

Matter and Memory Chapter 3: “On the Survival of Images”

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- I Introduction [147 / 132]
 - A) Summary of preceding chapters: perception / memory-image / pure memory
 - B) Movement of memory at work: an act *sui generis*
 - 1) Adopting proper attitude:
 - a) Detach ourselves from present and place ourselves in “past in general”
 - b) Then in a certain region of the past: like adjusting a camera
 - 2) Actualization of the virtual recollection
 - a) Comes into view like a condensing cloud [*une nébulosité*]
 - b) Its outlines become more distinct / surface takes on color
 - c) It tends to imitate perception
 - i) But remains attached to past
 - ii) Retains [*se ressentait*] something of its virtuality
 - iii) A present state that contrasts sharply with [*tranche sur*] the present
- II Capital error of associationism: confusion of product with process [148 / 134]
 - A) Associationism substitutes for continuity of becoming [continuous multiplicity] a discontinuous multiplicity
 - 1) Sacrifices:
 - a) Actual states mixed/ impure; associationism demands atomic simplicity
 - b) So it sacrifices unstable to stable, beginning to end [process to product]
 - 2) Examples:
 - a) Perception expels memory-image
 - b) Memory-image expels pure memory
 - c) Thus it can't handle pure memory
 - 3) Result:
 - a) Associationism cuts psychic life into sensation and image
 - b) And thus finds only difference of degree or “intensity”
 - B) Truth of the matter:
 - 1) Past is essentially virtual
 - 2) It can only be known by following movement of actualization
 - 3) Which is what associationism can't do, as it looks for the actual in the past
- III Difference in kind between pure memory and memory-images [150 / 135]
 - A) Granted that pure memory ends up in an image, the error of psychologists is to find an image at beginning of process [again, product vs process is key]
 - 1) Rather than having memory of a pain be itself a pain
 - 2) B says process of recollection like hypnotic suggestion, evoking a pain image
 - 3) Absurdity via inverting argument: decrease of sensation never gives memory
 - B) Deep roots of illusion: false idea that perception is contemplative, not pragmatic
 - 1) Present is what interest me, what summons me to action
 - 2) Past is essentially powerless
 - C) Structure of time
 - 1) Time passes: present is the instant of passage

- 2) Present is “thick” and durational, not a mathematical point
- 3) Present encroaches upon [*empiète sur*] past and present: it is sensori-motor
 - a) Sensation: perception of immediate past [cf Ch4: contraction of vibrations]
 - b) Motor: determination of immediate future [cf Ch2: motor schemas]
- D) Present and my body [this only makes sense in terms of Chs 1 and 4]
 - 1) “My present consists in cness I have of my body”
 - 2) Extended in space, body is unified sensori-motor system, “center of action”
 - 3) My body is “the actual state of my becoming, that part of my duration which is in the process of formation” [*l'état actuel de mon devenir, ce qui, dans ma durée, est en voie de formation*]
 - 4) My body is at center of quasi-instantaneous section effected by perception in flowing mass
 - a) This cut constitutes “material world”
 - b) Our body is, of that material world, that which we feel directly flowing [*il est, de ce monde matériel, ce que nous sentons directement s'écouler*]
 - c) The actual state of our body is the actuality of our present
 - 5) Instant matter vs durational body
 - a) Matter as extended is a present that is always beginning again
 - b) Our present [actual state of our body's becoming given as feeling of flow, that is, as center of action linking sensation and movement] is the “materiality of our existence” qua system of sensations and movements

IV Pure memory [154 / 139]

- A) Difference in kind of memory vs sensation and present [154 / 139]
 - 1) Re sensation: psychologists will materialize memory and idealize sensation
 - 2) Re present as sensorimotor, pure memory is useless and powerless
- B) This *impuissance* explains “latent” preservation of pure memory [156 / 141]
 - 1) Unconscious psychical states
 - a) Cness is only the note of the present and the active
 - b) So the inactive can be unconscious but still exist “in some manner”
 - 2) Can't see existence of past and memory if we see cness as speculative
 - 3) Past when unperceived exists just as non-perceived spatial objects exist
 - a) We assume that only the actual exists, but the virtual [past] does too
 - b) Discussion of diagram [159 / 143]
 - i) Unperceived in space still poses practical promises / threats
 - (a) Surrounding objects represent possible actions
 - (b) Space is thus diagram of (near) future
 - (c) And actual perception
 - (1). Is both close in space and near in future
 - (2). And only a part of unlimited experience
 - ii) Unperceived in past has no practical bearing
 - (a) So our practical instinct prefers to see it as non-existent
 - (b) Since it is only concerned with present utility
 - iii) We have difficulty seeing this because we
 - (a) Hypostasize the determination of order of external images
 - (b) And overstate the contingency of inner life
 - (1). Neglecting presence of character in all our decisions

- (2). Character = “actual synthesis of all our past states”
 - a. Character is hidden
 - i. bcs we have only a “digest” of it
 - ii. And bcs spontaneous memories seem capricious
 - b. This is bcs. actual cness only allows useful memories
 - c. And bcs. we “leap” into a region of the past
 - i. Bypassing intermediate levels
 - ii. And rendering past discontinuous
- C) “Capital problem of existence” [163 / 146]
 - 1) Presentation in cness vs. logical / causal connections of images
 - 2) In existence: conscious apprehension and regular connection in degrees
 - a) Internal states: perfect presentation, but contingent connection
 - b) External objects: imperfect presentation, but necessary connection
 - 3) But intellect imposes a false difference in kind on this difference of degree
 - 4) We have to see that “whole of past psychical life conditions our present state, without being its necessary determinant”
- D) Preservation of past [165 / 148]
 - 1) Our spatial pre-occupation forces us to think of cerebral storage of memories
 - 2) Focus on present utility
 - a) Explains how past is preserved
 - i) Past has not ceased to be; it has only ceased to be useful
 - ii) If you see present as instant, then IT “is not” [Augustine]
 - iii) But concrete durational present is “immediate past”
 - (a) Contraction of vibrations, so that perception is already memory
 - (b) Thus, “practically, we perceive only the past”
 - (c) “pure present” is “invisible progress of past gnawing into future”
 - b) But also why it’s hard for us to realize this: “law of life = law of action”
- V Return to point of departure: difference in kind of two memories [167 / 150]
 - A) Recap of the two forms of memory
 - 1) Habit / motor mechanisms (procedural / present / useful adaptations)
 - 2) Pure-memory (episodic / dated / past)
 - 3) Connecting link: body
 - a) Site of durational perception of immediate past
 - b) Ever-born again image and cannot store images
 - c) A section of the universal becoming
 - d) A “place of passage” of movements, a sensori-motor “hyphen”
 - B) First image of the cone
 - 1) Body habits: “quasi-instantaneous” memory of which true memory is base
 - 2) Mutual support of two forms of memory
 - a) Pure memory offers useful recollections to body mechanisms
 - b) Sensorimotor mechanisms allow pure memory to be actualized
 - 3) Mutual support is mark of “well-balanced mind” / good adaptation to life
 - a) Living in present is man of impulse
 - b) Living in past is dreamer
 - c) Good sense occupies the middle
 - 4) Extreme cases

- a) Spontaneous memory in children
- b) Dreams
- c) Sudden approach of death: "life flashes before your eyes"
- 5) Particular vs general
 - a) Particularity: sees only difference (dreamer / recollection)
 - b) Generality: sees only resemblance (present action / perception)
 - c) In normal life they interpenetrate in the "general idea"
- VI General Ideas founded on perception of similarity [173 / 156]
 - A) Effort of pure memory to insert itself into motor habit [173 / 156]
 - 1) Circle of general ideas, leading to nominalism and conceptualism
 - a) To generalize means to abstract
 - b) But to abstract we must know how to generalize
 - c) Common postulate: perception of individual objects as start of process
 - 2) Bergson's approach: we start with an intermediate knowledge
 - a) We start with a "confused sense of the striking quality" / resemblance
 - b) This begets both generality and individuality by dissociation
 - i) Reflective analysis clarifies it into general idea
 - ii) Discriminative memory solidifies it into perception of individual
 - c) We see this from utilitarian nature of perception
 - i) Need goes straight for resemblance / quality
 - ii) Difference is "superfluity of perception"
 - 3) Genesis of general idea from affect / passive synthesis
 - a) Similarity acts objectively like a force, provoking reactions
 - b) Rudimentary cness (e.g. amoeba) senses resemblances only
 - i) Germ of human capacity of forming general ideas
 - ii) When same reaction is generated from superficially different sensations, the "general idea will have been *felt and passively experienced*, before being represented"
 - c) Escape from circle: no circle, but a spiral: from feeling to thought
 - i) Felt similarity at origin is not fully formed representation at finish
 - ii) In this progress, via double effort of understanding & memory, we get
 - (a) Perception of individuals: memory grafting distinctions on felt resemblance
 - (b) Conception of genera: understanding disengaging a clear idea
 - (1). In beginning, only cness of similar attitude in diff situation
 - (2). Effort of reflection on process of spontaneous abstraction
 - (3). Leads to general idea of genus
 - (4). And to artificial motor apparatuses = linguistic categories
 - B) An "essential phenomenon of mental life": instability of general ideas [180 / 161]
 - 1) General idea goes back and forth between action and pure memory
 - 2) Second image of the cone:
 - a) Helps us fight confusion of process / product
 - b) General idea
 - i) = "double current" btw action and pure memory
 - ii) ≠ either of the isolate end points
 - c) Multiple levels: "a thousand repetitions of our psychical life"

- d) Normal self is always in motion among those levels
 - i) Giving “just enough” image / idea to perceptive representations
 - ii) To help with present action

VII Critique of associationism [181 / 163]

- A) Bergson does not dispute association and contiguity of ideas
 - 1) Need to determine principle of selection: why only one image enters consciousness
 - a) Associationism cannot do this
 - i) Its atomic ideas float in inner space
 - ii) Its error is to see ideas as speculative / cut off from will
 - b) B’s solution: independent image is a product (of process of dissociation)
 - 2) “radical vice” of associationism: assumes atomic perceptions
 - 3) B: instead selection / condensation / actualization of virtual whole of memory
 - a) Double movement of contraction / expansion
 - b) Result of fundamental needs of life
- B) Thought experiment: extremes of pure action / pure dreaming [185 / 166]
 - 1) Sensori-motor functions only: determined reaction
 - a) Association of simplicity and association of contiguity
 - b) As two complementary aspects of same fundamental tendency
 - i) Extract what is useful from any situation
 - ii) Store up reactions in form of motor habit
 - 2) Dreams only: arbitrary choice
 - a) All recollections differ from present perception [singularity of pure memory]
 - b) Thus any memory may be set alongside present situation
 - 3) Normal life oscillates btw these two extremes
 - a) Results in an “infinite number of possible states of memory”
 - b) Each one is a repetition of the whole of our past life
- C) Movement among infinite planes of memory accounts for associations [188 / 168]
 - 1) Association by similarity:
 - a) Resemblance to current situation filters the acceptance of images
 - i) Translation: contracting
 - ii) Rotation: presenting the useful side
 - b) Common vs personal images due to degree of contraction of memory
 - i) Contracted memory is impersonal / general
 - ii) Relaxed memory is personal / singular
 - 2) Association by contiguity
 - a) Close to action, contiguity approximates similarity
 - b) Far from action, contiguity results from position re singularities
 - i) Memories are not atomic
 - ii) But in virtual state, are in nebulous regions around singularities
 - iii) So finding a memory = process of expansion / spreading out cloud
 - iv) Pathology attests to this view of things

VIII Evidence from pathology relative to relation of body and spirit [192 / 172]

- A) Decisions depend on ability to materialize spirit in bodily action
- B) Our bodily sensations and movements make up our *attention to life*
 - 1) De-centered nervous system: body is only transfer site of movements
 - 2) Dreams and insanity / aphasia and disturbances of memory