

Ulrik Klophaugen

Habitual and Virtual Memory

Encountering the Past through Reenactment and
Recollection

Bacheloroppgave i Sinnsfilosofi

Veileder: Ståle Finke

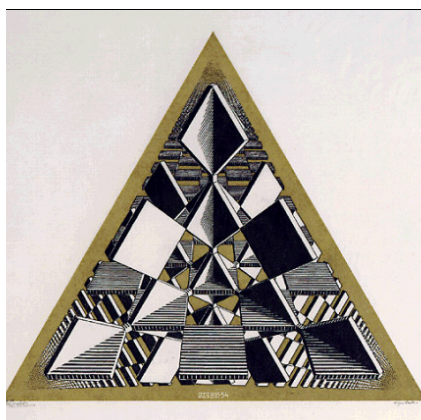
Medveileder: Anders Næs

Mai 2021

Ulrik Klophaugen

Habitual and Virtual Memory

Encountering the Past through Reenactment and
Recollection



Bacheloroppgave i Sinnsfilosofi
Veileder: Ståle Finke
Medveileder: Anders Næs
Mai 2021

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet
Det humanistiske fakultet
Institutt for filosofi og religionsvitenskap



Kunnskap for en bedre verden

Abstract

In *Henri Bergson`s* book *Matter and Memory*, perception and recollection are different kinds of phenomena, but are always interlaced in reality. As theoretical abstractions, *pure memory* is memory devoid of any perceptions and *pure perception* is perception devoid of any memories. *Memory-images* are the meeting place between these two extremes. Concrete perception is antecedent action and what appears on the screen of our senses is the reflection of our body`s capacities. Every concrete perception is always filled with memory-images and every concrete memory-image is always also perceived. The function of memory is to preserve and import the past into the present and to contract many moments of duration into a single intuition. There are two systems of memory through which this happens: *habitual memory* and *virtual memory*. Habitual memory is the past *reenacted* through body, and virtual memory is the past *represented* through mind. Memory is the engine duration and is binding each of the successive moments of our life together in a coherent whole. Bergson affirms the existence of psychic states which are not directly given in immediate awareness. In Freuds theory, the unconscious mind is posited as a depository for repressed memories of a personal nature; this is a psychological conception of recollection. In Bergson`s theory, the unconscious is posited with a vertical and a horizontal axis. The vertical contains all recollections ranged successively in *time* and the horizontal contains all objects simultaneously in *space*. Through Bergson`s insight we reinterpret the unconscious as that which we lack an explicit meta-reflection about and not a secret realm outside of experience. Repressed memories are not truly unconscious nor completely past but an implicit aspect of our present experience which is energized by resistance and avoidance.

Habitual and Virtual Memory

Encountering the Past through Reenactment and Recollection

Introduction

How is the past preserved and imported into the present? This is a primordial question in the philosophy of mind and the initiatory question behind this essay. Our aim is to convey that there are two primary forms in which the past is preserved: *bodily habits* and *independent recollections*. An essential distinction drawn by the French philosopher Henri Bergson in his seminal book *Matter and Memory*, which is a guiding presence in our memorology. Out of this distinction we delineate two unconscious planes of existence; an *actual* plane of matter wherein the past is only reenacted and a *virtual* plane of memory from which *recollections* spring forth. These arguments converge towards the conclusion that it is necessary to address both these systems and their interconnections in order to understand the workings of memory and the 'unconscious mind'. Firstly, we will describe the difference between the body's implicit knowledge and our mind's explicit representations. Then, we will show how they come to meet with perception and action in a dynamic *movement* and the generation of *memory-images*. Finally, we will investigate whether the theory yields explanatory power for psychoanalytic phenomena such as the unconscious mind, trauma and repression.

More specifically, we will compare Bergson's and Freud's ideas of the unconscious. Here, we find that whereas Freud sought to establish a psychological conception for clinical investigation, Bergson hypothesized an ontological unconscious with both a temporal and a spatial dimension. We maintain that this ontological Memory is the soil from which psychological memory can sprout; the substratum that enables our past events to be weaved together into a personal history. In other words, Freud's topology of the psyche into Superego, Ego, and I.D rests on presuppositions which Bergson's ontology attempt to address. Prior to the question of egoic repression we can ask; how is it that the past can be conserved at all?

On Matter and Memory

Matter and Memory was written by Bergson in 1896, four years prior to Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Although it is still relatively unknown it has had a far-reaching influence throughout the history of ideas since its publication. In Marcel Proust's magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time* and modern selectionist theories of memory in cognitive psychology, Bergson's theory is present. Phenomenological thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty and Sartre are engaged in his work and critiques him for lacking a notion of the intentional structure of consciousness. These critiques are challenged by recent work that reveals a close resemblance between Bergson and post-structuralist concepts such as agency and subjectivity (Pearson, 2018, loc. 1840). In phenomenology the intentional structure of consciousness constitutes the structure of temporality. In Bergson's process philosophy this intentionality is granted to memory 'over and above the subject'. What are the essential insights in the book?

It is the demonstration of the past as a proper ontological element, to innovate a dynamical model of the workings of memory, to establish the virtual nature of pure memory, and to argue that to remember is not simply a matter of mechanical reproduction of the past, but the process which imbues life with sense and significance (Pearson, 2018, loc. 1890).

The Centrality of Action

Perhaps the most essential aspect of *Matter and Memory* is its emphasis on bodily action and that both perception and recollections are faculties subservient to the demands of action and choice. Perception is affirmed as virtual action. A question concerning perception is: where does the image of the external world come from? Bergson's answer is that what appears on the screen of perception is a reflection of our body's powers to act; its eventual influence on its surrounding objects and these objects influences on it. Which recollections survive is determined by their degree of usefulness and relevance in the situation at-hand. This marks a return from conceiving cognition as a faculty for generating pure and speculative knowledge, to a cognition which is above all subject to the necessities of life and creative action; thinking is primarily seen as vital rather than contemplative. Bergson reminds us not to neglect the relation of 'perception with action and of memory with conduct' (Bergson, 1896, pp.145). If we conceive of the display on the screen of our perception as an 'aggregate of images' with a great range of variance and that there is one privileged image that is invariant (our body), then we can see that our conscious perception consists in making the aspects which can serve to meet the need and interest of our body more salient. Bergson asserts that 'it is towards action

that memory and perception are turned; it is action that the body prepares` (Bergson, 1896, pp.145).

Contextualization

In contemporary psychology the two branches of memory are classified into an explicit declarative memory and an implicit nondeclarative memory. Roughly, implicit memory concerns our body`s procedural and participatory knowledge and explicit memory concerns our propositional and episodic knowledge. Bergson was one of the first thinkers to point out that there are different types of memory. An important distinction between his theory and the psychological curriculum is its confluence with the materialistic paradigm. McNamara writes: `The representational-instructionist view of memory is still what I would consider the modern standard view of the nature of memory. It and its related trace theory of how the brain stores memory constitute the background assumptions of much of modern research into memory´ (Pearson, 2018, loc. 1870).

Recently there has been a resurgent focus in cognitive science on the embodied, embedded, extended and enacted aspects of cognition, which is signaling the importance of taking the body, action and the environment into account when considering perception and memory. We argue that what is lacking in cog-sci but afforded in Bergson`s theory is a conception of memory as `virtual coexistence´ and its integral role in enabling our lived sense of *duration* by binding the past to the present with an outlook towards the future. Furthermore, the understanding that neither recollections nor representations can be generated by neither the brain nor the body whose primary and only office is towards action. We argue that our body and the brain modulate and filters out information in accordance with the needs of survival, thus they are influencing the selection and actualization of images. Our nervous system`s affectivity ordinate which perception-images or recollection-images is apprehended as salient and available, but do not *produce* ideas and representations. In fact, the brain and the body are also representational images which appear on the screen of perception and can thus only interact with and influence other images, but not create them. Following Bergson, we maintain that the brain and the body are instruments of action and action alone (Bergson, 1896, pp.144).

PART I – Deconstruction

Deleuze states that ‘memory is essentially difference and matter essentially repetition’. In this essay we call the motor mechanisms engraved by repetition for habitual memory and state that independent recollections are the actualizations on the screen of memory and arise out of a virtual plane. The process of becoming actualized is the process of becoming distinct and thus recognizable, which is why we posit a virtual plane in which all the levels of our past is coexisting in totality from which this division is made. Deleuze suggest that virtual is the opposite of actual and *possible* is the opposite of the *real*, so that the advantage with virtuality is that ‘it possesses a reality’; the coexistence of the whole of our past (Deleuze, 1988, pp.96). The virtual does not have to be realized, but actualized, and its actualization depends on the body’s movements and the generation of memory-images in which they transfix into a perceivable form. We will return and expand on these dynamics later. Firstly, what is the function of memory?

The Function of Memory

From *Matter and Memory*, we learned that the function of memory is twofold; to preserve and import the past into the present and to contract many moments of duration into a single intuition. The preservation and importation of the past comes either through independent recollections of facts and experiences etc. or through our bodily habits as ‘the accumulated effort of past action’ (Bergson, 1911, pp. 97). Habitual memory works by incorporating a sequence of movements by effortful repetition, which then becomes automatic and effortless as the body’s dispositional capacity. Bergson contends that this memory ‘acts our past experience but does not call up its images’ (Bergson, 1911, pp. 97). There is thus a need to postulate another form of memory which is able to record and recollect our experience through memory-images. Virtual memory, with the power of contracting many moments of duration into one intuition, is also the engine that ranges all our past states in the chronological succession in which they occurred. These systems have completely different means of conserving the past; one through reenacting it and the other by recording and representing it. They are also complimentary in that they constrain and enable each other in complex ways.

Let us paint an example. When I sit down to play the piano, I am executing a sequence of movements which have been ingrained by deliberate practice; this is the work of habitual

memory expressed in action. When I play, my body assumes a certain posture and attitude which will affect my mood and state of mind. Suddenly I am struck by a particular recollection of playing in autumn next to the fireplace with a melancholic feeling. This remembrance stem from virtual memory which is brought into presence by the help of the movements of my body. `The recollections need, for their actualization, a motor ally` (Deleuze, 1991, pp.67). Why do we need to posit a virtual plane of memory, and not contend with the actual plane of matter to explain remembering and recognition? Is it not merely in the brain that recollections reside?

Are Memories Stored in the Brain?

Before venturing further, we will attempt to make a clear disputation of the inaccurate hypothesis that the brain is a storage place for memories. The epitome of the materialistic and behavioral research into memory is expressed in the memory engram, which is a unit of cognitive information in the brain, the medium in which memories are stored as biochemical changes that correspond to outer stimuli. In a research paper titled *What is memory? The present state of the engram*, Donald Hebb proposes that it is the `enchantment of synaptic strength´ which is most important for memory consolidation and that the search has moved away from neuronal cells as the basic building blocks of memory. Now it is the connections and communication between neurons which is primary (Poo et al. BMC Biology, pp.5).

We do not dispute that the synaptic pattern of neuronal processing is an essential component of learning and skill development, and even determinate of the actualization of memories. But to draw the conclusion that `recollections are preserved in the brain´ is a misconception. It confuses and equivocates between what Deleuze calls `the line of objectivity and subjectivity´ (Deleuze, 1991, pp.54). The brain is in the line of facts of what can be objectively measured in a *quantitative* manner, and recollections are in the line of what can be subjectively experienced in a *qualitatively* manner. There is undeniably a close relation between brain activity and mental states since they vary along a common movement and the stored-up motor contrivances influences the actualization of recollections. But if we grant that the brain is the `substratum of recollections´, we need to confer upon it the exact power of preserving its past states which we deny to duration itself (Deleuze, 1991, pp.54). In addition, we can ask how the brain knows a recollection from a perception, if they are both reducible to its neuronal fireworks? We do not know what experience is, so how can we presume that we know what recollections of experience is? These are important epistemological considerations in

psychological research but let us dwell here no more. We must now distinguish perception from recollection and present our two systems of memory.

Perception and Recollections are Different in Kind

What is the difference between memory and perception? This question has been pondered throughout the history of western thought and is at the center of issues concerning the philosophy of mind and cognitive science. Bergson's method is not limited to inferential logic and abductive reasoning, but also proceed by intuiting genuine differences in kind. Deleuze even calls this the Bergsonian Leitmotif and writes that 'people have seen only differences in degree where there are differences in kind' (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 23). To posit differences in kind is of course, dualistic. But to ask clear questions and properly formulate problems, we must be able to decompose a whole into its 'natural articulations', in order to know how different parts come together into the same whole. Let us put these principles into practice. What do we mean by the proposition that 'visual and auditory stimuli are *different in kind*'? We essentially mean that there is a qualitative difference, and that a larger quantity of one will never result in the creation of the other. Auditory stimuli exist on a spectrum of amplitude or loudness of sound, and we are saying that no matter how much we turn up the volume of our speakers, imagine a galaxy emanating auditory waves, it would still not become visual waves. It would remain loudness, not brightness, sound not light. So here we are dealing with a difference in kind. This does not mean that vision and audio cannot come together into a unity, on the contrary. The multimodal integration of information from our different sense organs enables a greater depth and breadth of perception, but precisely because they are different! In a film scene, for instance, modalities of sight and sound come together in a mutual support by vivifying and expressing meaning through two independent but synchronistic layers.

So, we can now return to the topic at hand and adopt the main axiom from *Matter and Memory*; that perception and recollection are different in kind. If perception is only a more intense memory, we would think that we sometimes mistake a slight sense impression for a memory. No, Bergson reminds us, such a mistake never happens. The past is real in its pastness. Then, as a theoretical idealization we can establish that there is *pure perception* which is devoid of all memory, and *pure memory* which is devoid of all perception. At the tail end of recollection, we are in the virtual plane of memory, and at the tail end of perception we are in the plane of matter. This may sound strange since is this not what happens constantly? That

our perception become recollections; we first perceive an event and then remember this perception? An important consideration is not to confuse the *content* for the *structure*, a particular perceived object for perception itself. While perception and recollection as structures are different in kind, perception-images and recollection-images are only different in degree, so herein our separation reunite in the transmutation into memory-images which bleed into perception and orient towards future action.

Perception as Virtual Action

To explain perception in materialistic terms necessitates many unprovable assumptions, or in more provoking terms a few miracles. First, we must confer upon the brain the power to translate the quantities of *unexpended* sensations on the surface of the retina into the qualities of our *extended* surroundings, a leap from the arrangements and movements of quantities into the qualities of experience. Then we must confer to it the power to correlate and project this virtual map of the world back on the environment which is of a wholly other nature than it. A clearer and more parsimonious route is to begin from the manifold of images of our direct experience, which is all that we have true access to. Bergson writes:

There is, first of all, the aggregate of images; and then, in this aggregate, there are `centers of action`, from which the interesting images appear to be reflected thus perceptions are born and actions made ready. My body is that which stands out as the center of these perceptions; my personality is the being to which these actions must be referred (Bergson, 1911, pp.28).

We do not create the field of perception but dissociate it into `centers of action`, which we refer to as bodies in space. What I see in my environment is the `eventual influence` which my body has on its surrounding objects and that they may have on it. Bachelard express it as “space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work” (Bachelard, 1964, pp.34). The greater the body`s power to act (symbolized by a higher degree of complexity in the nervous system), the wider is the field that perception embrace. The perception of an object distinct from our body never expresses anything but a virtual action. The more the distance decreases, the more virtual action passes into real action. Bergson writes `perception as a whole has its true and final explanation in the tendency of the body to movement` (Bergson, 1896, p.27). Throughout our life there is a diverse manifold of images (people, houses, equipment, landscapes, the sun), within this variance there is an invariant structure which is that they are all viewed relative to my body`s movements. What then is the

difference between a 'material object' in itself and in my perception of it? In reality it is continued and embedded with every adjoining object and my concrete perception only retains those aspects which are useful and relevant for the affective needs and interests of my body. As such, perceiving is not additive, but subtractive; it does not translate nor project, but greatly reduces matter into its superficial layer, those which are amenable to me (Bergson, 1896, p.21). If something can be said to be projected, it is the conceptual grid of meaning which distinguishes this field into discrete 'things'. Now that we have established the body as a center of action and our real perceptions and recollections as subservient to its vitalities, we can elaborate on the habitual memory of the body.

Habitual Memory and Motor Contrivances

It is interesting to note that the etymological roots of the word *inhabit* means 'dwell in, live in, reside' whereas *habitat* means 'area or region where a plant or animal naturally grows or lives' (Online Etymological Dictionary). Our habitual memory is a memory of spatial movement which is always connected to a dwelling-place and a certain setting. The rooms in which we dwell are latent with interactional cues, like initial impulses which trigger a sequence of movements such as playing an instrument, reading a book or doing the dishes. We have developed the ability to walk in a childhood house, and the felt sense of these rooms are sedimented deep in our body and heart. Bachelard expresses this beautifully; 'over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits' (Bachelard, 1964, pp.36). The sensory-motor contrivances are not memory in the sense of representing a specific region or chain of events in our past, but as past action and experience compressed into the portfolio of available expressions and performances; the past *reenacted* rather than recollected. We will now outline the main branches of habitual memory from Thomas Fuchs's essay 'A Phenomenology of Body Memory', to give a sense of the different facets of the memory of reenactment.

Fuchs classified body memory into procedural, situational, intercorporate, incorporate, pain and traumatic. He characterizes these engraved habits as the *operative intentionality* which binds us to the world (Fuchs, 2012, pp.9). We have already outlined procedural memory as the employment of a sequence of movement and a pattern of perception which is developed by periods of deliberate attention and effort. After thorough practice, it becomes automatic and frees our attention from attending to the movements manually (Fuchs, 2012, pp.12). Situational memory is described as the extended intermodal recognition of events and

situations in our lifeworld. It is what we refer to when we say that someone is *experienced*. They have a perspectival knowing of `what it is like to´ be a sailor at sea in a storm, be a silent sage alone in a cave or to be deeply depressed. A perspective of how it felt to kiss for the first time, to jump in a parachute or to be frightened by a film (Fuchs, 2012, pp.14).

Then, he continues to our intracorporeal memory, which can also be called interpersonal or participatory knowing. This is the accumulation of an intuitive sense of how to interact and behave through our encounter with other beings. Relational attitudes such as assertiveness or submissiveness is an embodied part of the personality which is expressed in tones of voice, gestures and facial muscles. Incorporative memory is a pre-reflective knowing of participation in a complex social milieu. Related but distinct is incorporative memory, which designates the attitudes, roles and ways of life we have internalized from our culture and family system in order to adapt. Our ability to mimic and identify with our peers is crucial for the development of the self-world identity at the core of our ego. Worldviews and core attitudes are arguably mostly propositional beliefs, but these beliefs and attitudes also become implicitly expressed in our conduct and bodily bearings. In the context of internalizing our parents, Freud writes `as small children, we have known these higher beings, admired, feared, and later absorbed them into ourselves´ (Freud, 1923, loc. 358). Traumatic memory will be elaborated on in the end section of this essay. Now that we have presented the implicit memory of our habitual body, we will attempt to clarify why recollections are *flowing with* but not *produced by* the movements of the body.

Virtual Memory and Independent Recollections

By independent recollections we mean essentially explicit memory; episodic and semantic. Memories of that which can be expressed through language or images referring to events of the past. In Bergson`s dynamical ontology independent recollections stem from the virtual past but depend on the movements of the body for their actualization into the present. As Bergson writes, recollections `require for their recall a kind of mental attitude which must itself be engrafted upon an attitude of the body´ (Bergson, 1986, p.74). Our habitual memory is always thwarted towards action and thus filters the flood of past recollections into those which bears a usefulness resemblance to the situation at hand. But when our nervous system is relaxed, the dam of memory-images is unleashed as when we sleep or in deep meditation. The next paragraph is a phenomenological description of such a spontaneous remembering, to

give a sense of the phenomena of which we speak. Then we will turn our attention to memory as virtual coexistence and the engine of duration.

A sudden glimpse of a recollection-image of an event long since passed, appears on the screen of the mind, a childhood scene. Initially, it is given only as a dim intuition, a spark of recognition. Then, when I concentrate on this image, the energy of attention unfolds it into a whole ecology of moments surrounding this image. I recall as a child camping in my grandparent`s backyard, how the texture of the old brown tent felt, waking up to the heat of the morning sun, and the rush of a child`s innocent excitement and wonder. When I perceive into it, I am taken back to this region of the past, my grandmother cooking in the kitchen, playing with my cousins in a river and a myriad of other moments which all seem to gravitate like planets in a solar system around the shining image of my grandparents` house in my childhood. Bachelard continues `The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams´ (Bachelard, 1964, pp.37). In the reciprocal movements of memory and imagination I can take an imaginal stroll there. It is not like recalling a particular recollection, but a synthesis of a manifold of moments strung together into a representative dreamhouse which envelops this whole phase of my childhood into a single living image. Although, this house is partially an imagined entity, it is still a relic of the bodily impressions from which they took form i.e., my perspective is neither in microdetail or upside down, but in the aspects and angles corresponding to the body which dwelled there.

PART II – Reconstruction

Virtual Coexistence

Heretofore, we have established perception and recollection as different ontological phenomena, conceived perception as virtual action, and clarified the two memory systems of reenactment and representation. Now we will turn our gaze onto what Deleuze calls Bergson`s conception of the past as a `proper ontological element´, which cannot be reduced to the present but is in a `virtual coexistence´ with it (Deleuze, 1988, pp.56). To ground this notion in an introspective observation, notice that when we attempt to recall a piece of information, we must first turn our attitude to a *general past* and then await to receive the recollection. This is an act of adjustment which Bergson analogizes to `something like the focusing of a camera´ (Deleuze, 1991, pp.56). The first act of remembrance is a detachment

from the salient grip of the present moment, then into the past, therein a particular region of it. With our body and mind, we attempt to adopt the appropriate attitude to create an attractor field where the memory we are searching for can spring forth. Subtle movements like shrinking one's eyebrows, tighten the eyelids, and a whole gestalt of postures, are all motor components which participate in the actualization of a memory. This act of turning to the past is regarded as a genuine leap into the plane of memory.

The commonsense notion of past and present is that the present is, and the past was. In the Bergsonian revolution this order is reversed; the present always Becomes, it does not cease to pass, and the past IS, it is equivalent to Being itself. We are used to thinking that the past is constituted after having been a present like a reproduction of a perception that was. Herein, the past lives contemporaneously with the present and is constituted immediately in the instance it occurs. How else would the past be constituted if not in the present moment? It had to be recorded while it took place, how else would it retain itself? The past is not after the present like the trails of airplane but the pure element which enables its endless passage to unfold (Deleuze, 1988, pp, 59). McNamara writes 'memory is not a regression from present to the past but a coming forward of the past to meet the present' (McNamara, 1996, pp.227). In Bergson's theory, the role of memory is to synthesizes the past with the present, with an outlook to the future; this movement of memory is what creates a sense of duration.

Memory as the Engine of Duration

Duration is the most central doctrine and recurring theme throughout Bergson's works. It was first introduced in his doctoral dissertation called *Time and Free Will*, after an epiphany that the mathematical time of physics and clocks did not capture the felt sense of real duration. So, what does he mean by duration and its distinction from an abstract idea of time? He proposes that extensity is the sensorial substrate from which we project out a grid of space, and duration is the lived experience from which we project an abstract time. He critiques abstract time as being a product of spatial thinking, which gives the illusion that we can adequately represent the flow of time by a static line, or motion by motionless points in space (Bergson, 1896, pp.129). We are all familiar with duration in a common sense, it is the undercurrent of all our psychic states, through which they gain endurance or continuity. He presents pure duration as 'the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states' (Bergson, *Time & Free Will*, pp. 100).

In reading *this* sentence you are able to retain the first part of it and synthesize this with the rest and perceive it as a meaningful whole. How is this possible? Imagine that we continue this retaining and coexistence we experienced with this sentence to the whole of our past and that there is no isolated moment with clear outlines which separates states past and states to come. If we try to investigate our own experience and ask ourselves: does feelings, thought streams and moods come in separation or in a coherent continuity? Surely, we will realize that although the surface level contents of our experience can seem contradictory, our feelings are always *consonant*; feelings are not contradictory in themselves - only their labels can be contradictory. When I interpret my current state of mind through the label of 'sadness', my experience is rendered familiar, reoccurring, and graspable. If we apply two-valued logic to describe our experience, it seems that one cannot be sad *and* happy simultaneously, since their characteristics are mutually exclusive; but again, the disharmony is laden in language and not experience itself. I can certainly recall states -while listening to music for instance- when I felt both melancholic sadness and a sheer joy in an enmeshment of psychic intensity. Bergson named this 'mutual penetration' of states by durational memory *qualitative multiplicity*; a changing heterogeneity which cannot be isolated into discrete units (Bergson, *Time & Free Will*, pp. 75). An insight which begs the question: how can memory translate our successive conscious states into different memory-images if they are inherently indivisible?

Movement and the Actualization of Memory Images

Let us quickly recall the *information processing* model of memory, which is the standard in contemporary psychology, and then bring in Bergson's alternative as a comparison. The information processing models involve the three processes of encoding, storage and retrieval. Encoding involves translating a perceptual stimulus into a format which can find a match in an associative network (McNamara, 1996, pp.229). The storage phase assumes that there is a pattern or trace of the percept in the neuronal network of the brain, which is then reactivated when a contingent or similar perception-image arise, so recollection is conceived as a reproduction of an earlier perception. Our contemporary paradigm still has relics of the tradition of association psychology, which goes back to the empiricist philosopher John Locke. It is essentially the doctrine that memory works by the association of ideas through contiguity (they are adjoining) and similarity (they share features). Bergson's critique is not a disputation of the resemblance of ideas through contiguity or similarity, but simply that this statement does not explain why a particular recollection-image appeared. 'For we should seek in vain for two ideas which have not some point of resemblance, or which do not touch each

other somewhere... what we really need to discover is how a choice is effected among an infinite number of recollections which all resemble in some way the present perception' (Bergson, 1996, pp.212-213). What is Bergson's alternative? To outline this, we will refer to McNamara who compared the theory in Matter and Memory with modern selectionist theories of memory. He said that it also consists in three phases (McNamara, 1996, pp.222):

1. **Proliferation/Generation phase** – the brain and nervous system relaxes their inhibitory functions which enables a proliferation of a vast array of memory images from a virtual generator.
2. **Actualization/Selection phase** – then a selection process in which only a subset of the most useful images remains and are actualized.
3. **Contraction/Expansion phase** – a distinct region of the past opens which is experienced as an expansion by the present consciousness.

We are always bathing in a virtual pool of an infinity of images, which the inhibitory power of the brain is censoring or 'screening out' to allow only those which are relevant to our survival. McNamara suggest that these images are the fundamental ideas of our cognition which we call 'the world, objects, everyday reality- and memories' (McNamara, 1996, pp.223). Memory charged with our past as a whole, reciprocates the present state by the movements of *translation*, where it descends in its totality to meet experience, thus contracting with a concern for action. Then a movement of *rotation* upon itself where it orients to present that aspect of itself which is most useful (Deleuze, 1988, pp.64). Whenever we recall a particular memory, we also unveil and localize a certain region of the past. If there is a faint glimmer of a childhood scene, it immediately takes us back and enwraps us in this whole region we refer to as childhood. In these regions there are always dominant memories which Bergson describes as 'shining points round which the others form a vague nebulousity. These shining points are multiplied in the degree in which our memories expand' (Bergson, 1896, p.171). In the section of independent recollections, we described this expansion wherein our attention on a spontaneous recollection gave life to and resurrected a vast array of contiguous memories.

These three phases proceed through the three elements of *Pure Memory* (the virtual), *Memory-Images* (actualization), *Pure Perception* (the actual). Pure perception is not in any perceiver or subject but belong to the 'material objects' we perceive all around us (Bergson, 1986, pp.139). In Bergson's theory, every concrete perception is always a perceptual image which has undergone an 'aspectualization' through which our memory has retained only that which

is relevant for the actions of the body. At its core, that is, in matter itself, perception is completely devoid of memory and the present is radically distinct from the past. Pure memory is essentially virtual, which means that it is not actualized into a perceivable form and is completely devoid of perception; unmaterialized. These two seemingly incommensurable planes of existence undergo a transmutation whereby they conjoin forces; the virtual past descends into a memory-image, and the actual present ascends in a genuine leap towards the oceanic past. So, the movements of the body and mind co-create an attitude which specifies a certain *altitude* on the vertical plane of the past, with an intuitive glimpse we unfold many moments of contracted duration and a certain region of the past. While pure perception and pure recollections are different in *kind*, recollection-images and perception-images are only different in *degree*, so by the common framework of movement we have bridged their gap (Gilles Deleuze, 1988, pp.67).

Horizontal and Vertical Planes of Consciousness

Here, at last, comes the final conjunction of the two planes of existence which will serve as a springboard for a clearer conception of the unconscious. The unconscious has been veiled under two disguises: matter and the psyche. Materialism proports that there is inanimate matter behind the screen of our perception, and Freudian Psychoanalysis proports that there is an animating unconscious behind the screen of our mind. They both assume a metaphysical view of reality which proports to describe the appearances in our experience, but which our experience can never directly reach; the-thing-in-itself and inner unconscious processes. We maintain that both of these positions contain a kernel of truth but are also problematic and confusing. They contain truth in that there is clearly more to matter than that which meets the eye, as there is clearly more to the psyche than what we can know explicitly. The exact point at which they become problematic is by the inference that the material universe is something *wholly other* than that which is within our perception, and that the unconscious is something *wholly other* than that which is within our conscious experience. We argue that Bergson`s ontology is the most parsimonious view, which avoids the major problems that arise from the aforementioned doctrines. Materialism gives rise to the hard problem of consciousness of how a first-person perspectival experience can arise from a third-person material substrate when the latter lacks all the qualities of the former. There are also what we can call the interaction problem or the translation problem of how two totally different realities can communicate with each other when they speak in profoundly different tongues? Let us present Bergson`s

horizontal and vertical lines of consciousness and see which problems this conception can dissolve.

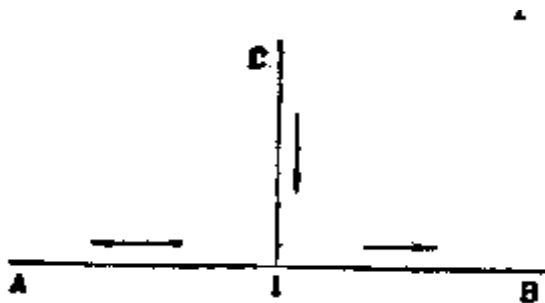


FIG. 3.

Our perceptions, actual and virtual, extend along two lines, the one horizontal, AB, which contains all *simultaneous* objects in space, the other vertical, CI, which are ranged our *successive* recollections set out in time. The point I, at the intersection of the two lines, is the only one actually given to consciousness' (Bergson, 1986, pp.92).

Beyond the horizon of our actual perception there is a cosmic ocean of unconsciousness, which we call the material universe, containing objects existing simultaneously in space. My current perceptual bobble is enwrapped in an infinity of concentric circles which extends outward in space in every direction (Bergson, 1896, pp.93). There is no real difference between perception and the thing perceived, only an apparent difference which stems from the active mind's arbitrary carving out from the *whole* of matter those *parts* which can profit the body's survival. Analogous, beyond and 'behind' our current perceptual bobble there exists recollections lain out in succession through time wherein only those recollections which can guide the choice of the discerning consciousness are bestowed the vitalities of life. Bergson proposes that the unconscious plays 'in each case a similar part' (Bergson, 1896, pp.93). In the realm of memory, Bergson affirms the existence of representations or images outside of awareness - precisely analogous to objects in space (Gardner, 2003, pp. 112).

PART III – Implications

Idea of the Unconscious

Freud is frequently credited with the discovery of the unconscious. Although he was the first to systematize the term it was used by the pioneers who established psychology as an independent discipline in the 19th century such as Helmholtz, Fechner and Wundt. Here, `unconscious mental states are thought of as states which are not objects of consciousness, rather than, as in Freud, states which cannot become such´ (Garner, 2003, pp.108). We acknowledge that, in a sense, the unconscious state cannot itself become conscious since this would per definition make it not itself. But this necessity of language and two-valued logic in constructing a limited definition must not be equivocated with the ontological reality that the concept is pointing to. We argue that everything becomes much clearer in conceiving the unconscious as that which is not immediately accessible by the introspecting consciousness, but not something of another nature than it. Followingly, there is only a difference of degree and not in kind between the unconscious and the conscious, and like light is only one variable whose absence we call darkness, these two seeming oppositions are only different expansions and tensions along a single spectrum. In some passages, Freud himself does not seem far estranged from this view. He writes `now let us call `conscious´ the conception which is present to our consciousness and of which we are aware and let this be the only meaning of the term `conscious´.´ (Freud, 1915, loc. 32). If we instantiate Bergson`s diagram of vertical and horizontal dimensions, we can extrapolate from Freud`s idea of the unconscious beyond the original usage of term.

Bergson himself drew a connection to Freud`s work and does seem to think there is correspondence between their two theories. `My idea of integral conservation of the past has more and more found its empirical verification in the vast collection of experiments instituted by the disciples of Freud´ (Garner, 2003, pp.112). Despite this proclamation, there is an enormous gap between the atemporal conception of the unconscious in Freuds work and Bergson`s theory of the temporal character of memory. A major incongruence also comes in the conception of what the unconscious consists of. Whereas for Freud the unconscious was conceived as a repository for repressed representations with a personal and sexual content, Bergson identifies the unconscious with memory and the conserved past as a whole in its dynamic relation to the living present (Kerslake, 2006). In the next paragraphs, we will draw

attention to this difference and connection between an ontological memory and psychological recollections and the dialectic question of whether the past is effective or powerless.

We argue that the psychological unconscious is predicated on an ontological memory, the web out of which our autobiographical narratives and personal history can be weaved. If we did not have the ability to record and retain the past whatsoever, neither would we have the ability to construct an egoic identity which disavows certain aspects of its own psychic substrate and personal past. Deleuze seems to indicate that psychological consciousness will be born out of the attunement to the 'proper ontological conditions' which an actualization of the virtual past enables (Deleuze, 1988, pp.63).

Is the Past Effective or Powerless?

In Psychoanalysis, a central doctrine is that the unconscious, with its repressed memories and fantasies, is an active force. It has effect on the neurotic behavior, emotional obsessions and relational dynamics of the subject, but the pathological cause of these symptoms is concealed in the unconscious. Bergson's doctrine of the virtual past is that it is powerless, unless charged with the vitalities of present action. Are these notions irreconcilable? When an unbearable memory is unleashed into consciousness, it can make sense to expressions such as behavioral tendencies or a strongly held attitude in the patient. For instance, if we had a parental figure who disapproved of us and had unreasonably high standards which invoked a frequent feeling of inadequacy and unworthiness. Then, after many years of workaholicism and striving for achievement, we discover during a therapy session that this excessive behavior was fueled by an underlying complex of memories concerning the relation to our parental image. Essentially a compensation strategy to balance an internal sense of lack. Does this count as an example of the active nature of the unconscious past? The memory complex is active, but it is not entirely unconscious because it is implicit in our behavior, and it is not completely past since it is fueled by the energy of the present.

Bergson's claim is that when a recollection is truly unconscious and in the virtual past, it is also powerless; it acts no more. It can potentially act if it is resurrected by a resemblance to a pressing situation, to actualize itself and aid in choice-making, with the warnings of past experience. Our suggestion is that what we mean in psychoanalysis when we state that a repressed childhood memory is unconscious is that we lack conscious *meta-cognition* of it; we are unable to explicitly report it to ourselves. This does not mean that it was not implicitly present in our experience, and if we conducted a thorough investigation of our experience, we

could throw awareness on it. What do we mean by a psychic unconscious state? An example is that I am reactive and boiling with rage. If you ask me 'why are you acting this way?', I would answer 'because I am angry'. In truth, underlying this rage there is an intense fear and insecurity which this excessive rage compensates for, and underneath this sheet of emotion there is a deep desire. I am conscious of the anger, but I am unconscious of the emotions fueling it. In any case, the fear and desire are implicit parts of my present experience and action, not outside it. It is simply that region of my experience which I cannot report to myself; and do not explicitly know that I am having. But of course, on a deeper level, I do know, because it is my psyche that is doing the repression. This leads to the paradox of both knowing and not knowing at the same time. I do not know explicitly *that* I am fearful, but I know it implicitly since I am experiencing it. Thereby, the unconscious is the vast region of our experience which we do not reflect on and pay attention to, not a mysterious chamber of buried secrets, although these memories are in a sense hidden from view. One of the implications of this conception is that every (not all) unconscious regions of the psyche can, in principle, become illumined by our awareness, since they are not of a different substance than it, but simply that which we have chosen to forget and forego in the service of adapting to life.

Repressed memories are not truly past, they are implicitly present and thus kept alive. Trauma is self-perpetuating in reenactment, but often too unbearable to fully recall and assimilate in a memory-image. Freud himself admits that repression demands a 'persistent expenditure of force' (Freud, 1915, loc. 233). We concede that the memory which is being defended against is not really past but are actively participating in the present. It is invested with the energies of the present through the very repression which is keeping it at arm length; but right on the other side of this repression it presses upwards to be realized and released. The point is that this belongs not to a past which is no more, but a complex which reenacts in the present, and its releasement and acknowledgement would allow it to become reunited with the past from whence it stems; like a ghost being released of a curse it can evaporate into the virtual ocean of the past.

Let us illustrate our position with a couple of examples. If I am unable to recognize only the letter 'F', as is the case in certain disorders, this must mean that I am only able to implicitly recognize 'F'. I am unable to use it, express it, and contain it (explicitly), but I must at some level be able to recognize it, or else I wouldn't have known that this is the letter I do not recognize (Bergson, 1896, pp. 73). What our line of arguments are leading up to, is that what

is called repression is essentially avoidance and that avoidance is, far from being unactive and powerless, an intentional effort to go in a certain direction and not another. Therefore, the unconscious of psychoanalysis is always a matter of something which is in a middle ground between conscious and unconscious, past and present, which is why we are both unable to deal with it and unable to let it go. In Bergson`s language we could say that it is a memory-image which is attempting to find a sensor-motor pathway to become actualized, and since our past is indestructible and always with us implicitly in our conduct, action and attitudes, it is no wonder that it is stuck in a liminal state between the past and the present.

Attraction and Repulsion

The vertical dimension of the unconscious is studied by depth psychology and affirmed by Bergson`s virtual plane of memory. Thomas Fuchs outlines a horizontal dimension of the unconscious concerning body memory and modulations in the perceptual field. Herein, we will draw a connection between these reflections and passages from *Matter and Memory*. The virtual plane of memory is expressed in imagination by the production of images, in dreams and fantasies. The actual plane of matter expresses itself through the body`s movements, attitudes, and preferences. Fuchs begins by stating that `unconscious fixations are like restrictions in the spatial potentiality of a person, caused by a past which is implicit in the present and resists the progress of life´ (Fuchs, 2004, pp.1). One of the very functions of Bergsonian memory is to guide the actions of consciousness which are in a `zone of indetermination´ between stimulus and response. We could say that pure perception addresses the actual by *sight*, but by the intervention of memory, perception can address potentialities by *vision*. When this virtual plane expands the vision of consciousness, a vast array of possible action opens up, but when contracted and restricted by the inhibitions of the body and mind, the creative progressions of one`s life can be thwarted. Where there could be a vision, there is effectively a `blind spot´ or an `absence´ which manifests as an avoidance to this directional vector of choice.

Thomas Fuchs attaches the sociologist Kurt Lewin`s idea of a *life space* to interpret the expressions of the unconscious in the sense of closeness, distance, breath, depth, and symbolic boundaries in virtual action. Furthermore, the flow of this perceptual field is ordained by attractive and repellent forces or vectors. These field forces might manifest as conflicting impulses, like a child has an impulse towards safety *and* exploration, between keeping to mother`s familiar embrace or curiously leaping into the unknown (Fuchs, 2003, pp. 7).

Similar consideration is present in Bergson, when he speaks of the 'threats and promises' given to the sensorium of sight and hearing, signaling the danger or advantage of the objects in the environment surrounding our body (Bergson, 1896, pp.19). He draws this tendency to the structure of the nervous system itself and agrees that it is an implicit kind of memory, which is independent of explicit representation. In certain passages he seems to establish the differentiations between *attractive* and *repelling* forces to the most rudimentary forms of life. He traces this tendency back to the process of an acid selecting salt at its base, to the plant extracting the most nourishing vitamins in the soils. The primordial operation of sensible discernment is the process of seizing from our surroundings that which attracts and has practical interests for us (Bergson, 1896, pp. 102).

The unconscious on the horizontal field of perception is thus implicitly present as *absence*. Its contents are not beyond the threshold of experience, but rather that which experience denies or hides from itself by the workings of language, perception and memory which produce a self-image for whom certain truths or images are unacceptable and painful. Without the ability to detach from experience and gain a meta-awareness of it, there would be no separation from experience into someone having an experience and denying certain aspects of it. Fuchs writes 'consciousness is not fully transparent to itself because it hides itself from itself' (Fuchs, 2003, pp.16). The game of hide and seek, by which we dissociate from certain aspects and cling to others is doomed to fail eventually. As we will conclude with in the final section, being is what it is, independent of what becomes. The past cannot be erased nor destroyed by the powers of the present; only denied and forgotten.

Implications of Matter and Memory

Commentators has described *Matter and Memory* as a 'terrifying book'. How does the folklore statement that *one cannot get away with anything* make sense through Bergson's paradigm? If the fundamental principle on the plane of matter is that every movement is reciprocated; that every action has a reaction, then we can understand that the boomerang of our past actions returns to us with a force in exact proportion to our original throw. The original action could be of high intensity, as is the case with a violent act or a tragic accident. These events make a discontinuity in the unfolding of our life and can be difficult to integrate. This shock creates a rupture which ripples throughout the streams of consciousness and disseminates until it is dispersed back into the stillness of the ocean from which it came. In the cases of PTSD, we can see these reverberations in the symptoms of hyperarousal,

contraction and intrusion (Herman, 1997, pp.35). Hyperarousal means that the body is in a constant state of alarm, contraction that we have lost access to the traumatic incident because we deem it unbearable, and intrusion means that its effect is still reoccurring in the present.

On the other hand, the original action could be of minor intensity, but repeated over a long time and sedimented into the body as a persistent habit. These tendencies which are reinforced every day, become the vector direction towards which our behavior gravitates. Ingrained in our cycle of daily activity, to unlearn these patterns of behavior requires an exceptional effort and persistence; *one cannot get away with anything*. To undo a tendency of behavior one must *pay attention*, in the exact measure to the *inattention* whereby we established it. This is clearly exemplified in the case of alcoholics or narcotic addicts, in their attempt to quit their habitual misuse of an addictive substance. The first step is to admit that you have a problem, and thus put your awareness on the tendency and become conscious of your unconscious behavior.

If the inescapable truth of the plane of matter is the return of past action, then the terrifying truth of the plane of memory is that the past is *indestructible and omnipresent*. If we could reduce recollections to neuronal conglomerations, one could simply extract these regions of the brain where the memory trace is located, and it would be like a past event never took place. Through the paradigm of an ontological memory, this procedure is not so easy; we can destroy or damage the parts of the brain which actualizes our recollections to life, but the pure recollections of the virtual past can neither be destroyed nor changed. Virtual coexistence means that it is the whole of our past that is with us, thou only implicitly and indirectly.

Conclusion

The function of memory is to preserve and import the past into the present and contract many moments of duration into a single intuition. *Habitual memory* contracts a repeated sequence of movements into sensory-motor contrivances of the body. *Virtual memory* can contract and expand many moments or an entire region of the past into a single intuition in the present. A pure recollection, an absent representation, assumes a form in a memory-image, which can fuse itself with the images of perception and become actualized and activated in the living present. *Perception, Memory, and Imagination* are different, inseparable, and non-interchangeable concepts. Perception is essentially virtual action; what is displayed on the screen of our senses is a reflection of the body's power to act and be acted upon. Habitual memory concerns the dispositions and capacities of our body. They enable our interaction

with the world and symbolizes the accumulation of past action, a compression of past experience into the tendencies of reenactment in the present. Memory as virtual coexistence is contemporaneous with the present, it records and prolongs the past as a whole. *Duration* is a mutual penetration between the qualities of our experience, whereby states cohere and interfuse in a heterogeneous mass without clear distinctions.

The unconscious is that which we lack a conscious *meta-cognition* of; the part of our experience we cannot explicate. In Bergson's theory, the unconscious is all that which exists beyond the circle of present perception. On the horizontal plane of matter, all objects exist simultaneously in the spatial universe, but are not given in our perception. On the vertical plane of memory, all representations exist successively in the temporal consciousness, but are not explicitly recalled. The unconscious is affecting our perceptions and actions in a similar manner. All objects in space have a certain field of force on all other objects, as all moments in time bears a certain field of force on all subjects. *Matter* can receive and generate movement and action; *Memory* can receive and generate recollection and ideas.

List of References

- H. Bergson. 1896. *Matter and Memory*. Pantianos Classics.
- H. Bergson. 2001. *Time & Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. New York: Dover Publications, INC.
- G. Deleuze. 1991. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books.
- K.A. Pearson. 2018. *Bergson: Thinking Beyond the Human Condition*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- S. Freud. 1923. *The Ego and the ID*. New York: Clydesdale Press.
- S. Freud. 1915. *The Unconscious*.
- G. Bachelard. 1964. *The Poetics of Space*. New York: Penguin Books.
- J. Herman. 1997. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic Books.
- T. Fuchs et al. 2011. *Body Memory and the Unconscious*. Research Gate. DOI:[10.1007/978-94-007-1848-7_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1848-7_4).
- T. Fuchs. 2012. *The Phenomenology of Body Memory*. DOI:[10.1075/aicr.84.03fuc](https://doi.org/10.1075/aicr.84.03fuc).
- S. Gardner. 2003. *The Unconscious Mind*. Publisher: Cambridge University Press. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521591041.010>.
- Poo et al. 2016. *What is Memory? The Present State of the Engram*. BMC Biology. DOI: 10.1186/s12915-016-0261-6.
- P. McNamara. 1996. *Bergson's 'Matter and Memory' and Modern Selectionist Theories of Memory*. Academic Press, Inc.
- K. Christian. 2006. *Insects and Incest: From Bergson and Jung to Deleuze*. Multitudes. <https://www.multitudes.net/insects-and-incest-from-bergson/>.
- Online Etymological Dictionary. 2001-2011. https://www.etymonline.com/word/habitual#etymonline_v_33991.

