaphysicians by the object they have in view. Looking for an intuition, through a strange inconsistency they seek to get this intuition from its very negation, analysis. They are seeking the self (le moi), and claim to find it in the psychological states, even though it has been possible to obtain that diversity of psychological states only by transporting oneself outside of the self and taking a series of sketches of the person, a series of notes, of more or less schematic and symbolic representations. And so although they place states side by side with states, multiply their contacts, explore their intervening spaces, the self always escapes them, so that in the end they see nothing more in it than an empty phantom. One might just as well deny that the *Iliad* has a meaning, on the plea that one has looked in vain for this meaning in the spaces between the letters which go to make it up.

Philosophical empiricism, then, is here born of a confusion between the point of view of intuition and that of analysis. It consists in seeking the original in the translation where it naturally cannot be, and in denying the original on the plea that one does not find it in the translation. It necessarily ends in negations; but looking at it more closely, one perceives that these negations signify simply that analysis is not intuition, and this is

the self $\Rightarrow$ the itself

the illusion of
abstract over
materialism

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self-evident. From the original and furthermore vague intuition which furnishes science with its object, science passes immediately to analysis, which multiplies indefinitely the points of view of that object. It is quickly persuaded that, by putting all the points of view together, it could reconstitute the object. Is it any wonder that, like the child who seeks to make a solid play-thing of the shadows silhouetted along the wall, it too sees the object fleeing before it?

But rationalism is the dupe of the same illusion. It starts from the confusion empiricism made, and remains as powerless to reach the personality. Like empiricism, it takes the psychological states to be so many fragments, detached from an ego which supposedly holds them together. Like empiricism, it tries to bind these fragments to one another in order to reconstitute the unity of the person. Like empiricism, in short, it sees the unity of the person elude its grasp like a phantom each time it tries to lay hold of it. But while empiricism, tired of the struggle, in the end declares that there is nothing else than the multiplicity of psychological states, rationalism persists in affirming the unity of the person. It is true that, seeking this unity in the psychological states themselves, yet being obliged to put to the account of psychological states all the qualities or determinations it finds by analysis (since analysis, by definition, always ends in states), it is true that it has nothing left for the unity of the person but something purely negative, the absence of all determination. The psychological states having necessarily taken and kept for themselves in this analysis all that gives the slightest appearance of materiality, the "unity of the self" can be nothing more than a form without matter. It will be the absolute indeterminate and the absolute void. To the detached psychological states, to those shadows of the self the totality of which was, for the empiricists, the equivalent of the person, rationalism, to reconstitute the personality, adds something still more unreal, the vacuum in which these shadows move, one might say, the locus of the shadows. How could that "form," which is really formless, characterize a living acting, concrete personality and distinguish Peter from Paul? Is it surprising that the philosophers who have isolated this "form" of the personality then find it powerless to determine a

empiricism $\leftrightarrow$ multiplicity
rationalism $\leftrightarrow$ unity
intuition $\leftrightarrow$ unity-multiplicity

form without
matter

material affect is more ^{informative} than abstract psychological states

^{51p1029} person, and that they are led by degrees to make of their empty Ego a bottomless receptacle which no more belongs to Paul than to Peter, and in which there will be place, as one sees fit, for the whole of humanity, or for God, or for existence in general? I see here between empiricism and rationalism this sole difference, that the first, seeking the unity of the self in the interstices, so to speak, of psychological states, is led to fill up these crannies with other states, and so on indefinitely, so that the self, confined in an interval which is continually contracting, tends towards Zero the further one pushes analysis; while rationalism, making the self the place where the states are lodged, is in the presence of an empty space that one has no more reason to limit here rather than there, which goes beyond each one of the succeeding limits we undertake to assign to it, which goes on expanding and tends to be lost, not in Zero this time, but in the Infinite.

empiricism

↓

multiplicity

↓

zero

rationalism

↓

unity

↓

infinity

Considerably less than is supposed, therefore, is the distance between a so-called "empiricism" like Taine's and the most transcendent speculations of certain German Pantheists. The method is analogous in the two cases: it consists in reasoning on the elements of the translation as though they were parts of the original. But a true empiricism is the one which purposes to keep as close to the original itself as possible, to probe more deeply into its life, and by a kind of spiritual auscultation, to feel its soul palpitate; and this true empiricism is the real metaphysics. The work is one of extreme difficulty, because not one of the ready-made conceptions that thought uses for its daily operations can be of any use here. Nothing is easier than to say that the ego is multiplicity, or that it is unity, or that it is the synthesis of both. Here unity and multiplicity are representations one need not cut according to the object, that one finds already made and that one has only to choose from the pile, — ready-made garments which will suit Peter as well as Paul because they do not show off the figure of either of them. But an empiricism worthy of the name, an empiricism which works only according to measure, sees itself obliged to make an absolutely new effort for each new object it studies. It cuts for the object a concept appropriate to the object alone, a concept one can barely say is still a concept, since it applies only to that one thing. This empiricism does not proceed

elements

vs.

fragments

ready-

made

garments

new

effort

particularization of conceptualization

the person which endures

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by combining ideas one already finds in stock, unity and multiplicity, for example; but the representation to which it leads us is, on the contrary, a simple, unique representation; and once it is formed one readily understands why it can be put into the frames unity, multiplicity, etc., all of which are much larger than itself. Finally, philosophy thus defined does not consist in choosing between concepts and taking sides with one school, but in seeking a unique intuition from which one can just as easily come down again to the various concepts, because one has placed oneself above the divisions of the schools.

That the personality has unity is certain; but such an affirmation does not teach me anything about the extraordinary nature of this unity which is the person. That our self is multiple I further agree, but there is in it a multiplicity which, it must be recognized, has nothing in common with any other. What really matters to philosophy is to know what unity, what multiplicity, what reality superior to the abstract one and the abstract multiple is the multiple unity of the person. And it will know this only if it once again grasps the simple intuition of the self by the self. Then, according to the slope it chooses to come down from the summit, it will arrive at unity or multiplicity or any one of the concepts by which we try to define the moving life of the person. But no mixing of these concepts among themselves, I repeat, would give anything resembling the person which endures.

If you put a solid cone before me, I see without difficulty how it narrows toward the peak and tends to become a mathematical point, how it also grows larger at its base into an indefinitely increasing circle. But neither the point nor the circle nor the juxtaposition of the two on a plane will give me the slightest idea of a cone. It is the same for the multiplicity and unity of the psychological life; the same for the Zero and the Infinite towards which empiricism and rationalism direct the personality.

These concepts, as we shall show elsewhere, ordinarily go by pairs and represent the two opposites. There is scarcely any concrete reality upon which one cannot take two opposing views at the same time and which is consequently not subsumed under the two antagonistic concepts. Hence a thesis and an antithesis that it would be vain for us to try logically to reconcile, for the

thesis $\Rightarrow$ antithesis $\nRightarrow$ a thing

the multiple unity of the person

↓
aspects of personality

spectrum across unity-multiplicity

simple reason that never, with concepts or points of view, will you make a thing. But from the object, seized by intuition, one passes without difficulty in a good many cases to the two contrary concepts, and because thesis and antithesis are seen to emerge from the reality, one grasps at the same time how this thesis and antithesis are opposed and how they are reconciled.

It is true that in order to do that one must institute a reversal of the habitual work of the intelligence. To think consists ordinarily in going from concepts to things, and not from things to concepts. To know a reality in the ordinary meaning of the word "to know," is to take ready-made concepts, apportion them, and combine them until one obtains a practical equivalent of the real. But it must not be forgotten that the normal work of the intelligence is far from being a disinterested work. We do not, in general, aim at knowing for the sake of knowing, but at knowing in order to take a stand, gain a profit, in fact to satisfy an interest. We try to find out up to what point the object to be known is *this* or *that*, into what known genus it fits, what kind of action, step or attitude it should suggest to us. These various possible actions and attitudes are so many conceptual directions of our thought, determined once and for all; nothing remains but for us to follow them; precisely in that consists the application of concepts to things. To try a concept on an object is to ask of the object what we have to do with it, what it can do for us. To label an object with a concept is to tell in precise terms the kind of action or attitude the object is to suggest to us. All knowledge properly so-called is, therefore, turned in a certain direction or taken from a certain point of view. It is true that our interest is often complex. And that is why we sometimes manage to turn our knowledge of the same object in several successive directions and to cause view-points concerning it to vary. This is what, in the ordinary meaning of these terms, a "wide" and "comprehensive" knowledge of the object consists in: the object, then, is led back, not to a unique concept, but to several concepts in which it is deemed to "participate." How it is to participate in all these concepts at once is a question of no practical importance and one that need not be asked. It is, therefore, natural and legitimate that we proceed by juxtaposition and apportioning of

a practical
equivalent
of the
real

concepts in every-day life: no philosophical difficulties will be born of this since, by tacit consent, we shall abstain from philosophizing. But to transfer this *modus operandi* to philosophy, to go—here again—from concepts to the thing, to employ for the disinterested knowledge of an object one now aims at attaining in itself, a manner of knowing inspired by a definite interest and consisting by definition in a view taken of the object externally, is to turn one's back on the goal at which one was aiming; it is to condemn philosophy to an eternal friction between the schools and set up a contradiction in the very heart of the object and the method. Either there is no philosophy possible and all knowledge of things is a practical knowledge turned to the profit to be gained from them, or philosophizing consists in placing oneself within the object itself by an effort of intuition.

to
condemn
philosophy

But in order to comprehend the nature of this intuition, to determine precisely where intuition ends and analysis begins, we must return to what was said above concerning the flow of duration.

simple
sensation

↓
immobility

↓
change
(cf. Heraklitos)

It is to be observed that the concepts or schemas, to which analysis leads, have the essential characteristic of being immobile while under consideration. I have isolated from the whole of the inner life that psychological entity which I call a simple sensation. So long as I study it I suppose it to remain what it is. If I were to find some change in it, I should say that it was not a single sensation, but several successive sensations; and it is to each one of the succeeding sensations that I should then transfer the immutability at first attributed to the whole sensation. In any case I shall, by carrying analysis far enough, be able to arrive at elements I shall hold to be immovable. It is there, and there only, that I shall find the solid base of operations which science needs for its proper development.

mood

There is no mood, however, no matter how simple, which does not change at every instant, since there is no consciousness without memory, no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments. That is what duration consists of. Inner duration is the continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, whether the present distinctly contains the ever-growing image of the

past, or whether, by its continual changing of quality, it attests rather the increasingly heavy burden dragged along behind one the older one grows. Without that survival of the past in the present there would be no duration but only instantaneity.

It is true that if I am criticized for abstracting the psychological state from duration by the mere fact of analyzing it, I shall defend myself against the charge by saying that each of these elementary psychological states to which my analysis leads is a state which still occupies time. "My analysis," I shall say, "easily resolves the inner life into states each of which is homogeneous to itself; only, since the homogeneity spreads out over a definite number of minutes or seconds, the elementary psychological state does not cease to have duration, though it does not change."

But who does not see that the definite number of minutes and seconds I attribute to the elementary psychological state, has no more than the value of an indication meant to remind me that the psychological state, supposedly homogeneous, is in reality a state which changes and endures? The state, taken in itself, is a perpetual becoming. I have extracted from this becoming a certain mean of quality which I have supposed invariable: I have thus constituted a state which is stable, and by that very fact, schematic. Again, I have extracted becoming in general, the becoming that would no more be the becoming of this than of that, and this is what I have called the time this state occupies. Were I to examine it closely, I should see that this abstract time is as immobile for me as the state I localize in it, that it could flow only by a continual changing of quality and that, if it is without quality, a simple theatre of change, it thus becomes an immobile milieu. I should see that the hypothesis of this homogeneous time is simply meant to facilitate the comparison between the various concrete durations, to permit us to count simultaneities and to measure one flowing of duration in relation to another. And finally, I should understand that in fastening to the representation of an elementary psychological state the indication of a definite number of minutes and seconds, I am merely recalling that the state has been detached from an ego which endures, and demarcating the place where it would have to be set in motion again in order to bring it, from the sim-

concrete
duration
vs.
instantaneity

duration
changes

a perpetual
becoming

becoming
in general
called
time

(time
↓
isom-
orphic
becoming)
(time
↓
space)

one flowing of duration in relation to another

ple schema it has become, back to the concrete form it had at first. But I forget all that, having no use for it in analysis.

intuition
↓
mobility
↓
duration

That is to say, analysis operates on immobility, while intuition is located in mobility or, what amounts to the same thing, in duration. That is the very clear line of demarcation between intuition and analysis. One recognizes the real, the actual, the concrete, by the fact that it is variability itself. One recognizes the element by the fact that it is invariable. And it is invariable by definition, being a schema, a simplified reconstruction, often a mere symbol, in any case, a view taken of the reality that flows.

But the mistake is to believe that with these schemas one could recompose the real. It cannot be too often repeated: from intuition one can pass on to analysis, but not from analysis to intuition.

With variability I shall make as many variations, as many qualities or modifications as I like because they are so many immobile views taken by analysis of the mobility given to intuition. But these modifications placed end to end will not produce anything resembling variability, because they were not parts of it but elements which is quite another thing.

Let us consider, for example, the variability nearest to homogeneity, movement in space. For the whole length of this movement I can imagine possible halts: they are what I call the positions of the mobile or the points through which the mobile passes. But with the positions, were they infinite in number, I shall not make movement. They are not parts of the movement; they are so many views taken of it; they are, we say, only halt suppositions. Never is the mobile really in any of these points; the most one can say is that it passes through them. But the passing, which is a movement, has nothing in common with a halt, which is immobility. A movement could not alight on an immobility for it would then coincide with it, which would be contradictory. The points are not in the movement as parts, nor even under the movement as places of the mobile. They are simply projected by us beneath the movement like so many places where, if it should stop, would be a mobile which by hypothesis does not stop. They are not, therefore, properly speaking, positions, but suppositions, views or mental viewpoints. How, with these points of view, could one construct a thing?

That, nevertheless, is what we try to do every time we reason about movement and also about time for which movement serves as representation. By an illusion deeply rooted in our mind, and because we cannot keep from considering analysis as equivalent to intuition, we begin by distinguishing, for the whole length of the movement, a certain number of possible halts or points which, willy-nilly, we make parts of the movement. Faced with our inability to recompose movement with these points we intercalate other points, in the belief that we are thus keeping closer to what mobility there is in movement. Then, as the mobility still escapes us, we substitute for a finite and definite number of points a number "infinitely increasing,"—trying thus, but vainly, through the movement of our thought, which indefinitely pursues the addition of points to points, to counterfeit the real and undivided movement of the mobile. Finally, we say that movement is made up of points, but that it comprises in addition the obscure, mysterious passing from one position to the next. As though the obscurity did not come wholly from the fact that we have assumed immobility to be clearer than mobility, the halt to precede movement! As though the mystery was not due to the fact that we claim to go from halts to movement by way of composition which is impossible, whereas we pass easily from movement to slowing down and to immobility! You have sought the meaning of a poem in the form of the letters which make it up, you have thought that in considering an increasing number of letters you would finally embrace the constantly fleeting meaning, and as a last resource, seeing that it was no use to seek a part of the meaning in each letter, you have assumed that between each letter and the one following was lodged the missing fragment of the mysterious meaning! But the letters, once more, are not parts of the thing, they are the elements of the symbol. The positions of the mobile are not parts of the movement: they are points of the space which is thought to subtend the movement. This empty and immobile space, simply conceived, never perceived, has exactly the value of a symbol. By manipulating symbols, how are you going to manufacture reality?

But in this case the symbol meets the demands of our most

points
and
passing

to counterfeit the
real of
the mobile

mobile
intuition
is more
clear than
analysis

↓
the whole
is more
clear than
the elements of
individual sentences

inveterate habits of thought. We install ourselves ordinarily in immobility, where we find a basis for practice, and with it we claim to recompose mobility. We obtain thus only a clumsy imitation, a counterfeit of real movement, but this imitation is of much greater use to us in life than the intuition of the thing itself would be. Now our mind has an irresistible tendency to consider the idea it most frequently uses to be the clearest. That is why immobility seems clearer to it than mobility, the halt preceding movement.

This explains the difficulties raised by the problem of movement from earliest antiquity. They are due to the fact that we claim to go from space to movement, from the trajectory to the flight, from immobile positions to mobility, and pass from one to the other by way of composition. But it is movement which precedes immobility, and between positions and a displacement there is not the relation of parts to the whole, but that of the diversity of possible viewpoints to the real indivisibility of the object.

Many other problems are born of the same illusion. What the immobile points are to the movement of a mobile, so are the concepts of various qualities to the qualitative change of an object. The different concepts into which a variation is resolved are therefore so many stable visions of the instability of the real. And to think an object, in the usual sense of the word "think," is to take one or several of these immobile views of its mobility. It is, in short, to ask oneself from time to time just where it is, in order to know what to do with it. Nothing is more legitimate than this method of procedure, as long as it is only a question of practical knowledge of reality. Knowledge, in so far as it is directed toward the practical, has only to enumerate the possible principal attitudes of the thing in relation to us, as also our best possible attitudes in respect to it. That is the ordinary role of ready-made concepts, those stations with which we mark out the passage of the becoming. But to desire, with them, to penetrate to the innermost nature of things, is to apply to the mobility of the real a method designed to give of it immobile points of view. It is to forget that if metaphysics is possible, it can only be an effort to re-ascend the slope natural to the work of thought, to place oneself immediately, through a dilation of the mind, in the thing one

a dilation of the mind

analysis
↓
immobility
seems
clearer
than
mobility
↑
intuition
composition

a variation

is studying, in short, to go from reality to concepts and not from concepts to reality. Is it surprising that philosophers so often see the object they claim to embrace recede from them, like children trying to catch smoke by closing their fists? A good many quarrels are thus perpetuated between the schools, in which each one accuses the others of having let the real escape them.

But if metaphysics is to proceed by intuition, if intuition has as its object the mobility of duration, and if duration is psychological in essence, are we not going to shut the philosopher up in exclusive self-contemplation? Will not philosophy consist simply in watching oneself live, "as a dozing shepherd watches the running water?" To speak in this fashion would be to return to the error I have not ceased to emphasize from the very beginning of this study. It would be to fail to recognize the particular nature of duration and at the same time the essentially active character of metaphysical intuition. It would be to fail to see that only the method of which we are speaking allows one to pass beyond idealism as well as realism, to affirm the existence of objects both inferior and superior to us, though nevertheless in a certain sense inferior to us, to make them co-existent without difficulty, and progressively to dispel the obscurities that analysis accumulates around great problems. Without taking up the study of these different points here, let us confine ourselves to showing how the intuition we are discussing is not a single act but an indefinite series of acts, all doubtless of the same genus but each one of a very particular species, and how this variety of acts corresponds to the degrees of being.

intuition
is an
indefinite
series
of acts

If I try to analyze duration, that is, to resolve it into ready-made concepts, I am certainly obliged by the very nature of the concept and the analysis, to take two opposing views of duration in general, views with which I shall then claim to recompose it. This combination can present neither a diversity of degrees nor a variety of forms: it is or it is not. I shall say, for example, that there is, on the one hand, a multiplicity of successive states of consciousness and, on the other hand, a unity which binds them together. Duration will be the "synthesis" of this unity and multiplicity, but how this mysterious operation can admit of shades or degrees—I repeat—is not quite clear. In this hypothesis

"claim"

shades

analysis of duration is not clear
is insufficient

What is time for Bergson?

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(duration is not only my singular)

there is, there can only be, a single duration, that in which our consciousness habitually operates. To make certain of what we mean, if we take duration under the simple aspect of a movement being accomplished in space and if we try to reduce to concepts movement considered as representative of time, we shall have on the one hand any desired number of points of the trajectory, and on the other hand an abstract unity joining them, like a thread holding together the beads of a necklace. Between this abstract multiplicity and this abstract unity their combination, once assumed to be possible, is some strange thing in which we shall find no more shadings than the addition of given numbers in arithmetic would allow. But if, instead of claiming to analyze duration (that is, in reality, to make a synthesis of it with concepts), one first installs oneself in it by an effort of intuition, one has the feeling of a certain well-defined tension, whose very definiteness seems like a choice between an infinity of possible durations. This being so one perceives any number of durations, all very different from one another, even though each one of them, reduced to concepts, that is to say, considered externally from two opposite points of view, is always brought back to the indefinable combination of the multiple and the one.

a choice between an infinity of possible durations

Being Singular Plural

a dust of moments & instantaneous

eternity

Let us express the same idea more precisely. If I consider duration as a multiplicity of moments bound to one another by a unity which runs through them like a thread, these moments, no matter how short the chosen duration, are unlimited in number. I can imagine them as close together as I like; there will always be, between these mathematical points, other mathematical points, and so on, ad infinitum. Considered from the standpoint of multiplicity, duration will therefore disappear in a dust of moments not one of which has duration, each one being instantaneous. If on the other hand I consider the unity binding the moments together, it is evident that it cannot have duration either since, by hypothesis, everything that is changing and really durable in duration has been put to the account of the multiplicity of the moments. This unity, as I examine its essence, will then appear to me as an immobile substratum of the moving reality, like some intemporal essence of time; that is what I shall call eternity.—the eternity of death, since it is nothing else than movement emptied of the mobility which

multiple durations (continuous)

made up its life. Examining closely the opinions of the schools antagonistic to the subject of duration, one would see that they differ simply in attributing to one or the other of these two concepts a capital importance. Certain of them are drawn to the point of view of the multiple; they set up as concrete reality the distinct moments of a time which they have, so to speak, pulverized; they consider as being far more artificial the unity which makes a powder of these grains. The others, on the contrary, set up the unity of duration as concrete reality. They place themselves in the eternal. But as their eternity nevertheless remains abstract, being empty, as it is the eternity of a concept which by hypothesis excludes the opposite concept, one cannot see how this eternity could allow an indefinite multiplicity of moments to co-exist with it. In the first hypothesis one has a world suspended in mid-air which would have to end and begin again by itself each instant. In the second, one has an infinitely abstract eternity of which one can say that it is especially difficult to understand why it does not remain enveloped in itself and how it allows things to co-exist with it. But in either case, and no matter which one of the two metaphysics is chosen, time appears from the psychological point of view as a mixture of two abstractions neither one of which admits of either degrees or shadings. In either system, there is only a single duration which carries everything along with it, a river without bottom and without banks and flowing without assignable force in a direction one cannot define. Even then it is a river and the river flows only because reality obtains this sacrifice from the two doctrines taking advantage of an inadvertence in their logic. As soon as they regain possession of themselves, they congeal this flowing either into an immense solid sheet, or into an infinity of crystallized needles, but always in a thing which necessarily participates in the immobility of a point of view.

It is altogether different if one places oneself directly, by an effort of intuition, in the concrete flowing of duration. To be sure, we shall find no logical reason for positing multiple and diverse durations. Strictly speaking, there might exist no other duration than our own, as there might be no other color in the world than orange, for example. But just as a consciousness of color, which would harmonize inwardly with orange instead

pulverized
time
↓
a powder
of grains

a world
suspended
in mid-air

a monad
simpler

the
concrete
flowing
of
duration

the concrete duration of Nature
from my perspective (analysis)

the continuity before, after, and around me

red ^{to} and yellow

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unity to multiplicity
multiplicity to unity

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presentiment

in contact

palpitations

materiality

eternity of life

the vibrations of light

of perceiving it outwardly, would feel itself caught between red and yellow, would perhaps even have, beneath the latter color, a presentiment of a whole spectrum in which is naturally prolonged the continuity which goes from red to yellow, so the intuition of our duration, far from leaving us suspended in the void as pure analysis would do, puts us in contact with a whole continuity of durations which we should try to follow either downwardly or upwardly: in both cases we can dilate ourselves indefinitely by a more and more vigorous effort, in both cases transcend ourselves. In the first case, we advance toward a duration more and more scattered, whose palpitations, more rapid than ours, dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity: at the limit would be the pure homogeneous, the pure repetition by which we shall define materiality. In advancing in the other direction, we go toward a duration which stretches, tightens, and becomes more and more intensified: at the limit would be eternity. This time not only conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. It would be a living and consequently still moving eternity where our own duration would find itself like the vibrations in light, and which would be the concretion of all duration as materiality is its dispersion. Between these two extreme limits moves intuition, and this movement is metaphysics itself.

... the concretion of all duration

meta-physics

We cannot stop here to outline the various stages of this movement. But after having presented a general view of the method and made a first application of it, it will perhaps be not without point to formulate in as precise terms as possible the principles upon which it rests. Of the propositions I am about to set forth, most have received in the present work a beginning of proof. I hope to demonstrate them more completely when we attack other problems.

I. There is an external reality which is given immediately to our mind. Common sense is right on this point against the idealism and realism of the philosophers.

II. This reality is mobility.²³ There do not exist things made, but only things in the making, not states that remain fixed, but

not only can we intuit a continuity of durations, but I am / we are that continuity of unity-multiplicity

only states in process of change. Rest is never anything but apparent, or rather, relative. The consciousness we have of our own person in its continual flowing, introduces us to the interior of a reality on whose model we must imagine the others. All reality is, therefore, tendency, if we agree to call tendency a nascent change of direction.

III. Our mind, which seeks solid bases of operation (point d'aperçu), has as its principal function, in the ordinary course of life, to imagine *states* and *things*. Now and then it takes quasi-instantaneous views of the undivided mobility of the real. It thus obtains sensations and ideas. By that means it substitutes for the continuous the discontinuous, for mobility stability, for the tendency in process of change it substitutes fixed points which mark a direction of change and tendency. This substitution is necessary to common sense, to language, to practical life, and even, to a certain extent which we shall try to determine, to positive science. Our intelligence, when it follows its natural inclination, proceeds by solid perceptions on the one hand, and by stable conceptions on the other. It starts from the immobile and conceives and expresses movement only in terms of immobility. It places itself in ready-made concepts and tries to catch in them, as in a net, something of the passing reality. It does not do so in order to obtain an internal and metaphysical knowledge of the real. It is simply to make use of them, each concept (like each sensation) being a practical question which our activity asks of reality and to which reality will answer, as is proper in things, by a yes or a no. But in so doing it allows what is the very essence of the real to escape.

IV. The difficulties inherent in metaphysics, the antinomies it raises, the contradictions into which it falls, the division into opposing schools and the irreducible oppositions between systems, are due in large part to the fact that we apply to the disinterested knowledge of the real the procedures we use currently with practical utility as the aim. They are due principally to the fact that we place ourselves in the immobile to watch for the moving reality as it passes instead of putting ourselves back into the moving reality to traverse with it the immobile posi-

traverse

reality which is tendency

tions. They come from the fact that we claim to reconstitute reality, which is tendency and consequently mobility, with the percepts and concepts which have as their function to immobilize it. One will never create mobility with halts, however numerous: if one begins with mobility, one can draw from it through thought as many halts as one wishes. In other words, *it is understood that fixed concepts can be extracted by our thought from the mobile reality; but there is no means whatever of reconstituting with the fixity of concepts the mobility of the real.* Dogmatism, as the constructor of systems, has nevertheless always attempted this reconstitution.

Dogmatism as the constructor of systems
materialism w. ins

V. It was bound to fail. This is the impotence, and this alone, pointed out by the skeptical, idealistic and critical doctrines, all those doctrines, in fact, which question our mind's ability to attain the absolute. But it does not follow from the fact that we fail to reconstitute living reality with concepts that are rigid and ready-made, that we could not grasp it in any other manner. The demonstrations which have been given of the relativity of our knowledge are therefore tainted with an original vice: they assume, like the dogmatism they attack, that all knowledge must necessarily start from rigidly defined concepts in order to grasp by their means the flowing reality.

the mind must do itself violence
fluid concepts

VI. But the truth is that our mind is able to follow the reverse procedure. It can be installed in the mobile reality, adopt its ceaselessly changing direction, in short, grasp it intuitively. But to do that, it must do itself violence, reverse the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories, or rather, recasting them. In so doing it will arrive at fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things. Only in that way will a progressive philosophy be constituted, freed from the disputes which arise between the schools, capable of resolving problems naturally because it will be rid of the artificial terms chosen in stating them. To philosophize means to reverse the normal direction of the workings of thought.

VII. This reversal has never been practised in a methodical manner; but a careful study of the history of human thought would show that to it we owe the greatest accomplishments in

whatever living quality there is in metaphysics

the sciences, as well as whatever living quality there is in metaphysics. The most powerful method of investigation known to the mind, infinitesimal calculus, was born of that very reversal.²⁴ Modern mathematics is precisely an effort to substitute for the ready-made what is in process of becoming, to follow the growth of magnitudes, to seize movement no longer from outside and in its manifest result, but from within and in its tendency towards change, in short, to adopt the mobile continuity of the pattern of things. It is true that it contents itself with the pattern, being but the science of magnitudes. It is also true that it has been able to realize these marvellous applications only through the invention of certain symbols, and that, if the intuition we have just mentioned is at the origin of the invention, it is the symbol alone which intervenes in the application. But metaphysics, which does not aim at any application, can and for the most part ought to abstain from converting intuition into symbol. Exempt from the obligation of arriving at results useful from a practical standpoint, it will indefinitely enlarge the domain of its investigations. What it will have lost with regard to science, in utility and occurrence, it will regain in scope and range. If mathematics is only the science of magnitudes, if mathematical procedures only apply to quantities, it must not be forgotten that quantity is always nascent quality; it is, one might say, its limiting case. It is therefore natural that metaphysics should adopt the generative idea of our mathematics in order to extend it to all qualities, that is, to reality in general. In so doing, it will in no way proceed to universal mathematics, that chimera of modern philosophy. Quite the contrary, as it makes more headway, it will meet with objects less and less translatable into symbols. But it will at least have begun by making contact with the continuity and mobility of the real exactly where this contact happens to be the most utilisable. It will have looked at itself in a mirror which sends back an image of itself no doubt very reduced, but also very luminous. It will have seen with a superior clarity what mathematical procedures borrow from concrete reality, and it will continue in the direction of concrete reality, not of mathematical methods. Let us say, then, with all due qualifications to what might seem either too modest or too

the scope and range of metaphysics

ambitious in this formula, that one of the objects of metaphysics is to operate differentiations and qualitative integrations.

VIII. What has caused this object to be lost sight of, and misled science itself about the origin of certain methods it employs, is that intuition once grasped must find a mode of expression and application which conforms to our habits of thought and which furnishes us, in well-defined concepts, the solid basis (point d'aperçu) we so greatly need. That is the condition of what we call strictness, precision, and indefinite extension of a general method to particular cases. Now this extension and this work of logical perfectioning can be carried on for centuries, while the generative act of the method lasts only an instant. That is why we so often take the logical apparatus of science for science itself,²⁵ forgetting the intuition from which the rest was able to ensue.²⁶

All that has been said by the philosophers and by scientists themselves about the "relativity" of scientific knowledge is due to forgetting this intuition. *Relative is symbolic knowledge through pre-existing concepts, which goes from the fixed to the moving, but not so intuitive knowledge which establishes itself in the moving reality and adopts the life itself of things.* This intuition attains the absolute.

Science and metaphysics then meet in intuition. A truly intuitive philosophy would realize the union so greatly desired, of metaphysics and science. At the same time that it constituted metaphysics in positive science,—I mean progressive and indefinitely perfectible,—it would lead the positive sciences, properly speaking, to become conscious of their true bearing, which is often very superior to what they suppose. It would put more of science into metaphysics and more of metaphysics into science. Its result would be to re-establish the continuity between the intuitions which the various positive sciences have obtained at intervals in the course of their history, and which they have obtained only by strokes of genius.

IX. That there are not two different ways of knowing things thoroughly, that the various sciences have their roots in metaphysics, is what the philosophers of antiquity, in general, believed. Not in that lay their error. It consisted in adopting the belief so natural to the human mind, that a variation can only

ancient
philosophy

duration (change) as eternity

express and develop invariabilities. The result of this was that Action was a weakened Contemplation, duration a false, deceptive and mobile image of immobile eternity, the Soul a fall of the Idea. The whole of that philosophy which begins with Plato and ends with Plotinus is the development of a principle that we should formulate thus: "There is more in the immutable than in the moving, and one passes from the stable to the unstable by a simple diminution." Now the contrary is the truth. *diminution; cf. Spinoza*

Modern science dates from the day when mobility was set up as an independent reality. It dates from the day when Galileo, rolling a ball down an inclined plane, made the firm resolution to study this movement from high to low for itself, in itself, instead of seeking its principle in the concepts of the *high* and the *low*, two immobilities by which Aristotle thought he sufficiently explained its mobility. And that is not an isolated fact in the history of science. I take the view that several of the great discoveries, of those at least which have transformed the positive sciences or created new ones, have been so many soundings made in pure duration. The more living was the reality touched, the more profound had been the sounding. *So many soundings in pure duration*

the cave; the Sun
But the sounding made on the sea floor brings up a fluid mass which the sun very quickly dries into solid and discontinuous grains of sand. And the intuition of duration, when exposed to the rays of the understanding, also quickly congeals into fixed, distinct and immobile concepts. In the living mobility of things, the understanding undertakes to mark out real or virtual stations, it notes arrivals and departures; that is all that is important to the thought of man in its natural exercise. But philosophy should be an effort to go beyond the human state. *virtual arrivals and departures*

On the concepts with which they have blazed the trail of intuition scholars have preferred to fix their glance. The more they considered these residua which have reached the state of symbols, the more they attributed to all science a symbolic character. And the more they believed in the symbolic character of science, the more they effected it and emphasized it. It was not long before they noticed no difference, in positive science, between the data of immediate intuition and the immense work of analysis that the understanding pursues around intuition. *residua cf. Kristeva*

philosophy should be an effort to go beyond the human state

the understanding, whose role is to operate on stable ~~symbols~~ elements

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The Creative Mind

Thus they prepared the way for a doctrine which affirms the relativity of all our forms of knowledge.

But metaphysics has also worked toward that.

Why did the masters of modern philosophy, who were renovators of science in addition to being metaphysicians, not have the feeling of the mobile continuity of the real? Why did they not place themselves in what we call concrete duration? They did so more than they thought, and much more than they said they did. If any attempt is made to connect by continuous links the intuitions around which systems are organized, one finds, along with several other convergent or divergent lines, a well-determined direction of thought and feeling. What is this latent thought? How is this feeling to be expressed? To borrow once more the language of the Platonists, and stripping the words of their psychological meaning, by calling Idea a certain assurance of easy intelligibility and Soul a certain preoccupation with life, we shall say that an invisible current makes modern philosophy tend to lift the Soul above the Idea. In this, as in modern science and even more so, it tends to move in the opposite direction from ancient thought.

But this metaphysics, like this science, has deployed around its inner life a rich tissue of symbols, occasionally forgetting that if science needs symbols in its analytical development, the principal justification for metaphysics is a break with symbols. Here again the understanding has pursued its work of fixing, dividing, reconstructing. True, it has pursued it under a somewhat different form. Without emphasizing a point I propose to develop elsewhere, let me confine myself to saying that the understanding, whose role is to operate on stable elements, can seek stability either in relations or in things. In so far as it works on relational concepts, it ends in scientific symbolism. In so far as it operates on concepts of things, it ends in metaphysical symbolism. But in either case the arrangement comes from it. It would willingly believe itself independent. Rather than recognizing at once what it owes to the deep intuition of reality, it is exposed to what is only seen in all its work, to an artificial arrangement of symbols. With the result that if one keeps to the letter of what metaphysicians and scholars say, as well as to the content of what they do, one might believe that the first have dug

modern: Soul (life) above Idea (clarity)

Ancient: Idea (clarity) above Soul (life)

life = praxis

externalization of intuition of reality

Kant is the logical consequence of analysis

a deep tunnel under reality, while the others have thrown over it an elegant bridge, but that the moving river of things passes between these two works of art without touching them.

One of the principal tricks of Kantian criticism consisted in taking the metaphysician and the scholar at their word, in pushing metaphysics and science to the utmost possible limit of symbolism, where, in any case, they lead of their own accord the moment the understanding lays claim to an independence full of dangers. Once the relation of science and metaphysics with "intellectual intuition" is misunderstood, Kant has no difficulty in showing that our science is entirely relative and our metaphysics wholly artificial. Because he strained the independence of the understanding in both cases, because he relieved metaphysics and science of the "intellectual intuition" which gave them their inner weight, science with its relations presents to him only an outer wrapping of form, and metaphysics with its things, an outer wrapping of matter. Is it surprising, then, that the first shows him only frameworks within frameworks, and the second phantoms pursuing phantoms?

the moving river of things

critique of Kant

metaphysics and science

Greek temple

He struck our science and metaphysics such rude blows that they have not yet entirely recovered from their shock. Our mind would willingly resign itself to see in science a wholly relative knowledge and in metaphysics an empty speculation. It seems to us even today that Kantian criticism applies to all metaphysics and to all science. In reality it applies especially to the philosophy of the ancients, as well as to the form—still ancient—that the moderns have given most often to their thought. It is valid against a metaphysics which claims to give us a unique and ready-made system of things, against a science which would be a unique system of relations, finally against a science and a metaphysics which present themselves with the architectural simplicity of the Platonic theory of Ideas, or of a Greek temple. If metaphysics claims to be made up of concepts we possessed prior to it, if it consists in an ingenious arrangement of pre-existing ideas which we utilize like the materials of construction for a building, in short, if it is something other than the constant dilation of our mind, the constantly renewed effort to go beyond our actual ideas and perhaps our simple logic as well, it is too evident that

science ↔ relations ↔ empiricism ↔ form
metaphysics ↔ things ↔ rationalism ↔ matter

Sweet Nothing
and Pain and
Death

metaphysics cannot be mastered

it becomes artificial like all works of pure understanding. And if science is wholly the work of analysis or of conceptual representation, if experience is only to serve as the verification of "clear ideas," if instead of starting from multiple and varied intuitions inserted into the movement proper to each reality but not always fitting into one another, it claims to be an immense mathematics, a single system of relations which imprisons the totality of the real in a mesh prepared for it, it becomes a knowledge purely relative to the human understanding.

A close reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* will show that for Kant this kind of universal mathematics is science, and this barely modified Platonism, metaphysics. To tell the truth, the dream of a universal mathematics is itself only a survival of Platonism. Universal mathematics is what the world of Ideas becomes when one assumes that the Idea consists in a relation or a law, and no longer in a thing. Kant took for a reality this dream of certain modern philosophers:²⁷ much more, he thought that all scientific knowledge was only a detached fragment, or rather a projecting stone of universal mathematics. The main task of the *Critique*, therefore, was to lay the foundations of this mathematics, that is, to determine what the intelligence should be and what should be the object in order that an unbroken mathematics might bind them together. And it follows that if all possible experience is thus assured of admittance into the rigid and already constituted frameworks of our understanding (unless we assume a pre-established harmony), our understanding itself organizes nature and finds itself reflected in it as in a mirror. Whence the possibility of science, which owes all its effectiveness to its relativity,—and the impossibility of metaphysics, since the latter will find nothing more to do than to parody, on the phantoms of things, the work of conceptual arrangement which science pursues seriously on relations. In short, the whole Critique of Pure Reason leads to establishing the fact that Platonism, illegitimate if Ideas are things, becomes legitimate if ideas are relations, and that the ready-made idea, once thus brought down from heaven to earth, is indeed as Plato wished, the common basis of thought and nature. But the whole *Critique* of Pure Reason rests also upon the postulate that our thought is

a single system of relations

barely modified Platonism

a projecting stone

f. Leibniz

critique of Platonic generalization

points of contact

incapable of anything but Platonizing, that is, of pouring the whole of possible experience into pre-existing moulds.²⁸

That is the whole question. If scientific knowledge is indeed what Kant insisted it was, there is a simple science pre-formed and even pre-formulated in nature, as Aristotle believed: from this logic immanent in things the great discoveries only illuminate point by point the line traced in advance, as, on a festival night, a string of bulbs flick on, one by one, to give the outline of a monument. And if metaphysical knowledge is indeed what Kant intended, it is reduced to the equal possibility of two opposed attitudes of mind toward all the great problems; its manifestations are so many arbitrary choices, always ephemeral, between two solutions virtually formulated from all eternity: it lives and dies from antinomies. But the truth is that neither does the science of modern times present this unilinear simplicity, nor the metaphysics of the moderns these irreducible oppositions.

a festival night

ephem-
eral

Modern science is neither one nor simple. It rests, I readily agree, upon ideas one ultimately finds clear; but these ideas, when they are profound, become progressively clear by the use made of them; they owe then the best part of their luminosity to the light cast back upon them, through reflection, by the facts and applications to which they have led, the clarity of a concept being little else, accordingly, than the assurance, once it is acquired, of manipulating it to advantage. At the start, more than one of them must have appeared obscure, difficult to reconcile with the ideas already accepted by science, and bordering on the absurd. That is to say that science does not proceed by the regular nesting of concepts predestined to fit neatly inside one another. Profound and fruitful ideas are so many points of contact with currents of reality which do not necessarily converge on a same point. It is true that the concepts in which they lodge always manage somehow or other, in rounding off their corners by reciprocal friction, to makeshift among themselves.

the initial
absurdity
of clarity
of
Einstein
Self-
Reliance

On the other hand, the metaphysics of the moderns is not made of solutions so radical that they can lead to irreducible oppositions. This would no doubt be so if there were no means of accepting at the same time and in the same field the thesis and antithesis of the antinomies. But to philosophize consists

analysis can give more intuition (a string of bulbs)

congealed and dead in these
living in philosophy philosophers

grey
black
white

great
masters

sounding

same
ocean

something
more

impulsion
J. Dewey

precisely in placing oneself, by an effort of intuition, inside this concrete reality on which from the outside the Critique takes the two opposing views, thesis and antithesis. I shall never imagine how black and white intermingle if I have not seen grey, but I have no difficulty in understanding, once I have seen grey, how one can envisage it from the double viewpoints of black and white. Doctrines which have a basis of intuition escape Kantian criticism to the exact extent that they are intuitive: and these doctrines are the whole of metaphysics, provided one does not take the metaphysics congealed and dead in theses, but living in philosophers. To be sure, these divergences are striking between the schools, that is to say, in short, between the groups of disciples formed around certain of the great masters. But would one find them as clear-cut between the masters themselves? Something here dominates the diversity of systems, something, I repeat, simple and definite like a sounding of which one feels that it has more or less reached the bottom of a same ocean, even though it brings each time to the surface very different materials. It is on these materials that disciples normally work: in that is the role of analysis. And the master, in so far as he formulates, develops, translates into abstract ideas what he brings, is already, as it were, his own disciple. But the simple act which has set analysis in motion and which hides behind analysis, emanates from a faculty quite different from that of analysing. This is by very definition intuition.

Let it be said, in conclusion, that there is nothing mysterious about this faculty. Whoever has worked successfully at literary composition well knows that when the subject has been studied at great length, all the documents gathered together, all notes taken, something more is necessary to get down to the work of composition itself: an effort, often painful, immediately to place oneself in the very heart of the subject and to seek as deeply as possible an impulsion which, as soon as found, carries one forward of itself. This impulsion, once received, sets the mind off on a road where it finds both the information it had gathered and other details as well; it develops, analyzes itself in terms whose enumeration follows on without limit; the farther one goes the more is disclosed about it; never will one manage to say

intuition is the great master from the
same ocean

~~THE~~ THE IMPULSION

an urge to movement
INTRODUCTION TO METAPHYSICS

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everything; and yet, if one turns around suddenly to seize the impulsion felt, it slips away; for it was not a thing but an urge to movement, and although indefinitely extensible, it is simplicity itself. *simplicity itself* Metaphysical intuition seems to be something of the same kind. What in this case matches the notes and documents of the literary composition, is the collection of observations and experiences gathered by positive science and above all by a reflection of the mind on the mind. For one does not obtain from reality an intuition, that is to say, a spiritual harmony with its innermost quality if one has not gained its confidence by a long comradeship with its superficial manifestations. *an affair with the origin being with* And it is not a question simply of assimilating the outstanding facts; it is necessary to accumulate and fuse such an enormous mass of them that one may be assured, in this fusion, of neutralizing by one another all the preconceived and premature ideas observers may have deposited unknowingly in their observations. *giving over to life* Only thus does the raw material of the known facts emerge. Even in the simple and privileged case which served us as an example, even for the direct contact of the self with the self, the definitive effort of distinct intuition would be impossible for anyone who had gathered and collated a very great number of psychological analyses. The masters of modern philosophy have been men who had assimilated all the material of the science of their time. And the partial eclipse of metaphysics since the last half century has been caused more than anything else by the extraordinary difficulty the philosopher experiences today in making contact with a science already much too scattered. But metaphysical intuition, although one can achieve it only by means of material knowledge, is an entirely different thing from the summary or synthesis of this knowledge. *material knowledge* It is as distinct from it as the motor impulsion is distinct from the path traced by the moving object, as the tension of the spring is distinct from the visible movements in the clock. In this sense, metaphysics has nothing in common with a generalization of experience, and yet it could be defined as the whole of experience (*l'expérience intégrale*).

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