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Living the Past: Bergson, Proust, Deleuze and Nietzsche on Memory and the Self

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Memory is not of the past, it is of the present and it is of the future. This insight, developed by Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory* is the subject of this dissertation. Focusing on the figural representations in *Matter and Memory*, I argue that Bergson presents a dynamic conception of memory that can be read as destabilizing fixed notions of the human subject. I closely examine the implications of Bergson's positive account of memory, demonstrating that his account is primarily oriented toward showing how memory is useful for action in the present. I continue to develop this dynamic model of memory by turning to Marcel Proust, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the interpretive work of Gilles Deleuze. In doing so, I explore the possibilities for gaining access to a past that exists beyond the interest of the present moment, of 'saving the past' in order to discover new creative means of transforming the self.

Change is far more radical than we are at first inclined to suppose

Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*

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Introduction

When I recall jumping from a high cliff into a deep lake with my brother and cousins during summer vacation now it is significantly different from the story I told of this memory when I was 12, when I saw it as exciting, proof of my daring nature. Different still from the way this memory entered my thinking about myself in my 20s facing the fear I was unwilling to admit during that one leap then (while everyone else did many), determined to be a girl who jumped, and aware of how that set me apart from the others. Now I see a fuller picture of our lake trips and myself centered around jumping from that high cliff: family dramas, childhood needs, gender anxieties. This personal memory has changed as I have grown up, and while this is not an experience different from the memorial experience of anyone else in itself, it speaks to how the past operates in our lives. What it says is that we all recognize ourselves differently over time through the memories that have accumulated around events, places, or even in the most mundane of regular occurrences.

What can be glimpsed in this common experience of returning to the past is that the nature of memory, despite the fixity of an event, is one of change. But we frequently assess the past based on its permanence rather than through the shifting and changing relationships that we develop towards memory over time. The unchangeable nature of the past event takes over the way that the interpretation of the event necessarily changes. What this example also highlights is the way that the changing self returns to the past to locate newness. The past itself takes on new and different meanings over time, and self that returns to the past through memory changes. A renewed insight into the past and a different way of living in the self may seem to be one and the same change. After all, it is the self from which the change must come. Yet, we often see the past

as overshadowing us—it holds us back or determines our future. We give it a power of its own. In this work I will consider just what it is about the way the past changes for us over time, and how the self can be actively involved in initiating this change. It is nature of the past that makes up the self, and so I suggest here that when we think about the power of the past we have to consider the past as changing and the self as changing. I will argue that the past plays a crucial role in shaping the present self in ways that can both liberate and confine us.

For this dissertation work I focus on how the past has been thought about, diagrammed, and creatively imagined in the work of Henri Bergson, Marcel Proust, Gilles Deleuze, and to a smaller extent Friedrich Nietzsche. Bergson and Proust especially share an interest in elevating the status of the past in their thought. Though their investigations take on significantly different forms of expression, they view the past as something other than merely passed or stale, and memory as dynamic in shaping the self. The variable nature of memory and the changing self are the two main areas that I draw out of Bergson and Proust. And by bringing Bergson, Proust, Deleuze and Nietzsche together, this work offers a richer view of the ways that memory can shape the self than any of these authors alone provides.

In the first two chapters of this work I offer an analysis of the figures of memory that make up *Matter and Memory* in order to develop a dynamic conception of memory and the self. There are five figures that make up *Matter and Memory* and I examine these figures as the text unfolds to see what these illustrations add to the theory, as well as obscure. In chapter 1, I establish some of the key conceptual tools that are operative in *Matter and Memory.* The structure of this chapter follows roughly the first half of *Matter and Memory*, beginning with a discussion of perception and images—the matter side of this text—and moving through each chapter by focusing on how a theory of memory is constructed through these figures. Of special

emphasis in this chapter are figures I - III that Bergson uses to exemplify how new elements of his memory theory can be visually represented. In this chapter, I begin to show how crucial memory and the past are to operations of present life, whether in the mode of habit or reflective thought.

In Chapter 2, I turn to the more prominent "cone of memory" figures to consider how these figural representations present a past preserved entirely in itself and one that can be lived out differently depending on how we return to the varying emphasis points. What these two figures show about Bergson's thinking is that in his focus on utility and "attention to life" he depicts a past that exists in all of our present moments in a largely invisible way. Nevertheless, I show that through the cone of memory Bergson identifies ranging variations of the emphasis points in our past, indicating that the way we choose to return to memory impacts the self significantly. In the last section of this chapter, I turn to Deleuze's reading of Bergson's theory of the past as ontologically significant. I show how in Deleuze's focus on the past in Bergson he expands the significance of Bergson's analysis beyond psychological boundaries and emphasizes Bergson's approach to memory as developing an interpretation that undermines notions of a fixed, substantial self. By taking up Bergson's claim that our past is the element of our existence and the view that the durational quality of the self is constantly changing, I will open up the discussion to the possibility of radically choosing how we engage the past in our current life.

In the third chapter of this work I give a reading of how Proust engages with memory over the course of *In Search of Lost Time* through the interpretive and literary elements associated with involuntary memory. Proust divides memory into two types: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary memory is Proust's concept for how memory normally operates. It functions in a way similar to how Bergson conceives it—operating for the sake of the present

self, offering very little back to us about the past. Involuntary memory provides an example of a radically different engagement with memory, one that unites the current self with a past not quite lived before. I show that for Proust, it is through a creative response to involuntary memory that an individual can locate their true self.

In chapter 4, I continue to develop a conception of how we can respond to the past in a way that produces radical change in the self. I consider the problem of being stuck in the past and why we might want to let it go—to forget in order to live a healthier life. I look at the way that an individual can be unhealthily absorbed in the past, through the theme of the most routine of life events: lost love. Returning to Proust I discuss the two volumes of his work that focus on his obsession with Albertine after she leaves him. From this Proustian absorption in the past I turn to an analysis of Nietzsche's emphasis on forgetting to question what it means to live with the past but also let it go. In Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati,* I show the deep affirmative potential of returning to the past in a way that creatively affirms it. Finally, I return again to how thinking about the self in memory, and how "saving the past" in Bergson and Proust allows us to more actively live it. In considering the past and how a self lives in memory from the perspective of these thinkers I offer an analysis that claims both a changing self and a changing relationship to memory over time. I ask: what does the past offer us—about who we are—our self over time? How do we draw something new from our past? How is our past useful beyond action in the present?

My intent in writing this dissertation was to depict the richness of Bergson's conception of how we live in memory, and how this allows for a new way of thinking about the self. Ultimately, as I show, Bergson's rich understanding of memory is oriented less towards thinking about how the self engages with the past variations that are cycling into life, and more towards

using the past to the greatest efficiency possible. This is to say that despite what I see as the deeply personal nature of how the past operates in our lives, and the rich portrayal of the existence of this past, Bergson's theory offers a more impersonal reading of the past than I originally thought I could develop. Nevertheless, his theory, as I have analyzed it, is radical in thinking about the existence of the past in our lives, and his close analysis of the structure of the past offers promising ways to think about the self.

In considering how Proust, Nietzsche and Deleuze construe the past, in relation to Bergson, and on their own, I began to see that each thinker engages with memory from what I loosely understand as a different emotional and psychological primary place: Bergson's sense of memory is utilitarian, Proust's nostalgic, Deleuze sees it as a becoming, Nietzsche as a terror transformed into joy. In a sense these four positions represent the fluxuations that any of us may move in and out of in relation to our own past. And while these thinkers approach the past conceptually from different directions, they come together in seeing the past as the locus for change rather than as some staid and unmoving fixture.

Chapter 1. Bergson's figures

Introduction

Memory is not of the past, it is of the present and it is of the future. This insight, developed by Henri Bergson in one of his major works, *Matter and Memory*, will be the subject of much of this dissertation work. In this view, the past is re-oriented to a position of prime importance. The past itself is continually present—an aspect of life so inherent in living that it acts the element of our existence.[1] As I will argue, understanding memory in this way has the potential for significantly shifting the way we conceive of the self and the world around us. Like Bergson, I will argue that memory is a decisive source of change in human life.

Nietzsche's exhortation that we must move beyond the 'stone of the past' is not just a philosophical claim.[2] The metaphor of the past as an immovable object, a metaphor that is called to mind regularly as something that we must put behind us, significantly impacts our understanding of it. Against the idea of the past as something that has a definitive narrative and shape, Bergson's philosophical project orients the past to present and future life. The past is moving and changing in relation to our lives, and we are continually re-interpreting it. This is not to say that the past changes. Rather, the way in which we change in relation to it gives the past new meaning and force over time, dynamically shaping the way that we live.

[1] Bergson frequently uses the term "medium" to discuss our body in matter and since we will think here about the past as facilitating even our movements in space and experience of the material world I use the term "element" to suggest, in the vein of Luce Irigaray's thinking that the past is a fundamental environmental aspect of our lives. Gilles Deleuze also uses the term "element" to describe the ontological aspect of the past. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjab (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1998), 56.
[2] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufman (Viking Penguin, 1966), 139.

In this chapter, I look closely at the emphasis that Bergson places on the structure of the past and its conceptual elements. I show that despite the rhetorical emphasis that Bergson places on seeking out the life of "spirit," *Matter and Memory* is a text that emphasizes the utilitarian nature of memory. That is to say, Bergson's focus is on the operations of memory in its service to action and on how memory forms a connecting link between mind and body, past and present. Bergson's focus on the function of memory in sustaining and defining life was surely inspired by the Darwinian theory of his time that seeks to describe human activity in terms of what is necessary for survival.[3] Discussing memory as the basis of habit, Bergson says that "adaptation" expresses in a one word "the general aim life."[4] But I will suggest that it is surprising, in light of Bergson's critique of space in *Matter and Memory* and the problems that we encounter when we discount the durational element of existence in *Time and Free Will*, that his focus on memory tends toward utility for present action. The utilitarian limits of memory that Bergson seems to impose will become a theme of this chapter and beyond, as I turn to Proust and Nietzsche to develop a conception of memory that transcends and disrupts present action and usefulness.

There are significant reasons to see in Bergson's thought an abiding interest in a self beyond what allows for action in the present moment. In *Time and Free Will* Bergson interrogates the nature of the "the fundamental self" which has been covered over by spacialized modes of thinking and social convention.[5] It is only through Bergson's non-utilitarian work of intellectual discovery that the habit and conventional ways of existing in space and in the social world are rolled back. Bergson continues to repeat the idea that we must return to some

[3] This focus is especially present in the concept of of élan vital. See *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell, (New York: Dover, 1998).
[4] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 84.
[5] Bergson *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson, (Mineola: Dover, 2001), 128-39.

durational understanding of the self that requires "turning back" into ourselves, or giving up habitual modes of thought.

Though the question of what this new conception of the past has to do with the self is not directly addressed in the pages of *Matter and Memory*, I develop it from this work because it is within this text that Bergson offers an in-depth conception of how the memory of the past operates concretely in lived experience. By focusing on the diagrams that Bergson uses to express this relationship, my work here will highlight the importance of bringing this conception of the past to bear on individual life, looking to the areas of Bergson's writing about memory that offer direction into his thought on the topic, and developing the role of the self from this theory of memory.

Despite the apparent rigidity of Bergson's figures of memory, I suggest that it is through these illustrations that this seemingly action-based theory of memory reveals an understanding of the subject becoming through the past, and with this basic principle the possibility for individual transformation through memory. These figures not only depict the depth of memory in relation to externalized space but as Keith Ansell-Pearson articulates it, "an autonomous life of memory."[6] The confines of spatialized diagrams can't represent the durational reality of memory, nor the self-constitution that develops from it, but it is in this area of development that I show Bergson identifying the changing nature of the self through the past as one that is not only useful but also an anchoring point for creative life.[7]

The body and perception

[6] P. 173 digital copy *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual.*
[7] The term "diagrammotology" is an apt one to bring up here as an explicit study of how spatialized and typically sparse forms are used to illustrate complex thought. See Mitchell, 1981; Stjernfelt, 2007.

What the body *does*, and the role of perception in relation to matter are radically revised in chapter I of *Matter and Memory*. Much attention is paid to this complex chapter in secondary literature on Bergson, especially drawing out the challenge that Bergson makes to philosophical views of the body and perception.[8] My own work will only take on what is necessary from this chapter in order to get at Bergson's account of memory. Bergson suggests that his account of matter is arrived at through *memory*, such that this beginning section of his work on *Matter and Memory* could have been arrived at through the course of his analysis of memory itself.[9] I will begin with the body and perception because the principles developed in this chapter will go on to distinguish Bergson's theory of memory.

Bergson establishes a number of propositions in this first chapter of *Matter and Memory* that he will work out in the course of his book, and we'll look to these briefly. Primary among them are: 1. a description of the body and objects in the material world as images 2. perception as an activity that is not speculative, nor interior and subjective, but simply facilitative of our action upon things, and 3. pure perception as different in kind from pure memory. Each of these statements carries a fairly radical charge and I'll discuss each below along with their relation to Bergson's account of memory.

Image

[8] For example, see Leonard Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism*, (New York: Continuum, 2003), 11; Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergon*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 111; Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[9] Bergson expresses surprise at the deep connection between the study of memory and matter. "We little thought, at the beginning of our inquiry, that there could be any connection between the analytical study of memory and the question, which is debated between realists and idealists or between mechanists and dynamists, with regard to the existence or the essence of matter." Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 15.

By beginning his first chapter with a discussion of images Bergson is intending to suspend philosophical presuppositions and to lay bare a new approach to thinking about perception. The approach he takes is through "common sense," asking his reader to put aside the philosophical extremes of realism and idealism and follow him in articulating matter as it is experienced. [10] He states in the introduction to *Matter and Memory* that by starting with common sense "such a mind would naturally believe that matter exists just as it is perceived; and since it is perceived as an image, the mind would make of it, in itself, an image."[11] So we begin with a method reminiscent of Descartes, ignoring traditional philosophical accounts of matter and perception to arrive at a foundation for matter, and our engagement with it, that Bergson suggests previous philosophers have overlooked.

The consideration of images makes up a significant portion of *Matter and Memory*—they are what Bergson uses to describe matter, the body, and a certain type of memory. An external image, as Bergson construes it in his first chapter, does not create— it is an extended entity that acts as a conduit of motion. It is capable of being acted on by some images and acting on others in turn. [12] Bergson writes: "*All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium of certain particular images, the type of which is furnished to me by my body*."[13] In other words, we are surrounded by images that, for the most part, are not capable of creating anything new but are governed by constant laws, what Bergson calls "laws of nature."[14] The body, on the other hand, occupies a

[10] The important question of what problems may result from Bergson's assumption of a 'common sense' viewpoint for the basis of his analysis is not taken up in this interpretation. It is noteworthy that Bergson identifies this methodological move as feigning (*feindre)* or artifice. See Lawlor, *The Challenge of Bergsonism*, 2.
[11] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 10.
[12] The term image is meant to orient our thinking of matter to action in the present. This term is also used in Bergson's conception of memory. Bergson uses "memory-image" to designate internal images not yet physically manifest. As I will discuss below, Bergson indicates that memory-images also move to meet the present moment.
[13] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 18, italics in original.
[14] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17.

privileged position in relation to other images that surround it. It is not merely responsive to the laws of nature, it is also a source of motion and change—it has the power of choice.[15]

The privileged role of the body as a source of change does not imply that Bergson's 'body' resides atop a 'great chain of being.' [16] Bergson's view of the universe as an aggregate of images effectively levels any claim to material hierarchy. A rock, for example, is not matter or image to a lesser degree than my body. But while the rock does not hesitate before acting, or more precisely, before it is put into motion, Bergson sees the body as a source of freedom in relation to matter insofar as it is capable of introducing "a genuine and therefore a *new* action upon the surrounding objects."[17]

Further, the body's capability of producing new action does not imply that the body is what creates images. Instead of presenting a form of idealism, Bergson's interpretation presents a view where matter, as image, has no hidden and fixed qualities that underlie it. Images, freed from a static conception of matter, are constantly subject to temporal change. Perception, likewise, is not product of the mind's representation of matter, but of action. Bergson's thought suggests that whatever it is that is perceived does not possess characteristics other than what are immediately apparent and useful for our present action.

One of the most important expressions of Bergson's view of the body as image resides in his discussion of the brain. For Bergson, not only is the body an image but the brain too is an image. This means that the brain cannot produce other images—the brain is not a source of representation. He writes, "in our opinion, then, the brain is no more than a kind of central

[15] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 19.
[16] In Bergson's work 'privilege' is also used to denote the position of knowledge that we have regarding ourselves. See Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 1.
[17] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 20.

telephonic exchange: its office is to allow communication or to delay it."[18] In describing the brain in this way Bergson is stating that it routes communication so that the body acts automatically, or delays information in order to allow deliberation and choice to intervene. In both cases he suggests that the brain,

> Adds nothing to what it receives, but, as all the organs of perception send it to their ultimate prolongations, and, as all the motor mechanisms of the spinal cord and of the medulla oblongata have in it their accredited representatives, it really constitutes a center, where the peripheral excitation gets into relation with this or that motor mechanism, chosen and no longer prescribed.[19]

Conceiving of the brain as transmitting movement rather than creating representations allows Bergson to escape both the idealist and realist arguments that matter is either a "construction or a reconstruction" of the mind.[20] In these conceptual systems representations are construed as static. It is important for Bergson—whose focus on duration comes out of dynamism— to conceive of matter in constant motion.

I've stated that the privileged position the body holds is about freedom of choice. While the body—and most importantly for Bergson, the brain— is an image like all images, the individual knows it inside and out, and in Bergson's thought this interior life will serve as the ultimate indeterminacy, while the exterior is action. The inside—spirit, or memory, is the source of newness, while the body acts out the choice. The body is described as a connecting link, a hyphen, a machine, even. To this extent, his discussion of the body—the material position that it occupies—is not that of 'lived bodily experience.' The focus is not on motion that comes from outside. It is always, even the cusp of affective sensation, an interior experience first. Thus the change and freedom that occur in Bergson's thought aren't a result of the flesh, or of attention paid to the interface between interior and exterior. Freedom resides squarely within.

[18] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 30.
[19] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 30.
[20] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 69.

Perception

Bergson rejects accounts of perception given in idealism and realism that see perception as knowledge seeking and speculative in nature.[21] Just as the brain is in service to the action of the body, so too is perception understood as a function of action. As Bergson describes perception, it is a "variable relation between the living being and the more-or-less distant influence of the objects which interest it." [22] Perception is thus need-based: our body acts and reacts in the world that surrounds it based on the needs of the present moment. This utility oriented perception takes in what is necessary for the body in space at a particular place and time.

That action is essential to Bergson's definition of perception becomes evident in the way Bergson distinguishes perception from matter. Bergson says, "*I call* matter *the aggregate of images, and* perception of matter *these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body*."[23] Here, Bergson's definition of matter as an aggregate of images differs from his definition of perception only in that perception involves the possible action of my body on the matter that surrounds me. Because the content of our perception is limited to the small slice of the external world that addresses the present moment and our current needs, perception is always less than reality—less than the aggregate of images that compose matter.

To describe the particular way that perception relates to and limits external images, Bergson uses the metaphor of "reflection." Reflection implies a process of both taking in an impetus, in this case an image, redirecting it, and projecting it back. Our body takes in external

[21] Bergson uses the term "speculative" throughout this chapter according to its basic definition: the seeking out of knowledge.
[22] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 33.
[23] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 22.

images significant for its current needs and "reflects" possible future actions upon the objects surrounding it. The extent to which reflection can project action upon external objects varies. Whereas some forms of reflection remain within closer proximity, deliberative action allows us to extend our influence to objects that range far outside of our immediate space. Bergson refers to this action yet to be carried out as "virtual," and the action carried out as "actual"—both of these concepts will factor prominently into Bergson's account of memory, and will be explicated further below.

Pure perception

For Bergson, all perception is already mixed with memory. To think of perception stripped of memory is to imagine a "pure perception," which he will counterpose with "pure memory" to represent a theoretical difference in kind. Pure perception is entirely objective: all of the subjective and affective qualities that memory adds to perception are removed.[24] Bergson defines pure perception as "a perception that a consciousness would have if it were supposed to be ripe and full-grown, yet confined to the present and absorbed, to the exclusion of all else, in the task of molding itself upon the external object."[25] As this quotation indicates, if there were no memory, perception would be a direct line "from perception to matter, from the subject to the object."[26] What this perception amounts to, though, is very little in an account where memory fills in the details of much of our perceptual encounter with reality. Perception stripped of

[24] Bergson states, "Our perception of matter is, then, no longer either relative or subjective, at least in principle, and apart, as we shall see presently, from affection and especially from memory; it is merely disserved by the multiplicity of our needs" *Matter and Memory*, 50.
[25] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 33.
[26] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 70.

memory is then a matter of what Bergson calls "mere signs of the real": my body in immediate contact with the external world with no contextual understanding to fill out the edges of life.

The immediacy of pure perception not only eliminates affection and subjectivity but the durational element of experience that memory provides. This means that were the theoretical construct of pure perception to be realized, it would only and always consist of one instant followed by another with no continuity between the two. As I will discuss further below, with memory we have duration; memory draws together past, present and future. Without memory, matter would only be experienced as disconnected moments—one moment after another—with no unity between them—Leibniz's *mens momentanea*, a mind perceiving without memory.[27]

The account of pure perception that Bergson develops is meant to show that because accounts of perception have previously ignored the mixed nature of memory and perception they have attributed to perception a subjectivism that ought to be attributed to memory. By separating out these distinct but interwoven concepts Bergson suggests that we have a better idea of the differences—differences in kind—between memory and perception. As we can see, Bergson is interested in dispelling notions of perception and memory that result in viewing the two as a "single phenomenon." This error also leads to conceptions of perception as a diminished memory, or of memory as a weakened perception.[28] As a result we understand perception to be interior because it is always already mixed with the past and we don't identify the memorial aspect that fills in perception, animating it at every move. To counter these errors Bergson articulates a way

[27] Lydia Davis's very short story "Almost No Memory" provides a fictional portrayal of what such state would look like. The female protagonist reads and takes notes filling notebook after notebook, never remembering what she has read, taken note of, or tried to remind herself to think again by noting it down. Lydia Davis, *Almost No Memory*, (New York: Picador, 1997), 134.

[28] As example of this view can be found in Hobbes, who defines memory as decaying sense. Hobbes defines memory relative to imagination (the analogue for perception here) saying that memory refers to the 'decay' of what is imagined, signifying "that the sense is fading, old, and past." See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, (London: Penguin, 1982), Ch. 2.

of understanding differences that exist qualitatively in nature between functions of life—differences in kind.

Differences in kind

Having established a theory of perception in Chapter I of *Matter and Memory* that poses a difference in kind between perception and memory, Bergson then goes on to explore the function of memory in the following two chapters of his text. As I have discussed, articulating a pure form of perception allows Bergson to elucidate the characteristics that are particular to this faculty and to distinguish perception from memory.[29]

Pure is used to designate the abstract nature of pure perception and pure memory. As noted, these are not empirical designations. As mentioned above, Bergson identifies the pure form of memory and perception in part because it aids him in identifying their differences in kind.[30] These divisions in kind are our continual companions throughout *Matter and Memory*—they will continue to distinguish our understanding of memory and perception. As I will show, differences in kind are not easily pried apart and pointed to: this designation is qualitative. What this means for a discussion of purity is that the seeming dualism between pure perception and pure memory ultimately refers to a composite. As Deleuze notes in *Bergsonism*, "dualism is therefore only a moment, which must lead to the re-formation of a monism."[31] Perception and

[29] Bergson's thinking on differences in kind is a rich topic that we will develop throughout this chapter and further in chapter 2, where we will explore the shape it takes in Deleuze's reading, and its importance for commentators on Bergson.
[30] Elizabeth Grosz offers an extremely clear articulation of how differences in kind and differences in degree operate in Bergson's thought. See Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 158-163.
[31] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, Trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjab (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 29.

memory necessarily function together, but it is by stripping each function of the other that Bergson seeks to elucidate their conceptual and functional differences in kind.

Just as Bergson proposes the internal states of our mental activity flow from one thought or feeling to another (as is discussed at length in *Time and Free Will*) differences in kind, or differences in nature, are always already entwined with each other. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson establishes his concept of differences in kind along the lines of duration and space.[32] Duration is qualitative, internal and heterogeneous. Space is homogenous-- portioned off and quantified. Duration and space are differences in kind, and each unit can be seen to represent difference in kind and difference in degree, respectively. Duration cannot be split apart easily, differences within it are differences in kind, while space can be cut into units and thus is itself an example of differences of degree.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson shows how we mistakenly assume that we can apportion off differences in kind according to a model of homogenous space. The supposition that there is merely a difference in degree between qualities that are different in nature is a problem that Bergson draws out throughout his work. This false supposition—a supposition that Bergson refers to as an illusion in the history of philosophy— returns again and again in relation to a discussion of the differences in kind that we will focus our attention on here—matter and memory. Next I look to Bergson's examples of the two forms of memory, where I will show how in Bergson's thought memory not only differs in kind from perception, it is also characterized by differences in kind within itself.

Two forms of memory

[32] Bergson, *Time and Free Will.*

Bergson begins Chapter II of *Matter and Memory* by setting out a number of propositions that guide his analysis of memory. As he sees it, we are still in the realm of "common sense" thinking and Bergson continues to compare these theories of memory with everyday experience. He begins with the first proposition: "*The past survives under two distinct forms: first, in motor mechanism; secondly, in independent recollection.*"[33] This statement regarding two forms of memory will be significant for Bergson's theory: they parallel the divisions of matter and spirit, body and soul, that Bergson makes throughout the book. These two forms of memory are the basis for Bergson's theory of memory and as his work progresses these forms take on various terminological shifts: motor mechanism becomes habit or habit-memory, while independent recollection, or memory *par excellence* will be referred to as memory-image, and even image-memory.

Bergson exemplifies both of these primary forms of memory in "the lesson learned by heart."[34] I study a lesson repeatedly until it has been committed to memory. I may begin by giving the reading a once over and then continuing to re-read the material, repeating sections to myself, memorizing more at each successive reading until I have fully memorized the lesson and can repeat it at will without reviewing the text. Though students rarely memorize "lessons" in this way anymore, we can imagine studying a poem or a speech that we want to commit to memory for recitation purposes. Not only do we read it over multiple times, but with each new reading we develop sensitivities to the text: the inflections we want to use in a particular passage, the right moment to pause; and with each reading the text itself is more fully engrained in our memory. An important aspect of the lesson learned by heart, or the memorized recitation, is the

[33] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 78.
[34] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 79.

repeated studying of the material and the various hours spent devoted to memorizing the lesson.[35] The hours spent memorizing the lesson are distinct times in my life: times spent reading at a desk, reciting in a park, or thinking over the memorized passages over in my head as I ride a train.

With this example a crucial distinction is introduced in Bergson's account of memory. On one hand there is the passage that becomes further engrained in memory, but remains a distinct unit of memorized text. On the other, there are the moments spent memorizing, which are never the same as each other. The first aligns with the memory of motor mechanism, habit memory. The second aligns with the content of independent recollection, the memory image. I develop the analysis of each type of memory below.

Motor mechanism and habit memory

The first form of memory is habit based—it is the lesson that can now be repeated at length from memory. Bergson does not call this form of memory a habit yet, but *like* a habit it is acquired through "repetition, decomposition of an action and recomposition, and it is 'stored up' in a mechanism that will purportedly set it off automatically through an initial impulse."[36] Bergson eventually refers to this form of memory as motor mechanism and though it is here exemplified in a memorized lesson, it is best understood as a repetition that once repeated regularly becomes entirely automatic. Like driving a stick shift, turning the knob of a door clockwise or even saying thank you when someone opens a door for you, the movements and responses generated from this form of memory require seemingly no thought, and certainly no

[35] This example is first discussed on p. 79-81, then Bergson continues to return to the example of the "lesson" throughout *Matter and Memory*.
[36] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 80.

conscious recollection.[37] I might even find that if a passage is perfectly committed to memory it will be initiated in my thought with the slightest prompt of a phrase heard out of context, or even the memory of one of the moments spent memorizing the passage.

In Bergson's discussion of habit memory there are a number of similarities to thinkers such as Charles Darwin (an influence on Bergson) and William James (a contemporary and interlocutor). In *The Origin of the Species*, Darwin compares habit to instinct, noting, "habits easily become associated with other habits, and with certain periods of time and states of the body. When once acquired, they often remain constant throughout life."[38] Like Bergson's example of the lesson learned by heart being reeled off once the student hears a given cue, Darwin offers the behavior of a caterpillar weaving a hammock. If a caterpillar is removed from his hammock and placed into one at a later stage of completion he will begin to weave at the stage that his first hammock had reached. Darwin says, "as in repeating a well-known song, so in instincts, one action follows another by a sort of rhythm; if a person be interrupted in a song, or in repeating anything by rote, he is generally forced to go back to recover the habitual train of thought."[39] This "mingling" of instinct and habit that Darwin identifies in his work will come to a fuller realization in Bergson's later thinking on the method of intuition.

In discussing habit in *Principles of Psychology*, William James identifies individual habit as oriented to exigencies of life, as well as education.[40] Bergson's example of the lesson learned by heart indicates the focus on reason that he first places on this form of memory, mechanism eventually taking over and freeing the mind from concentration on the intellectual aspects of the

[37] The automatic nature may not be so clear in the case with a lesson learned by heart especially since it is not a common pedagogical practice anymore, see Frances Yates excellent study *The Art of Memory* for a fuller history of the art of mnemonics, (University Of Chicago Press: 2001).
[38] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, (New York: Bantam, 1999), 207.
[39] Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 207-8.
[40] William James, *Principles of Psychology*, accessed January 15, 2015, (https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/james/william/principles/complete.html#fn138), Ch. 4.

rote lesson and allowing for the student to reel off the memorized piece with little thought to it. James's too highlights the diminishing conscious attention required for acts that become habitual. He describes the plasticity of organic matter for acquiring habit, and the difficulty through which we might want to diverge from an engrained path once it has been made.[41]

While Bergson was likely influenced by both of these author's accounts of habit, there is a difference emphasis in his work. It is not only that Bergson sees in memory a special significance that neither Darwin nor James identify. Bergson also tends to emphasize the possibility of newness and change that comes with memory in general. Whereas Darwin understands habit in terms of instinct, which is ingrained, and James emphasizes the possibility of habits becoming instilled and, while freeing, a challenge to overcome, in Bergson we will see a more dynamic model.

At this point, it is important to see that first form of memory that Bergson distinguishes is habit memory, understood as motor mechanism animates our lives. It is the reflex movement involved in catching a football spontaneously tossed in our direction as well as the graceful coordinated effort that comes together in dance. This form of memory is integrated into our muscle contractions and action oriented movement at every instant of our lives. Moving forward in identifying the differences in kind between these two forms of memory I show that Bergson's emphasis on action orients this first form, and marks a new path in theorizing memory philosophically by identifying memory as more than one type of faculty.[42]

Recollection of memory image

[41] James, *Principles of Psychology*, Ch. 4.
[42] Though as Ed Casey points out in "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty" Bergson never goes so far as to articulate the situation of habit directly in the body, like Merleau-Ponty later does in *Phenomenology of Perception*, In *Man and World* 17 (1984): 284.

The second form of memory can be found in these separate moments wherein the lesson was memorized. Bergson suggests that each moment can be recollected at will and this is why he refers to this form of memory as creating "event[s] in my life."[43] The moments spent committing a lesson to memory may or may not be memorable, but the key idea is that these are each individual points in my history that cannot occur again. The long hours of memorizing a lesson in my bedroom and then testing out my memory while riding on the train, or sitting in the park are all unrepeatable parts of my life. While I might habitually return a special location in the park to think, or memorize passages of poetry, each time is a unique and unrepeatable event, even if it is a rarely an uneventful practice. The emphasis here is that I am able to recall the different moments spent learning a lesson, or memorizing a passage, and it is my prerogative to recall these moments at will, briefly as habitual practice or at length, thinking through what occurred in an eventful day spent thinking about poetry in the park.

The simplicity of the lesson learned by heart belies the weighty differentiation Bergson is making. While memory is frequently thought of as one type of thing, even confusing it with perception at times, Bergson asserts that it is multiple: habit and event, motor mechanism and recollection, or action and memory-image, as he most commonly refers to them. It is temporality that reveals to us the "profound difference" that comes from Bergson's conception of the two forms of memory.[44] Time operates differently in each form of memory: in the lesson learned by heart Bergson claims that the lesson will always take about the same amount of time to repeat, once it has been committed to memory. The action, or repetition of this lesson (or movement)

[43] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 80.
[44] For an outline that highlights the temporal differences between the two forms see John Protevi, "Matter and Memory Chapter 2: 'On the Recognition of Images", accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.protevi.com/john/Bergson/MM2.pdf.

has been fixed. While if I wanted to recall any of the given moments spent memorizing this lesson, I can think through them quickly or moment by moment, replaying the surroundings and thoughts or distractions I encountered as I set to learning the lesson. These moments are images of my past—impressions of past experience that I can return to, undergoing again at my own pace—while the motor memory of the lesson learnt is expressed through an action that one simply performs routinely, without representation.

The first form of memory is stored-up movement; Bergson refers to this memory as motor mechanism and describes it as "habit interpreted by memory."[45] Motor mechanisms are so established as routines of daily life that Bergson suggests we wouldn't know how we had acquired them if we weren't able to recollect the memories of learning and practicing this action. The second form of memory that "has a date" is called recollection and it operates continually as it has been described in Bergson's example—every moment or event of our daily life is stored up in memory-images.

I began this discussion going over two distinct forms of memory, though Bergson is quick to point out that one form serves as "memory par excellence" while the second form "*habit interpreted by memory*" acts in the service to the present moment.[46] As I have shown, these two forms are oriented in opposing directions, motor mechanism is directed forward, while memory-image turns back, or as Rudolf Bernet has expressed the opposition: "in habit-memory, it is the *body* that 'fixes' and takes possession of single memories that are useful for its future action; whereas in recollection-memory, it is, to the contrary, consciousness that coils back into itself in order to exult in the infinite powers of the creative *mind*."[47] In this articulation, motor mechanism is so closely aligned with the present and the future —with its task of acting in

[45] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 84.
[46] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 84.
[47] Rudolph Bernet, "A Present Folded Back on the Past (Bergson)," *Research in Phenomenology* 35 (2005): 70.

response to immediate perception, that it seems to have little to do with the past. Recollection memory, on the other hand, gathers images of the past, but it has no apparent life in the present.

It is important to remember that at this point is Bergson's analysis, the significance of distinguishing and defining these two forms of memory is for Bergson to show that there are real differences in kind within memory itself. Bergson argues that the failure of the psychology of his day to create a full theory of memory stems from the fact that habit memory—motor mechanism—is not included in its consideration of memory but was collapsed into a perception.[48] As in the discussion of pure perception above, Bergson uses pure forms of memory as theoretical extremes to clarify his account and distinguish it from previous thinkers. Such an analysis has the effect of temporarily solidifying Bergson's account in such a way that classical dichotomies, such as form and content, appear to be re-enforced.[49] In his discussion of how memory actually operates, however, Bergson's apparently stabilizing view will break. In actual life, memory is essentially mixed and dynamic for Bergson.

This will become clear in the discussion of "recognition" and "memory image" that follows. At this point I have defined recollection as a form a memory that is able to conjure impressions of the past, what is called memory images. The memory-image is identified at this point as the *content* of memory (recollection)— as the impressions of the events in a life. Speaking of recollection at this point, Bergson says it "records, in the form of memory-images, all the events of our daily life as they occur in time."[50]

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[48] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 88, 106-7.
[49] Bergson speaks of recollection in a way that reflects the mixed relationship between memory and perception in later texts. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson identifies recollection with what is present to the intellect, saying "Intelligence is guided in fact by present perceptions or by the more or less vivid residue of perception called recollection." Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1977.
[50] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 81.

However, while Bergson uses a preliminary concept of 'memory-images' at this point, it is in Chapter II that Bergson will actually incorporate the term "memory-image" into his analysis of the lesson learned by heart. There, the memory-image will begin to take on a more dynamic character. No longer merely an impression of the past, and no longer isolated within the bounds of a theoretical construct that operates as an abstracted extreme, it will play an essential role in dynamically shaping the present. Memory-images in this latter sense, are used by Bergson to understand experiences within daily life. They are called up when needed in the present moment and modified by the situation at hand—they *act* out our present again and again by filling in the details of our present moment.

Separating out these so-called pure forms of memory reveals the role they play in memory life. As I investigate Bergson's conception of "recognition" below, I'll begin to collapse the abstracted distinction between the "pure" forms of memory discussed so far. I start to show how they operate together to continually make memory present in perception.

Recognition and attention

The question of how perception and memory unite is a central part of Bergson's memory theory. To answer this question, I turn to Bergson's discussion of recognition. Recognition ties together the past and the present by facilitating the entry of memory-images into the perception that occurs in the present moment. To understand Bergson's account more sharply I will not only develop Bergson's positive account, but attend to the ways that Bergson's distinguishes his view

of recognition from prior theories. Looking to Bergson's position against certain theories of recognition is the best way to understand how he differentiates and constructs his own account.

Bergson begins by challenging previous theories that identify recognition as the mere synthesis of perception and memory. These theories imply that there is always a moment of temporal simultaneity in which perception and memory meet that leads to recognition, while also assuming that recognition always involves images. The problem with these accounts, Bergson argues, is that "experience stands over against them, testifying that in most cases recollection emerges only after the perception is recognized."[51] For Bergson, we simply need to bring up the fact that "we often recognize an object without being able to identify it with a former image," to prove that the instantaneous association of perception and memory is not the rule to follow in recognition.[52]

Bergson's account proposes two types of recognition in order to show that not all recognition is a function of memory-images, and further, that if for some pathological reason we are unable to match perception with memory-images we are still able to call up images.[53] Continuing his division along the lines of motor-mechanism and memory-image (or perception and memory) these two types of recognition follow the difference he has established between perception and memory. It should be noted that recognition is always more closely tethered to perception than memory because it is a faculty engaged with the external world. The two types that I will articulate below will be more or less defined by perception: automatic recognition is linked to action and is described as inattentive, this form molds itself closely to perception.

[51] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 91.
[52] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 91.
[53] Bergson argues this point by citing psychological research that shows cases in which the "psychic blindness" of an individual does not entail visual blindness, or the contrary, visual blindness does not result in psychic blindness. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 92.

Attentive recognition is linked with the memory-image and is the form of recognition that will facilitate the entry of memory into our perceptual field.

Automatic recognition is to be understood primarily through movement. Bergson says, "at the basis of recognition there would be thus a phenomenon of a motor order."[54] Automatic recognition can be seen as a chain of occurrences: perception prolonged into movement forms habit (or the "organization of movement and perception"), and the consciousness of this organization is recognition.[55] Consciousness in this sense involves action—we act our recognition based on the familiarity, or newness, of any number of objects and circumstances. A person familiar with how to catch a football will move toward the football hurtling toward them, while a person unsure of how to react might jump out of the way. In either situation the body acts quickly, almost immediately, recognizing the abilities it possesses and putting them to use. This is because, as Bergson suggests, "we commonly act our recognition before we think it."[56] His example of bodily recognition involves walking through a city that we do not know and feeling hesitant of where to go, observing the surrounding objects with interest. Eventually this city will become familiar and the body will behave differently—moving about with ease and taking no specific interest in its surroundings.[57]

Bergson's account of attentive recognition is developed in response to a central question of how memories relate to our present moment: "is it the perception which determines mechanically the appearance of the memories, or is it the memories which spontaneously go to

[54] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 93.
[55] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 94.
[56] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 95.
[57] Attentive recognition, referred to simply as attention in the course of *Matter and Memory*, also begins with movement though it ends with focused attention through the use of memory-images. The operation of attentive recognition basically describes present perception coming into contact with memory-images, and the intermediate role that recognition plays between the two.

meet the perception?"[58] At stake in this question is the problem that Bergson has raised throughout his discussion of perception and memory. That is, his disagreement with philosophical theories that have argued that memories are stored within the brain. If Bergson is able to show convincingly that perception, or movement, engenders nothing else but more movement, then he can claim that "the office of sense-stimulation is merely to impress on the body a certain attitude into which recollections will come to insert themselves."[59]

Bergson notes that the psychological theories of his day attempt to describe attention by means of a change to the intellect alone—as the "magnifying of the intellectual state" or the development of heightened attitude of intellect that expresses heightened concentration. [60] Bergson counters such theorists by developing a definition of attention "as an adaptation of the body rather than of the mind."[61] His account of attentive recognition begins with the motor mechanism of automatic recognition. As I have shown, automatic recognition organizes the body's movements and responses. Bergson describes attentive recognition according to this hypothesis as a faculty that prepares the body for the entry of memory.

The mechanism of attentive recognition is one that proceeds along the lines of automatic recognition until attention is directed at something in particular. At this point action slows in that it is no longer bent solely on the useful but is engaged in concentration on a particular object. Here Bergson discusses what has previously been articulated as primarily a matter of bodily movement transition into focused attention.[62] At first glance the shift from the bodily movement of automatic recognition to the intentional focus of attentive recognition appears to be a cessation

[58] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 99.
[59] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 99.
[60] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 100.
[61] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 100.
[62] The terms "attentive recognition," "attention," and "attentive perception" are all used by Bergson to describe the same or a similar function.

of movement: The question that is raised is what occurs *in the mind* so that an object that was previously just been part of my potential action now holds open new, and (deeper) interest?[63] What occurs in relation to the object in focus is the entry of memory: in attends to something, activity momentarily ceases. For Bergson, this cessation of bodily movement in attentive recognition is important to note. It is by adopting an attitude of inaction that the body, relaxed, allows for specific memory images to come forward.[64] That being said, Bergson identifies accounts that focus solely on the cessation of bodily movement as merely negative, as ignoring the "more subtle movements" of memory that constitute conscious attention.[65]

Described positively, attentive recognition is realized in a different form of movement—in the active projection of memory-images onto perception. In Bergson's account, attentive recognition functions by re-tracing the object of perception using memory-images that have been allowed to enter into our frame of perception as our active movement has slowed. These memory-images bring contextual memories to the situation at hand, and memories more distantly related to the object we are engaging with. The point is that attentive recognition, at this point referred to simply as attention, facilitates this entry by 1. Adopting the body to a specific "attitude" (over and against it's typical bent towards action) and 2. allowing memories to slip in because bodily comportment is relaxed, allowing for specific memories to come forward.[66]

A typical model of attentive perception is linear: "the object exciting sensations, the sensations causing ideas to start up before them, each idea setting in motion, one in front of the other, points more and more remote of the intellectual mass."[67] On the contrary, Bergson suggests that when in considering the role that attention plays in perception we see that it acts

[63] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 100-1
[64] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 101.
[65] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 101.
[66] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 101.
[67] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 103-4.

more like a circuit: the object is not perceived and abandoned—images, and ideas/memories build up in response to this object and circulate back upon it, enhancing it, as our ideas/memories increase contextually in relation to the object. The difference in these two approaches to attentive perception is significant: in one account "things happen mechanically and by a merely accidental series of successive additions."[68] In Bergson's account "new elements sent up from a deep stratum of the mind might join the earlier elements, without thereby creating a general disturbance and without bringing about a transformation of the whole system."[69] In other words, the perceptual response becomes richer and our intellectual apprehension of the object deeper without bringing about a global shift in our apprehension of the object. This account of attention, which Bergson calls "reflective perception" is demonstrated in figure 1, the first illustrative guide in *Matter and Memory*.[70]

Before turning to figure 1, I should note that in both forms of recognition the body's action plays a key role. Its "state"—either bent toward action or imitative of some comportment that evokes memory-images— plays one part in Bergson's analysis. The second part is played by memory images and their mode of entry into the present. The middle link, recognition/attention, that I have just articulated is what allows for these two forms to connect.[71] It should be re-stated that Bergson's account of recognition differentiates itself primarily by highlighting the role of action and the body. He writes "at the basis of recognition there would thus be a phenomenon of

[68] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 104.
[69] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 104.
[70] In the *Principles of Psychology*, James also takes up the question of the relationship of attention to the body (he too refers to Ribot) and the possibility that attention is a site of freedom—a location of voluntary action. That being said, James limits his scope to defining the characteristics of attention, as opposed to defining its underlying mechanism. James says "Every one knows what attention is. It is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought." Such a notion falls within the category of theories that Bergson identifies as ones that focus primarily on attention as a kind of concentration and direction of intellectual activity. See James, *Principles of Psychology*, Ch. 11.
[71] The notion that attention/recognition play a 'middle' role in perception has a vital place in current research within phenomenology and cognitive psychology. For example, see Edward Casey, "Attending and Glancing," in *The World at a Glance*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

a motor order."[72] As I have shown, this account suggests that recognition is not merely a matter of memory uniting with the present. Such a view overlooks the role of the body in recognition. As I will show, the body is the entry point for the return of memory, which I now turn to examine through the first illustrative figure in *Matter and Memory*.

Figure 1

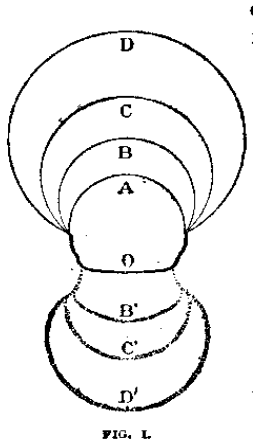

FIG. 1.

In this first figure in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson anticipates a number of the theses he will eventually articulate concerning memory through the book's guiding figure, the cone of memory. Figure 1, pictured below, resembling a mirrored mushroom cloud is, however, the figure most aligned with perceptual activity. Bergson refers it to as elucidating a circuit of "reflective perception." What this term means for Bergson is indicative of his claim concerning recognition: memory-images are projected onto present perception to the extent that the body facilitates their entry. At the core of this argument is Bergson's hypothesis that movement only engenders movement and if we want to understand how memories enter perception we have to look elsewhere for an explanation.

[72] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 93.

Bergson gives us just this explanation: as in his analysis of recognition, the body arrests its activity when a specific object comes into focus, and attention initiates bodily comportment that facilitates the entry of memory images related to the object. Memory-images that correspond with this particular situation enter and reflect the perception that is currently experienced. The reflection is so perfectly aligned with the object that it might seem that no memories are involved in our perception at all. For example, when I drink from a favorite chipped mug I might not always see the crack in the ceramic that could potentially cut my lip, yet memory-images reflect the element of danger in this particular cup and so I always drink from one side. Bergson suggests that the "operation" of memory covering over a present perception with past images "may go on indefinitely—memory strengthening and enriching perception, which in its turn becoming wider draws into itself a growing number of complementary recollections."[73]

The circuit metaphor (an image that should recall the description of the brain as a 'central telephone exchange') in Bergson's conception of reflective perception depicts how he envisions this operation working. The object, let's say the chipped cup, is at the center of a circuit involving both memories and perception (see Fig. 1). Bergson says that "no disturbance starting from the object can stop on its way and remain in the depths of the mind: it must always find its way back to the object from where it proceeds."[74] Attention to this object yields increasing inflow of memory-images that return to the object itself and enrich perception of it. This is why I favor one side of the chipped cup: when I pick it up to drink, memory-images mold onto my perception of the cup and I act as if I see that this object poses danger on one side and is to be avoided even if I don't note the chip with every drink. If I focus more specific attention on the cup in a moment of rumination I might recall the moment it was chipped, and the dismay I felt

[73] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 101.
[74] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 104.

on causing damage to a favorite item, which in turn might recall memories of why this was a favorite item in the first place. The point is that for Bergson each circuit of memory—ranging from my habitual behavior in engaging with the object to the emotion I can recall feeling in relation to the half-broken item, and the further circumstance of receiving the item and why it is special—will always return to the external object. Memories must always circle back to perception.

The basic operation of memory filling in perception is depicted in figure 1 above. Point "O," which represents the object, is centrally placed below memory while perception extends below it. We can assume that point O is temporally located in the now: that is, in the immediate moment of reality when it is being perceived. The circles that proliferate around the object are circuits of memory that are most relevant to the object, and increasingly less so as they move further away (points A-D). A is closest to immediate perception of the object and thus is most contextually related to the situation at hand, while the circles beyond it refer to the growing "intellectual expansion" that radiates into apprehension of the object, and away from it. The point furthest away from the object (point D) holds memory-images of it in its most expanded form—this correlates with the most expanded part of memory, the least linked with action, and thus the most capable of holding multiple analogous images of the object at hand.

Through Figure 1 Bergson discusses the object as being "created anew" through attentive perception. We can see how this occurs in relation to memory—the expanded or contracted strata of memory have more or less relation to the object from our past; these past memory-images fill

out our apprehension of the present object at hand. With each attentive moment directed at the object more memory-images will appear.[75]

The circles that radiate around the bottom of point O (points B'-D') relate to the reality of the object. These gain in depth in relation to the constituent elements surrounding the object: "it will be seen that the progress of attention results in creating anew not only the object perceived, but also the ever widening systems with which it may be bound up."[76] Our understanding of reality is enhanced in relation to our attentive perception to an object resulting in a "deeper strata of reality" for the object and its surroundings. Point B' is closest to the immediate surroundings of the object, while the point furthest from the object (point D') might include distant memories or emotions bound up with this particular object.

For Bergson this is a description of reality as it is made up of our past memorial experiences. He is suggesting that our individual orientation in reality is primarily memorial. Even in this first figure the basic elements that run through Bergson's theory of memory are presented. Fundamentally, figure 1 opens up Bergson's conception of how memories come into contact with perception as facilitated by attentive recognition. In identifying the work of attentive recognition as a "backward movement of the mind"[77] Bergson depicts an engagement with the past that is not simply useful, but requires a selective determination in how memory-images are used. The circuit shows us that memory-images that emerge in relation to the circumstance at hand always return to the object: memory is tethered to objects, and objects would have no depth without memory. These radiating circles emphasize the dynamic process of memory and

[75] At this point, we can begin to see how Bergson creates a dynamic and creative model of perception by focusing on memory—a model that shows how the present moment is shaped in a way that gives space for human agency in relation to 'matter'.
[76] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 105.
[77] This is a phrase Bergson will continue to take up over the course of his work on memory and intuition.

perception moving into one another, and in the case of memory, its uniting with present perception.[78]

Up to this point the account of recognition, both automatic and attentive, has stemmed from Bergson's analysis of bodily action. Through action, movement, and perception, he shows how memory is called forth, either in reactive bodily motion that isn't identified as memory, or through attentive recognition that enhances the perception of an object and its surroundings. It is important to remember that Bergson distinguishes the body initially by its power to be a source of motion—and ultimately by its freedom. At this point, the initial presence of bodily freedom is already evident. For Bergson, perception is not reducible to a mere response (or impression) made by matter—it is active and creative because it is constituted by the projection of memory images. Thus, the body—unlike matter—already has a role in shaping the very thing that it responds to.

As I continue in laying out how memory engages with the body, the development of our conception of memory and ultimately bodily freedom will become more dynamic. From the perspective of discussing perception, the memory-image has come to appear as somewhat fixed. It is, to be sure, a mover—something projected by memory that causes perception to be continually changed. I have not emphasized, however, the way that memory-images themselves are continually changed in this process of projection. Bergson's first diagram already suggests this point. Each reflective circuit allows for additional memory-image to enter and enrich present experience. In turn, these memories are renewed and re-configured through present experience. The memory-images that have been projected onto perception continually form the matter for

[78] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 127.

new memory-images—their repetition is never the same.[79] As I proceed in this work I will show how the perpetual and dynamic interaction of memory and matter will allow for an account to be developed wherein any attempt to establish a fixed and unchanging 'subject' of experience is undermined. What takes shape in Bergson's thought regarding memory is what Deleuze calls "the general form of difference" itself. [80]

Virtual/actual

Bergson begins to shake up the metaphysical underpinnings of alternative theories of perception by insisting that memory-images are not to be understood as things or as congealed conglomerates.[81] These alternative theories attempt to firmly separate the objects of memory (memory-images) as being fully formed in one location (the brain), and the objects of perception as being fully formed in another (the external world). They argue that memory stems from the impressions of sensation that are then stored in the brain, mental objects that correlate to the real objects of sensation. In this way, sensation is given a fundamental priority. Sensation not only forms memory-images; but the conception of memory-images is modeled after sensory objects; memory-images are understood as fully realized entities that have distinct physical locations.

[79] While it is beyond to scope of this project to discuss the place of 'traumatic' memories in particular, such memories may or may not pose a difficulty for Bergson's dynamic theory of memory. For while traumatic memories seem to fit Bergson's model insofar as they are thought to continually inform present circumstances, they are also exceptional insofar as they seem to remain fixed—to a pathological degree. That being said, perhaps such memories do accord with Bergson's account insofar as traumatic memories are distinguished by the fact that the actual 'content' of the memory, the 'memory-image' itself, remains beyond the purview of the victim. If it were the case that such a memory-images could not be fully projected onto perception in the present, then Bergson's account may help to explain the reason they remain fixed (i.e. because memory-images are changed through projection onto perception).

[80] Gilles Deleuze has said that, "in considering repetition in the object we remain within the conditions which make possible an idea of repetition. But in considering the change in the subject, we are already beyond these conditions, confronting the general form of difference" *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 71.

[81] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 125-6.

In the final pages of Chapter II of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson introduces the use of a few terms that will play a prominent role in his theory of memory in explaining how memory that is not "stored up" anywhere returns. The terms 'virtual' and 'actual' are meant to describe movements or zones of memory as it comes into the present. Virtual memory is initially described as powerless—it only "borrows" power when it becomes materialized in present sensation. 'Actual' describes memories that have been dormant and are now acting in the present. These split sides, one not yet present ("powerless"), the other active, operate by moving towards one another in relation to an object of sensation. In the present, an actual object impresses the sense organs, and sensations are sent off that are met by a virtual object—the object as it exists in memory. The object itself contains nothing—impressions are gathered of it that are then filled in with matching and enhancing memories that have previously been virtual.

What Bergson is suggesting is an overturning of the priority of sensory objects and memory objects in the functioning of perception. For Bergson, both sensible objects and memory-images have access to perception, but memory-images have priority. Bergson's theory is one where the process of recognition is primarily from inside out, not outside in—"not centripetal, but centrifugal."[82] That the objects of sensation do not have a privileged access to perception is given meaning according to our virtual past: "the virtual image evolves toward the virtual sensation and the virtual sensation toward the real movement: the movement, in realizing itself, realizes both the sensation of which it might have been the natural continuation and the image which has tried to embody the sensation."[83] Thus both sensation and memory (image) take on a virtual status—one wherein memory plays a greater role in shaping what is perceived than sensation. Thus Bergson gives the traditional power of sensation to memory, once it has been

[82] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 130.
[83] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 131.

joined with action in the present. Bergson closes Chapter II by claiming that Chapter III of *Matter and Memory* will delve further into the virtual and "show by what continuous progress the past tends to reconquer, by actualizing itself, the influence it had lost.[84]" In the following interpretation of Chapter III, I turn to fully enter the articulations of memory: pure, virtual, and influencing our present moment.

Figure 2

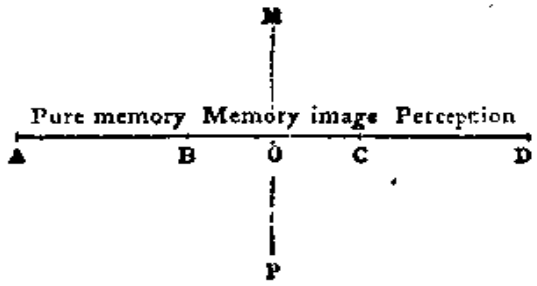

FIG. 2.

Figure 2 is introduced at the beginning of Chapter III. This figure is surprisingly linear, though it indicates anything but a linear conception of memorial activity. Depicted along a horizontal line are the three movements or processes related to memory that have been the primary topics of Chapters I and II: pure memory, memory-image and perception are placed respectively along a horizontal line, while object, perception, and memory are stacked on a vertical line. Speaking of pure memory, memory-image and perception as part of figure 2, Bergson says: "Symbolizing these three terms by the consecutive segments AB, BC, CD of the same straight line AD, we may say that our thought describes this line in a single movement, which goes from A to D, and that is impossible to say precisely where one of the terms ends and

[84] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 131.

another begins."[85] Though Bergson conceives of these memory groupings along a line, it is impossible to separate out the movements of each grouping because of the durational quality of memory. For this reason the conceptual distinctions that Bergson makes along the horizontal line are placed outside of the action, while the vertical line depicts memory moving to meet perception in relation to an object, as we will see in figures 3 and 4. This figure lays out the expansiveness of virtual and actual memory as it mobilizes in the external world. It anticipates a shift that Bergson will propose in understanding consciousness and unconsciousness in the next figure. The horizontal line indicates the progression of memorial movement: pure memory flows into memory image, which moves to meet perception and brings the past alive in the present, as is depicted above.

Accompanying this figure is a now famous description of the work of memory moving into perception. The following passage serves to illustrate the "living reality" of memorial activity that Bergson's theory encompasses, and the difference in kind between perception and memory that he establishes as one of the principle arguments of this chapter:

> Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection to call up some period of our history, we become conscious of an act *sui generis* by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past—a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it by adopting the appropriate attitude. Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on color, it tends to imitate perception. But it remains attached to the past by its deepest roots, and if, when once realized, it did not retain something of its original virtuality, if, being a present state, it were not also something which stands out distinct from the present, we should never know it for memory.[86]

This is a succinct synthesis of the concepts I have thus far discussed in Bergson's memory theory. Each phase of memorial and perceptual experience is present here, from the body calling forth

[85] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 133.
[86] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 135.

memory through action to "pure" virtual memory becoming (activated) in response to this call and transforming into an attitude that is not identifiable as memory (or the past). Bergson emphasizes that even though memory appears in the form of present action it is always tethered to the past. Recollecting memory requires leaping back into this past, which is first a "past in general," existing alongside the present moment, coextensively.[87] Memory is depicted as a living reality that becomes, and becomes almost imperceptibly in its seamless unity with the present which requires the past to give it life.

Figure 2 serves to illustrate the entirety of the memorial process that Bergson's account takes into consideration, in contrast to the limited scope of other accounts of memory that Bergson critiques. The theory of associationism is singled out as failing to account for the intermixed nature of memory and perception. [88] Bergson presents associationism as constructing conceptions of both memory and perception as singular elements at a completed stage. In associationism, memory is understood through the recollected image and perception in the sensations that have made it up. Ignoring the action that has brought a recollected image to life, and the memory-images that has contributed to a perception, not only overlooks the connected nature of memory and perception but also has to assume the presence of memory in perception. Using Figure 2, Bergson suggests that memory operates in associationism only from the line segment O-D, and that pure memory is cut out entirely. Associationism, and other accounts of memory that only operate in the "actual" fail to account for the origin point of memory-images, and ultimately, in Bergson's theory, action itself; this origin point is pure memory.

[87] I will discuss the "past in general" and coexistence of past and present in the following chapter, though this passage is significant for establishing not only the pre-existing past, but also how the present passes.
[88] Associationism is important for Bergson to construct his theory of memory against. It is important to note that *theories* of association are under critique, and not a theory of Association itself. See Bergson's discussion of "the insufficiency of the current theories of association," (Bergson, *Matter and Memor*y, 163). To this extent, Associationism is not presented in full detail, and the reader is meant to understand that Bergson is generalizing these theories in order to critique them.

Pure memory

Pure memory is a fundamental element in Bergson's theory and one that re-aligns a number of general concepts that are used in his memory theory in a new way (just as we saw occur with pure perception). Bergson articulates this realignment as the dispelling of illusions and he counts out three illusions that are strongly woven into the history of philosophical accounts of memory. I'll examine these ideas in detail below, but they are succinctly: 1. That there is merely a difference of degree between memory and perception, 2. That sensation is an "ethereal and unextended state" and 3. That consciousness is speculative.[89] Overturning these illusions takes us right into the heart of pure memory and allows us to make sense of how Bergson develops a positive account of memory against these illusions.[90]

Illusion I

Chief among these illusions is the error that there is merely a difference in degree between memory and perception. Bergson counts this as the first illusion and notes that it runs deep in the history of philosophy. The argument for this difference in kind comes up through Bergson's earlier critique of perception as speculative. As I discussed above, Bergson determines that perception is based solely in bodies and action and contains nothing of "spirit."

[89] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 137, 140-1.
[90] I borrow the idea of a "positive" theory of memory from Ed Casey, who writes in *Remembering* regarding philosophers who have dismayed over the lack of constructive theories of memory: "yet they have rarely offered a positive account of memory to take the place of rejected theories," 2.

In Chapter III, Bergson makes the argument for a difference in kind between perception and memory along new lines that help to develop the concept of pure memory. His first approach distinguishes the present from the past: "My present is that which interests me, which lives for me, and in a word, that which summons me to action; in contrast, my past is essentially powerless."[91] This statement lays out Bergson's early distinction between present and past, rhetorically overshadowing the importance that will be placed on the past throughout the course of this work. The emphasis that is placed on the present is in keeping with Bergson's definition of perception as action. The present calls us to action while the past does not.

Present and past come together when Bergson inquires how it is that a present moment is determined. He concludes that while an ideal present exists, a "concrete live present" cannot be isolated since the nature of time is that it is always moving forward. The present occupies a duration, and this duration is not only moving rapidly forward into the future but is pulling the past forward as well. As I sit at a desk I am conscious of the immediate typing that I am doing, while I also recall the words I have just read, and the tea I have just sipped. These moments were my present but quickly passed as I continued in my task of writing. The point is that while we advance into the future the past is always with us, making sense of the immediate present we are in and the moments we are lead into. This vision of the present that is knit with the past and leading into the future is the subject of much of Bergson's memory work.

In his description of the present in Chapter III, Bergson likens it not to conscious vision but to action. The present is aligned with Bergson's conception of perception: "my present consists in a joint system of sensations and movements. My present is, in its essence, sensori-motor."[92] In other words, the present, like perception, is to be understood through the body and

[91] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 137.
[92] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 138.

action: we are to understand the present through the temporal shifts that our body senses and acts upon. Extended matter is defined by Bergson as "a present which is always beginning again," and engagement with this present is always through the body.[93] For Bergson, this claim positions the body, which has been articulated above as a privileged image that is not only responsive to motion but responsible for it, as a central factor in the difference in kind between memory and perception.[94]

A second approach to making the case for a difference in kind between memory and perception also comes through this centrally positioned body. Bergson states, "my actual sensations occupy definite portions of the surface of my body; pure memory, on the other hand, interests no part of my body."[95] On one side the body is acting in the extended world of matter, on the other side there is the interior realm of memory and the past. While the body is the conduit for memories, as I will soon dwell upon, Bergson emphasizes here that the action of the body is oriented entirely towards sensation and the physical world with no interest in memory. This division is meant as a critique against accounts of memory that falsely assume sensation to contain memory within it and then have difficulty accounting for where sensation-memory is located. From Bergson's positioning of the present, perception is entirely understood through sensations and movement, memory is powerless and entirely outside of the realm of externalized sensation.

Illusion II

[93] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 139.
[94] I discuss the role of the body at more length in the following chapter.
[95] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 139.

The second illusion that Bergson tackles is introduced through an example that critiques the outcome of regarding memory and perception as only separated by a difference in degree. Bergson writes concerning "most psychologists":

> They perceive memory only in the form of an image, that is to say, already embodied in nascent sensations. Having thus attributed to it that which is essential to sensation, and refusing to see in the ideality of memory something distinct, something contrasted with sensation itself, they are forced, when they come back to pure sensation, to leave to it that ideality with which they have thus implicitly endowed nascent sensations.[96]

The consequence of this thinking leads to both the faculty of perception and memory possessing the attributes of the other. Memory becomes localized at different points on the body while sensation is simultaneously freed from this localization—losing its connection to the bodily point of contact where sensation occurs.

Bergson's insistence on an active, bodily conception of perception that is sharply distinguished from memory is ultimately what allows him to make a case for the existence of pure memory. Perception, as I have discussed, is to be understood as an active and need based faculty that is always mixed with memory-images. However, perception is different in kind from memory and as a faculty it should not be understood as possessing any memory in itself. To get at this point Bergson proposes a pure perception, which is stripped of any memorial or subjective qualities. Pure memory, similarly, is entirely devoid of the perceptual and external world. Without this active conduit into the external world, pure memory is "radical[ly] powerlessness" but preserved entirely in a "latent state."[97] The argument for pure memory, made up of the entirety of our past memorial states and existing in a state of potentiality, is partly made by dispelling the third illusion concerning unconscious and conscious mental states, which we will now turn to in our next section on figure 3.

[96] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 140.
[97] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 141.

Figure 3 and Illusion 3

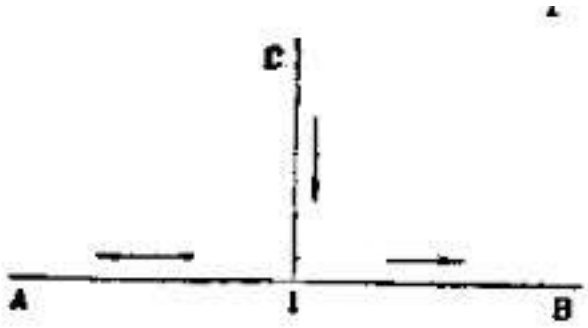

FIG. 3.

Bergson's third figure is introduced in the middle of Chapter III of *Matter and Memory* to elucidate his understanding of the unconscious and to help illustrate and dispel a third illusion that permeates the history of philosophy. This illusion concerns the understanding of what constitutes conscious activity. Bergson links this illusion to previous errors that he has worked to overcome, primary among them the view that perception is speculative. Since Bergson will go on to link consciousness and perception, it is in keeping with the divisions in kind that he has established that he claims that this error concerning consciousness that he is dispelling is part of an "ever-recurrent illusion."[98] Bergson argues that the problem with viewing consciousness as speculative is that "we cannot see what interest, devoted as it is supposed to be to pure knowledge, it would have in allowing any information that it possesses to escape" and so "we

[98] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 141.

fail to understand why it refuses to throw light on something that was not entirely lost to it."[99] That "something" is the past, and Bergson concludes that "in the domain of consciousness, all that is real is actual" and the past no longer exists once it has passed.[100]

The question that Bergson uses to test theories that see consciousness as speculative is: what happens to a psychical state after it ceases to be conscious? Does it cease to exist? He responds that while a psychical state might leave conscious activity, we do not believe that something no longer present to our immediate thought or surroundings ceases to exist. Bergson establishes the unconscious as the domain for psychical states that are not immediately present—that *exist* outside of consciousness.[101] "The idea of an unconscious representation is clear, despite current prejudices; we may even say that we make constant use of it, that there is no conception more familiar to common sense."[102] As I will show, the unconscious will play as much of a role in the Bergson's theory of reality as consciousness does.

Bergson lays out a conception of conscious and unconscious activity that parallels the divisions he has made between present and past, perception and memory. The role of consciousness aligns with perception and the present, while the unconscious becomes the domain for memory and the past. Bergson writes, "in other words, in the psychological domain, consciousness may not be the synonym of existence, but only of real action or immediate efficacy; limiting thus the meaning of the term, we shall have less difficulty in representing to ourselves a psychical state which is unconscious, that is to say, ineffective."[103] Thus by linking

[99] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 142.
[100] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 142.
[101] By identifying the past's "*existence outside of consciousness*," Bergson is first able to speak of the past as something that can continue to exist. *Matter and Memory*, 142.
[102] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 142.
[103] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 142.

consciousness to present activity, which is also to say by limiting consciousness to the field of action and movement, Bergson opens up the domain of the unconscious to internal life.

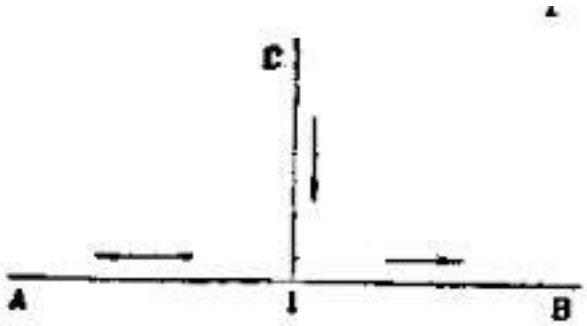

FIG. 3.

Bergson relies on figure 3 to illustrate his conception of the unconscious in relation to conscious activity. This figure resembles an upside down T: The ⊥ flatly depicts time and space on perpendicular lines (as is depicted in Figure 2)—spaces stretches out horizontally (points A-B) and time extends vertically up (points C-I). Their meeting point is that which is "given to consciousness" (point I). This figure can be viewed as the skeletal structure of the next figure we will encounter: the cone of memory.

Figure 3, above, helps to dispel the illusion that there is more "reality" in the external world that stretches around us at any given moment than there is in the expanse of our past experience. For Bergson, this illusion stems from the theory of speculative consciousness wherein there is a mistaken but commonplace emphasis placed on space over time. In this emphases we easily perceive space stretched out around us, attributing existence to unperceived space that we do not immediately see or interact with. In Berson's view we do not attribute existence to the unperceived portions of our past experience that act to inform our present.

As figure 3 depicts, though, our spatial reality and our past temporal reality exist in equal proportion to our immediate conscious experience. The unconscious operates similarly to the

unperceived portions of space; even though it is out of sight, we do not doubt its existence. "In truth," Bergson writes, "the adherence of this memory to our present condition is exactly comparable to the adherence of unperceived objects to those objects which we perceive; and the unconscious plays in each case a similar part."[104] A hallway exists outside of my bedroom, and connected to it stairs, a porch and all of the neighborhood in which I live. I do not doubt this when I open my door to go out into the world. Limiting temporal reality to an immediate present ignores the depth of mental states that extend behind us in proportion to the material world that exists in front of us. Furthermore, as Bergson notes in the above quote, the unconscious plays a part in both cases. Within it, memory not only facilitates the understanding that there are objects outside of my immediate perception, the unconscious also harbors the virtual memories that continually come forward and are actualized in the present.[105]

As in my example above, Bergson describes walking out into the world with the expectation that rooms and objects will be there. He uses this example to explain why we fail to recognize the expanse of the past as proportionate to the outer world around us. The past no longer interests me in the way that the physical space that stretches out before me does. The "material universe" is "big with promises and threats," and the past 'cannot and should not' hold sway over us in this way.[106] The past, as Bergson points out, is not present in immediate consciousness, it is full of images already perceived that might seem capriciously ordered as they come to mind. In contrast, the present stretches out in a unity that can easily be made sense of: the objects closest to me can be acted upon and I am able foresee what will appear when I enter a

[104] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 145.
[105] Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 144-50.
[106] Bergson, *Matter and* Memory, 144. Though Bergson is deeply involved in the language of the unconscious in *Matter and Memory* the difference between his conception of the unconscious and Freud's is made clear in this point. The material universe is what holds out threats, the past does not and the unconscious is not 'psychological', so much as that which is not present to mind. Even though this point aligns with commonly held positions that Bergson is trying to disprove, he does not see an individual's past as psychologically determinative of their existence in the material universe.

space. These habits of thought regarding space and time (or matter and memory) illustrate how the differences between these two states of existence are enlarged while the similarities are minimized.

Bergson claims that at the root of this misconception is an illusion that vitiates our acknowledgment (or understanding) of the role the unconscious plays in our lives. This is an illusion that leads us to a position wherein we assume "the double movement by which we come to assume objective realities without relation to consciousness, and states of consciousness without objective reality—space thus appearing to preserve indefinitely the things which are there juxtaposed, while time in its advance devours the states which succeed each other within it."[107] With the term "devour" Bergson directs our attention to the assumption that time disappears entirely after it passes. This is hardly the case. This failure to recognize the role of the past in relation to the present is one that determines much of Bergson's philosophical project.[108] Bergson proposes that the preservation of the past ought to be viewed as possessing *as least* as much reality as our relation to present objects that surround us spatially.

Though Bergson attempts to makes sense of how and why these illusions regarding the past operate in our everyday experience, he is quick to argue against the explanations he offers for why we might see the past as useless (as mentioned above, the disappeared nature of the past, the seeming capriciousness of memories, etc.). In response to the claim that our memories appear discontinuous to us while objects in space usually possess a logical order, Bergson argues that because memory is in service to consciousness it moves to meet the present when needed, skipping over any causal relation to contextual "occurrences" between memories. The seeming

[107] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 143.
[108] Bergson's attempt to correct for the errors of thought that arise through the identification of existence with space and spatial metaphors (as opposed to time) is a recurring principle of his thought, one first developed in *Time and Free Will*.

discontinuous nature of memories entering our present moment is not capricious, but rather, Bergson explains, it is *efficient* in inserting the necessary memories into a particular action.[109] This is another an example of the interest that Bergson shows in asserting the utility of memory.

An evocative image that Bergson offers presents the connected nature of memories as a chain. Each link of the chain represents a section of a memory-image that has a date in time. Bergson's memory chain metaphor is meant to draw out the connectedness of unconscious states in way that is similar to the connected nature of objects appearing in space around us. As noted, I assume that outside of the room where I sit there is another room and a hall, etc. My present perception is one link in a chain, but Bergson notes that this single link "communicates its actuality to the rest of the chain."[110] By emphasizing that memories form a similar chain, Bergson is arguing that even though not every part of a memory-image is in use at any given moment this does not mean that the whole of a remembered moment is not present, and still connected with the memory link in use. In other words, as I will go into at length below, a returning memory, acting in the present, is connected with an entire set of linked memories, but only part may be actualized or consciously noted.

Another argument for how the unconscious plays an overlooked role in everyday life takes us into the territory of metaphysics. Bergson takes a new approach in making his argument for unconscious states by focusing on existence itself. He states that when we consider existence from the perspective of experience:

> Existence appears to imply two conditions taken together: (1) presentation in consciousness and (2) the logical or casual connection of that which is so presented with what precedes and with what follows. The reality for us of a psychical state or of a material object consists in the double fact that our consciousness perceives them and that

[109] Indeed, for Bergson memory initially comes forth in the service of action that is useful for the body.
[110] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 145.

> they form part of a series, temporal or spatial, of which the elements determine each other.[111]

Here Bergson points out that our notion of existence implies not only the presence of something, but the presence of something as integrated with what comes before and follows—causally and logically. He continues by noting that the degree to which entities can be present or integrated can vary. For example, an internal state might be less integrated than an object that appears in physical space. Indeed, whereas Bergson identifies physical objects as being wholly causally integrated, memory often moves to meet the present moment by leaving out memory-images not relevant to future action, as I have discussed above.[112]

Bergson's point is not the physical objects (matter) are more real than the objects of memory. While physical objects surpass internal objects in integration, Bergson argues that they do not fulfill the first condition—presence—to the same degree. Whereas we can never perceive everything around us, or even the entirety of one physical object at once, we can grasp the entirety of a memory-image or internal impression, which has its entire exists entirely within our experience.[113] In this sense, internal objects—and the unconscious that allows for them—take on a reality that is no less important or 'real' than external reality.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have followed the development of Bergson's account of memory to the point where Bergson has established the existence of the unconscious as separate from, but

[111] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 147.
[112] Or, to use the metaphor from above, memory often operates by leaving out 'links in the chain' of memory-images that, together, constitute the memory of an experience. Physical objects, on the other hand, cannot have 'missing links' in the chain of causal interaction. They are, as Bergson says, thoroughly determined by fixed 'laws of nature.' Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17.
[113] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 147.

essential to, consciousness. Bergson has argued against the failure to attribute existence to unconscious states, thereby collapsing unconscious memories into conscious activity. Following the pattern that I showed Bergson establishes above, entities are first separated in order to identify their differences before synthesizing them (perception and memory, present and past). In the following chapter, I will show how Bergson brings consciousness and the unconscious together, arguing that conscious and unconscious activity continually works in tandem to fill in the experience of external reality with the entirety of the past.

The question of the existence of the past is what Bergson argues has been part of the error in understanding the nature of the past itself. We have been caught up in a worry over where the past would be contained, if it were to continue to exist after passing. He clears up this problem by applying his critique of the spatialization of duration:

> This survival of the past per se forces itself upon philosophers, then, under one form or another; the difficulty that we have in conceiving it comes simply from the fact that we extend to the series of memories, in time, that obligation of containing and being contained which applies only to the collection of bodies instantaneously perceived in space.[114] (149)

Since the past is not a material object it does not reside in any location. This argument is the same one made in Chapter 1 of *Matter and Memory*: memories do not reside in the brain because the brain is an image among all other images. Bergson suggests that the real issue shouldn't be the question of the location of past images, but the usefulness of these images: "the question is just whether the past has ceased to exist or whether it has simply ceased to be useful."[115]

With this question Bergson's memory theory takes a turn towards utility that is surprising in part because of the rhetorical emphasis of memory aligned with spirit. Though Bergson's intent with the question of the usefulness of the past is directed at utility for movement, I will

[114] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 149.
[115] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 149.

approach this question more broadly as I continue on in Chapter 2 to examine the final figures of memory. Specifically asking, how does our past influence who we are over time? What is the usefulness of the past for us, as subjects in the world?

Chapter 2. The cone of memory

Introduction

In chapter 1 I analyzed the basic concepts that make up Bergson's memory theory with a special focus placed on figures 1-3. In the course of laying out this conception of memory I have briefly synopsized the significant portions of the "matter" side of this theory, which effectively makes up the other half of this book, but mainly to the extent that it factors into an understanding of memory. In chapter 1 I showed that the approach that Bergson takes to thinking about memory and the past is largely oriented toward action and utility. In particular I showed the dualism at the core of Bergson's thinking, in matter and spirit, perception and memory, and in the two forms that memory takes. In the early pages of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson quickly divides off functions and faculties to align with either spirit or with matter. This dualist approach is intended to distinguish the specific qualities of each faculty before showing how they function together. To set up a true dualism between perception and memory Bergson establishes pure perception as a concept encompassing the entirety of the action-oriented perceptual faculty as it differs in kind from pure memory, a conception of memorial activity stripped entirely of perception. While the pure forms of both perception and memory do not operate independently, these conceptions effectively identify the qualities existing in nature of these differences in kind, first separately, then working together.

Bergson's conception of memory is broken down beginning with two forms of memory. These two forms, motor mechanism and recollection (memory-image), respond to a failure that Bergson identifies in accounts of memory to articulate the "motor mechanism" aspect of memory. The result is that memory is only considered to be one type of thing, and the automatic nature of

memory— habitual actions that are seen as motor mechanism— are collapsed into the more common recollection memory or smuggled into accounts of perception.

Recollection and habit memory, representing a difference in kind within memory itself, continues to be developed throughout the course of *Matter and Memory* and takes on significance especially in the five figures that Bergson uses to illustrate the operations of memory and the engagement of matter and memory. Recognition, the process through which memory enters the present, is one of the first elements of memory we looked to that is significantly altered in Bergson's account. Recognition is not to be understood merely as the coming together of memory and perception; this would be to suggest that recognition is always a function of memory, and Bergson argues that recognition is also a function of action. To this extent there are two types of recognition: automatic and attentive. Automatic recognition is action and reaction while attentive recognition is the filling in of action by memory-images. The position of recognition in Bergson's theory initiates the tendency in his theory to favor the position of action and the present. For Bergson the body is always bent toward action in the present. The body, understood as a privileged image that is a source of motion through voluntary action, plays the connecting link between memory and action, and it is the role of action that Bergson suggests we have been missing in our memory theories.[116]

The figures that Bergson introduces throughout the course of *Matter and Memory* illustrate the operations of his account of memory positively in distinction to past memory theories that simply state what memory is not. I have relied heavily on these in the figures in the

[116] A note on the role of the body, as discussed in Chapter 1, Bergson sees the body as an image that is privileged because an individual understands it from within. From without, the body operates in a mechanistic and utility oriented way, directed towards action, acting on the images that surround it. As I will discuss below, the body also becomes an expression of memory for Bergson.

past chapter, so I will give a brief review of the contributions that I see figures 1, 2, and 3 making to Bergson's account.

Figure 1, the "mushroom cloud," illustrates Bergson's conception of reflective perception, that is, the way in which perception is built up by memory-images the more attentively we engage with an object. This figure is mirrored, depicting the build up of memory-images in relation to an object, and the deeper concentration of reality that an object takes on in accordance with our attentiveness to it (attention ushering in memory-images). In this first figure, which shares elements with the final figure, we see Bergson beginning to account for the way in which the past shapes the present moment, and how our experience in the present is significantly different based on how we engage with the past.

Figure 2, plotted in an x-y graph, depicts the movement of memory. Beginning with pure memory and ending in perception, the figure shows how pure memory flows into the memory image and then moves to meet perception to bring the past alive in the present. Bergson criticizes other accounts of memory (especially Associationism) for beginning with the memory-image, and overlooking pure memory. He argues that such accounts of memory conflate memory and perception. Bergson's third figure, an upside down T-shaped graph, is meant to show how the expanse of our past exists and impacts our present with like the spatial dimensions that surround us. It is used to dispel a number of illusions pertaining to conscious and unconscious activity, and it gives justification for Bergson's conception of pure memory. As in figure 2, Bergson uses a graph with both x and y axes to depict different ways that the virtual can move toward, and influence, the actual. This upside down T illustrates conscious activity horizontally stretching out around us and unconscious activity existing vertically. Bergson argues that consciousness is not speculative and ought to be understood as operating in the present. The unconscious, containing

the entirety of our past— the memories that bring the present alive— exists and operates continually through the present. The role the unconscious plays, then, is as vast as all of our past states and the continually changing present and future that they move into. Our character links these states, determining the way in which the past enters the present. This seeming subjective turn in Bergson's theory opens the way for a number of considerations that I will look to my analysis of figures 4 and 5 regarding the possibility of becoming through our past, and impacting significant change in the present.

The "cone of memory" is Bergson's most famous illustrative figure. As I will suggest in this chapter, the implications for this figure, or figures, (since there are technically two cones of memory: figures 4 and 5) open up new ways for thinking through the way that the self becomes in relation to the Past. The psychological quality of these zones of memory opens Bergson's theory up to a number of interpretations of the implications for this returning memory. That is to say that Bergson's account not only offers a positive articulation of the mechanics of memory, but, as I will argue in the chapters to come, this work suggests that our character—our self—is bound up with the way in which memory returns and that this is a matter of choice. The suggestion I highlight in Bergson's account is that the way our memory returns is malleable, and thus the way we are is also malleable. In other words, Bergson's account of memory is a way to consider becoming, through memory. Deleuze will take this suggestion to the extreme and argue that Bergson's account provides an ontology that prioritizes the existence of the past as the element of our existence. This direction might seem at odds with the account of memory that has been outlined above. It is clear that Bergson's intent in defining memory is primarily oriented to showing how memory is useful for action in the present. That is to say, memory is not given a romanticized Proustian treatment in Bergson. It is a use-value, and as I quoted above, it is

functioning best when it is "docile" and conforms itself to the present moment, rather than sending forward memories that are not useful.[117]

In this chapter I will advance an argument that makes use of Bergson's theory, and tentatively works through the tension that is present in his account regarding the utility of memory, and the psychological and ontological dimensions that open up new memorial paths for thinking about the nature of the self. As I will argue here, figures 4 and 5 belie the rhetoric regarding the nature and use of memory that Bergson proposes throughout *Matter and Memory*. I read these figures as providing an alternate account to a solely utility oriented conception of memory. My interpretation will examine the concept of self that emerges from Bergson's memory theory and how the descriptions of memory that he gives allow for subjective insight.

Figure 4

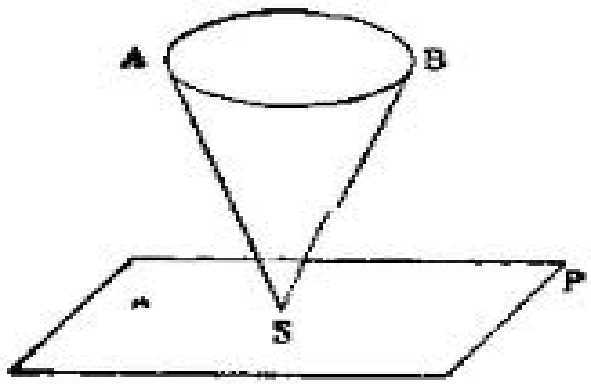

FIG. 4.

[117] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153.

The statement that best orients Bergson's approach to memory in his analysis of figure 4 is: "*Practically, we perceive only the past*, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future."[118] This claim is certainly a departure from the previous "radical powerlessness"[119] of pure memory, though Bergson's argument for the past as practically making up our perception does not contradict his earlier phrase, but expands upon the complexity of his conception of memory. Below, I'll review Bergson's discussion consciousness in order to understand how and why it is that our immediate present is made up of the past. In this section I'll then draw out the significance that figure 4 holds for thinking about the past in relation to the body, memory-image, and our character. As in chapter 1, my analysis follows out the direction that Bergson takes in *Matter in Memory,* and it is in the discussion of character that I begin to suggest how the self is operative in Bergson's thinking about the return of the past.

Bergson's conception of consciousness as action and movement is one of the keys to understanding how the past inhabits our present. As discussed in chapter 1, the immediate present is always a continuation of our past. By the time that we think of the present moment it has already passed. Bergson writes: "your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; in truth every perception is already memory."[120] Here again, Bergson radically claims the role of the present for the past. This claim is not made as a rhetorical or overly technical claim, though. He stakes out this territory for the past in part because of the role that consciousness plays, writing that it: "illumines, at each moment of time, that immediate part of the past which, impending over the future, seeks to realize and associate with it." The claim that our present is our past is thus a claim about our immediate past—the moments that have just passed: the passage I have just read, the tea just sipped. The continuous

[118] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 150.
[119] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 141.
[120] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 150.

nature of our existence is provided by our ability to knit together past moments with our immediate present, keeping this expanse in our future-oriented consciousness. In other words, the past orientation of our present consciousness facilitates our action and movement in the form of habit-memory, or to return to the two forms of memory: motor-mechanism.

Our present is also presided over by the 2nd form of memory we have discussed. Bergson has called this form, which operates through memory-images, recollection, or simply "true memory." It is through an analysis of the way in which this form of memory functions that we see the past truly influencing ("making up") the present. Recollection is not habitual, it is referred to as true memory largely because these are the memories that make up our life: summers at the lake, learning to drive a stick shift, breaking a mug. All of these memories, large and small, have an influence on our present moment. Bergson writes of this memory: "Coextensive with consciousness, it retains and ranges alongside of each other all of our states in the order in which they occur, leaving to each fact its place and, consequently, marking its date, truly moving in the past and not, like the first, in an ever renewed present."[121] Both through the continual building up of memory-images and in the availability of this storehouse of past experience to our present moment, this "true memory" is always present in a state of potentiality—'virtually.'[122]

Bergson sets up his discussion of the cone of memory by returning to the body, the central image and connecting link between past and present, memory and perception. The status of the body as central is elevated to "a section of the universal becoming," and it is also referred to as a "hyphen."[123] This hyphen provides the connecting link for a term that is already part of

[121] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 151.
[122] This passage will acquire more significance when I turn, shortly, to the figure "par excellence" in *Matter and Memory*, the cone of memory.
[123] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 151.

our vocabulary: the memory-image (*souvenir-image*). As a hyphen, the body thus unites our memories of the past with images in the present.[124]

Viewing the body as a "hyphen" and "place of passage" recognizes the role it facilitates between two modes of existence: the present, and the material images that proliferate around it, and the past, ripe with memory-images unique to each individual that have the potential to introduce newness into the present moment. Each of these phrases attributed to the body emphasizes the channeling role that it performs between past and present. Bergson reminds us that since the body itself is an image it cannot store up other images—no memories or perceptions *remain* in the body. Rather, perceptions and images move through it, contributing to the continual growth and change of that Bergson calls "a section of universal becoming."[125]

If we look to figure 4, we see how the figure depicts the body as a "place of passage" between past memory-images and present perceptions.

[124] Here, Bergson hints at the continued development of a dynamic conception of the memory-image. As mentioned in the first chapter of this work, Bergson's concept 'memory-image' initially appears to express the inactive and fixed content of recollection. As Bergson's comment about the hyphen suggests, the concept 'memory-image' already holds, in itself, a dynamic sense of the transference of past (identified with pure memory) to present (identified with the image, which "is a present state"). (Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 140.) This idea is further developed through figure 4, the cone of memory.

[125] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 151.

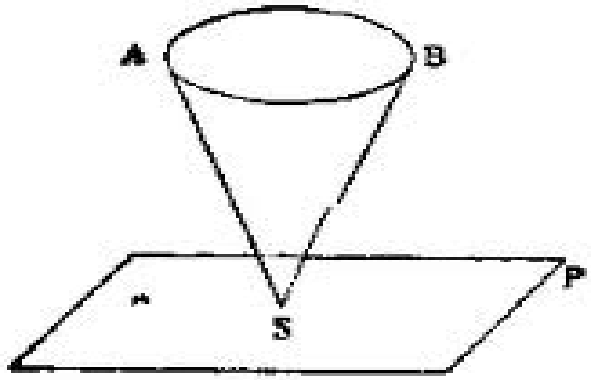

FIG. 4.

The structure of figure 4 is very similar to the lines in figure 3—As discussed in the previous chapter, figure 3 is the skeletal structure of the cone. The horizontal lines of both figures represent space. The vertical lines of figure 3 and the vertical extension of the cone in figure 4 represent the past. The intersecting points of both figures 3 and 4 represent the temporal and spatial elements coming together in an individual body. The meeting point of the past and the present is channeled through the body, which receives images of the past in response to encounters in the present.[126]

The points on figure 4 are illustrated to appear three-dimensional. The cone shape is made up of points SAB. This is where Bergson places "the totality of the recollections accumulated in my memory."[127] Point P, the plane of the present, is articulated as "my actual representation of the universe."[128] Point S, touching down in point P, and connected through the

[126] As Al-Saji points out, later in *Matter and Memory* Bergson will see the body as expressing its own duration in relation to the memorial past. For a fuller analysis of the lived body in Bergson and in Merleau-Ponty see her essay, "Temporality of Life: Merleau-Ponty, Bergson and the Immemorial Past," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, XLV (2007): 183.
[127] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 152.
[128] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 152.

triangular figure to Points A and B, represents the present moment of the cone, and this is where the body moves. Bergson writes of point S that "this image does but receive and restore actions emanating from all the images of which the plane is composed."[129] In points A and B, the inverted base of the cone, we find the uppermost zone of memory. This is "true" memory, memories no longer connected to the present, and preserving all of the details of the event in which they took place.

It is important to Bergson's theory that this exemplary figure illustrates both forms of memory within its structure: habit memory and "true" memory together, lending each other "mutual support" in the construction of an individual's reality in the present. [130] Bodily memory acts at the tip of the cone while true memory fills the figure and base. Bergson insists that "these are not two separate things."[131] Rather, the true memory that flows from the base of the cone is channeled into the tip to act out present moments, transforming from virtual memory to actualized memory in the present. The tip is ever mobile, moving forward through space while the base remains immobile, the past unceasingly flowing into the base as time progresses; this double movement of the past moves forward to enliven action in the present.

The fleshing out of figure 4 enables Bergson to depict the ever moving, yet stable base of memory. We can imagine that throughout the course of a life the cone becomes ever longer—memory continuously moving into the cone, cycling back into the present moment when it is needed. This is why figure 4 goes beyond depicting the expanse of the past in relation to the present and illustrates the expansion of the past and its preservation *in itself*. Memory's preservation in itself is depicted not as contained within some particular material reality, but as a necessary faculty in our everyday existence. We are able to act because we have the expanse of

[129] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 152.
[130] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 152.
[131] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 152.

the past ranging along our every moment and entering the present through action. Of course, we do not only experience memory through action—we remember willingly, and memories return to us involuntarily that have nothing to do with acting in the present. As I have so far examined, though, Bergson's analysis of the past is stripped of the personal aspect that makes memory feel unique. In identifying the elements of memory Bergson seems to leave out the emotional. Below I'll look to his analysis of character, the entrance of the personal in Bergson's thought.

The cone of memory is also meant to illustrate and explain *types* of life. Both ends of the cone indicate tendencies in an individual's life that have more or less prominence in their character. Bergson has previously brought up character through figure 3, as a link between conscious and unconscious states—external and internal, our immediate present and our past—it is a joining "synthesis of all of our past states."[132] Like the body that is centrally located between memory and perception, past and present, as a conductor between these two states, our character is a reflection of both sides of this divide. Bergson writes:

> The whole of our past psychical life conditions our present state, without being its necessary determinant; whole, also, it reveals itself in our character, although none of its past states manifests itself explicitly in our character. Taken together, these two conditions assure to each one of the past psychological states a real, although an unconscious existence.[133]

The two conditions that Bergson refers to are the two conditions for existence that he used to argue for the existence of the unconscious. These conditions allow him to put forward an argument concerning not only the existence of the past, but also its continual influence on our present moment. The influence of the past makes up who we are and acts as a "connector" between past and present, along with our body, which we will return to in the following chapter.

[132] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 146.
[133] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 148.

Through our character we show ourselves to the world: in bodily movements and habits unique to each individual, in speech patterns, in particular responses to given situations, etc.

Each one of these past states has a "real, though an unconscious, existence."[134] Bergson brings up this understanding of identity in relation to the cone of memory by asking about the interaction between habit memory and memory-image. He says, "is it not by the constancy of this agreement, by the precision with which these two complementary memories insert themselves each into the other, that we recognize a 'well balanced mind,' that is to say, in fact, a man nicely adapted to life?"[135] To illustrate the extremes of living at either 'end of the cone', he depicts two types of men: the dreamer and the man of impulse.

The 'man of impulse' is closely associated with the tip of the cone and the immediate action and reaction that occurs in the present moment. Bergson denigrates this type of living by linking it to the action of the "lower animals," and also by referring to this type of individual as a "conscious automaton."[136] The association between immediate action in the present limits, almost entirely, this individual's ability to recognize ways that experiences differ from universal categories under which these experiences are understood. Bergson says that the man of action, "always swayed by habit, would only distinguish in any situation that aspect in which it practically *resembles* former situations; incapable, doubtless, of *thinking* universals… he would nevertheless move in universals, habit being to action what generality is to thought."[137]

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the dreamer is described as one who "*dream*[s] his life instead of living it."[138] Living in the past without any thought to the present, this type of individual fails to act on the memories that he spends his time focusing upon, "keep[ing] before

[134] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 148.
[135] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153.
[136] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153, 155.
[137] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 155, italics in original.
[138] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 155, italics in original.

his eyes at each moment the infinite multitude of the details of this past history."[139] The danger of this type of existence is that an individual would "never rise above the particular" and thereby never identify the proper response to the type of experience they are undergoing.[140] Each image would be assigned an independent date in time and position in space, but no habitual reaction would arise. [141]

These depictions are meant to show the extremes of living at either end of the cone—immersed in memory-images, or focused intently on the present. Of course, these types of life are hardly possible— no one is able to detach entirely from the present or from memory. [142] The middle point between these extremes is where Bergson locates 'good or practical sense' and in line with his memory theory, he fittingly sums this individual up as the "man of action" and characterizes him by saying that the "promptitude with which he summons to the help of a given situation all the memories which have reference to it; it is also the insurmountable barrier which encounters, when they present themselves on the threshold of his consciousness, memories that are useless or indifferent."[143] For Bergson, the middle ground of memory—a disposition that resists the call of capricious memory by focusing on the necessity of present action—is best sought out. Bergson's claim here is that memory ought to always be directed toward usefulness as fulfilled in action. Thus the dreamer, who allows recollections to "emerge into the light of

[139] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 155.
[140] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 155.
[141] Jorge Luis Borges excellently imagines what a person who is able to recall every single memory would be like in his short story "Funes the Memorious." This character eventually confines himself to a dark and silent room in order to escape the endless buildup of memory-images. Jorge Luis Borges, "Funes, the Memorious," in *Ficciones*, trans. Anthony Kerrigan, (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 107-17. .
[142] At this point I have shown that Bergson continually employs the technique of presenting abstracted extremes (differences in kind) in order to grasp actual living experience, which operates between the two. The presentation of the man of impulse and dreamer is another example.
[143] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153.

consciousness without any advantage for the present situation" is contemplative to a fault.[144] For Bergson, it is only in sleep or on the verge of death that the necessity of action rightly relaxes.[145]

It is significant that even while engaging in a theoretical assessment of how memory should be adapted toward life in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson seems to eschew pensive thinking in favor of an action-based mode of engagement. The disposition of memory that he sees as most balanced is one "docile enough to follow with precision all the outlines of the present situation, but energetic enough to resist all other appeal."[146] Though Bergson equates this position with practical, good sense, it is also a position that is most aligned with convention.

The interpenetration of these memory states, associated with either end of the cone, serves as the ground for a discussion of generality and resemblance that Bergson examines next. He writes of these extreme states, one entirely devoted to memory, the other immersed in action: "the first reveals itself in the recollection of differences, the second in the perception of resemblances: at the meeting of the two currents appears the general idea."[147] Continuing Bergson's technique of isolating pure extremes to develop his thought, memory is aligned with difference and perception (or action) with resemblance. Generality, as I show, is what will fluxuate between the two points—the two ends of the cone of memory. I now turn to a second iteration of the cone of memory that Bergson develops to account for this discussion of generality and resemblance, further depicting the way in which memory returns.

Figure 5

[144] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153.
[145] Bergson's description prefigures Freud's work on dreams and makes the point that sleep leads to an "indifference" towards the return of memory images such that entire past histories return to us that we no longer remember in waking life. See his essay "On Dreams," in *Mind-Energy*, and *The World of Dreams*.
[146] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 153. I will return to this quote later to draw out the implications of his use of the term "docile" in reference to the supposed best disposition of memory.
[147] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 155.

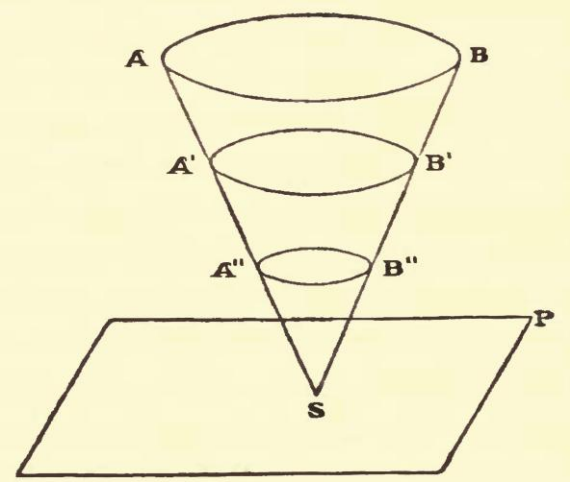

Figure 5 is introduced to address a question that Bergson says touches on "an essential problem of mental life."[148] This problem concerns the circular relationship between universals and particulars ('individuals'), or between 'generality' and 'resemblance' as they operate in the formation of general ideas. Bergson poses the problem in this way: "to generalize, it is first of all necessary to abstract, but to abstract to any purpose we must already know how to generalize."[149]

Bergson begins his discussion by entering the debate between conceptualism and nominalism over where apprehension of the external world begins. The nominalists, Bergson, tells us, reduce the idea of an general idea to the set of particulars to which such an idea refers, seeing "in it merely an open and unlimited series of individual objects."[150] Along their model a general idea comes about in the following way: "we begin by perceiving a thing, and then we assign to it a word: this word, backed by the faculty of or the habit of extending itself to an unlimited number of things, then sets up for a general idea."[151] Conceptualism, on the other hand, begins with the intellect, which, "resolves [what it sees as the] superficial unity of the individual into different qualities," such as 'whiteness', maintaining that universal categories exists

[148] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 161.
[149] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 156.
[150] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 156.
[151] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 156.

separately from individuals, which are characterized by their potential to hold and express these qualities.

Bergson shifts the direction of the debate by suggesting that unlike these opposing theories, experience starts "neither from the perception of the individual nor from the conception of the genus, but from an intermediate knowledge, from a confused sense of the *striking quality* or of resemblance."[152] Here Bergson suggests that we primarily engage with entities from a vague and non-conceptualized recognition of the similarities among them, rather than through the appearance of separate and isolated entities. This unrefined sense, which resides between the extremes of particularity and conceptuality, allows for both extremes. Bergson goes on to say: "this sense, equally remote from generality fully conceived and individuality clearly perceived, begets both of them by a process of disassociation."[153]

By posing the problem in this way, as a process of moving toward the extremes from the middle, Bergson interprets the debate about generality and resemblance (universals and particulars) in terms of the motion to and from present perception and pure memory in the cone of memory. Each direction of motion within the cone is named: "*reflective analysis* clarifies it into the general idea; *discriminative memory* solidifies it into a perception of the individual."[154] Here the processes of thought that move us from toward perception and concept, along with the problem of how the mind is able to engage both particulars and universals, are explicable within the framework that Bergson provides through the cone of memory.

One implication of Bergson's theory is that action takes a prominent role in initiating the creation of genera. Bergson suggests that there is no need for abstraction in first seizing upon

[152] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 158.
[153] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 158.
[154] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 158, italics added.

that which attracts attention.[155] We begin not by reflection, but by first acting upon that which attracts us, often repeating this action again and again in response to similar stimuli. It is the repetition of actions—otherwise known as motor-mechanism or habit in Bergson's theory—*the first form of memory*—that is the "germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas."[156] Bergson's argument for how we arrive at the general escapes the circularity of nominalism and conceptualism. We begin by acting out similarity and we return to these actions *intelligently*. Abstraction is not initially mental, it begins as the physical repetition of action and develops into the notion of genera in the mind, as Bergson states.

> And it is precisely in the course of this progress that are built up, by the double effort of the understanding and of the memory, the perception of individuals and the conception of genera—memory grafting distinctions upon resemblances which have been spontaneously abstracted, the understanding disengaging from the habit of resemblances the clear idea of generality.[157]

As we see in the quote above, both forms of memory are operative in the construction of genera: memory-image building from habit the "clear idea of generality."

It is at this point in *Matter and Memory* that Bergson brings together his discussion of resemblance and generality with figure 5 (pictured above). The final figure that factors into Bergson's account of memory, is another version of figure 4 (also pictured above), now with striated levels cutting across the body of the cone. The levels are the single added feature to this image, but they are quite important to the development of Bergson's account of memory and offer us insight into the workings of the self.

These levels of the cone are arrived at through Bergson's discussion of generality and resemblance, and readers are meant to discern the connection between the conscious and unconscious activity of the mind in relation to these concepts. The general idea is described as

[155] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 159.
[156] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 160.
[157] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 160.

"oscillat[ing] continually" between the base of the cone (AB) and the tip (S) just as the so-called "normal self" moves back and forth between these poles. At either end of the cone the general idea takes on a different form: at S it acts out this idea; at AB it exists in the realm of so many other memories waiting to be put into action. Bergson describes this multitude at the base of the cone as, "the thousand individual images into which its fragile unity would break up."[158] The general idea escapes in both fragile evanescent memories and in action. It is made up, Bergson insists, on the movement of the "double current" between either end of the cone that has the potential to momentarily crystalize and evaporate. Conscious activity, which has been aligned with action, is housed at the tip of the cone, just where the body unites with the present moment. The remaining area of the cone houses memories, or zones of the unconscious that are more spread out the farther they move from the tip. The normal self—and the general idea—are never static in relation to these poles.

As mentioned above, figure 5 is introduced to further understand the process by which memories return to consciousness and for this Bergson returns to his critique of associationism. With the associationists, Bergson agrees that "every idea which arises in the mind has a relation of similarity or of continuity with the previous mental state," but he finds this point entirely too universal to provide explanatory power insofar as nearly every idea bears some degree of similarity with all others.[159] The key question for Bergson is how a pertinent reflection is chosen among countless others that "resemble in some way present perception."[160] Bergson claims that associationism cannot explain how one particular image would return instead of countless others

[158] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 162.
[159] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 163.
[160] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 164.

because of the insufficiencies of this theoretical approach as a whole.[161] Theories of associationism are charged with a number of errors that Bergson addresses. Primary among them are the errors of 1. viewing ideas and images as independent and 2. speculative entities without any concrete relationship to action or will.[162]

Bergson finds problems with these tenets of associationism, reversing them for his own positive account of memory. As is evident by now, he has been intent on overturning the view that perception and/or consciousness are speculative for most of *Matter and Memory*, now he suggests that by according memory-images a speculative role, associationism has overlooked the relationship between these images and the "activity of the will."[163] Memory-images do not exist for themselves as independent entities jostling one another to return—they exist for us and are subject to our will. Returning to a point argued regarding generality and resemblance, Bergson emphasizes that memory-images do not exist as independent entities. Just as we perceive resemblances before individuality, Bergson argues that memories return as a whole before an individual memory is enacted in our present. "We perceive the resemblance before we perceive the individuals which resemble each other; and, in an aggregate of contiguous parts, we perceive the whole before the parts."[164] The way in which memory returns as a whole makes up most of the remaining discussion of Chapter III, and Bergson illustrates just how this operation works through the cone of memory.

Looking to the second iteration of the cone of memory, figure 5 (pictured above), we see that it is meant to illustrate these zones of returning memory. Bergson writes that it is "the entire

[161] In several ways, Bergson's account of memory appears to be influenced by William James. In the *Principles of Psychology*, James will also take up the problem of discovering a principle that guides association. Like Bergson, he will abandon the idea that 'simple' ideas are what are primarily associated (like 'blue' or 'hard') and look toward action both habitual (similar to what Bergson identifies as motor memory) and voluntary to understand how association operates. See James, *Principles of Psychology*, Ch. 14.
[162] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 164-5.
[163] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 164.
[164] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 165.

consciousness which, spreading out over a larger area, discovers the fuller detail of its wealth" that returns.[165] Again, Bergson argues against associationism by re-stating a point made in his discussion of how recognition engages with true memory, that the entirety of our memories range alongside perception. Association would have it, as noted above, that memories are separate entities. Against this, Bergson's theory elaborates the return of a 'zone' of memory. Not memory as a whole, as we might be led to believe through Bergson's discussion of recognition, but the return of a zone of memory, and residing within each zone, memory as a whole. I showed above how figure 4 of the cone is meant to depict the entirety of our memorial life, and the consequences for thinking about memory preserved entirely and at the ready. I'll discuss below how figure 5 is broken up into sections, each section depicting the entirety of our memory but with varying degrees of memorial attunement or sensitivity emphasized in the zones that cut across the cone. I refer to these as zones or levels of memory and I'll show below how I see these pictorial depictions as opening up a way of thinking about the role of the self in Bergson's theory, along with the possibility of change and becoming.

In figure 5 the levels or cross-sections of the cone illustrate these zones of memory and the mechanics of how memory returns. [166] In first introducing figure 5, Bergson writes of these levels of the cone: "Between the sensori-motor mechanisms figured by the point S and the totality of the memories disposed in AB there is room, as we indicated in the preceding chapter, for a thousand repetitions of our psychical life, figured by as many sections A'B', A"B", etc., of the same cone."[167] What is meant by "repetitions" in Bergson's quote? In figure 5 the striations or levels represented by points A'B' and A''B'' are these repetitions, and these are not to be

[165] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 165-6.
[166] Bergson's term for levels is "sheets" (nappes), though the English is almost always translated as levels. I use levels because this term carries more of the force of choice that I see Bergson endowing this aspect of his memory theory with.
[167] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 162.

repeated only a few times, but that there are thousands (even more) of these sections dividing up the cone. On each level of the cone memory as a whole resides as framed by present perception.

The way that the whole of memory resides variously within different cross-sections or zones of the cone re-enforces Bergson's emphasis on action over speculation. Bergson states "each of these complete representations of the past brings to the light of consciousness only that which can fit into the sensori-motor state and, consequently, that which resembles the present perception from the point of view of the action to be accomplished."[168] Each level of the cone is adapted to a certain expansion or contraction of memory, depending on its proximity to the base or the tip and represented by the larger and smaller portions of the cone. The zones nearest to the tip of the cone are the most suited to action. The further away they move from the tip the more personal and like a 'pure-image' they become.

It is important to emphasize again that on each level the same memories exist in entirety and that these levels are repeated "an infinite number of times."[169] Bergson describes these levels as "many possible reductions of our past life" and states that "they take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens out, and they thus enter into an unlimited number of different systemizations."[170] What I want to emphasize in these passages is that our past is not only preserved as a whole, but that many different versions of our past are preserved. This is not to say that the differing versions of our past preserved on these levels are the result of varying pasts. Memory-images, as we know, are defined by their static and unrepeatable quality. Rather, these differing versions are a result of certain moments being more emphasized than others within different levels, based on proximity of the level to action or to memory-image.

[168] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 168.
[169] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.
[170] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.

The emphasis that is placed on a memory-image at any particular present will vary widely depending on the circumstance. Bergson gives the example of hearing a word in a foreign language. Depending on one's mental disposition, one may be more likely to arrive at an association that is closer to an action or to an image. The utterance, Bergson tells us, "may make me think of that language in general or of a voice which once pronounced it in a certain way."[171] The former association is the result of a disposition directed more toward "immediate response" and action, the latter results from a disposition "nearer to the pure image."[172]

Bergson uses the term "tones" to designate our various dispositions toward cross sections on the cone that are closer to perception or memory. The "normal self" is always moving between the two poles of action and memory, changing its tone. As we can anticipate, it is action, or the "needs of the present" that determine which level returns—which tone of life is necessary for a present moment. The needs of the present work in conjunction with these tones of our mental life. Bergson notes that there is no classification for how these tones of our past are bound with action, and that it would be a difficult task, indeed, to attempt such a project.

However, Bergson does introduce the conceptual tools of 'translation' and 'rotation', to explain how a zone of memory returns to meet the needs of the moment. Translation, he writes, "moves in its entirety to meet experience," and rotation "turns toward the situation of the moment."[173] Translation accomplishes the task of "locating" the zone of memory that the present moment requires. Rotation, acting simultaneously with translation, turns the most appropriate side of the memory toward the present moment, "presenting to it that side of itself which may prove to be the most useful."[174] This metaphor of rotation points back to the "circuit"

[171] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.
[172] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.
[173] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 168-9.
[174] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.

of recollection with the present that is depicted through figure 1, the mushroom figure. These new concepts of translation and rotation can be applied to figure 1 to see that once the recollected memory is actualized in the present it rotates the most applicable aspect of the translated level of memory towards the object, ostensibly creating the object anew based on the tension through which the memory is actualized.[175]

In both figures 1 and 5 (Bergson's first, and his last in *Matter and Memory*) importance is placed on layers of the past for depicting 1. the way in which returning memory varies based on the situation at hand (action in the present), 2. the level of attention towards the present moment, and 3. our character. While action in the present has been the primary operation that perception and memory serve, with his discussion of "tones" of mental life, Bergson is engaging with the psychological manifestations of memory—or spirit, as he often calls it. In describing these layers as 'tones' of our mental life Bergson intimates the extent to which he sees these planes varying psychologically.

There is evidence for this psychological focus more clearly when Bergson makes uses the example of reading a "psychological novel." The reader can be lead astray, Bergson notes, when the author does not properly maintain the "plane of mental life that he has chosen" for the character whose thoughts the author is portraying. The sense of dissonance that a reader can experience indicates the expectation that the "tones" of our character are located on different planes of memory, and that within a given situation, they will be maintained with some degree of consistency.[176] Our expectations in literature also apply to life—we anticipate established behavior from our friends and family. This speaks both to their physical behavior and to their

[175] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 105.
[176] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 169.

character. In turn, this psychological analysis has implications for our own character and way of being (or becoming) in the present.

It is possible that Bergson arrives at his discussion of levels of the past, and tones of our memorial life, through his investigations into psychological abnormalities. In discussing how we intuitively know when a tone of mental life has been breached through literature, he brings up pathology as a further supporting example. Bergson says, "in the 'systematized amnesias' of hysterical patients for hysterical patients, for example, the recollections which appear to be abolished are really present, but they are probably all bound up with a certain determined tone of intellectual vitality in which the subject can no longer place himself."[177] Bergson might be understood to be saying here that these pathological cases of memory are a result of a patient getting "stuck" on a particular plane of memory, or being unable to return to entire expanded or contracted zones of their past. These past zones do not disappear, since one of the fundament tenets of Bergson's account of memory is that the past exists in itself and in entirety at all times. Rather, as this quote suggests regarding these cases of pathology, certain zones simply become inaccessible. From this analysis it's also possible to assume that being barred from a certain zone of our past would so significantly impact our character so as to lead to psychological conditions that are typically associated with mental pathology.[178]

From a philosophical analysis, Bergson indicates that we tend to return to particular levels of memory, and that this tendency is what establishes who we are:

> If, here again, we imagine a number of possible repetitions of the totality of our memories, each of these copies of our past life must be supposed to be cut up, in its own way, into definite parts, and the cutting up is not the same when we pass

[177] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 170.
[178] Bergson presents a more developed analysis of abnormal functions of memory in "Memory of the Present and False Recognition," though in this essay the main abberancy is believing or briefly feeling that something has occurred that has not. Henri, Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. Wildon Carr, (Lexington, 2014), 83-115.

> from one copy to another, each of them being in fact characterized by the particular kind of dominant memories on which the other memories lean as on supporting points.[179]

The above passage is suggesting that a memory that is dominant on a particular level of the past might be put in the background as minor on another plane. One plane might make prominent the need to feel secure and protected, which will determine an individuals actions in an entirely different way than the plane that emphasizes the independent and confident aspect of her personality. To be sure, Bergson acknowledges that there are always "dominant memories, shining points round which the others form a vague nebulosity."[180] In his thinking, we return to these dominant memories, and as these attitudes or tones affect our present more frequently, they make up our character, determining the plane we return to and the memories we access.

The dreamer and the man of impulse discussed above that Bergson has developed over the course of *Matter and Memory* also help us understand these returning zones of memory. While these individuals represent extreme (and unreal) dispositions, he uses them to suggest that that character is determined by how we engage in memorial life. To speak using his figural terminology: *our character is determined by the zone of memory that we most frequently return to and call upon in our present moment*. As we've seen, Bergson's argument against associationism critiques the view that individual memories capriciously return in connection to external stimuli. Rather, as figures 4 and 5 are meant to show, zones of memory return—zones that are determined by who we are and what type of action will be taken in the present. *Matter and Memory* is the fullest statement of how our return memory determines our self, though the basis of this subjective memory—change—is the continual theme of Bergson's work. In his work on the laughter Bergson writes: "our character is the result of a choice that is continually

[179] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 170.
[180] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 171.

being renewed"[181] At this point, the major insight that can be drawn from Bergson regarding memory and the self is that in the existence of this ever-expanding past that we choose how to engage with. The past is growing and changing with us— and the type of person that we are is shaped by the different dispositions we have toward memory—dispositions that determine zones of memory that we most frequently return to, and willingly, choose to access. In this way, our character, our self is defined by our relationship to memory. I now turn to Giles Deleuze's reading of Bergson, to see how he ascribes ontological qualities to Bergson's cone of memory.

The ontological past

Bergson is a major influence on Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze's monograph *Bergsonism*, is a theory in itself, and we see Bergsonian thinking coursing throughout both Deleuze's interpretive and original theoretical works. Deleuze's return to the "cone of memory" is a guiding conceptual figure in both of these areas of his work, and I'll look to his reading below to further see the place of the self in relation to the past, and in relation to Being take shape. In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze identifies the cone of memory as representative of the coexistence of past and present. In this section I'll continue with an analysis of the cones of memory, drawing on the interpretation that Deleuze makes in *Bergsonism* and I will also briefly make use of the extended reading he gives it in relation to time, ontology, and habit in *Difference and Repetition*.

Deleuze's interpretation of the cone of memory aligns with the interpretation that this chapter has provided. He depicts the cone as representing the memorial activity of an individual's entire lived past, emphasizing that each level of the cone (as introduced through

[181] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. C. Brereton and F. Rothwell, (Arc Manor, 2008), 79.

figure 5) represents the past in entirety.[182] Deleuze's interpretation distinguishes itself, however, by paying special attention to the difference between planes of the cone of memory, a difference that he understands as one with ontological significance. As was touched on above regarding the descent of virtual memory as "translation," in each case actualized memory descends from a cross-section or plane of memory. For Deleuze, it is a mistake to suppose that a virtual memory would become actual by passing through more than one plane of memory. On each plane the recollection called for has varied emphasis, as I articulated through Bergson's thought of the 'dominant and shining' points of the memory, and the descending memory would lose all of its individuality if it where to draw its being from various levels of memory.[183] Deleuze emphasizes that each level of the cone represents the past in entirety. He writes: "the whole of our past is played, restarts, repeats itself, *at the same time,* on all the levels that it sketches out."[184] These repetitions are psychic rather than physical —but in emphasizing the quality of these repetitions he suggests we arrive at "regions of Being itself, the ontological regions of the past, 'in general,' all coexisting, all 'repeating' one another."[185]

This suggestion regarding memory might sound like some science fiction novel or film. The past, with various emphases placed on emotion or sensation, repeats itself endlessly in variations that focus on certain moments over others. This is not to say that our pasts are multiple, but as we have also seen Bergson suggest, the "shining points" of any given moment in a past are made more prominent based on the level of the cone. Bergson bases this level on action, and to a certain extent psychological necessity. The difference for Deleuze is that the existence of these

[182] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 59-60. In *Difference and Repetition* and *Cinema 2* Deleuze also sees the entirety of our past extended further still to include all of our potential pasts as if the extension of the cone is a metaphor for some world memory. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; *Cinema 2,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 98.
[183] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 65.
[184] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 61.
[185] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 61.

various orientations to our past are oriented to our relationship with Being—with that persistent principle that is responsible for the existence of particular entities, including our own present.

Deleuze's interpretive departure from Bergson's articulation of the act of memory, is a matter of "multiply[ing] the distinctions, even and above all when these texts confine themselves to suggesting the distinctions, rather than establishing them strictly."[186] It is in this manner that Deleuze distinguishes the psychological from the ontological aspects of Bergson's memory theory. Earlier he writes: "we must emphasize that this analysis, which seems to have so much psychological finesse, really has a quite different meaning. It is related to our affinity with being, our relationship with Being, and to the variety of this relationship."[187] The levels of the cone take on different meaning in his reading. In Bergson's thought there is the suggestion that types of character are different based on where they fit within proximity to action in the cone of memory, a description that largely focuses on how efficiently an individual is able to make use of the past. By multiplying the distinctions regarding the layers of the past, Deleuze is emphasizing the multiplicity of ontological sources responsible for the present self that reside as independent zones of memory, as different ways of being in relation to the past.

In memory, a leap is made, and Deleuze argues that this leap is originally a leap into Being—to that ever-present element that sustains presence. He cites Bergson's description of memory moving into perception (as quoted in chapter 1) as exemplary of the ontological status of the past. If you recall, this is where Bergson describes the "leap" into the past that we make in the act of memory. After fully quoting this section from *Matter and Memory*, Deleuze differentiates how he sees the ontological and psychological elements playing out in this passage:

> Bergson does indeed speak of a psychological act; but if this act is '*sui generis*,' this is because it has made a genuine *leap*. We place ourselves *at once* in the past; we leap into

[186] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 63.
[187] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 62-63.

> the past as into a proper element. In the same way that we do not perceive things in ourselves, but at the place where they are, we only grasp the past at the place where it is in itself, and not in ourselves, in our present. There is therefore a 'past in general' that is not the particular past of a particular present but that is like an ontological element, a past that is eternal and for all time, the condition of the 'passage' of every particular present.[188]

What we first encounter as memorial activity, Deleuze suggests, is not ultimately our own past, but an element that allows for the existence of a personal and psychological past. As he goes on to claim:

> It is the past in general that makes possible all pasts. According to Bergson, we first put ourselves back into the past in general: He describes in this way the *leap into ontology.* We really leap into being, into being-in-itself, into the being in itself of the past. It is a case of leaving psychology altogether. It is a case of an immemorial or ontological Memory.[189]

In this formulation, Bergson's leap into the past is a leap *into* ontological dimensions of the past—a leap into analysis of the past as that which is responsible for presence and beings. The discussion of memory is ontological—a discussion is prior to the foundation for psychological consciousness. Deleuze concludes:

> It is only then, once the leap has been made, that recollection will gradually take on a psychological existence: 'from the virtual it passes into the actual state . . . .' We have had to search at the place where it is, in impassive Being, and gradually we give it an embodiment, a 'psychologization.'[190]

From this extended passage Deleuze's reading of Bergson is one that argues that 1. the past is ontologically responsible for founding our personal psychological consciousness; 2. this "past in general" is a shared condition for the passage of any (individual's) present moment—it does not refer to an individual past; 3. there is always a movement from the ontological element of the past to our personal psychological past.

[188] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 56.
[189] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 56-57.
[190] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 57.

The operative understanding of psychology that Deleuze is engaging with here is one involving Bergson's concept of duration—one oriented to an individual's particular life. To this extent, Deleuze's reading offers us an important insight into the individualized duration that Bergson depicted in *Time and Free Will*. As particular, our psychological consciousness is grounded in an orientation to Being uniquely our own. Deleuze speaks of the "ontological conditions" that facilitate the leap that we make into the past in our engagement with memory.[191] This is not a psychological act, it is one that is determined by an ontological positioning of our relationship to the past that then determines our duration and psychological engagement in the present.

Deleuze presents the ontological significance of the past as an uncontroversial idea in Bergson's thought. It comes out of the problem that Bergson has identified with common misconceptions regarding the past. As discussed in chapter 1 and 2 Bergson identifies that we have trouble seeing the past as still present. Through the figures that I analyzed in *Matter and Memory*, Bergson presents the past with as much (if not more reality) than the present. Bergson uses the language of leaping back into the "past in general," as Deleuze quotes above, and as I noted in chapter 1, this past make the passing of the present possible.[192] Bergson discusses memory's preservation in itself as the basis for present action. This leads him to identify memory as "coextensive" with the present: it ranges alongside it, in his description.

In Bergson's thought no present has been experienced without reference to the past. Deleuze positions this *a priori* past as an ontological element that makes possible memorial activity. For Deleuze, the Bergsonian imperative is that the past that possesses this preservative

[191] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 64.
[192] In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze lays out four paradoxes that Bergson has discovered in relation to the past as a pure and *a priori* entity that coexists with the present. The fourth paradox is the cone of memory itself, p. 81-4. See also Alia Al-Saji's excellent discussion of these paradoxes in her essay "A Memory of Another Past," 209-11.

force is synonymous with being in itself: "The past, on the other hand, has ceased to act or to be useful. But it has not ceased to be. Useless and inactive, impassive, it IS in the full sense of the word: it is identical with being in itself."[193] This shift demands that we consider ontology as making up a broader swath of lived and living time. So while the coexistence of the past and present is the status that Bergson outlines for us in *Matter and Memory*: in Deleuze's thought the past is elevated to the status of ontology. We are to see the past and the present as inseparable moments—elements— in time. He refers to the coexistence of past and present as "a fundamental position of time and also the most profound paradox of memory."[194]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have asked what the cones of memory have to do with the relationship of the self to the past. Both Bergson and Deleuze have considered what it means to locate ourselves more permanently on a plane of memory. In Deleuze's thought, our lives will be played out very differently depending on the level that we continually return to, and would undergo significant change if we try to orient ourselves differently in relation to the past. Deleuze writes that we might live out the life of the "philosopher or the pig, the criminal or the saint."[195] And it is the present moment that depicts the plane of existence to which we return: "the sign of the present is a passage to the limit, a maximal contraction which comes to sanction the choice of a particular level as such, which is in itself contracted or relaxed among an infinity of other possible levels."[196] For Deleuze, the movement between these planes of memory can also signal dramatic

[193] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 55.
[194] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 58.
[195] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 83.
[196] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 83.

upheavals of our existence. As Alia Al Saji has pointed out in Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson, the past itself is "rearranged, it undergoes transformation and fragmentation, between different planes."[197] Deleuze, following Bergson, uses the term "choice" in writing about the significance that our present depicts. Our choices establish a level of pure past that we access, the past that is continually present is absorbed into our present mode of life. Deleuze writes later, "Bergson saw that memory was a function of the future, that memory and will were the same function, that only a being capable of memory could turn away from its past, free itself from the past, not repeat it, and do something new."[198]

The question that remains is how we engage these varying levels of the past, that for Bergson indicate significant shifts in our attention to life, and for Deleuze, are about the very core of who we are. In large part this is a question that cuts to the core of self-reflection. Living the past is about seeing how it is orienting us. Deleuze puts the question in these terms:

> The question for us is whether or not we can penetrate the passive synthesis of memory; whether we can in some sense live the being in itself of the past in the same way that we live the passive synthesis of habit. The entire past is conserved in itself, but how can we save it for ourselves, how can we penetrate that in-itself without reducing it to the former present that it was, or to the present present in relation to which it is past? 'How can we save it *for ourselves*? [199]

Bergson's thesis that the past is preserved in entirety doesn't necessarily mean that we recognize our past for how it is coming to bear on our current action.[200] Deleuze's question gets to the point of how past recognition can lead to recognition of the self, how we can go beyond memory-images as a forms of memory that slip into our lives to enliven action in the present, to

[197] "A Memory of Another Past," p. 223.
[198] Deleuze, Gilles, "Bergson's Conception of Difference," in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, trans. Mike Taormina, 38.
[199] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 84.
[200] Indeed, Bergson develops a rich understanding of the ways that our past can be misrecognized, and in writing about how this occurs confirms the point (that I am making at large in this work) that the Bergson sees the past that is active in our present as "ordinarily concealed" when it is functioning normally. See, Bergson, "Memory of the Present and False Recognition," *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays*, 89.

a relationship with memory that is reflective and even creative, bringing us to continually question how we engage in the past. In *Difference and Repetition,* this is the point where Deleuze directs us to Marcel Proust for an answer. He notes that Proust "intervenes" with reminiscence, or involuntary memory. What we learn from Proust, Deleuze suggests, is that "the present exists, but the past alone insists and provides the element in which the present passes and successive presents are telescoped."[201] Proust, Deleuze argues both in *Difference and Repetition* and in *Proust and Signs,*[202] manages to do something with the past that Bergson can only argue is preserved. Proust 'saves the past.'

In the following chapter I'll look to Proust's major work, *In Search of Lost Time*, to examine how the concept of involuntary memory functions as a creative method. In analyzing the form this memory takes, and the instances of its occurrences in Proust's work I draw out a number of the themes and considerations that I have dwelled on in Bergson's thought. Looking forward to both chapters 3 and chapter 4, I show that the movement of memory in Proust's thought returns the individual to a past in a very different way, and I question how this impacts and enhances what we can find in Bergson's analysis of memory. In examining this return in Proust's work I further engage with the questions of how we can 'save' the past, live it in an affirming way, and see it as a creative force that Bergson and Proust place at the forefront of their thinking.

[201] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 85.
[202] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 85; Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard, (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 59.

Chapter 3. Involuntary memory

Introduction

Marcel Proust brings to life the workings of memory, and the potential for creative growth and self-revelation in his work, *In Search of Lost Time*. While this grand narrative dwells on the past life of our narrator, he confesses fairly early in the book to his belief that voluntary memories, "memory of the intellect," fail to show us anything of the past itself.[203] What type of relationship to the past, then, is this work that is so focused on our relationship to time opening up for us? What is it that delivers—revives— the past from oblivion? How can the past open up a new way of thinking about the self? The type of memory that crystallizes all of these aspects of engagement with the past is involuntary memory. In this chapter, I'll look to the way that involuntary memory becomes an approach to thinking about the past, creative fulfillment, and a way to locate the self over time in Proust's work. I'll show here that the instances of involuntary memory that occur throughout *In Search of Lost Time* lead our narrator to the realization that he must seek out the fleeting moments of the past that he glimpses through involuntary memories because it is here that truth about oneself, and Truth itself, can be located.[204]

I argue that involuntary memory is the method of return that shows us how to mine our past for self-understanding in Proust's work. In chapter 1 and 2 I looked at how Bergson's theory of the past operates through the series of figures that illustrate the return of memory in *Matter and Memory*, asking how memory shapes the self through, and despite this utilitarian approach.

[203] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I: Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Kilmartin, (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 59.
[204] Proust capitalizes truth in this way and we can understand his engagement with Truth as the seeking out of the impressions that makes up his work. Gilles Deleuze has an excellent chapter in *Proust and Signs* on this topic, 15-25.

In this chapter I will break down the way that involuntary memory functions in Proust's thinking, and look at how this type of memory opens up ways for thinking and returning to the self. In Bergson's thought, and in Proust too, it is evident that there is resistance to fully engaging in seeking the self through memory.[205] Proust writes that engaging with the past, the work of 'excavation,' takes great courage. It is far easier to "drink tea and to think merely of the worries of today, and hopes for tomorrow, which can be brooded over painlessly."[206] On the cusp of each involuntary memory experience the narrator has been close to a certain resignation of spirit associated with giving in to the everyday concerns of life. Involuntary memory brings him back to the true self that has been closed off by these everyday social norms.

Proust sees the self as multiple to the extent that an individual undergoes deaths of many selves over the course of a life. Beyond the way that we understand our self to change in childhood, or over the course of our adult life, Proust sees us shedding versions of ourselves, and many new selves replacing them, throughout the eras and experiences of our life. The end of a love affair signals the death of a particular self that we have been, and the love that we have felt seems impossible to our new self: "so that it would be in a real sense the death of the self, a death followed, it is true, by resurrection, but in a different self, to the love of which the elements of the old self that are condemned to die cannot bring themselves to aspire."[207] The unrecognizability of a past love that this passage suggests helps explain one of the views that Proust takes regarding memory. Thinking back on the past does not bring it back—in fact Proust describes our past selves as dead to us. Despite the deaths of our many selves, and the dead

[205] Deleuze too sees the interpretation of involuntary memory as a form of "suffering" that the intelligence must go through in order to escape a void, *Proust and Signs*, 98.
[206] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 63.
[207] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume II: Within a Budding Grove,* trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 340.

memories that make them up, this is a book that dwells on the nature of bringing the past back to life.

The experiences of the past that make up the narrator's life throughout *In Search of Lost Time*, comprise a series of disappointments. Proust's narrator leads a charmed life, but in the domains of society, travel, love, politics, friendship, he seeks and fails to find meaning. Each of these realms of life make up different "selves" that the narrator lives. He seeks a lasting meaning in each, but in the end leaves each self behind to become someone new. The conclusion the narrator arrives at after his final involuntary memory sheds light on the cohesiveness that he ultimately sees binding these selves together. There is a durational quality to the self, that I will briefly look at in this chapter, and evaluate in the relation to Bergson's thinking about the self. Below, I'll look at the instances of involuntary memory, and the shifts in self that make up these occurrences, in order to develop an interpretation of the self and memory in Proust's work. Involuntary memory is the type of memory that Proust elevates to an art form. This type of memory will play a number of roles in *In Search of Lost Time*. It is the ultimate experience of return, not only as memory, but for a past that never existed. It also shakes our narrator out of the experience of stultification—reviving his life at various times and directing him to other pursuits. To this end, involuntary memory initiates the creative activity of the narrator, and within the course of this book it structures how his life is depicted, through a series of realizations. I explore the instances of involuntary memory below, drawing out an interpretation of memory's radical power for self-discovery and providing a way of thinking about how an individual can engage with memory to dynamically shape the self.

Involuntary memory

There are only four instances of involuntary memory in the over 4000 pages of *In Search of Lost Time.* The writer and the reader of the book are meant to experience these returning moments to the past as the most euphoric of experiences. Despite the rarity with which it occurs, involuntary memory tells us the most about how Proust sees memory working, in large part because it highlights the failure of memory to access the past as it operates in everyday experience. In what follows, I explore each instance of involuntary. My interpretation attends to the structural elements of each instance, which include the perceptual object or sensuous sign from which the memory originates, the memory object and experience that this sign reminds the narrator of, and the effect that each instance has on the narrator. As I proceed, I clarify the only two forms of memory identified throughout the whole of *In Search of Lost Time,*[208] voluntary and involuntary. It is through one of these forms, involuntary memory, that we are able to locate the true self, Truth itself, and experience a genuine traversal of time.

In *In Search of Lost Time*, involuntary memory proceeds in the following manner: it begins with a chance encounter with a perceptual object that immediately leads to an overpowering sensation of joy in the narrator. This sensation initially seems to issue from the object itself. The narrator seeks to repeat the experience through continued engagement with the object, only to realize that the sensation cannot be further intensified in this way; the perceptual object itself is not the source of this encompassing feeling of elation. Unsatisfied, the narrator continues to search his memory and thoughts until his search finally yields a return to an object of memory from his past. His present is then overtaken by past sensations that unfold from this memory. Though he is rooted in his present physically, he experiences a return to a pure past—a

[208] Though I am sure that with further focus one could distinguish a variety of 'forms' of memory, and gradations that follow from the distinction of voluntary/involuntary. Perhaps a study of this exists, but I have not yet come upon it in my research.

past wholly separated from what is useful to his present self, and that never was quite experienced when it was lived. I detail this movement as it occurs in each instance of involuntary memory and then examine each of the constitutive elements that make up the experience.

Combray

The narrator first experiences involuntary memory after a dreary day leaves him feeling that the future is equally bleak. Years have passed since his childhood in Combray. The narrator, whose memories of this place are preserved almost exclusively through the nighttime drama with his mother,[209] decides to accept a cup of tea from her, something he rarely does. As the sensation of the tea and crumbs from the petite madeleine enter his mouth, he is overcome with "an exquisite pleasure" that is described as "isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin."[210] The object, the petite madeleine soaked in tea, initiates the sensation. At first, the taste and smell cannot be connected to any origin. The sensation of pleasure proceeds to overtake all of the narrator's concerns. As it overtakes him he discovers "this essence was not in me, it *was* me."[211] The narrator 'senses' that this feeling that has overcome him is connected to the tea and the madeleine and in hopes of prolonging this pleasure he drinks more, then more, only to find that his continued tasting diminishes the feeling of joy that overtook the narrator initially. Though a perceptual object—the madeleine and tea—has called forth this sensation, he cannot find meaning by returning to it.

[209] The childhood scene that opens up the recollection of the Combray section of *Swann's Way* presents the narrator as a child desiring that his mother kiss him goodnight and stay as long as possible with him, fearing the nights when visitors (in particular M. Swann) keep her from coming up to him. He works himself into such a frenzy over her absence that one night his father consents and allows his mother to sleep in the room with her son, though the parents, and the narrator see this finally acknowledging rather than working against the "condition" of the narrators nerves, interesting phrased as an "involuntary ailment" p. 15-51; 50.
[210] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 60.
[211] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 60.

Our narrator continues to search his experience. It is only in dwelling on an "unremembered state" that he realizes he is not seeking, but engaging in a creative effort. "It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, which it alone can make actual, which it alone can bring into the light of day."[212] What the narrator will 'make actual' is ultimately a return to the object, yet this is another object—an object of the past. "The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray…my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane."[213] The narrator moves from the present object that ignites the feeling of overwhelming pleasure and self-recognition to an object of his past, his lost memory.

The memory that returns brings back an entire world—a zone of memories that was lost to what he calls "voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect."[214] There is an important distinction at work here between an image of the past and the past itself. For Proust, to voluntarily remember is to revisit a past image that is familiar to our current mode of thinking. To this extent, voluntary memory is aligned with habituation in the sense that familiarity determines what comes to mind, enabling us, for example, to feel comfortable with the layout of a room we know well. In voluntary memory we return to and engage with memories from a vantage point that don't take us out of our current framework of thinking. Involuntary memories do just the opposite. The return that occurs brings back to an entirely new (or old) mode of experiencing this past moment. The past we gain access to is one that we have not visited for so long that we do not immediately recognize it, like the return of a friend whom we have forgotten. The memory of Combray that the narrator experiences through involuntary memory is of a place and time that had seemingly disappeared from his current self.

[212] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 61.
[213] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 63.
[214] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 59.

Intermittencies of the heart

The idea that involuntary memory involves a returning self is made especially clear in its second occurrence in Proust's work. This instance occurs on the narrator's second visit to Balbec. His first trip occurred years ago with his grandmother who has died. The involuntary memory that is experienced here reminds the narrator of the first visit, returning his grandmother to him and initiating the mourning that he has not yet been able to go through. The involuntary memory proceeds in a similar way. Our narrator is infused with an "essential being" at a moment of exhaustion and distress. He bends to untie his boots and is overcome. In this return, the narrator is overcome not with an "exquisite pleasure," but with an overwhelming pang of loss and he weeps. The discovery of the object of memory is immediate in this instance. It is the grandmother's face, "tender, preoccupied, disappointed" as she bends to untie the narrator's boots. [215] Her figure, stooped over, expresses the fatigue that he now feels. The present object of perception that initiates the involuntary memory is shared with the past—the laces of the boots that he now unties are the boots that his Grandmother untied for him on their first visit to Balbec.

The Grandmother who returns in this moment of involuntary memory is, we are told, the narrator's 'real' grandmother, not "the grandmother whom I had been astonished and remorseful at having so little missed."[216] At the moment when the narrator is returned to her, he realizes with all of the crushing weight of death, that she is gone forever. He claims "with the perturbations of memory are linked the intermittencies of the heart," so that "if the context of sensations in which they are preserved is recaptured, they acquire in turn the same power of

[215] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume IV: Sodom and Gomorrah,* trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library), 2003, 210
[216] Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 211.

expelling everything that is incompatible with them, of installing alone in us the self that originally lived them."[217] The self that returns in this instance of involuntary memory brings with him all of the love and care, and cruelty too, that accompanied the narrator's relationship toward his grandmother as it was lived during his first trip to Balbec with her. This involuntary memory, and this lost self, initiate a mourning for the loss of the grandmother, that had previously been pushed aside in a "forgetfulness" of her and of who he had been when with her.

This occurrence of involuntary memory shows us a different side of the overwhelming experience of returning memory. The self that descends upon our narrator is his past Balbec self—a self that has been 'dead' for some time. The return of this self ushers back all of the emotions and thoughts that he shared with his Grandmother during his first trip with her to Balbec. The resulting sense of the reality of her death, and his inability to re-experience this actual relationship again, sends him into mourning and depression. In this section, Proust clarifies the status of past selves that are 'dead' to the voluntary memory of our current self. Proust notes that our past joys and sorrows stay with us mostly "in an unknown region where they are of no use to us, and where even the most ordinary [memories] are crowded out by memories of a different kind, which preclude any simultaneous occurrence of them in our consciousness."[218] Here Proust identifies the unknown region of memories beyond the reach of voluntary memory as "of no use to us." The suggestion is that voluntary memory is directed toward what is familiar and useful to the current self. This isn't so far from the Bergsonian suggestion that the memory-images available to us depend on their usefulness for current action. As I have discussed in the previous two chapters, Bergson delimits memory in terms of its utility to present action. The zones of memory presented in the cone of memory are shaped by their

[217] Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 211-12.
[218] Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 211-12.

relationship to action. Cross-sections close to present perception take the form of motor-memory—of habitual response that plays out directly in a bodily response, while the sections that reside further away from present perception take the form of images. Though each zone holds the entirety of one's memories, which memories will be accessible, and in what way, depends on the actions these memories are ultimately useful for. Thus attention to life is successfully operating when we are putting the past to use, not meditating on how to return to it.

With Proust's concept of involuntary memory, a very different possibility arises. In the instances that I have examined so far, the return of memory isn't partial or useful for action. It has the opposite effect; it over-takes the body and current self, leaving the narrator stopped in his tracks. Indeed, far from being active, the experience of involuntary memory is primarily passive.[219] In both cases discussed the narrator is not only overwhelmed by the experience, but the occurrence of seems to come on without any prompting, through what Proust describes as chance encounters. In what follows, I'll begin to show the way that Proust sees these chance encounters with involuntary memory as something that we must hold on to, and that enable a recognition, ultimately with the possibility for change in the self.

Time regained

Though the return of past selves through involuntary memory in Proust occurs by chance, the final two instances of involuntary memory show how the narrator can, voluntarily make something of these experiences. In other words, in the final instances of involuntary memory the focus is placed on realizing how to develop something out of this contingent experience. In this

[219] Roger Shattuk refers to the sudden encounter with involuntary memory as a "deflagration," taking over body and mind *Marcel Proust* (The Viking Press, 1974), 140.

way, these final instances of involuntary memory arrive at the conclusion of the book. In *Time Regained,* the narrator is ready to renounce his aspirations for literature and to spend the rest of his days in the triviality of the world of society. Once again his involuntary memory return is initiated by a chance encounter with a perceptual object that connects him to his past. On crossing the courtyard of the Guermantes mansion, he trips over an uneven paving-stone and experiences a rush of images. These images refer to the most intimate relationships with objects and sensations throughout the course of his life: the twin steeples of Martinville, Vinteuil's sonata, the three trees he sees from his carriage, the taste of the madeleine and tea. Involuntary memory objects are called up alongside objects that have not returned to him by chance encounter, but have nevertheless served as guideposts of his mental imagery. He is again suffused with happiness, his doubts vanish, and his fear of death and illness subsides. He attempts to maintain the pleasure that has overcome him by repeating the rocking motion on the uneven stones, but he cannot grasp hold of this vision, until, finally, he is returned to his past. It is the experience of walking on the uneven cobblestones of Saint Mark's baptistery—this sensation has been "restored to me complete with all the other sensations linked on that day to that particular sensation."[220] The original sensation returns through the fleeting experience of an uneven stone—this brief sensation, a momentary encounter with the ground below, is sufficient to trigger the same sensation of an experience that carries with it the smells, tastes, and sensations of an entirely different order and time, in Venice.

The narrator identifies this movement of memory as the exact return to the past that the madeleine triggered for him previously. As he proceeds into his social engagement he asks himself "but why had the images of Combray and of Venice at these two different moments,

[220] Marcel, Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume VI: Time Regained,* trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 256.

given me a joy which was like a certainty and which sufficed, without any other proof, to make death a matter of indifference to me?"[221] He determines that he will find the answer that he is seeking that day, and upon being ushered into a waiting room, he is again transported in involuntary memory.

The object that initiates the next return of the past is the sound of a spoon clanging against a plate. He is transported, this time to a railway carriage, and he sees with delight the trees that he has previously had such difficulty articulating as "essence." The object that he is returned to is the sound of a beer bottle being opened, as he rushes away from Balbec on the train with Robert Saint-Loup. Almost instantaneously as he wipes his mouth with a napkin he feels the rush of intoxication again, and he is suffused with a vision of blue, which is "so strong that this impression that the moment to which I was transported seemed to be the present moment."[222] He has returned to Balbec, and the object that he returned to a towel that he is using to dry his mouth at the Grand Hotel—the same starchy stiffness is present in the object at present, in the library of the Prince de Guermantes.

This final experience of involuntary memory is the moment when method becomes important for discerning what to do with these seemingly chance encounters of memory return. This final return leaves him with a determination to "fix"[223] their essence, to understand the impressions of his past that these memories have delivered to him. The narrator has been returned, in each instance of involuntary memory, to everyday objects, to commonplace experiences so ordinary that he doesn't remember them as details of his past at first. But as I've noted, this is not a matter of voluntarily recollecting. Images of the past are like snapshots—they

[221] Proust, *Time Regained*, 257.
[222] Proust, *Time Regained*, 258.
[223] Proust uses the term fix throughout *In Search of Lost Time* and as I read it he means both that he wants to comprehend meaning and to find a way to make the impression last, he will eventually realize that only the work of art is capable of doing both of these things.

are descriptions of detailed surroundings but offer back to us very little of what this past actually felt like. The difference, Proust goes on to propose in *Time Regained*, lies in the impressions that have been formed in these past moments and in finding a way to make them last. The "lesson" that he has drawn from these involuntary memories is that he must "immobilize" the essence that he has located in things, and in himself. He must lift them from their contingency, and give them solid form. He must seek the impression that has given him glimpses of his "true life," because it is only this impression that "is a criterion of truth."[224] His ultimate realization is that he is ready to undertake the project of creating his own work of art, a work where he will find a lasting expression of the truth of these most powerful impressions.

The forms of involuntary memory

Despite the few and fairly divergent instances in which involuntary memory enters the narrative of *In Search of Lost Time*, each instance shares a form, and upon its occurrence shifts the direction of our narrator's life considerably. I've briefly summarized the instances of involuntary memory above that range across the seven volumes in this text. Below I'll analyze the form that involuntary memory takes throughout these instances to determine the elements of cohesion that make up these short instances—instances that provide the theoretical fodder for much of Proust's work. I'll focus on the elements of involuntary memory: the objects of perception that ultimately bridge the present and past, the sensuous signs these objects harbor, the impressions that are formed as a result of trying to grapple with the experience of involuntary memory, and the work of art that results from these experiences. In observing the structure of how involuntary memory functions in Proust's work, a method for returning to the past take

[224] Proust, *Time Regained*, 275.

shapes. This is important for considering how the self operates in memory, and how we might re-interpret Bergson's theory of memory with an eye toward the power of memory to alter the self. I turn first to the status of the perceptual objects that trigger involuntary memories.

The objects of involuntary memory

Ultimately, it is through involuntary memory that the narrator is led to realize how he must pursue his own work of art. These memories, which prove essential to *In Search of Lost Time*, have what appear to be mundane origins His impressions have inevitably been tied to an object, and our narrator has attempted to "fix" the meaning of these various things since his childhood in Combray. Like the object that will later confine Proust's art, it is an object that originates each instance of involuntary memory. What the object holds in store for the narrator is based merely on a chance encounter. As Proust recounts before the first instance of involuntary memory, the objects that imprison the souls of lost Celts can only be released if the faint call from within these objects is heard and recognized. According to this belief, the recognized call of the imprisoned soul releases it from its object, and the soul overcomes death to return to share our life.[225] In like manner, the narrator is able to 'recognize the call' of the objects that trigger involuntary memory when they offer a very distinctive sensation—such as the flavor of the madeleine, sound of a clanging fork, or feel of a starched napkin. What the narrator is able to 'recognize' in these cases, is the way these objects hold captive a sensation of our past—our life, which has been lost to us.

The objects are everyday: a petite madeleine, shoelaces, uneven pavement stones, and a clanging of a fork followed by a starched napkin. As our narrator notes, these are objects that

[225] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 59.

have been passed by on countless occasions and have been 'disassociated' from the memories that they will return him to.[226] By a chance encounter, their power is unlocked. He seeks in vain to seize their power by grasping hold of them and attempting to experience them more completely. Yet the objects themselves are not insignificant, at first experiencing the involuntary memory with the madeline the narrator imbues it with some sacred essence. On further investigation, the narrator finds that these perceptual objects are not the source of the essence, it is he who is the possessor of essence, he *is* the essence of the euphoric experience that overtakes him.

As I have observed by following out the development of each instance of involuntary memory, the objects that initiate the memory anchor a return to a specific time of the past. These objects end up holding two places in each instance of involuntary memory, bridging the present and the past. It should be noted that the object itself is merely a bearer of what Giles Deleuze refers to as the "sensuous signs." Deleuze reads *In Search of Lost Time* as a text not about memory but about signs, he writes in the first chapter of *Proust and Signs*: "Proust's work is based not on an exposition of memory, but on the apprenticeship to signs." [227] The objects of involuntary memory are always attached to a sensuous quality: they have taste, smell, sound, touch, and with this initial sensation, a world of sensations of the past returns. I discuss below that for Deleuze Proust's work is about "deciphering and interpreting" these signs over the course of a life.[228] As Julia Kristeva notes in her text on the experience of literature in Proust, "objects begin to have meaning once I discover the sensations associated with them."[229] We have observed that this is so—the object that is present initiates a sensation, and the narrator is

[226] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 63.
[227] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs, 4.*
[228] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs, 5.*
[229] Julia Kristeva, *Time and Sense,* trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 169.

overcome with pleasure from this sensation, each time. This is a pleasure that dissipates the narrator's doubts and worries—it is even strong enough to banish his fears of his own mortality.

The difference between these objects of involuntary memory and other objects that populate the text through repeated moments is that our narrator will continually speak about the latter and invest them with imagination. The objects of involuntary memory remain hidden in their everyday existence, as simple things. They do not repeat in our narrator's imagination until he is suddenly overwhelmed by the sensation that emanates from them, a sensation of that he ultimately recognizes as an experience of an essence particular to himself, identifiable only through his own experience.

Sensuous signs

Giles Deleuze describes the 'sensuous sign' as that which triggers an 'intervention' of involuntary memory. "It will be noticed that it intervenes only in terms of a sign of a very special type: the sensuous sign; we feel an imperative that forces us to seek its meaning."[230] Involuntary memory occurs when a sensuous sign presents itself by chance (attached to an object) and the narrator is called to seek its meaning. The sensuous sign is first perceived and memory must go to find its likeness—memory must traverse time in search of the memorial sensation that corresponds to its likeness in the past.

Kristeva claims that "true sensory experience, then, can only occur if we *reproduce* what is felt and said in a movement that is indeed 'telescopic' and, more specifically, metaphorico-metonymic (condensing-displacing)—as with the madeleine in the movement from Mamma to

[230] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs,* 53.

Aunto Léonie."[231] Kristeva is suggesting here that much of our sensory experience is an act of creation. One can see this act of creation in the narrator's response to the sensuous sign. The narrator invests the sensuous signs with imagination. This does not happen in immediate experience—it happens in the anticipation of a future moment, or in the recreation of a lost past. Kristeva sums up Proust's re-creation of sensation well when she states that "sensations, like time, are 'regained,'" and we see this occur in each instance of involuntary memory, where "a sensation also works in reverse, affecting, renewing, and recreating past sensations."[232]

The importance of regaining these sensuous signs highlights a tension in the role that sensuous experience plays in *In Search of Lost Time*. The narrator presents himself as a man disappointed by immediate experience—yet in the pages of the book, Proust shows himself as an author adept at presenting the richness and sensuality of perception. The tension is resolved insofar as we distinguish from immediate sensual experience and the creative return to the latter. For Proust, it takes an act of return, through memory, to access this "inner wealth" of impressions that sensations have initiated. That is why, for the narrator, the disappointments of life are disappointments of the present moment. As Proust writes, "so often, in the course of my life, reality had disappointed me because at the instant when my senses perceived it my imagination, which was the only organ that I possessed for the enjoyment of beauty, could not apply itself to it, in virtue of the ineluctable law which ordains that we can only imagine what is absent."[233] Reality can never live up to what imagination has invested in recollection of the past or the anticipation of the future.[234] The distance between impressions created by the narrator and that which they are impressions of becomes clear at several points when the narrator returns to

[231] Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, 212.
[232] Kristeva, *Time and Sense*, 212.
[233] Proust, *Time Regained*, 263
[234] Proust sees future anticipation with the richness that an involuntary memory might hold in that the imagination fills in the details in a way that reality can never quite produce and satisfy for us.

remembered things. The church at Balbec, for example, is nothing like it was pictured in the images Swann has given the narrator as a boy, and when our narrator finally visits the theatre after years of expectation he is met with disappointment.

In the case of the sensuous signs that trigger involuntary memory the presentation of an experience that does not live up to the impression is lacking. The narrator's experience of involuntary memory are too fleeting. The sensuality of the experience necessitates an interpretation, but this interpretation does not come easily, it will eventually be articulated in the very book we read. At the stage of each involuntary memory, as the book progresses, the narrator has yet to realize the creative work that will be required to grasp these fleeting experiences. Immediately after each involuntary memory strikes, the narrator endeavors to repeat the experience and then begins grappling to discover the meaning of the sensation itself.

What is ultimately significant about the sensuality associated with signs is that their experience will eventually lead to the work of art—the only location of Truth in the Proustian corpus. The sensations that the narrator comes to experience through instances of involuntary memory that return him to *himself* must be interpreted. The recovery and interpretation of these impressions constitutes what the writer claims to be the sole domain that escapes 'wasted time,' the domain of art. It is only by pursuing these impressions, these "hieroglyphs," in the creative act of art that they might be interpreted and fixed. As our narrator realizes, this requires the strength and courage, "to force himself to make an impression pass through all the successive states which will culminate in its fixation, its expression."[235]

The impression

[235] Proust, *Time Regained*, 279.

The importance of the impression in Proust's thought is set against what he sees as the disappointments and failures of other domains of experience. The disappointments the narrator experiences in travel, love, politics, are actually dissatisfactions regarding action in the present—"our inherent powerlessness to realize ourselves in material enjoyment or in effective action."[236] The present moment is a disappointment because it has been imbued with expectations that it fails to meet. The necessity of action and social performance covers over our true reaction, the inner call that we may have towards some closer truth. For Proust, this lesser life is the standard mode—he suggests that we become embroiled in the events of the day, setting aside these calls to truth.

For Proust, the impression cannot be grasped during present action, and recollecting the past only offers a description of events—a mere recording of how we have engaged in the external world. Like Bergson, Proust identifies the necessity that action take over our everyday mode of existence, but he critiques this type of life as lacking a substantial connection to "reality." The challenge, for Proust, is to locate and express an impression, a task that proves difficult. It requires that we learn to decipher our inner world, "to drag forth from the obscurity which lies within us, that which to others is unknown."[237] Proust recognizes the possibility of living our entire lifetime without knowing ourselves, or making ourselves known to other people. Recognizing that the true self occurs at chance encounters, and the experience of involuntary memory is one of these possible moments when we will glimpse it, Proust writes: "the discovery of our true life, of reality as we have felt it to be, which differs so greatly from what we think it is

[236] Proust, *Time Regained*, 272.
[237] Proust, *Time Regained*, 276

that when a chance happening brings us an authentic memory of it we are filled with an immense happiness."[238]

The narrator's task, then, will be to succeed where others before him have failed because they did not have the realization involuntary memory allowed, or the courage to follow out their impressions. In this way, the narrator seeks to avoid the fate that almost became of him, a fate that the narrator was almost ready to accept before the final instances of involuntary memory returned his resolve to pursue and fix his impressions through literature —that of the failed artist. In this way the narrator succeeds where other characters have failed. Proust presents many examples of the failed artist throughout *In Search of Lost Time*. Swann, who was never able to complete his essay on Vermeer and could only respond to the call of Vinteuil's little phrase and the failed artistry of the Baron de Charlus who, as Deleuze points out, is a master of signs, but will never be more than a man of letters.[239]

We are furnished, too, with examples of the "true" artist, through the character of Elstir, whom our narrator identifies as being able to present an "instant [that] impressed itself on one with such force…that pleasure comes to an end, that life passes and that instants, illuminated by the convergence at one and the same time of so many lights, cannot be recaptured."[240] Or with Berma, whose Phèdre disappoints our narrator, only because he cannot initially see that she has so fully inhabited the character that each gesture *is* Phèdre. His engagement with the true artists in his life, Elstire, Bergotte, Phèdre, has revealed that it is only through style that the artist can convey a true self. An artist's trademark style acts as the marker of a self, and it is this presentation of individuality that shows the self as cohesive throughout all of its instantiations.

[238] Proust, *Time Regained*, 277
[239] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 5.
[240] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume III: The Guermantes Way,* trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Kilmartin (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 577.

Proust does not claim that the interpretation of these impressions are for the artist alone, though. Inter-subjectively, we can only 'read' another by engaging in their creation, just as our narrator comes to appreciate the impressions that Elstir conveys through his paintings, and the Phèdre that Berma inhabits.

> For it seemed to me that they would not be 'my' readers but the readers of their own selves, my book being merely a sort of magnifying glass like those which the optician at Combray used to offer his customers—it would be my book, but with its help I would furnish them with the means of reading what lay inside themselves.[241]

The self that is found in creating the work of art is shared through the work of art. This is the form of communication that enables the true self of the artist to be interpreted by the mind of another.

The work of art

For the narrator, for Proust, the work of art is the only pursuit that will render up his true self, the Truth as it exists in the real, and the possibility for true intersubjective connection. Life lived in the domains of "wasted time" (society, politics, friendship, and love) cannot yield this discovery. As with the disappointment that accompanies the realization of imagined future pleasures or voluntarily recalled past sensation, Proust will firmly denounce these aspects of life as moments that cannot access the real. He writes, "the artist who gives up an hour of work for an hour of conversation with a friend knows that he is sacrificing a reality for something that does not exist."[242] The narrator realizes that the individual who is able to respond to the call of

[241] Proust, *Time Regained*, 508.
[242] Proust, *Time Regained*, 268.

her impression in artistic creation will locate something more real and more tangible than either a passing conversation with a friend or a the fleeting moment of involuntary memory.

It is in art that we are able to experience the 'contours of a mind.' This will hold true for the narrator's search for his own art, and for the experience that is encountered through the art of another. In Proust's thought, art alone allows for this exploration:

> As for the inner book of unknown symbols (symbols carved in relief they have been, which my attention, as it explored my unconscious, groped for and stumbled against and followed the contours of, like a diver exploring the ocean bed), if I tried to read them no one could help me with any rules, for to read them was an act of creation in which no one can do our work for us or collaborate with us.[243]

The work of art, and the work of the artist, is thus to excavate from their depths, the impressions that must be interpreted and brought back to life. Involuntary memory shows that the past can be returned once again, in a way more real than it was ever experienced, filled in and created anew.

The narrator's relationship with involuntary memories in *In Search of Lost Time* demonstrates the movement of creatively filling out an impression in order to reach the Truth contained in the work of art.[244] Momentary and grasping, each involuntary memory is only a brief illumination of Truth, and it will serve as the experience upon which all other Truths are written for the narrator. In this sense involuntary memory is a literary device that opens up horizons for exploration. On the cusp of each involuntary memory the narrator suffers from current circumstances and despairs over his future. The world that unfolds from each instance of involuntary memory gives him back entire epochs of his past, and momentarily banishes all of his current concerns. Proust's use of this tool cleanses our narrator of despair and fears of mortality, and revives entire regions of his past, but not as the past was lived at the time it passed.

[243] Proust, *Time Regained*, 274.
[244] Proust, *Time Regained*, 264.

Involuntary memory can thus be viewed both as the source for the work of art for our narrator and as the height of literary creation for our author. In its creative aspect, involuntary memory is the impetus for *In Search of Lost Time*. At the juncture of "the past as it never was" and the "true self," there is involuntary memory shaping the direction of the text. The reader sees how these moments of involuntary memory spur the narrator, providing pivot points in the plot. But we are never privy to the creative act itself—our journey ends with the narrators resolve to begin writing what we have just completed reading. The pinnacle moment of creativity that the reader can access is, then, the depiction of the involuntary memories that the author provides. Indeed, as I have shown, Proust depicts involuntary memory as creation, it alone creates what "*does not exist,*" it returns to the narrator a pure past full of objects that were never fully noticed and sensations never perceived in all their richness while living the present moment.[245] Yet in the "pure azure" of involuntary memory, they are experienced as they have never been, and they are timeless. These objects, and sensuous signs, are lifted from their contingency in the present, "liberated from their contingencies of time, within a metaphor."[246] The metaphor for creativity, in this book, is the experience of involuntary memory. It acts as both spur and expression of the narrator and author's true self-expression.

The experience of involuntary memory, as portrayed throughout *In Search of Lost Time*, is likely something that most readers have not experienced, at least not in the full reverential transport that Proust articulates. One could claim that involuntary memory is only relevant to a discussion of memory to the degree that it occurs and that its only significance is for discussing chance encounters that return us to a forgotten moment of past. As I'll argue below, the significance of involuntary memory is actually much greater. For Proust, what is decisive is the

[245] Proust, *Time Regained*, 268.
[246] Proust, *Time Regained*, 290.

not the incident itself, but the narrator's response. Involuntary memory is an experience that we must create, with our own style, and our own art, and our true self. Below, I'll consider the significance of creating a past that never quite existed for understanding how memory functions in our lives and can shape the self.

The past that never was

Proust closes *Time Regained* with a proof of the book: the people whom the narrator is preparing to write about, who have, in fact, already been written, are like giants.[247] The elapsed time that constitutes their lives is immeasurable in a way incomparable to their spatial occupation. Though Proust conceives the *selves* lived over the course of a life as multiple, there is a fundamental self that unites us and can be located and expressed. Understanding the unity of these selves is a matter of seeking out the impressions that have continuously been with us—determining what is common to the choices we make, even when these choices operate in extremely different tenors from various times in our life. These selves have existed in the dimension of time, which he conceives of much like Bergson's preserved past—as the element of existence. Proust's indebtedness to Bergson is felt especially strongly in this passage at the end of his work:

> And I felt, as I say, a sensation of weariness and almost of terror at the thought that all this length of Time had not only, without interruption, been lived, experienced, secreted by me, that it was my life, was in fact me, but also that I was compelled so long as I was alive to keep it attached to me, that it supported me and that perched on its giddy summit, I could not myself make a movement without displacing it.[248]

[247] Proust, *Time Regained*, 525.
[248] Proust, *Time Regained*, 531.

In this passage the close proximity Proust has to the Bergsonian way of thinking about the past that has been articulated in Chapters 1 and 2 is evident. The past supplies our present and future action, but what occurs in the present re-frames the past—it re-orients based on who we are now. In this line of thinking, the present moment displaces the past to the extent that the version of ourselves that we are now will draw different aspects, impressions, and behaviors from it. In Proust's thinking about the self and memory he shows that returning to the past, through involuntary memory, or creatively, will always be about engaging with an aspect that we did not entirely experience in the living of the past itself.

In light of the question of the self, Proust can be read as demonstrating a sense of Bergsonian duration through his narrator, even elevating this duration to a higher, and perhaps more clearer realization of the true self. In articulating the sensory experience of a life, Proust comes as close as possible to demonstrating Bergson's notion of duration as it is lived. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson distinguishes two types of duration, two aspects of conscious life: he refers to these as homogenous duration and true duration. I will quote below at length a passage that has bearing on how Bergson's way of distinguishing these types of duration enters Proust's demonstration of the self through *In Search of Lost Time*.

> Below homogenous duration, which is the extensive symbol of true duration, a close psychological analysis distinguishes a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined states, a self which *succeeding each other* means *melting into one another* and forming an organic whole. But we are generally content with the first, i.e. with the shadow of the self projected into homogenous space. Consciousness, goaded by an insatiable desire to separate, substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives the reality only through the symbol. As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self.[249]

[249] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 128.

Though Bergson does not split the self into multiple selves, even in his analysis of homogenous duration and the social self; whereas Proust emphasizes precisely this multiplicity of selves in his analysis of the individual, we have here Bergson identifying two directions that duration takes within a self as also present in Proust's *selves*. One of the directions is contrary to 'pure' duration as qualitative heterogeneity, because it is precisely the duration that is intermingled with spatiality, and homogeneity. Bergson will later refer to the "real and concrete self" as the durational self, and it's "substitute" as the social, external and superficial version of the self.[250] In articulating the sensory experience of a life, Proust comes as close as possible to demonstrating the Bergsonian thesis of duration as it is lived. He does so by enacting both types of duration—homogenous duration and true duration—laying out—*demonstrating* through the text— the idea of the many deaths of many selves, all social, relational, obsessional selves that perish as the external situations wherein they perform their social self changes in Time. While the true self, for Proust, is to be found in moments of involuntary memory, and in artistic creation and experience. This is the self that is in contact with a 'true duration' in the Bergsonian sense, a persisting self, whose sense of self is melting together into an organic whole.

It is out of faith in the aesthetic process that Proust demonstrates the ability for art to be created through whatever subject matter one chooses—so long as it represents what Proust refers to as 'the contours of one's mind.' Proust's thesis on art, on the writer, is that: "the reality that he has to express resides, as I now began to understand, not in the superficial appearance of his subject but at a depth at which that appearance matters little."[251] The subject matter itself matters little to Proust's claim regarding art as a realization of a true self. Proust's text presents the contours of a mind, and a self, and it is presented in large part through the geography and

[250] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 139.
[251] Proust, *Time Regained*, 279. Proust has also just stated that a frivolous theme is able to represent character as well as a serious one.

social landscape of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. What stands in opposition to the presentation of the work of art is the self as it exists in shared, social experience and time. For Proust, the social self—a self present in shared and common time—is illusory. Bergson argues that we should see this self as a refraction of the true self. Both thinkers see the fundamental self as difficult to locate, even over the course of our life. But by presenting the contours of the narrator's experience, Proust observes the many deaths of many social selves that perish as the narrator moves closer to the realization of his art.

Proust is demonstrating throughout the book two realms of conscious life, of the same kind as Bergson's homogenous duration and true duration. These align with the social self our narrator lives throughout *In Search of Lost Time* and the true self that he finds through the creation of the book, his work of art, and in various moments of the text when he experiences an involuntary memory—a charged return to what he feels himself to always have been. It is in the process of writing the book—writing this return to self that the ultimate task of discovery is undertaken. And it is in reading the book. From the first words—words begin at what is the chronological end-point of the narrative, the reader is placed within the context of uncovering of a true self. The narrator begins with a reflection and implicit question directed toward himself, saying "for a long time I would go to bed early," leaving the reader to search for an answer in the narrator's life and character.[252]

In *Time Regained* Proust realizes the way in which the true self is able to endure in duration:

> Its peal? had always been there, inside me, and not this sound only but also, between that distant moment and the present one, unrolled in all its vast length, the whole of that past which I was not aware that I carried about within me. When the bell of the garden gate had pealed, I already existed and from that moment onwards, for me still to be able to hear that peal, there must have been no break in

[252] Proust, *Swann's Way*, 1.

> continuity, no single second at which I had ceased or rested from existing, from thinking, from being conscious of myself, since that moment from long ago still adhered to me and I could still find it again, could retrace my steps to it, merely by descending to a greater depth within myself.[253]

This uncovering depends upon an engagement with the impressions of the past where the individual is able to find one's true self again. And Proust does so, tracing himself back to the peal of the bell, and the meanings latent in his mind regarding this sound, that has continued to echo throughout his life even if it was rarely heard. Passed Time, or wasted Time, is merely recollected; it is the Past that is mined for the essential aspect that is imbued within the bell's peal in the true self.

From the narrator's first experience of involuntary memory in *Swann's Way*, there is proof of the true, essential self as momentarily present with the return to the taste of the madeleine:

> And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it *was* me.[254]

The narrator asks himself where this could have come from. "What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?"[255] At once recognizing that this experience has presented him with something so precious—himself, his true, essential self—that he must find a way to take hold of it. It will take him until the end of the book to recognize that these fleeting occurrences of involuntary memory cannot be grasped by calling after the moments. They can be apprehended only through a labor—a work of discovery.

In this way, the duration that is demonstrated in Proust's work is thus a duration that relates to the location, and discovery of, the true self. This true self can be understood as taking

[253] Proust, *Time Regained*, 530.
[254] Proust, *Time Regained*, 60.
[255] Proust, *Time Regained*, 60.

up an immeasurable place in time. It exists in the expansion and creative excavation of moments—moments of involuntary memory. It is this immeasurable duration—the true time of the self—that Proust demonstrates. In doing so, we can see Proust as addressing a question Bergson returns to in *Time and Free Will*, the question of how an individual can locate *their* fundamental self through the method of *durée*. Proust presents the life of a narrator who lives through a series of 'false' selves before discovering the means to turn toward, and develop, his true self. For Proust, this occurs through the production of the 'work of art' as he understands it. As is evident in *In Search of Lost Time*, this method is not available to the narrator alone, but to others who seek to express their true self in a way that also aims to elevate the truth self of the person who experiences the artwork.

Conclusion

In this chapter I've looked closely at the form that involuntary memory takes throughout *In Search of Lost Time*. I've shown that when involuntary memory strikes, it stems from a sensation that bridges the current moment with a particular moment of the past, as in our narrator's first involuntary memory of the madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea. Yet, as we learn from the experience of the narrator, these connections are too flimsy to remain with us and allow the overwhelming pleasure and pain that comes with the returning self to persist. Ultimately, it is not the connections, the sensory signs, that reveal the essence of our true self. It is not the particular perceptual object, or moment, that is recollected and renders up our true self. As Proust says, "the emotion was the same, the difference, purely material, lay in the images

evoked."[256] Instead, what is essential to these moments is the true self that issues from these instances of remembrance of Time Past— producing experience as it was never quite experienced before.

In his final series of involuntary memories the narrator realizes what it is about the conglomerate quality of any given object that has sparked an episode of involuntary memory.

> The slightest word that we have said, the most insignificant action that we have performed at an one epoch of our life was surrounded by, and coloured by the relexion of, things which logically had no connexion with it and which later have been separated from it by our intellect which would make nothing of them for its own rational purposes.[257]

It is what the 'things' hold: memories, emotions, an entirely virtual feeling of the self at a particular instant in one's life, that elevates the emotional quality saturating the objects to the presentation of our true self at this Time in our lives. What these objects bear remains in memory. These particular objects strike us and bring us back to a Past that never was quite experienced precisely because we were too overtaken then, as we are now, by everyday convention. It is in these moments when involuntary memory is sparked by the saturated thing that we are presented with the true self that we were, and have always continued to be. Proust endows things with the ability to free us—they are "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract."[258]

Proust endeavors to show that the work of art, always a thing of some sort (even if it not a physical object): sound, wood, oil, *paperies,* is able to represent the true self. A thing that is formed through our self, and though it itself might not be promised everlasting duration,[259] unveils the duration within the self that has created the thing as work of art. It is in this way that true art speaks for us. It is also in this way that true art might be identifiable throughout the

[256] Proust, *Time Regained*, 256.
[257] Proust, *Time Regained*, 260.
[258] Proust, *Time Regained*, 264.
[259] Proust doesn't think that artistic work allows us to keep 'living on' beyond death, he writes *in Time Regained*, "eternal duration is promised no more to men's works than to men," 524.

periods of an artist's life, might be the same—carry the artists style, as exemplified throughout the book in the characters of Elstir, Bergotte, Berma. The work of art is always identifiable, different though the same, in some way, because it is always presented, molded, given forth, by the particular mind of the artist.

Though changed through his many selves, our narrator, through involuntary memory sees himself, too, as the same. He sees himself always holding the thing as a sign—seeking to decipher the essence of the object. He sees himself always endeavoring, throughout his entire life: "to draw forth from the shadow—what I had merely felt, by trying to convert it into its spiritual equivalent." This drawing forth and conversion work he realizes as art: "And this method, which seemed to me the sole method, what was it but the creation of a work of art?"[260] The method of reading signs in a world—making the signs of one's world meaningful, harbors the creativity of the artistic realm, as potential. "For to read them was an act of creation in which no one can do our work for us or even collaborate with us."[261] We cannot be aided in this work, for it is our own memory work—reading signs, external social signs, people as signs, things as signs—through the work of our memory, always reading the present through our Past as it imbues signs with the contours of our thoughts.

As I have shown, Proust identifies true life as truly discovered in art. As the narrator reflects on the discovery that he should mine the depths of his own thought, he clearly sees that this is the activity of creative life:

> But this discovery which art obliges us to make, is it not, I thought, really the discovery of what, though it ought to be more precious to us than anything in the world, yet remains ordinarily forever unknown to us, the discovery of our true life, of reality as we have felt it to be, which differs so greatly from what we think it is

[260] Proust, *Time Regained*, 273.
[261] Proust, *Time Regained*, 274.

> that when a chance happening brings us an authentic memory of it we are filled with an immense happiness?[262]

The temporary experience of an involuntary memory is only a matter of chance—it is too fleeting to hold truth together. It is in creation that a true self is created in such a way that it can be presented both to oneself and to others.

Gilles Deleuze critiqued Bergson for not seeking anything beyond the preservation of the past, writing in *Proust and Signs* that "it is in enough for Bergson to know that the past is preserved in itself. Despite his profound pages on dreams or on paramnesia, Bergson does not ask essentially how the past, as it is in itself, could also be saved for us."[263] The question of 'saving the past', beyond mere "preservation," is what I will interrogate in the next chapter. I've shown that for Bergson the past is the continual element of our existence—we make use of the past, recycle it, exist in it. But as I've also argued, the utility that Bergson establishes for the past means that its return is seamless with the present—it is not seen as the past, it is merely *what is*. In *Matter and Memory*, then, it is not clear how an individual can draw something new from the continual return of the past, or enact change in the self through this preserved past. Nevertheless, in Bergson's work there is the call to "remount" the slope of the past in order to creatively engage with our thought. This movement is the basis for the theory of intuition, the method of philosophy and creative attunement that Bergson develops. The preservation of the past is the basis for these developments in Bergson's thought, and in the following chapter I will continue to examine the ways that this plays out in his work. In doing so I'll read Bergson and Proust together. As I've already shown, though their investigations into the life of the past take on significantly different forms of expression, they both view the past experience as something other than merely passed or stale. I'll further investigate how reading these two together helps us

[262] Proust, *Time Regained*, 277.
[263] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 59.

discern a method for positively returning to the past. While Bergson and Proust approach the articulation of the past quite differently, their conclusions—about the life of the past, the self, and creativity— are close enough together to inform and enhance one other. Most notably, by putting the question of what we can draw from the past to both thinkers, I show how the coming together of a conception of how the past can be lived in an intentional way.

Chapter 4. Saving the past, living the past

Introduction

The self is a primary mode of change that I have kept at the forefront of this investigation into how Bergson and Proust frame the past and memorial life as future-oriented. I've shown that despite the relative absence of the subject in Bergson's analysis of memory, much can still be drawn from his thought on how individual memory functions, and how this new theory of memory re-orients self-understanding. My suggestion is that Bergson's theory shows us new ways to think about, and *live*, memory. From the perspective of the history of philosophy, Bergson's theory has shifted the way we think about the past as an element of our existence, and one that, in line with the influence of Darwin on his thought, is adaptable to how we want to live now. Additional concepts in Bergson's work, most notably élan vital and the method of intuition, rely on the memory theory that Bergson develops in *Matter and Memory*. These concepts depend upon the remembering subject—a connection to a certain type of past orientation that we learn from Bergson through his memory theory. It is important, then, for Bergson's larger project, to identify that how the self functions in memory produces the possibilities for this later theorizing about life. To get at these connections the question that I put to Bergson, in light of Deleuze's reading, and through a consideration of Proust's thinking about memory, is how do we go about living the past as a future endeavor?

In this chapter I draw out the idea of how we can actively 'save the past' in order to enact change in the self. As noted in the previous chapter, Deleuze suggests that Proust's reminiscence

is successful where Bergson's preserved past is not precisely because it succeeds at "saving the past for ourselves."[264] Though Bergson establishes the past as the element that fills in our present moment, in his utility oriented approach the self that returns to the past doesn't dwell on the change that is present in the past. In other words, the past is functioning best in Bergson's thought when it is not present as past. Proust demonstrates through involuntary memory how the past is both changed and experienced as it never was before. Moreover, the two moments of time are present—the past returned to and the feeling of its return—making the change in the past apparent. Here, I'll look further into what it means to save the past and live it as a future endeavor by way of the questions of absorption, or dwelling in the past, and forgetting. I have not yet touched much on the topic of forgetting in this work, in part because Bergson's conception of the past is rooted in a past in which nothing is lost. Of course, he bases his research on illnesses, such as aphasia or amnesia that do cut us off from our past. But this is not forgetting in a conceptual sense—it is sickness that removes us from a past that Bergson sees as existing even if we cannot access it. The radical conception of the past that undergirds all of our life seems to brook no concession to forgetting in an intentional way. In this vein, thinking about the past and the subject in Bergson's terms, means that we must be psychologically capable of dealing with all of our past. What this tell us about how the past returns in Bergson's thought is that the past that returns is not an emotional one. Bergson isn't asking about how an individual copes and realizes events in a life through the returning past. As I have shown he values action for a successful life to the point of critiquing the type of individual that focuses on the past rather than putting it to use. I'll come back to the consideration of Bergson's memory theory and the self-reflective self after considering Proust and Nietzsche, along with a few poets on the topic of forgetting in light of a past that is preserved, or saved.

[264] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 59.

I suggest that saving the past is far from dwelling in the past— being hindered by it in our ability to move forward. There is significant tension between viewing the past as that which holds us back and a past that anchors and informs our future that is necessary to understanding how change functions. At the heart of this concern is the question: how is it possible to actively engage with our past without absorption into it? Bergson's depiction in *Matter and Memory* of the dreamer that I discuss in Chapter 1 fits the description of absorption. He sees this type of individual as constantly focusing on the details of the past, unable to move forward in life, only attuned to difference.[265] The problem with the life of the dreamer is that he is never able to act because his mind is turned towards the past as it was lived, rather than as it is being lived. A more everyday understanding of this type of orientation would describe an individual as being unable to 'move on.' There are many examples of this type of thinking through the self-help, romance, and personal transformation genres where books, film and advice columns tell us how to get on with our lives and put the past behind us for good.[266] The past, as understood by this type of thinking, is perilous to our ability to live a healthy present and future life. If we want to maintain healthy equilibrium, we are urged to put the past, or at least part of it, out of the frame of our current orientation. In many of these cases, the past that we are urged to put behind us may be so psychologically painful, even traumatic, that "letting it go" seems to be the best way to move forward. We are urged to forget the past—to not dwell on it in our thoughts or let it impact the way that we live in the present.

The danger of being mired in the past is also an extremely familiar literary trope: we can call to mind Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* living in the ruined frozen moment of her past betrayal as a prime example. Or the character that occupies three of Faulkner's novels, and lives

[265] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 15.
[266] There are dozens of titles that begin with simply "Moving On" in the self-help and romance genres, similarly "Letting Go."

in the past, despite being the hope of the future for the family, Quentin Compson. What these literary and self-help examples highlight is not only our abiding interest in the past, but also the question: to what extent is the concept of forgetting central to the question of change? And further, if our past is troubled why would we want to save it? We especially see the obsession that this type of thinking breeds in Proust's work, where our narrator's fixation over Albertine Simonet in *The Captive and the Fugitive* occupies his constant thoughts—all moments returning him to memories of her and wild speculations about the various ways she may have betrayed him. I look closer at this obsessive holding onto the past that is exemplified through the narrator's relationship with Albertine below. What Proust so acutely portrays in these books that occupy a large portion of *In Search of Lost Time* is the painful grip that the past can have over us, and how in this grip the movement of time itself seems to slow. I will show how Proust acts as a phenomenologist, moving through the elements of this possessing past so that the operation of memory and the means or reaching greater self-understanding are revealed.

The possessive past

Though all of *In Search of Lost Time* is occupied with the past, the book originally published as *Albertine disparue*, now known as *The Fugitive*, portrays a special vexation with it. In the preceding book, *The Captive*,[267] the narrator has entered into domestic life with Albertine, a young woman whom he invested so much of his fantasy life into in his earlier years. In *Within a Budding Grove,* Albertine was part of the little band of *jeune filles* that captures the narrator's

[267] These two volumes are published together in the Moncrieff and Kilmartin translations revised by Enright that I use as the primary translation in this work.

attention, and love, during a summer spent in Balbec, and years later he is reacquainted with her in adulthood. In *The Captive,* Albertine lives with him and comforts him in the way he yearned for his mother to care for him as a child. As in the "nighttime drama" from his youth where his satisfaction results in the feeling that he has lost some struggle with the will, [268] his relationship with Albertine is comforting but ultimately disappointing. The narrator has lost his desire for her and wants to keep her close largely to keep her from others. He writes, "when I decided to live with Albertine, and even to marry her, it was in order to guard her, to know what she was doing, to prevent her from returning to her old habits with Mlle Vinteuil."[269] He understands his love for Albertine, at least intellectually, as a jealous love. He regularly plans their inevitable break and what he sees as the freedom of finally being able to travel to Venice. But Albertine leaves him first, resulting in a past focused absorption and obsession.

The narrator's obsession with Albertine returns him over and over again to moments in the past lived with her. Only at this point, he imagines all of these times as tinged with unseen infidelities and betrayals. It is impossible for him to move on physically—he feels incapacitated by the things that surround him that she once touched—her slippers, a lounge that she often sat on in his bedroom, the pianola she played. He cannot even enter the room where she slept, commanding his maid Françoise to maintain its readiness for her imminent return. As with the madeleine, the shoelaces, or the paving stones, once again perceptual objects of the narrator's present take on a weighty significance of past moments.

As discussed in chapter three, things (or signs as Deleuze reads them), bring back entire swaths of our past along with the self that lived through that time. It is from the present vantage

[268] I'm referring here to the opening scene in Swann's Way when the narrator's mother consents to sleep beside him in his childhood room because his unhappiness is finally seen as an ailment of nerves, as noted in chapter 3, *Swann's Way*, 15-51; 50.
[269] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 585.

point that unseen worlds of this past are revealed. The object that has returned us to these moments may be something we normally pay little attention to. Indeed, it's insignificance and constancy within our lives is often exactly what has obscured it from revealing anything meaningful beyond the use value that it serves. As discussed previously, these objects do not possess some mystical quality, but rather offer a temporal transport between times in our life. The instances of involuntary memory that occur throughout *In Search of Lost Time* are always prompted by an encounter with an object that opens up a world that has previously seemed lost. With the glimmer of recognition that the object ignites, the narrator is compelled to seek out this past. As chapter three discusses at length, involuntary memory occurs only a few times throughout *In Search of Lost Time* and thought it is describing an aspect of how we live in memory, it also functions as a creative device for Proust, serving to direct his work into new areas of exploration, and providing an anchor point for his argument about artistic creativity.

The remembrance that occurs through the objects that remind our narrator of Albertine are certainly not instances of involuntary memory, and the return that they prompt operates in a very different way. The past that these objects recall with Albertine reveal deceit, real or imagined. The narrator's obsessive jealousy is geared towards reading into these past moments the betrayal that he now sees was inevitable from her. He was always jealous in their relationship, maintaining a watchful possessiveness over Albertine. In *Proust and Signs*, Deleuze notes that it is voluntary memory, memory of the intelligence, that the "jealous man" relies upon to try to catch his beloved in deceit. All of the details of their interactions must be remembered in case they will eventually add up to some sign of betrayal. Deleuze says that this type of voluntary memory: "confronts its own limits and, straining toward the future, seeks to transcend them."[270] But the attempt at accounting for every memory to discern lies in the immediate present fails—it

[270] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 52.

"comes too late," for the moment.[271] This is exemplified in one instance where Françoise points out to the narrator that two rings left behind by Albertine have clearly been crafted by the same jeweler, indicating that they were given to her by the same person.[272] These rings now symbolize to the narrator his naïveté at not recognizing the similarities in design and believing that they were friendly gifts rather than gifts from an admirer. His recollection of the day he saw the second ring, a day otherwise peaceful, "loving and intimate"[273] is now marred by the removal of any remaining trust in his mistress and his intent on deciphering the eagle and ruby symbols of the ring to discover the admirer that gave them to her.

The return of the past that operates with the rings, a voluntary obsessive memory, or in the everyday things that Albertine has touched, does not open up new possibilities for creative self-understanding as occurs following instances of involuntary memory. Instead, the things that are suffused with memories of Albertine hold the narrator in a past that is torturous and confined. With Proust's example, we see how the meaning that accumulates around objects of grief or loss becomes saturated. An object, in this case a pair of rings, is thrown into a distinctive type of relief in the absence of the person who regularly used it. Proust remarks that this is where habit, in this case with another person, is most missed, or noticed, once its regularity is disrupted.[274]

In *Remembering*, Ed Casey draws together the "congealed" aspect of things and the habit formed around them, writing: "they augment continuing recognition of scenes we remember as well as facilitating our ability to repeat those scenes in subsequent reattachment."[275] We see this congealing in Proust's depiction of the past lived after a lost love, in the suffocating nature of the

[271] Proust thinks that we realize the events of the past only after they occur and this Deleuzian point regarding the jealous man accumulating the details of memory but only succeeding in using them after it has passed fairly accurately describes the Proustian approach to creatively writing about memory.
[272] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 623-5.
[273] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 627.
[274] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 577-8.
[275] Casey, *Remembering*, 206.

things and habits accumulated around a past with an individual and the return of the self that has previously lived through some type of similar schism. We even become confined by the words of our past self, repeating ourselves—a tendency Proust calls "self plagiarism."[276] And we see that in this reappearance of aspects of our self, or past selves, it is the "subsequent reattachment" that is the real educator in instances of lost love.

The way that Proust addresses past selves in the Albertine books shows us a fluid conception of their return. As discussed in Chapter 3, Proust has articulated a view that our life is composed of different selves that live in certain epochs of our life and then leave us—'dying,' in his language. In the break with Albertine the many habitual selves of daily life that haven't yet come out to experience her loss re-enter, causing resurgences of grief.[277] These selves not only return but also are discussed in a way that indicates many selves inhabiting a place and time—selves that seem to be attached to the most daily ("humble" in his words) activities, and the most advanced behaviors and thoughts.[278][279] They are even able to speak with and influence each other, as when the self that endured the parting with Gilberte returns to influence the way that the narrator deals with Albertine's departure. Writing of these selves, Proust says: "Each of them had to be told of my grief, the grief which is in no way a pessimistic conclusion freely drawn from an accumulation of baneful circumstances, but is the intermittent and involuntary reviviscence of a specific impression that has come to us from without and was not chosen by us."[280]

The use of 'involuntary' here calls to mind involuntary memory, but as I address above, what Proust is describing in lost love is different. The break, and then absence of Albertine is a

[276] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 587.
[277] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 579.
[278] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 587.
[279] This way of thinking about the various selves we live in active and passive moments of life is related to Deleuze's analysis of the synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition*, in which the self is understood through repetition as "contemplations," marked by need and fatigue, and eventually seen as a "modification," 76-9.
[280] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 579

destructive event that freezes the past so that it overwhelms the present for some time—it causes a rupture in the narrator's relationship between his current and past selves. In going about daily life, the narrator cycles between forgetting about the break briefly and being reminded again of the harmful event. For the narrator, the everyday self that goes to the barber, or proceeds with any other mundane part of the day, has to incorporate this new information into his current self—Albertine is gone.

The revelations that Proust focuses on regarding things and habitual life surrounding a lost love aren't new to anyone for whom a relationship has ended. The things that surround us, the weather, habit, the time of year, can reignite past grief over an ended love for years into our lives. [281] I'm spending time here with the Proustian consideration of what is essentially a breakup because I want to make the case that it illustrates the way that we live in memory in an amplified form. What Proust is describing in these two books largely devoted to Albertine, is the nature of obsessive love, jealousy, and possession as memories of her dominate him. These themes depict the way that memory can weigh us down and occupy our waking and dreaming moments. It also depicts, as I will discuss below, a way of understanding the Bergsonian vision of the past as always present to our action, but the difference is that the Proustian past is emotional – the presence of it is *felt*. This is a past represented by all of the things surrounding the narrator, reminding him of another person, providing the background undercurrent of images that are seen and thought about on a constant basis.

The theme of lost love is a dominant theme in literature, film, and music. It is, perhaps, where we see the continuously present (but oppressive) nature of memory highlighted the most

[281]See Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick's *The Weather in Proust* (Edited by Jonathan Goldberg. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) for an in depth analysis of the uses of weather that define and guide the narrators life, mood and relationship to the past throughout *In Search of Lost Time*, in addition to addressing sexuality, politics, and psychoanalysis.

frequently. I want to briefly look to a poem that offers us a few more ideas to think through this theme of memory before we turn to the question of how we can forget, or get over, memory that operates in this way. In a prose poem from *Glass, Irony and God* book Anne Carson writes:

> Perhaps the hardest thing about losing a lover is
> to watch the year repeat its days.
> It is as if I could dip my hand down
>
> into time and scoop up
> Blue and green lozenges of April heat
> a year ago in another country.
>
> I can feel that other day running underneath this one
> like an old videotape—here we go fast around the last corner
> up the hills to his house, shadows [282]

This poem illustrates well the undercurrent of memory, a particular past—in relation to a love affair—that streams under the present moments we live. Carson's description of this past life as a videotape depicts the reel of images that replay events in a way that can completely shape the experience of present moments, overwhelming them. There is an escapism in maintaining the past images in constant view, and perhaps this attitude is what Bergson is criticizing to when he speaks pejoratively of the dreamer attuned only to the past. Tuning into memory, 'telescoping' into the past, to use Proustian language, supplants the pain that might be currently felt.

The theme of obsessive absorption in the past in Proust's work is predicated on possession. The narrator realizes that upon Albertine's return the problems of their life together will quickly re-emerge. The return to the past with her, and the desire for her actual return is a tonic. The real relief comes through forgetfulness. He states: One seeks to see the beloved object, but one ought to seek not to: forgetfulness alone brings about the ultimate exchange of desire."[283]

[282] Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*, (New Directions Publishing, 1995) 8.
[283] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 607.

Forgetting— this is a major theme of Proust's Albertine works. The chapter section that makes up most of *The Fugitive* is "Grieving and Forgetting," and of course, *In Search of Lost Time* is about the return of a once forgotten past. But whereas memory, either of the intellect or involuntary, plays an active and creative theoretical role in Proust's work, forgetting is depicted as a slower process of disintegration. Much of it he sees as an eventual shifting of priorities away from a past that has occupied a certain amount of time and space. This past becomes another series that is incorporated into life—though forgotten, it continually shapes the present. Regarding forgetting, Proust writes: "In reality, we know that it is not a painful state but a state of indifference."[284] The forgotten is that which we don't care about directly any longer, but which remains an indirect influence on our current self, a forgotten past that resurfaces in various ways.

This influence and indifference can be seen in the death of Albertine. In *In Search of Lost Time*, Albertine never returns to the narrator. She dies in a horse riding accident and his grief over her departure becomes his grief over her death.[285] In the course of these two books grieving for her, the love the narrator had for Albertine is gradually dissolved into a larger pool of lost loves, as in the loss of Gilberte and even the pain and lost love he felt over his Grandmother's death. What Proust shows the reader is that forgetting is not an effacement of some event or person, or even a deliberate choice that once made banishes something or someone from our mind. It is closer to a dissolution of the difference that was once so strongly felt with another person—the weight of their particularities loses force as they recede from us so that even the things associated with the person are untethered. Each individual whom we love eventually becomes part of a series of repeating behaviors, obsessions, and correlative objects. Deleuze

[284] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 650.
[285] Though it is interesting to note that the grief that the narrator seems to experience when Albertine leaves him is depicted as far more intensely felt than the news, and the days following her death.

writes, "not only does each love form a particular series, but at the other pole, the series of our loves transcends our experience, links up with other experiences, accedes to a transubjective reality."[286]

This is a statement about difference and repetition: the specificity of each love, and the love for each love is eventually repeated. As mentioned above, Proust expresses this theme of repetition by addressing it as 'self-plagiarism'--the act of repeating the words of another as your own, only in this instance the self that is repeated is one that has been previously lived. And we see in even the most grief obsessed moments regarding Albertine that the narrator is already blurring the differences between her and other lost loves; in frantically trying to win her back the connections between Albertine and Gilberte are the most apparent to him. His own self-plagiarism, though lamented, forms the basis for how Proust's writing on the specificities of reminiscence and a life lived in society is a philosophical work. This is to say that forgetting functions for Proust as a way to keep the story going—to open up space for and to depict the many stages of life that his characters live through. Walt Whitman wrote that he "contained multitudes,"[287] leading to inevitable contradictions within himself. In Proust, the narrator also contains multitudes—selves that lives and die only to be partly resurrected again in another guise.

But what does the repetition of loves, or of any of the other behaviors that we encounter in what Proust has referred to as a series of disappointments (society, travel, politics, friendship), imply about the role of memory in changing the self? Or to put the question another way, does the type of forgetting that allows for the seemingly unconscious repetition of a series of like events allow us to change? Proust suggests that the self changes gradually and to a limited degree

[286] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 71.
[287] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, (New York. Dover, 2007), 69.

in response to each series of disappointments—as if the structure of experience remains but the desire gradually fades and shifts. He writes, "we do not think of the outcome which generally comes to pass and is also favourable: we do not succeed in changing things in accordance with our desires, but gradually our desires change."[288] Though forgetting serves a purpose in Proust's work, his views on forgetting and change seems to be that they occur through dissolution of the desire or the will to hold on to something.[289] *Our desires change* is different from claiming that we change with intentionality. We can think about the intentionality of change as a question of will. And while Proust will most certainly see the will as central to finding a way to "fix" the moment that is experienced through the impression that sparks involuntary memory, this is a will that remains largely absent in forgetting. The will is present, but negatively. It is a matter of letting go.

The role of an active relationship with forgetting is one that is developed in Friedrich Nietzsche's thought. I turn to his thinking on the subject to continue thinking through the question of forgetting as an aspect of how we live in our past, taking up the question of what it means to will through memory, and forgetting. Nietzsche's thought on the nature of memory and forgetting also circles around the questions of letting go and change. I draw out how Nietzsche succeeds at thinking about the problematic past in a way that both Bergson and Proust don't—by way of affirmation. For the purpose of further questioning the nature of how we can manage to actively save the past, but not to be hindered by it, I first look briefly to the *Genealogy of Morals*, where Nietzsche most strongly makes a case urging us to forget. Despite Nietzsche's strong rhetorical push to forget—to let go of our 'memory of the will,' I show how the past maintains a

[288] Proust, *The Captive and The Fugitive*, 609.
[289] Though, Walter Benjamin provocatively asks in his essay "The Image of Proust": "Is not the involuntary recollection, Proust's *mémoire involontaire*, much closer to forgetting than what is usually called memory?" In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (Schoken Books: New York, 1969), 202.

prominent and active role in his philosophical work and how his position on memory offers insight into how we might actively live, and save, the past.

Remember to forget

Few philosophers have argued for actively leaving our past behind us more than Friedrich Nietzsche. In his thought, the past is described as a stone that weighs us down. Until we move beyond our "memory of the will," we cannot move beyond ourselves into the free spirits that his philosophical project hopes for human life. A form of forgetting that is willed, active forgetting, is viewed by Nietzsche as necessary for overall health. He writes in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "Forgetting is an active and positive faculty of repression;" we must forget for "there could be no happiness, no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no present, without forgetfulness."[290] In this polemic account of memory, Nietzsche develops an origin story—a genealogy—on the impact of memory on the human animal. His thinking of forgetting is bound up with a project of the transvaluation of values—understanding the way that values have formed and deformed us—and how we can move beyond them.[291] Nietzsche develops the idea of active and reactive forces and his insistence on forgetting partly stems from thinking about how we can transvaluate—reevaluate how our values have created these reactive forces. In the *Genealogy*, he depicts reactive force as formed through a history of punishment and internalization of drives. Active

[290] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. In *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, (New York: Random House, 1967) 58. See also *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* where Nietzsche first develops the concept of "active forgetting," trans. by R. J. Hollindale. In *Untimely Meditations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[291] This book functions largely as a critique of the institution of morality, an essayistic exploration of the ideas introduced *in Beyond Good and Evil* (trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966). In this chapter, I primarily focus on the genealogical origins Nietzsche lays out for how the values of good, bad, and evil have developed to see how memory and forgetting undergird this morality and how we might live with these functions.

force is associated with the happiness that comes from expending force unconsciously, from letting go without malice, from forgetting without *remembering to forget*.

Though much of Nietzsche's work circles around the idea of letting go and futurity, the *Genealogy of Morals* contains his most explicit discussion of memory and forgetting as formative, de-formative, and necessary for questioning self-knowledge.[292] In the preface, Nietzsche writes: "we are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge,"[293] urging us to consider the foundations of our thinking and valuation.[294] What Nietzsche depicts so clearly in his genealogy as formative of our morality is that for the human animal the ability to remember is rooted in a history of punishment and negative internalization. We hold onto something as a result of a suffered or engrained past harm and this can easily lead to the stifling of our freedom. But Nietzsche also tells the story of memory paradoxically. He writes that at the point in history when our 'animality' turns inward "something so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and pregnant with a future" occurred so that "the aspect of the earth was essentially altered."[295]

In this evolutionary story of the development of the human animal into the reasoning animal, dependent upon consciousness for survival, Nietzsche sees that humans begin to remember and our possibilities for new types of life are opened up. He writes: "the entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was

[292] David Allison has written that Nietzsche's critique of morality identifies the root of an "ontotheological conceived world order" as the "it was," or despair over our helplessness in relation to the past (*Reading the New Nietzsche*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2000, 161). There are many connections to be made between this Judeo-Christian critique and the torturous story of coming to memory that Nietzsche tells in the *Genealogy*, but for the sake of brevity I limit myself to drawing out the conceptual distinctions here.
[293] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 15.
[294] This opening section is both like and unlike Bergson's appeal to "common sense" over philosophical knowledge in that Nietzsche wants us to dispense with the learned moral theories that we rest upon, but this critique also extends to resting easily in what is commonly known or thought to be sufficient—the herd mentality.
[295] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 58.

inhibited."[296] The coming of consciousness in this genealogy is for Nietzsche a story of hope—that same consciousness co-inhabiting the human is also a story of loss because the in-ward turning of the self limits the active letting go linked to our more instinctual past.[297]

Nietzsche's polemical account allows us to see memory and forgetting as necessary aspects of our development and possibility for change. As Ed Casey puts it in *Remembering*: "Perhaps forgetting and remembering are *equiprimordial in human experience*; both are valuable, both are required. If so, the unfreedom of forgetting is not to be regretted vis-à-vis the freedom of remembering. Each is essential to human existence."[298] With the use of the term "unfreedom" in relation to forgetting, Casey suggests that forgetting is a variation of repetition, or even habit. In this sense, forgetting frees up consciousness to focus on the more important events, or memories, or even daily functioning of our life. Casey points out not only the necessity of forgetting, but the problem with vilifying it conceptually. Nietzsche's writing on forgetting is a positive faculty that enables 'well-being,' and as Casey writes, "a basis for being-in-the-world."[299]

As the focus on wellness and health implies, forgetting does not only allow for repetition through habitual life, it offers a release of instinctual energy. And in Nietzsche's thought this sense of forgetting as allowing for repetition is also problematized through his critique of habit. While he writes in *The Gay Science* that he loves the formation of "brief habits," he critiques the reliance on "enduring" ones. In *The Genealogy of Morals* he compares habit as a *vis inertiae* and

[296] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 85.
[297] The connection here between Nietzsche's interest in maintaining an instinctual connection to life over the prominence of intellect and Bergson's is notable: in *Creative Evolution* Bergson writes "Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness…a complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should maintain their full development," 266.
[298] Casey, *Remembering*, 307.
[299] Casey, *Remembering*, 307.

links it to the passivity of herd mentality.[300] But the active forgetting of the *Genealogy* is one that stands opposed to the passive adoption of morality.

I noted above that Nietzsche's treatment of memory is about affirmation and letting go—it produces humans that are "a way, an episode, a bridge, a great promise" toward a new mode of life that affirms basic human drives.[301] Forgetting is instinctual and necessary in Nietzsche's thought but memory moves us into the future. Both are required and both require a specific type of willing that affirms and lets go. It is a matter of learning how to harness this aspect of will if in order to live out the type of future life that Nietzsche seeks. In Nietzsche's thought we can only move forward if we live in accordance with this active force—the will to power that propels us past constraints of our past, and reactive memories.

For Nietzsche these activities of the will, letting go and moving forward, are not merely about forgetting. But what can be drawn from his work regarding the concept of forgetting is the affirmation that letting go requires. This affirmation of the past is present in Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return, and in his call for *amor fati*. One way of thinking about forgetting in light of the eternal return is that the past is not erased or overlooked but it is affirmed as no longer determining our future. This active forgetting both wills the past to exist and acknowledges it as no longer having a hold on our current actions. Nietzsche sees forgetting as an art, and a power, and in this sense it is not merely an unconscious freeing up of our mind, it is practiced for the sake of living a healthy life.[302] This is to say that in Nietzsche's thought about forgetting is most useful to us when we are willing away a past that is no longer reactive. In the eternal return, the past returns, but not in the stranglehold of reactive force, it simply returns and it is affirmed. In

[300] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science, with a Prelude of Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs,* trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Random House, 1974), 167; *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 24.
[301] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 85.
[302] Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 69.

Nietzsche's thought, the eternal return operates as a principle of change. Taken literally, the idea of this return is partly and inextricably bound up with the past as a possibility for preparing our future. It is concerned with a past that we hold in memory, but hold lightly, with an acknowledgment of its power and a recognition of our ability to will this past into a hopeful future.

Nietzsche goes a step beyond affirmation when he suggests that we must love our past, even will it: "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, no forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but *love* it."[303] In the same spirit Nietzsche wrote years earlier regarding *amor fati*: "I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them."[304] In both quotes Nietzsche refers to a necessity that is oriented, in part, toward past life experience and thought preparing us for he person we choose to be now.

We can see the creative process of willing the necessity of the past in Zarathustra, who proclaims: "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, "But thus I will it; thus I shall will it.'[305] Here Nietzsche suggests that truly affirming our current life requires that we see all that has passed as essential—everything that has brought us to the point of willing the current future. Thinking about affirming all that has passed, even loving it, does involve maintaining a hold on the past in a certain sense. But the type of 'hold' on the past that occurs in *amor fati* needs to have a 'light' hold on us. I use the term 'light' because the past of *amor fati* is not one that we merely react to or are dominated by (as Proust's narrator is by his lost love of Albertine), but a

[303] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*, 358.
[304] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 157.
[305] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 141.

past that is recognized as contributing to the our current and future self, one that is chosen. It is important that his hold be seen as active and conscious as well. Nietzsche's concern regarding habit and repetition is that unconscious repeating leads to the nascent acceptance of deformed values and *ressentiment*. Holding lightly implies that a past is acknowledged and the troubling aspects are released. This is not forgetting in the strict sense—the past has not disappeared. Holding lightly implies forgetting in the sense of letting go; the past doesn't maintain the "stranglehold" that it once did.

I've noted that in Nietzsche's thought the will plays a prominent role in memory and forgetting. He urges us to move beyond the "memory of the will," insisting that the positive faculty of forgetting is the path to health. [306] In Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati* the past is affirmed, even loved, because the negative and reactive qualities of this past have been let go. Nietzsche's work encourages us to make sense of the past—to actively engage with it. Otherwise, as Zarathustra darkly states, we only find in the past an assemblage of "fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings."[307] In the face of the past that may initially appear accidental and arbitrary, Zarathustra sees the ability to interpret and choose our present as redemptive and creative. Nietzsche's conception of willing the past ties together a number of the ways I have articulated thinking about memory and the self through Bergson, Proust and Deleuze. Below I draw these thinkers together, asking: how it is possible to enact change in the self through memory, what does it mean for a subjective identity to forget but also affirm the past, and how we can actively 'save the past?'

The Bergsonian self

[306] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 140.
[307] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 138.

The self has been presented as durational in Bergson's thinking and multigenerational in Proust's. While Bergson's articulation of memory does not primarily focus on psychological and identity oriented considerations of the self, he sees all of our memorial past as forming the basis for our character. As discussed in Chapter 2 the cone of memory depicts the way that memory returns in our life as expanded or condensed based on the exigencies of the moment. Action suspends what Bergson describes as the clamoring of memory in entering life as similar to the floodgates that allow this memory to enter in dreams.

In Proust's thinking, the floodgates of memory open with the very specific type of memory, and I suggested in Chapter 3, involuntary memory. This memory re-populates the world of the past in a way that it was not originally experienced at the time of living it. For Proust, the death of many selves is a way to consider the change in the self over time. This way of seeing change in the self can give the impression that one person has been many different people, that there is no unity in the self. Such an impression is negated insofar as Proust also sees the possibility of a true self and past that is both eternally present and foundational.

In this section I'll develop an interpretation of the past as found in Bergson and Proust—one that is ever-present and foundational—as that which gives us the freedom to enact change in the self. In doing so, this section takes up what seems like a counter-intuitive proposition. As I questioned at the beginning of this chapter, if our past exists in entirety, severed from us only through illness or anomalies of memory, how do we live it reflectively while also letting go of the aspects that trouble us? As I've discussed above, Nietzsche's response to these questions is to separate ourselves from the reactive elements—de-activating the past, in a sense, from what was

harmful about it.[308] In Nietzsche's thought the affirmation of the past affirms both the element of that is unchanging and the ability creatively move on and let go. This is especially prominent in Nietzsche's self-prescribed call for *amor fati*. In the remaining part of this chapter I look to the ways that we might apply this Nietzschean view of the past to Bergson and Proust, seeing the existence of the past as material for a future endeavor where the self is more fully realized.

This future orientation of the past is a point that Deleuze has especially drawn out of Bergson's work and integrated into his own theory. He writes: "Bergson saw that memory was a function of the future, that memory and will were the same function, that only a being capable of memory could turn away from its past, free itself from the past, not repeat it, and do something new."[309] Deleuze is suggesting here that we are capable of turning away from our past w*hile also holding onto it* because memory is about difference. This double relationship toward memory is present in Bergson's thought from his first work on duration in *Time and Free Will* and onward. It is especially evident in the way 'differences in kind' function relative to memory in *Matter and Memory*. In that work, the levels of the cone, discussed at length in chapter 2, depict our past repeated on different levels according to their proximity to action or expanded memory. Our past is "rearranged" on each level insofar as certain aspects of our past are more prominent on some levels than others and we return to a specific level of the past and repeat that variation. This level of return that the present signifies can be read as a way to understand ourselves— in Deleuze's words "the sign of the present is a passage to the limit."[310] The way that memory returns determines our subjective life, and we are in turn determined by this repetition. The present moment that is lived depicts our choice in relation to memory return. And Deleuze's suggestion

[308] Freud's thought is certainly helpful in thinking about how we might remove ourselves from a reactive past. See especially, "Remembering, Repeating, Working Through," in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and other Writings,* trans. John Reddick (New York: Penguin, 2003).
[309] Deleuze, *Desert Islands and other Texts 1953-1974*, 38.
[310] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 105.

here comes from Bergson's thought in that he saw that that there is a choice to how we return—a freedom in determining the level of our past that we engage with. He suggests that memory and the will serve the *same function*, but we have to learn how to use it in order to move forward. Here, Deleuze affirms that the returning of memory ought not to be seen as passive. The theme here resonates with all the interpretations put forth so far. Bergson's emphasis on the action oriented nature of memory, Proust's creative engagement with reminiscence, Nietzsche's willing the past, and the emphasis that Deleuze places on choice, each show the deep interest each thinker has in activating the past in our lives. This points to a shared ground of these thinkers work regarding memory—the question of how an individual can actively live the past.

What Bergson sees in memory and our relationship to it, is the importance of deploying the past in a certain way. This "way" is methodological—it is the theory of intuition and it rests in our relationship to memory.[311] One of the questions that this method attempts to address might be broadly understood as 'how can we live as ourselves?' In *Creative Evolution* Bergson writes about the rarity of truly experiencing ourselves "within our own life":

> It is into pure duration that we then plunge back, a duration in which the past, always moving on, is swelling unceasingly with a present that is absolutely new. But, at the same time, we feel the spring of our will strained to its utmost limit. We must, by a strong recoil of our personality on itself, gather up our past which is slipping away, in order to thrust it, compact and undivided, into a present which it will create by entering. Rare indeed are the moments when we are self-possessed to this extent: it is then that our actions are truly free.[312]

In this passage Bergson emphasizes the freedom that comes from gathering oneself—past and personality—to enter the present. With the term "recoil" the language of backward movement is

[311] With the theory of intuition Bergson explicates this occurrence on a methodological level, and to be sure, we are not living intuition at all times. But in a more minor way our relationship with memory is highlighted in the description of how we engage with intuition. See *Creative Evolution.*
[312] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 200.

employed to indicate the effort he sees in this activity. [313] It is not in letting oneself go (allowing dream life to take over, or stream of consciousness thinking, or even in a Bacchanalian revel) that freedom is felt, it is in gathering the self together by returning to the past. Bergson refers to the freedom that comes from this return as self-possession. Though this term typically indicates a type of composure, the sense of composure should not be understood in a way that restricts what I take to be essential to Bergson's self—the self as an unfurling possibility, an opening into the unknown. The preservation of the past that Bergson argued for in *Matter and Memory* is dynamic, and as I have discussed throughout this work, this dynamism is especially seen in the cone of memory that depicts the multiple emphasis points a fixed moment in the past occupies through the levels or sheets of the cone.

In Bergson's thought, the self is durational not passively, but insofar as duration entails that gathering oneself with the past is always necessarily a new effort. The reason for this continued effort is not because the past has changed but because our relationship to how we understand our self situated in the past is dynamic, so the gathering that occurs is a gathering of a changed and changing self. One can see this dynamic notion of the self in *Mind-Energy* where Bergson envisions the self as overflowing and always being different from what it was. He says "This thing, which overflows the body on all sides and which creates acts by new-creating itself, is the "I," the "soul," the "mind"—mind being precisely a force which can draw from itself more than it contains, yield more than it receives, give more than it has."[314] This image of the self as overflowing the body calls to mind Descartes' conception of the infinite nature that is always

[313] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 127.
[314] Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, 23.

exceeded in the finite individual. [315] It is not remiss to use the language of the infinite here—Bergson refers to memory itself as spirit and soul, and to spirit and soul and infinite. [316]

What comes together among these ideas about the overflowing of the durational self and the preservation and accumulation of memory is the strong commitment to a dynamic view of the self that undergirds Bergson's philosophical project. And despite the emphasis that is placed on memory as utilitarian, his commitment to dynamism can be drawn out into thinking about individual change through a reflective relationship to memory. In Bergson's thinking about the past, as I have examined, the self is positioned so that it is always leaping back into the past "as into a proper element."[317] In the indeterminate present, we can choose how to engage in the past. This choice creates freedom—we can read Bergson as suggesting that an individual is determined at every moment by how we enter the past. This isn't to say that the indeterminacy of how we engage with memory opens us up to wildly unpredictable engagements with the past at our choosing. The durational self in Bergson's thinking is still oriented to action.

In *Time and Free* will he distinguishes two types of durational selves, two aspects of conscious life. As discussed in chapter 3 he refers to these as homogenous duration and true duration.[318] And in *Matter and Memory* Bergson identifies another distinction in types of duration experienced by the self—he splits duration into duration as that "*wherein we see ourselves acting*" and "duration *wherein we act*"—where our "states melt into each other."[319] In *Time and Free Will*, he refers to living the true self as a task requiring a "vigorous effort of

[315] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Though Bergson doesn't quote Descartes directly here, "A Lecture delivered in Paris, at Foi et Vie, April 28, 1912," he is clearly on his mind, and cited later in the text. Here Bergson appeals again to common sense, as he did at the beginning of *Matter and Memory*, there directly referring to Descartes' thought experiment from *Meditations*.
[316] Ed Casey has argued for memory as the "means to soul" in his essay "Memory, Time, and Soul" in *Spirit and Soul Essays in Philosophical Psychology*, 177.
[317] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 56.
[318] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 128.
[319] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 186, italics in original.

analysis."[320] For Bergson this analysis must distance our self-understanding from a view dominated by spatial understanding.[321] In *Matter and Memory*, referring to this earlier project of analysis, he writes that it "presents, in its application, difficulties which are considerable and ever recurrent," difficulties which are described as 'negative work to be done,' that necessitate that we "give up certain habits of thinking, and even perceiving."[322] Bergson sees that the self must be recovered from not primarily from social conventions in general, but from the convention of understanding the self in terms of our concept of homogenous space.[323] It is only through a work of discovery that rolls back habit and conventional ways of existing in space and in the social world that we might locate the true self.

For Bergson, in order for the self to be more tuned into durational engagement and change, one should focus one's effort on disconnecting from fundamental but erroneous modes of thinking and being, not on the analysis or re-invention of a self-reflective past. In chapter 2, I discussed Deleuze's reading of the leap that is made in Bergson's thought. He reads the return to the past as a leap into an ontological element. Deleuze argues that it is a leap where we leave psychology behind us, for a moment, to return to the element of the past.[324] While Bergson depicts these zones of the past, his return to them is not focused on the particular meaning of one's personal past. In other words, when the self leaps back into the past and chooses to engage differently with how memory has previously played out, this is an engagement with the past that is oriented towards transforming it into something new. For Bergson, the significance of the continuing existence of the past primarily resides in its utility for transforming the present

[320] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 129.
[321] For Bergson, the proper interpretation of the self is part of his larger project of overcoming the tendency to understand human existence in terms of homogenous space.
[322] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 185.
[323] In *The Creative Mind* he writes about this task as a matter of "grasp[ing] ourselves afresh as we are…pushing the screen which masks us from ourselves farther an farther away." "Philosophical Intuition" in *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L Andison (Dover Publications, 2007), 106.
[324] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 56-7.

moment—this is the change that he sees and wants to come from memory. With the practicality of action that characterizes Bergson's thought, there is not a focus on self-realization or of seeking the past as it was, irrespective of current utility. Self-seeking is accomplished through the transformation of what has already passed into what is in the present and future; self is identified with one's character, which is understood as a 'hyphen' or link between past and present. What is radical in Bergson's thought is the appeal that he makes for all change to come from the past. The present must appeal to memory for movement, for anything, to occur. But like the critique that Bergson made regarding the dreamer, his thought regarding the past is that tallying in memory is not useful for creative movement. What is useful is moving forward.

Saving the Past

I have mentioned a few times that Deleuze sees Proust as succeeding at saving the past where Bergson fails. The question of saving the past is important to Deleuze: he brings it up in *Bergsonism, Proust and Signs,* and in *Difference and Repetition* where he asks the question "*how can we save it for ourselves*?"[325] Deleuze brings this idea into play so often because it is about meaningfully living out the past that is always, already repeating, and seeing the difference that occurs between the past and the present we are living. It is in a footnote in *Bergsonism* that Deleuze briefly explains how he sees Proust as more successful at this task than Bergson. Deleuze has been discussing the coexistence of the past in Bergson's thought in relation to Plato's theory of reminiscence. He adds as an aside:

> A comparison could also be made here between Bergson and Proust. Their conception of time is extremely different, but both acknowledge a kind of pure past, a being in itself of the past. According to Proust this being in itself can be lived, experienced by virtue of a

[325] Deleuze, Bergsonism, 126; *Proust and Signs*, 59; *Difference and Repetition*, 85, italics in original.

> coincidence between two instants of time. But according to Bergson, pure recollection or pure past are not a domain of the lived, even in paramnesia; we only experience a recollection-image[326]

As I have discussed in chapter 2, and briefly above, Deleuze has drawn out of Bergson's thought the way in which returning to memory has ontological rather than psychological dimensions. When it comes to saving the past, Deleuze seems to be both prioritizing a psychological connection to some memorial event, and questioning how it is possible to re-live an event as it occurred.

In Proust's thought this is not the way involuntary memory asserts itself. The past returns through an object, or sensuous sign in Deleuze's terminology, and the self that lived that past reunites with our current self. As discussed in Chapter 3, the return of involuntary memory brings us back to a true past and an invention. It is a past that seems like it was long forgotten but in returning to it, the edges are filled in by creatively re-imagining. In doing so, new realizations of the self that lived this past are revealed, and for the narrator, eventually, this leads to the creative impetus to write. In a certain sense, the past that is opened up by involuntary memory and is re-examined from a telescopic view, in Proust's terminology, informs us how to live now, as much as it reveals some truth about what occurred.

What is significant for Deleuze in saving the past, then, is returning to some essential aspect of the past that we may not have felt in living it, and living it now. The present brings to bear new recognition and insight into what has passed. Saving the past, living it, implies that in the return to it, we bring to bear this understanding of the past, and that this understanding impacts how it repeats in our present. This is distinct from Bergson's thought in that the return to the past in Bergson is always oriented towards bringing it forward, recycling it, but not on re-evaluating the past event itself for how it is changed in the present. The repetition and re-

[326] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 126

evaluation that occurs in Bergson's conception of the past is always through current action. Through Proust's thought, and taken up by Deleuze, saving the past involves understanding the past through our present. It requires looking at this past.

Looking at the past and drawing something from it is the work of the self. In this chapter I've examined the destructive elements that holding onto the past has for an individual through Proust's account of the narrator's loss of Albertine. I've also considered the upshot to forgetting—ultimately affirming—that occurs in Nietzsche's thinking about the past. Despite the emphasis that Nietzsche puts on forgetting in his philosophical work, he is also a thinker that sees examination of the past (rather than allowing it to exist as fragments and accidents) as necessary to living and affirming it. [327]

As I have discussed throughout the course of this work, Bergson's depictions of the workings of memory through figures and diagrams, and his emphasis on the change that the past enables, show us the powerful possibilities of viewing the preservation of the past in its entirety. Bergson sees the past existing in many configurations, psychological and virtual—this is clearly depicted through the cones of memory. The cone of memory is an evocative image because it depicts the existence of our past and in the layers of repeating emphasis points there are so many possibilities (virtualities in Bergson's language) for how we can choose to live out our past now. But in thinking of the past as transformative for the self, the focus on re-evaluation and living that occurs in Proust's and Nietzsche's thinking allows for a more revelatory understanding of our past. In these two thinkers, we see the possibility of turning toward the past to both fundamentally change and reach a truer self. Reading these thinkers together allows for what I suggest is the most active way to live in the past—recognizing the self changing through memory, and memory re-evaluated in our self.

[327] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 138.

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