



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Bergson and the Aristotelian model of immanent teleology

Cortina, A.

Citation

Cortina, A. (2019, April 11). *Bergson and the Aristotelian model of immanent teleology*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/71195>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/71195>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The following handle holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation:

<http://hdl.handle.net/1887/71195>

Author: Cortina, A.

Title: Bergson and the Aristotelian model of immanent teleology

Issue Date: 2019-04-11

3. Structural elements in Bergson's teleology

In this chapter I will address the main structural elements and issues in Bergson's conception of teleology. In 3.1 I tackle one central aspect of teleology: the analogy between the intentional world (the world of the human mind) and the natural world (the non-human world). I find that analogy and perfection, or goal, are interconnected notions, so I address both in the same section. Besides, it is true that Bergson has nothing like a consideration of the *télos*, *péras*, or the good as such, like we had in 2.1.a (although he applies the concept in concrete empirical examples throughout, as we will see). In order to pose this dual concept of analogy/perfection I gather the main examples of analogy in Bergson's work, regarding conservative or transgressive teleology. Consciousness, the embryo, and history are some of these examples that involve one proposal of analogy and one notion of what perfection is in each case. According to the previous account, 3.1 deals with pluralism (different types of perfection) and anthropomorphism (different kinds of right analogy).

3.2 deals with the problem of anthropocentrism. I tackle the place of human beings in the cosmos, derived from the philosophical model of immanent teleology. I find here, as I found in Aristotle, a mitigated anthropocentrism. I defend it is against absolute anthropocentrism, but it also states that human beings are, essentially, the *most perfect* animals (in the sublunary realm, in the case of Aristotle). In Aristotle, to a certain extent, humans sum up nature. They use vegetative faculties and animal faculties, and, besides, they have unique faculties, such as ethical and dianoethical virtues that, in one case—namely, contemplation or *theorein*—pertain to astral supralunary beings. They sum up nature and they also add something unique and divine to it. In my reading of Bergson, there is biomorphism, since there is a great variety of beings, goals and analogies: there is a common element between humans and the rest of beings. But human beings, on the one hand, also sum up nature and, on the other hand, have unique faculties. In Bergson there is a *hierarchical use of the ontological scale* for the sake of teleology, but in an evolutionary way. It is, thus, a *mitigated anthropocentrism*: humans are not the *only* goal-directed being in the world, but among the variety of goals, human goals are the *best* ones.

The third aspect I study in chapter 3 is the question of regularity. It is important for immanent classical teleology, as we saw in 2.1.d. To this extent, Bergson's conservative teleology is supposed to work always or for the most of the time. Bergson's account of attention to life or closed society tendencies, as we will see in 3.3.a, fits well with Aristotle's regular account of individual teleology.

In 3.3.b I tackle singular, unpredictable, indeterminate processes, which retrospectively can be interpreted as beneficial or not. Here is where I link Aristotle's secondary teleology with Bergson's view of evolution and history. Here also I develop one brief but enlightening remark made by the Bergsonian scholar Camille Riquier.

3.1. Perfectivism and analogy

In the "Introduction" to EC, Bergson proposes one circular philosophy. Bergson says that: "*theory of knowledge and theory of life seem to us inseparable*". Let's see how he justifies the statement:

“[a] A theory of life that is not accompanied by a criticism of knowledge is obliged to accept, as they stand, the concepts which the understanding puts at its disposal: it can but enclose the facts, willing or not, in pre-existing frames which it regards as ultimate. It thus obtains a symbolism which is convenient, perhaps even necessary to positive science, but not a direct vision of its object. [b] On the other hand, a theory of knowledge which does not replace the intellect in the general evolution of life will teach us neither how the frames of knowledge have been constructed nor how we can enlarge or go beyond them. *It is necessary that these two inquiries, theory of knowledge and theory of life, should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly.*

[c] Together, they may solve by a method more sure, brought nearer to experience, the great problems that philosophy poses. For, if they should succeed in their common enterprise, they would show us the formation of the intellect, and thereby the genesis of that matter of which our intellect traces the general configuration. *They would dig to the very root of nature and of mind.* [d] They would substitute for the *false evolutionism* of Spencer—which consists in cutting up present reality, already evolved, into little bits no less evolved, and then recomposing it with these fragments, thus positing in advance everything that is to be explained—a *true evolutionism*, in which reality *would be followed in its generation and its growth*”.³¹⁶

I claim that the “true evolutionism” defended here is to be found in the reformed finalism, according to Bergson. As we saw, Bergson considers that the basis of teleology or finalism is psychological. Spencer’s progressivism does not rely on that so fully, according to Bergson. The psychological basis should refer to the theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge should reinforce a solid theory of life. For Bergson, we should start our analysis from our daily experience of the world. Only afterwards can we build a bigger vision on that. Only from consciousness we could experience what Life is. At the same time, the theory of life gives us the broader picture. It expands psychology. It traces within nature the large roots of our inner experience.

“Theory of knowledge” implies that there is a sort of perfectionism in consciousness (we all *are* progress). In Bergson’s view, continuity, action and self-creativity are perfective features. Continuity and self-creativity were part of his doctrine of duration in D.I, and he added external action in MM. In the latter book he established the capacity of extrapolating these mind features to natural beings, such as amoebas. In MM he had already added to the “theory of knowledge” a “theory of life”, but he didn’t develop the idea. The “theory of life” examines the roots of knowledge and how knowledge could be understood within a bigger framework (bigger than the label “human theory of knowledge”). At this point I think that Bergson is developing his well-known claim according to which doing philosophy implies going *beyond human nature*.³¹⁷ Based on the theory of life we can grasp a deeper understanding of the theory of knowledge. Since life is present in all the living beings, we can understand our knowledge in comparison with them. Since Life, as such, has its own features, we can understand ourselves better in comparison to it. Life and knowledge compound a common ground for EC. The analogy illustrates that.

In sum, the theory of life entails the use of analogy, so it requires extrapolation. Bergson’s analogy can be established between human consciousness and living beings, and its aim is to show what life is as such. In MM the human organism and some parts of its consciousness are thus like other organisms to some extent. In LR human consciousness is a part of one society, and societies are organisms. In EC this analogy becomes much bigger. In addition to

³¹⁶ EC, pp. xiii-xiv. I put in italics evolutionism.

³¹⁷ PM, p. 227.

the theory of life, which concedes the possibility of establishing analogies between individual living beings and human consciousness, there is a complementary theory of life that defends the analogy between human beings and Life, understood as evolution. Hence, in EC there are analogies between human consciousness and one insect, between consciousness and one embryo and between consciousness and one plant. There are also ambitious analogies between human consciousness and Life, regarding creation.

I believe that in the introduction to EC Bergson is referring to teleological concepts, since perfection and analogy are both implied in the theory of knowledge and in the theory of life. I also consider in fact that, in the model of immanent teleology, analogy and perfection compose a circle. The theory of knowledge refers to our experience of what perfection is and the theory of life is the philosophical basis upon which the analogy can be established *legitimately*. Without perfection there is no directionality in nature. Without analogy there is no perfective model, since it is to be found in consciousness.

In general terms, the idea of analogy implies that human consciousness and human affairs *are* different parts of nature. There is analogy but also plurivocity of the same term. Hence, regarding its natural being, some common trace has to be noted between the human realm and the natural non-human one. This idea fits well with Bergson's claim that: "philosophy should be an effort to go beyond the human state".³¹⁸ It goes beyond anthropocentrism. In Bergson's world, Cartesian anthropocentrism is much closer than that of Plato and the Stoics.³¹⁹ Bergson's conception of nature challenges Descartes' and that of his heirs.

We saw that within Aristotle perfection or *télos* has several meanings, although it always refers to a certain kind of natural completeness. Regarding each case of analogy one concrete notion of what is perfection is has to be at work. In the human realm, completeness would mean the consummation of a productive action (the sculpture, the carpenter's work, the house, the health of a patient), the consummation of a faculty (sight for an eye, movement for the legs) or the fulfillment of a general goal (life according to virtue and reason, or happiness). This can be extended to nature, as we know well. According to Bergson's philosophy there are also a number of interpretations of what perfection is. All these types of perfection, according to the model of immanent teleology, can be extrapolated from human life to nature. According to that model, nature is again *more perfect* than human life.

In Bergson, the capacity of spontaneous efficiency upon the environment, temporal continuity, and free creativity are some of the mental features extrapolated to different phenomena by Bergson. In the next pages I deal with this case by case. My aim in 3.1 is not to discuss in full detail the perfective aspect, the *télos* involved. Now I will deal with the analogies in particular, and I will also give an account of the type of perfection. But I will come back to that in 4.

My aim here is just to highlight the main cases of analogy in Bergson, which can be understood in two types: a "horizontal analogy", between the individual (the organism, embryo, society) and the (human) individual, that is, analogies 3.1.a, 3.1.d and 3.1.c; and a "vertical analogy", between the human soul and the *élan*.³²⁰

³¹⁸ PM, p. 227.

³¹⁹ See 2.1.c.

³²⁰ I follow Frédéric Worms' terms. He states that there is one analogy between human duration and Life, called a vertical analogy, based on unpredictability, and a horizontal analogy, "transbiological" which "doit en quelque sorte en assurer l'unité immanente". He concludes: "Bergson ne renouvelle donc pas ici les arguments

The two most important studies on Bergson's notion of analogy are Pierre Montebello's *L'autre métaphysique* and David Lapoujade's *Puissances du temps. Versions de Bergson*. To be sure, both disregard the use of analogy for the sake of a teleological argument. Moreover, Lapoujade denies any sort of finalism in Bergson.³²¹ In fact, Lapoujade states that finalism's "raisonnement par analogie est mal fondé: ils rabattent les tous ouverts de la nature sur les systèmes fermés de l'intelligence".³²² According to this Lapoujade's account of finalism could not succeed in grasping what Life and freedom is in Bergson.

Although far from my view, I think that Lapoujade develops an interesting and useful theory of analogy in Bergson.³²³ It is not a matter of an analogy between fixed things, he says, but between tendencies. This echoes one of Bergson's mantras. Analogy is understood within a method here. Firstly, there is intuition of the self by the self.³²⁴ That is, we grasp ourselves spiritually, vitally and materially, he says. Secondly, there is extrapolation. This second step is what he calls sympathy, which is an "analogical reasoning".³²⁵

Lapoujade gives a systematic vision of these two Bergsonian terms: intuition and sympathy. I think Lapoujade is not far from my position, although I do not use the terms intuition or sympathy in my work and, besides, he rejects finalism in Bergson. Lapoujade describes a circle or a circuit of these two operations of the mind, which "presuppose themselves one another".³²⁶ According to this vision, intuition and sympathy could play a role similar to what I understand as analogy and perfection. In any case, analogy and perfection can be conceived as what Lapoujade holds thinking to be for Bergson: to jump beyond the limits of the circle in which human experience is enclosed.³²⁷ I also hold that the analogy is between tendencies, and not between fixed terms, as he claims for sympathy. In fact, Aristotle himself thinks that perfectivism is a feature of tendencies, and not things.

In *L'autre métaphysique* Montebello gives a deep account of the value of analogy in different important contemporary philosophers. Bergson is placed among Ravaisson, Schopenhauer, Gabriel Tarde and Nietzsche. Montebello shows the basis of the "most human of the metaphysics of cosmos, the most cosmic of the metaphysics of human beings"³²⁸, that is "the other metaphysics", is opposed to the modern philosophy represented by Descartes, Kant and phenomenology. "The other metaphysics", in short, places human beings within nature, and not isolated from it. In a way he claims that Descartes, Kant and phenomenology are anthropocentric. Montebello gives an extraordinary importance to the analogy as a method for the "other metaphysics". Analogy for him means that a human being is part of nature, and that, *according to proportions* there is a link between him and natural beings. There is also a

classiques en faveur de la finalité transcendante". I agree with him regarding the content of the vertical analogy and the general conclusion, although I am not totally sure about the meaning of what he calls horizontal analogy. However, I tend to think that basically, what he calls horizontal analogy is what I call by the same term. Worms, Frédéric. *Bergson ou les deux sens de la vie*. Op. cit, p. 204.

³²¹ Lapoujade, David. *Puissances du temps. Versions de Bergson* Paris Éditions de Minuit, 2010, p. 102.

³²² Ibid., p. 67.

³²³ Ibid., pp. 60-101.

³²⁴ Ibid., p.61.

³²⁵ "Raisonnement par analogie".Ibid., p. 62.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

³²⁸ Montebello, Pierre. *L'autre métaphysique*, Desclée de Brouwer, 2003, p. 11.

link between him and the cosmos. Along with this, this “other metaphysics” conceives beings as something spontaneous, non-passive; and also, it constitutes an “evident hierarchy”.³²⁹

The “other metaphysics” implies a vision of human beings divided in different stratum of being, where analogies can be erected. It also defends the analogy between the human being and the cosmos. Here, philosophy of nature and anthropological philosophy are reciprocally elaborated between each other.³³⁰ This depiction of the *other* metaphysics is right, at least regarding Bergson. The mind is a natural issue. All natural beings, on the other hand, fall on a natural scale. There is an analogy between the cosmos and the human being, since humans are at the top of this scale. There is an inner comprehension of what nature is. In my view, this, so to speak, *natural assumption* of human consciousness is a central claim of teleological thought. Eventually, throughout his discourse, Montebello does acknowledge this intimate affinity. It is evident, however, in the case of Ravaisson, an openly finalistic thinker, and not in the case of Schopenhauer, an openly non-finalistic thinker. In any case, Montebello does not explore the essential affinity between analogy and teleology. That is my task now.

The main difference between, on the one hand, Montebello’s and Lapoujade’s accounts, and, on the other, mine consists in the fact that I consider both the cosmological assumption and the circular argument (intuition and sympathy) to pertain to the teleological tradition. Lapoujade denies any sort of finalism and Montebello remains neutral, to some extent, but both employ teleological concepts. Therefore, I follow some of their indications in this section on analogies. I also analyze the two natures of the two main analogies distinguished, a vertical one (man/macrosmos) and the horizontal one (man/organism).

3.1.a. Analogy of adaptation: attention to life

MM is focused on the human body, the human soul and, above all, their intersection. Regarding the human body, in the first chapter is to be found an analogy between it and the rest of the living bodies. Life, and its philosophical meaning, is one of the main notions of MM. The microscopic Monera³³¹, “as we rise in the organic series”,³³² the “higher vertebrates”³³³ and, at the top, the human beings all take part in life. This is the first natural scale that appears in Bergson (only MM contains three). Here he finds that “the more it develops, the more numerous and the more distant the points of space are, which brings it into relation with ever more complex motor mechanisms. In this way the scope that allows to our action enlarges: its growing perfection consists in nothing else”.³³⁴

The term “perfection” is here linked to efficiency. Note that it is not an intellectual item. Unlike Aristotle, Bergson doesn’t use the artisan’s action as model. Bergson emphasizes the perfective efficiency of the inner drive of life. Among efficiencies, the most varied and articulated efficiencies should be called *the most* perfect ones. During the first statement of

³²⁹ “[l’analogie] établit des rapports et des proportions, partout une mesure commune par des choses différentes”. Ibid., p. 31

³³⁰ “... se déploie en une philosophie de la nature (ce qui ne veut pas dire en une philosophie naturaliste) à la mesure de son projet anthropologique”. Ibid., p. 76.

³³¹ That is the name of a phylum for structureless microscopic organisms included in the Protista kingdom, the third kingdom, created by Haeckel in the 1860’s.

³³² MM, p. 28.

³³³ MM, p. 29.

³³⁴ MM, p. 34.

his own position regarding knowledge in MM,³³⁵ Bergson recalls the organic base of our being. In other words, knowledge, and especially in this case, perception, should be understood within the general framework of living beings. And living beings are centers of action,³³⁶ and namely useful action.³³⁷ These actions are to be considered spontaneous and unforeseen movements.³³⁸ This label is, again, not restricted to human bodies, but also to the “humblest body” of the humblest living being.³³⁹ Between a body with a brain and one without it there is a “difference of complication, and not a difference in kind”.³⁴⁰ The living bodies consist in useful (for the sake of conservation), spontaneous (with certain minimal independence) action. As Bergson says: “my own body and, by analogy with it, all other living bodies are those which I have the most right to distinguish in the continuity of the universe”.³⁴¹

Our experience of the world is absorbed in avoiding certain things while seeking other things, since we are living beings and we are focused on action. This experience of the world can be extrapolated to other beings, such as the monera or the vertebrates. In MM.III Bergson recalls the *ex gradibus vitae* argument. The “purely utilitarian origin of our perception of things”,³⁴² can be grasped by comparing our nervous central system with the “herbivorous animal”. Shortly after this, Bergson also calls the amoeba a “rudimentary consciousness”,³⁴³ and gives the general idea:

“...We can follow from the mineral to the plant, from the plant to the simplest conscious beings, from the animal to man, the progress of the operation by which things and beings seize from their surroundings that which attracts them, that which interests them practically, without needing any effort of abstraction, simply because the rest of their surroundings takes no hold upon them: this similarity of reaction following actions superficially different is the germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas”.³⁴⁴

As we know, this *similarity, despite the difference*, is the basis of analogy. Finally, later in MM.IV, a chapter divided into short sub-sections, the discourse talks about inner movement in consciousness (sub-section II), and only subsequently is consciousness extrapolated to life in the “humblest being”.³⁴⁵ In the conclusion of MM (sub-section IX) Bergson refers to the scale as the “progress of living matter” which “consists in a differentiation of function which leads first to the production and then to the increasing complication of a nervous system”.³⁴⁶ The “birth of consciousness” and its progress means conservation and reproduction.

As Worms says, inner human life is part of an “analogy to the comprehension of life”.³⁴⁷ The second must be understood beyond the human psychological boundaries. The “biological foundation” of philosophy implies the use of valid analogies.³⁴⁸ But not *just* analogy, it

³³⁵ The whole argument can be found in MM, pp. 28-32.

³³⁶ MM, pp. 228 and 242.

³³⁷ I mean “vital utility”, for the sake of life itself.

³³⁸ MM, p. 248.

³³⁹ MM, p. 198.

³⁴⁰ MM, p. 29.

³⁴¹ MM, p. 198.

³⁴² MM, p. 158.

³⁴³ MM, pp. 158-159.

³⁴⁴ MM, p. 160.

³⁴⁵ MM, p. 198.

³⁴⁶ MM, p. 248.

³⁴⁷ Worms, Frédéric. *Introduction à Matière et mémoire*. PUF, Paris, 1997, pp. 296-298

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

implies analogy *and* perfection or function. The *télos* is not a mere similarity, but grounds the analogical psychological item in non-psychological nature. What there is at stake in MM is a bunch of analogies *of* functions and tendencies. There are analogies for the sake of conservation, for the sake of growth, etc.

The teleological ground of MM is basically the human body. Action and reaction are the very functions of the human body and every living body. Since it is not opportune now, I will not address the great importance of the past and memory in this section. The basis for the analogy among the different species, genera and kingdoms of biology is that, regarding their relation with the present (including here the environment, the surrounding world), they all take part in life: different types of action and reaction mean different types of fulfillment of the biological functions in certain environments.

We have also seen that Bergson's species, genera and kingdoms are conceived not just like a *mere plurality* but like a hierarchical scale or progress. The human body is at the top of that scale.

The human body/organism is the first of the innumerable series of analogies in Bergson. It implies perfection in the sense of individual teleology: human bodies, herbivorous animals, amoebas and vegetatives act for the sake of existing individually, specifically, and well. In my view, regarding human physiology, MM should be considered within a teleological framework, although Bergson does not talk about forms, *éidos* or *morphé*. In this regard, the emphasis must be put on the *érgon* or function. The philosophical schema fits with the individual teleology, established between mature living beings. Bergson coins this common orientation towards a function or *télos* as "attention to life".³⁴⁹

Also in EC.II the analogy regarding functions is suggested. There is analogy between mature insects and human beings. The *homo sapiens*—here called *homo faber*—and insects—such as the yellow-winged Sphex known by Bergson thanks to the *Souvenirs entomologiques* by Fabre—are an example I can recall.³⁵⁰ The main idea behind this is that both lineages, the one that leads to humans and the one which leads to insects, are the *most perfect* trends of nature. First, he writes: "... *instinct perfected is a faculty of using and even of constructing organized instruments; intelligence perfected is the faculty of making and using unorganized instruments*".³⁵¹ So, these "two modes of psychical activity",³⁵² and "represent two divergent solutions, equally fitting, of one and the same problem".³⁵³

In this level, the task to be performed is the function, which implies adaptation. Adaptation means survival, reproduction and well-being. Animal instinct attains that function, and so does intelligence among humans. Despite the naturalistic approach, it is crucial to note that Bergson does not say either in MM or in EC.II that animals and humans are *equal*. These passages just stress the similarity in terms of functionalism. His philosophy of action understands life as efficiency. It is the best example of conservative teleology, since it refers

³⁴⁹ I find a parallelism between Bergson and the vitalist author Uexküll, author of *Bausteine zu einer biologischen Weltanschauung*. He has also been compared with Aristotle in Weiss, Helene. "Aristotle's teleology and Uexküll's theory of living nature". *Classical Quarterly* 42 (1-2), 1948.

³⁵⁰ The Sphex is a type of wasp, a Hymenopteran. Bergson considers the Hymenopteran the example of "perfect instinct". EC, pp. 172-176.

³⁵¹ EC, p. 140.

³⁵² EC, p. 143.

³⁵³ EC, p. 143.

a regular efficiency for the sake of the conservation of the already living being within an already given environment. This analogy is a horizontal analogy, based on two different substances.

3.1.b. Analogy of maturity

Bergson also holds that there is an analogy, and so also an extrapolation, of perfective features between human consciousness and embryos. It is thus another case of conservative teleology based on horizontal analogies. The function or action for the sake of conservation in one environment is less clear here. The analogy is based on the continuum of the flux of consciousness and the development of the embryo. This analogy establishes duration (originally one of the central concepts of the young Bergson) and a process of biological growth. The specific action or function here is mere survival, development and being. First, we can see the meaning of duration in DI, before Bergson's philosophy of nature (and, hence, before his reformist teleological project).

The continuum of heterogeneous qualities was, along with irreversibility and creative freedom one of the main features of human psychological duration in DI.II. Duration as one continuum composed of heterogeneous unmeasurable qualities seems to be some sort of *pure becoming*. But this would not offer a complete depiction of Bergson's essay. The perfective features in this early work are for me undeniable, and at the same time less explicit. Teleology is not rejected at all in that early framework. In short, quality, simplicity, continuity, irreversibility and free will (later on called "creativity" by Bergson) compose a general description of what maturity is. The teleological horizon of this work is a self-determined choice and decision made by the "whole soul".³⁵⁴ This is that ontological peak called maturity. He even says that many men are not even capable of fulfilling that goal and also adds that we are "rarely free".³⁵⁵ In this framework, freedom is, in sum, the specific function of the human being. Here freedom is to be considered as one specific moment of a process: it is a moment of certain flourishing.

In my reading of DI *irreversibility means directionality and free will is young Bergson's model of perfection*. But in DI the approach to the notion of duration is not natural immanent teleology since there is no analogy beyond human experience, apart from one example on the experience of space.³⁵⁶ In DI the author remains psychological. To be sure, in Bergson's account of duration there were suggested analogies with the natural realm, whereas he rejects any sort of analogy with mathematics. For him, we cannot measure deep feelings, while the major "ideas" that guide our life play the role that cells play in an organism.³⁵⁷ His view of consciousness as an interpenetrated amount of qualities has an organic model. Psychology is the world of life and "free action drops from it like an over-ripe fruit".³⁵⁸

Apart from these suggestions, in general terms, the external world is considered there as pure space. One would have to wait until MM for a proper philosophy of nature (and also a subsequent development of his idea of consciousness). The model of immanent teleology

³⁵⁴ DI, p. 167.

³⁵⁵ DI, p. 231.

³⁵⁶ In DI.II, p. Bergson argues that insects and dogs experience space in a non-intellectual way, but rather qualitatively.

³⁵⁷ DI, p. 135.

³⁵⁸ DI, p. 176.

finds human consciousness and its perfectivity as analogous to other beings. It is a natural philosophy. In DI there are only hints of that.

In EC Bergson constantly projects psychological features onto different phenomena of biology, since he considers that human psychology is a central part of Life. At the beginning of EC.I Bergson recalls his old notion of duration. In comparison with DI, something important has changed: there is an analogy at stake with natural implications. In the first pages of EC he makes an analogy between one embryo and human consciousness by stressing the feature of continuity in time. This is the first analogy in EC. Again, this case does not reproduce what the author said in DI, because in EC he wants to elaborate a philosophy of nature, something more ambitious than the DI scope. It is maybe not very representative of EC in itself, since it is not based on a transgressive or creative *télos*, but on *the most conservative* example of all his conservative teleology.

The embryo growth is a process for the sake of completeness, perfection and fulfillment of specific faculties. The embryo's progress is not an *a-teleological* progress. Consciousness and the embryo's development is not pure becoming, but a tendency towards maturity. We can read the passage now:

“If I consider my body in particular, I find that, like my consciousness, it matures little by little from infancy to old age; like myself, it grows old. Indeed, maturity and old age are, properly speaking, attributes only of my body; it is only metaphorically that I apply the same names to the corresponding changes of my conscious self. Now, if I pass from the top to the bottom of the scale of living beings, from one of the most to one of the least differentiated, from the multicellular organism of man to the unicellular organism of the Infusorian, I find, even in this simple cell, the same process of growing old”³⁵⁹.

The DI concept of irreversibility seems at stake, but as applied to every living being. The body, and consciousness mature. Later on, Bergson introduces the scale of living beings (just like he did before in MM). It is true that Bergson emphasizes now the features of progress and growth in terms of a pure becoming:

“The cause of growing old must lie deeper. We hold that there is unbroken continuity between the evolution of the embryo and that of the complete organism. The impetus which causes a living being to grow larger, to develop and to age, is the same that has caused it to pass through the phases of the embryonic life. The development of the embryo is a perpetual change of form. Any one who attempts to note all its successive aspects becomes lost in an infinity, as is inevitable in dealing with a continuum. Life does but prolong this prenatal evolution. The proof of this is that it is often impossible for us to say whether we are dealing with an organism growing old or with an embryo continuing to evolve; such is the case, for example, with the larvae of insects and crustacea. On the other hand, in an organism such as our own, crises like puberty or the menopause, in which the individual is completely transformed, are quite comparable to changes in the course of larval or embryonic life—yet they are part and parcel of the process of our ageing. Although they occur at a definite age and within a time that may be quite short, no one would maintain that they appear then *ex abrupto*, from without, simply because a certain age is reached, just as a legal right is granted to us on our one-and-twentieth birthday”³⁶⁰.

It is clear that Bergson is stressing here the aspect of change. The “perpetual change of form” is related to duration from DI. At the end, Bergson uses the case of menopause and puberty as

³⁵⁹ EC, pp. 15-16.

³⁶⁰ EC, pp. 18-19.

examples of biological transformation. They don't imply perfection, but crisis. Maturity is between these two crises. But he refers to irreversibility also in material items, like bodies. There is continuity and change. Only the implicit aspect of irreversibility contains the teleological substratum.

We know how Aristotle shows the process of an embryo: first appears the figure and, always afterwards, the color and hardness or softness of the material: nature works just like a painter³⁶¹. *Like in the case of "attention to life", the intelligent artisan analogy is absent.* Furthermore, to age for a mature being is not the same as the perpetual change of form. According to Aristotle's major teleological claim, the later steps in the embryo's development are better than the previous ones: while, *ontologically* speaking, the perfection is prior, *chronologically* speaking, it comes the last (GA.II. 736b4-5).³⁶²

We have seen that he is using the scale exactly as he used it in MM and the analogical perspective. The issue here is the meaning of perfection. In these passages Bergson is using the concept of continuum used in DI, in MM.III and IM. In the case of EC.I, there is space to interpret the text.

As I said, DI seems to be alien to the topic of teleology. The concepts involved there, especially in its chapter II, were that of continuum, heterogeneity, quality, irreversibility and, finally, self-creativity or freewill, dealt with in chapter III. I will leave aside heterogeneity and quality for now. In my opinion, irreversibility and continuum compose a framework in which maturity is possible. Moreover, maturity is the basis for self-creativity or freewill.

In the example from EC.I, Bergson is removing this human feature, the continuum of consciousness, from living organisms. Bergson says that "it is often impossible for us to say whether we are dealing with an organism growing old or with an embryo continuing to evolve" and that "there is unbroken continuity between the evolution of the embryo and that of the complete organism". My argument doesn't change with regard to DI. Irreversibility and maturation are implicit concepts of Bergson's idea of duration. The concept as such is unchanged in EC, but now one analogy is involved.

The analogy as such, the feature that we are currently looking for, only appears in EC. It is, by the way, far from Aristotle's embryology. It establishes explicitly what can be traced back to DI. Although Bergson emphasizes the continuum-becoming element, irreversibility (associated with duration from the beginning) points in the direction of maturity, and, thus, to the goal or perfection. We will deal with embryology again in 4.1, in the section where I tackle the different kinds of perfection. It is part of what I call conservative teleology. In this case, it tends implicitly towards maturity.

3.1.c. Analogy of adaptation: the community

The special feature of this type of analogy relies on the class of individual involved here: the community. It is a special individual analogy since for us one society is not an individual living substance, but a compound of other individuals (namely citizens). Bergson considers

³⁶¹ GA.II. 743b15-25.

³⁶² Met.IX. 8: "...because the things that are *posterior in becoming* are *prior in form and in substantiality* (e.g. man is prior to boy and human being to seed; for the one already has its form, and the other has not),...: Met. IX. 8.1050a5-10, my emphasis.

human communities natural entities. Influenced by the biological perspective of his epoch, Bergson goes beyond Aristotle and considers the community not just a natural being, but also a living being. I think that Bergson is never completely clear about this question, since although he states that, as we will see, he does not nuance or clarify this idea.

In Bergson each individual is a part for the sake of the whole. Some part of our psychological life and also our moral life is deeply rooted in this whole. Bergson's essay on laughter and his later approach to what he called "closed society", DS.II, analyses the relationship between the individual and that whole. In both essays he tackles the *functions of concrete individual societies for the sake of their conservation or survival*.

In the case of laughter, the philosopher clearly talks about the relation between the individual members. Society's impulse through the comic is to be understood as a tendency to social politeness. In Bergson's view, laughter's essence is to intimidate by humiliating. It is a reaction against different disintegrative habits, of very different levels.³⁶³ As I will show in 4.1."Destination of the community", a conservative teleology is there at stake. But the main point here is that he establishes the analogy between an organism and a society.

In DS he poses a clearer analogy between society and the living being:

"The members of a civic community hold together like the cells of an organism and habit, served by intelligence and imagination, introduces among them a discipline resembling, in the interdependence it establishes between separate individuals, the unity of an organism of anastomotic cells".³⁶⁴

Furthermore, Bergson used this analogy within a more concrete political context. Between LR and DS, he gave one of his "war lectures" in 1916, called "On personality" ("La personnalité").³⁶⁵ There he tackled this topic, but focused on national societies. "As long as one society has grown and matured, as long as it has reached to become aware of itself, it is one person. As long as one society has its traditions, its laws, its institutions, which synthetically are past, they play the same role as memory does in every individual. One society that has its own form, its peculiar character, which imposes this form and this character to the actions that it realizes, is one person".³⁶⁶

But the relevant element of this text is the analogy between the human mind (person) and human groups, such as societies and nations. To some extent, societies are *like* persons. In line with the Romantic conceptions of nation and politics, Bergson believes that behind the

³⁶³ "We have seen that the more society improves, the more plastic is the adaptability it obtains from its members; while the greater the tendency towards increasing stability below, the more does it force to the surface the disturbing elements inseparable from so vast a bulk" LR, p. 61a. "Every small society that forms within the larger is thus impelled, by a vague kind of instinct, to devise some method of discipline or 'breaking in', so as to deal with the rigidity of habits that have been formed elsewhere and have now to undergo a partial modification. (...) society holds suspended over each individual member, if not the threat of correction, at all events the prospect of a snubbing, which, although it is slight, is none the less dreaded. Such must be the function of laughter. Always rather humiliating for the one against whom it is directed, laughter is, really and truly, a kind of social 'ragging'". LR, p.42a.

³⁶⁴ DS, pp. 13-14.

³⁶⁵ For the term "war lectures", see Soulez. The lectures on personality were given in Madrid, the 6th of May in 1916. See in Bergson, Henri. *Écrits philosophiques*, PUF, 2011, pp. 508-535 and *Études Bergsoniennes*, IX; translated into Spanish by Manuel García Morente, and re-translated into French by M. Gauthier. pp. 57-118. It is my own translation into English.

³⁶⁶ Bergson, Henri. *Écrits philosophiques*, Op. cit., p. 530.

State there are *organic peoples*.³⁶⁷ “Societies with traditions”,³⁶⁸ are *like* humans. The three dimensions of spiritual time, past, present and future, are present regarding national societies. This analogy focuses on the conservation of the being through time, among other things. It is also easy to interpret the already quoted words, from “On personality”, in a teleological way: maturity, fulfillment and growth. Past, present and “destiny” or “mission” are both parts of one person and one country.³⁶⁹

Throughout DS there is a constant analogy between individual souls and human community. This late essay also represents a systematic nuancing of the two teleological strivings. For the first time, Bergson articulates conservative teleology and transgressive teleology (which I will address in Chapter 4). Both tendencies are grounded in human consciousness and expanded to communities and universal history through analogy. First, he defines the two tendencies in our consciousness. One of them is obligation, pressure, impulsion or compulsion, which is basis for conservative teleology. Here Bergson revises his concept of society in LR. The other tendency is emotion, aspiration or attraction, which is a basis for transgressive teleology. The two articulate our behavior and ethics: “Pressure and attraction, specifying their objectives, would lead to anyone of these systems of maxims, since each of them aims at the attainment of an end both individual and social”.³⁷⁰ These two perfective tendencies are “two forces to which society owes its stability and its mobility”.³⁷¹

The analogy that we have to see now is impulsion. As Bergson says, its outcome is stability in society, but also survival. It is expressed very clearly in myths from the beginning of history. Bergson addresses this topic in DS.II. But what is interesting for us now is said in DS.I: in human consciousness there is a correspondence in obligation or impulsion. Society has a compulsory power on human consciousness. Human beings only have to accept the commandment of their society, in different degrees, from the family to the country. Society here has to be understood not only in static terms, but also as something individual.

Given this conception of society, it is clear that he endorsed this analogy. In terms of entity, there is a new example, because we have not seen the function of societies until now in Bergson. But in terms of perfection, here we are talking about the survival and well-being of the society. That is, in this case we remain in conservative teleology.

3.1.d. Analogy of creation

After the analogy of self/embryo there is, in EC, a second one, much more ambitious. It establishes an analogy between our soul and the cosmos.³⁷² It is difficult to determine the concrete scope of this statement. In any case, EC deals with the analogy between something more concrete, although extraordinarily ambitious: self and Life, Life in general, also called Consciousness or Supra-consciousness.³⁷³ More famously, this is the *élan vital* and it is only expressed by biology, in the universe. It is what I call a vertical analogy, since it is established between the part and the whole. This is an analogy of

³⁶⁷ See also “Quelques mots sur la philosophie française et sur l’esprit français”, in 1934. *Ibid.*, p. 675.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 531, the italics are mine.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 533.

³⁷⁰ DS, p. 91.

³⁷¹ DS, p. 91.

³⁷² EC, p. 241: “The universe is an assemblage of solar systems which we have every reason to believe analogous to our own”.

³⁷³ EC, p. 261.

macrocosmos/microcosmos, which is foreign to Aristotle. It is also part of the transgressive domain of Bergsonian teleology, since the ultimate scope of it is neither stability nor survival. The goal at stake is change, progress, transgression, with no particular beneficiary.

We can read again the following claim: “In reality, life is of the psychological order, and it is of the essence of the psychical to enfold a confused plurality of interpenetrating terms”.³⁷⁴

The psyche is a plurality of interpenetrating qualities in DI, and now that is translated into something else. He gives more detail in the same analogical direction: “The elements of a [n evolutionary] tendency are not like objects set beside each other in space and mutually exclusive, but rather like psychic states”.³⁷⁵

The history of evolution is the history of Life, and with “elements of a tendency” he means the general features of one development. For instance, the central tendency in his view is the development of the central nervous system. As I said very briefly in the Introduction, Life has one origin and is spread out in different species and lineages through millions of years. Our own personal and individual history is not a replica but has important traits in common with the history of life and the history of humans³⁷⁶

This analogy is not based on a certain community between one individual and another, for instance, the human mind and an embryo. In this case, Bergson is referring to the analogy between one living individual (or part) and Life itself (or the whole). The human being and, specifically, its consciousness represent the whole of living beings to some extent. This link between the best part (human life) and the whole (Life) is not a horizontal analogy, but a vertical one (Worms).

“Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose extinguished fragments fall back as matter; consciousness, again, is the name for that which subsists of the rocket itself, passing through the fragments and lighting them up into organisms. But this consciousness, which is a *need of creation*, is made manifest to itself only where creation is possible. It lies dormant when life is condemned to automatism; it awakens as soon as the possibility of a choice is restored”.³⁷⁷

I think this passage is useful to us for two reasons. It shows, firstly, which is the main teleological element of Life: it is for the sake of creation. There is also another thing: it “lies dormant” and it is “condemned to automatism”. Which means that when Life does not fulfill its scope it is condemned to automatism. What is automatism here? In my interpretation the opposite of transgression or evolution from one species to another is non-variation and adaptation, with no tendency to change to higher degrees of life (the development of the central nervous system, for instance).

In human life, creation—that is, in this context, freewill—is the perfective element to link through analogy with Life, since both humans and Life have the same *need* and, more importantly, have it as a *natural tendency*. As Bergson says: “...the root of life there is an effort to engraft on to the necessity of physical forces the largest possible amount of *indetermination*”.³⁷⁸ *Here the notion of indetermination plays the role of the télos.* In nature,

³⁷⁴ EC, p. 257.

³⁷⁵ EC, p. 118.

³⁷⁶ For human history, see the next subsection.

³⁷⁷ EC, p. 261.

³⁷⁸ EC, p. 114.

indetermination means overcoming certain unforeseeable limits. That is precisely what Bergson sees as perfect. For Bergson that is the highest capacity. It is much higher or more perfect than the other kinds of perfection, such as efficiency or adaptation. It is certainly higher than the conservative continuum.

As I noted, Bergson finds this unique capacity of transgression both in nature or Life and in human individual life. Human beings are for the sake of indetermination, because our maturity is or should be an unforeseen self-creation.

In Bergson, as we saw in DI, few of us are really free. So also among human beings there is an inequality regarding this faculty. Bergson then has to choose one type of human being for the sake of a correct understanding of the microsocos/macosocos analogy of human/Life. Bergson's choice is clear: the artist is the best example in Bergson for addressing this analogy. The genius of the artist is surely the central example of EC and one of the most important in Bergson's philosophy:

“If life is a creation, we must represent it by analogy with the creations it is given us to observe, that is to say, with those we ourselves achieve. Now, in artistic creation, for example, it seems that the materials we have to work with, words and images for the poet, forms and colors for the painter, rhythms and harmonies for the musician, range themselves spontaneously under the idea they are to express, drawn, as it were, by the charm of a superior ideality. Is it not a similar movement, is it not also a state of fascination we should attribute to material elements when they are organized into living beings?”³⁷⁹

For Bergson, Life is like an artist, since both tend to perfection. In this context of transgressive teleology, it means newness, unpredictability, and simplicity.

He opens the book stressing the artist's unpredictability.³⁸⁰

“The finished portrait is explained by the features of the model, by the nature of the artist, by the colors spread out on the palette; but, even with the knowledge of what explains it, no one, not even the artist, could have foreseen exactly what the portrait would be, for to predict it would have been to produce it before it was produced—an absurd hypothesis which is its own refutation. Even so with regard to the moments of our life, of which we are the artisans. Each of them is a kind of creation. And just as the talent of the painter is formed or deformed—in any case, is modified—under the very influence of the works he produces, so each of our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form that we are just assuming. It is then right to say that what we do depend on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are, to a certain extent, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually”³⁸¹

But maybe the clearest statement regarding the analogy between nature and the artist is to be found in PR, in the context of seeing life as the “continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty”:

³⁷⁹ VOFR, in PM, p. 282. Among the books that I take most into account, LR is rich with considerations about art. LR, 47b: “We should all, were it so, be novelists or poets or musicians”. LR.III, p. 46b: “between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil is interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd (...) almost transparent, for the artist and the poet”. LR, p. 48b: “Art is certainly only a more direct vision of reality. But this purity of perception implies a break with utilitarian convention, an innate and especially localized disinterestedness of sense or consciousness, in short, a certain immateriality of life, which is what has always been called idealism”.

³⁸⁰ PM, p. 158, italics are mine. Also PM, p. 117 and CV, in ES, pp. 25-26, 29.

³⁸¹ EC, pp. 6-7.

“Take the concrete and complete world, with the life and consciousness it encloses; consider nature in its entirety, nature the generator of new species as novel and original in form as the design of any artist: in these species concentrate upon individuals, plants or animals, each of which has its own character - I was going to say its personality (for one blade of grass does not resemble another blade of grass any more than a Raphael resembles a Rembrandt)”³⁸².

There is another similar feature between the activity of the artist and the tendency of Life. That is simplicity, which appears first in IM and in VOFR.³⁸³

“[a]An artist of genius has painted a figure on his canvas. We can imitate his picture with many-colored squares of mosaic. And we shall reproduce the curves and shades of the model so much the better as our squares are smaller, more numerous and more varied in tone. But an infinity of elements infinitely small, presenting an infinity of shades, would be necessary to obtain the exact equivalent of the figure that the artist has conceived as a simple thing, which he has wished to transport as a whole to the canvas, and which is the more complete the more it strikes us as the projection of an indivisible intuition. Now, suppose our eyes so made that they cannot help seeing in the work of the master a mosaic effect. Or suppose our intellect so made that it cannot explain the appearance of the figure on the canvas except as a work of mosaic. We should then be able to speak simply of a collection of little squares, and we should be under the mechanistic hypothesis. We might add that, beside the materiality of the collection, there must be a plan on which the artist worked; and then we should be expressing ourselves as finalists. But in neither case should we have got at the real process, for there are no squares brought together. It is the picture, *i.e.* the simple act, projected on the canvas, which, by the mere fact of entering into our perception, is *decomposed* before our eyes into thousands and thousands of little squares which present, as *recomposed*, a wonderful arrangement. [b] So the eye, with its marvelous complexity of structure, may be only the simple act of vision, divided *for us* into a mosaic of cells, whose order seems marvelous to us because we have conceived the whole as an assemblage”³⁸⁴.

In [a] Bergson is talking about the artist, and in [b] Bergson is talking about an evolutionary process. In his view, both are made by a simple impulse impossible to grasp by intelligence. In IM, where he talks about the *Iliad*,³⁸⁵ in EC he recalls the example: the work of literary art and the alphabet. The atoms are the letters and the harmony and evolution of them is simplicity.³⁸⁶

Rather, Bergson places together the idea of unpredictability and the idea of simplicity in the same statement:

“Every human work in which there is invention, *every voluntary act in which there is freedom, every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity, brings something new into the world.* True, these are only creations of form. How could they be anything else? *We are not the vital current itself; we are this current already loaded with matter, that is, with congealed parts of its own substance which it carries along its course.* In the composition of a *work of genius*, as in a simple free decision, we do, indeed, stretch the spring of our activity to the utmost and thus create what no mere assemblage of materials could have given (what assemblage of curves already known can ever be

³⁸² PR, p. 121, in PM.

³⁸³ VOFR, p. 270.

³⁸⁴ EC, simplicity, pp. 89-90.

³⁸⁵ IM, in PM, p. 203. Also, in IM, Bergson gives a similar example. The novelist multiplies the traits of one character, in different actions and different discourses, but “all this has not the same value as the simple and indivisible feeling I should experience if I were to coincide for a single moment with the personage himself”. IM, in PM, p. 187.

³⁸⁶ EC, pp. 239-240, italics are mine.

equivalent to the pencil-stroke of a great artist?) but there are, none the less, elements here that pre-exist and survive their organization. But if *a simple arrest of the action that generates form* could constitute matter (are not the original lines drawn by the artist themselves already the fixation and, as it were, congealment of a movement?), a creation of matter would be neither incomprehensible nor inadmissible”.³⁸⁷

Human beings are *in the highest degree natural*, because they can do certain things which are unique only to them. These unique faculties have to be related with spontaneity and creation. Humans are in the highest degree natural because they are in the highest degree free.

Also in EC, we find the unforeseeable novelty of the piece of work itself:

“We say of astronomical phenomena that they manifest an admirable order, meaning by this that they can be foreseen mathematically. And we find an order no less admirable in a symphony of Beethoven, which is genius, originality, and therefore unforeseeability itself”.³⁸⁸

We have seen two types of analogy, the horizontal one and the vertical one. Regarding some aspects of human consciousness, Bergson links one part of nature (human consciousness) to another part of nature, like one animal organism or one embryo, or even one community. This is an analogy between individuals and their individual functions or tendencies. Insofar as one human is natural and has one specific *télos* and another being is also natural and has its own *télos*, the analogy can be established. There is another possibility in Bergson. It is the possibility to establish an analogy between one exclusive type of part (only human consciousness) and the whole of nature. This is a vertical analogy. Now we can see that this analogy exists.

Apparently, we all have not developed the creative faculty, although it is present in all of us *in potentia*. That specific part is creativeness or freedom. The artists and poets are a sort of paradigm of freedom and creativeness for Bergson. To this extent we all try to imitate the great geniuses. Precisely because we are only partially poets and creative can we understand their talent.

The idea of simple and non-decomposable, creative, sudden effort, and the unforeseen efficacy of his work, not led by any sort of “plan”, is considered here perfection. Bergson considers that simplicity and unpredictability are to be found regarding human freedom, also in moral matters. But his proposal uses those two traits for a general extrapolation to Life and the cosmos. It is not part of what I called conservative teleology, but of transgressive teleology. The human individual is neither free nor creative for the sake of surviving or even well-being, but for the sake of contributing to something bigger. I will come back to this idea especially in 4, but we can say for the moment that a creative contribution (an advance, a discovery, etc.) entails in this framework some sort of well-being (such as joy). This remains within the participation model. In this case we are talking about participating in the progress of the cosmos, and *not* in its *stability*, as we found in Aristotle to whom perfection was something different.

Between Life and individual human life (and also history, as we will see in the next case of analogy) the analogy works, according to Bergson:

³⁸⁷EC, p. 239, italics are mine.

³⁸⁸ EC, p. 244.

“... in a general way, in the evolution of life, just as in the evolution of human societies and of individual destinies, the greatest successes have been for those who have accepted the heaviest risks”.³⁸⁹

The self and Life are linked by one image: *successful creation*. Bergson’s post-romantic universe bestows to the artistic genius the role of central analogy. There’s still one possible analogy that, following the very same terms (self and Life), relies not on a case of success (creation), but on failure.

I want to note this deflationary or negative version of the vertical analogy. As in Aristotle,³⁹⁰ in Bergson there exists the analogy between nature and human failure. In EC.II he addresses his vision of the history of evolution: the continual overcoming of one species from one into another, is the characteristic of the vital impulse.³⁹¹ But there is also an opposite tendency. Bergson sees this tendency as a decline. It is the tendency toward i) adaptation or ii) toward vegetative torpor. I will explain this obscure vision in Chapter 4, but we can say in advance that every species has to adapt itself to the circumstances. Once some new species has adopted one form and conserves its own being by succeeding in reproducing itself, then we can talk about success. For Bergson in EC, in comparison with the “movement” that leads spontaneously (not by chance) to new species, the movement of adaptation is ontologically secondary. Also, and more emphatically, he considers the lineage that leads from animals to what he understands by vegetative torpor, decadence. For instance, the fungi group and the animal parasites represent in EC.II this tendency. The two most opposite tendencies are consciousness (which means an ascent) and unconsciousness (which means a descent).³⁹²

As I said, adaptation and, above all, decline, is no creative art. Bergson does not talk about simplicity and unpredictability whilst talking about adaptation and decline. Yet it is a tendency of Life, according to Bergson. In CV he talks about Life in very illustrative terms, about risk and adventure, but also about another trend, which means a “tranquil, unenterprising existence”,³⁹³ but should be more literally translated as “tranquil, gentrified existence”, since Bergson writes “bourgeoise”.³⁹⁴ The hero and the gentry are a Romantic expression of what Bergson considers the two main tendencies in Life. I believe one can say that Bergson is a son of the 19th century Romanticism, as Lovejoy holds.³⁹⁵

As I recalled, for Aristotle the analogy between nature and art does not only rely on fulfillment, but also on error. The cases of error happen in both grounds. Leaving aside the differences at this point, Bergson also considers that. Human beings also decay. This is part of our everyday experience. Thus, the vertical analogy is not focused exclusively on transgression, but also on stability and “retrograded”.³⁹⁶ Just as there is imitation and repetition in our everyday life and moral life, there is imitation and repetition in nature. Sleep is the real loss of vitality in a lineage:

³⁸⁹ EC, p. 132.

³⁹⁰ See section 2.1.b, on *hamartia* in *Phys.*II. 8.199a33-199b5.

³⁹¹ EC, basically pp. 106-135.

³⁹² EC, p. 112.

³⁹³ ES, p. 16.

³⁹⁴ ES, 1964, p.12.

³⁹⁵ Lovejoy, Arthur. *Bergson and Romantic evolutionism*. UCP, California, 1914

³⁹⁶ CV, in ES, p. 25.

“Just as among primitive organisms there were some that turned towards animal life by refusing to manufacture organic out of inorganic material and taking organic substances ready made from organisms that had turned toward the vegetative life, so, among the animal species themselves, many contrived to live at the expense of other animals. For an organism that is animal, that is to say mobile, can avail itself of its mobility to go in search of defenseless animals, and feed on them quite as well as on plants. So, the more species became mobile, the more they became voracious and dangerous to one another. Hence a sudden arrest of the entire animal world in its progress towards higher and higher mobility (...) If the plant renounced consciousness in wrapping itself in a cellulose membrane, the animal that shut itself up in a citadel or in armor condemned itself to a partial slumber. In this torpor the echinoderms and even the molluscs live today. Probably arthropods and vertebrates were threatened with it too. They escaped, however, and to this fortunate circumstance is due the expansion of the highest forms of life”.³⁹⁷

Obviously, Bergson is talking here in analogy with human psychology. This is, again, a clear challenge of the critique of anthropomorphism. The plants did not renounce consciousness, primitive organisms did not turn towards animal life, mollusks did not shut themselves up in a citadel *literally*, but *metaphorically*. Let me tackle one of these examples, the last one: becoming a parasite. As I said, for Bergson a lineage of animal evolution becoming a parasite is a clear case of retrogression. It is the case of animal torpor. Bergson describes it in a psychological way: it is like “falling asleep”.³⁹⁸ The opposite direction, towards vertebrates, means enhancement. The tendency to *mobile living* preludes human psychology in his view, because it initiates the long path of indetermination throughout Life. The tendency toward movement, like “human armaments” becomes more and more mobile.³⁹⁹ In the case of the end of a lineage, Bergson says that matter has “hypnotized” Life.⁴⁰⁰

In general terms, we see, Bergson writes about it in a dualistic way, where matter and Life are two tendencies, which are at some time opposed: “Matter bends it to its own automatism, falls it to sleep in its own unconsciousness”.⁴⁰¹ Retrogression and automatism express one of the tendencies of Life. And, what is central for us now, they are part of ourselves as well.

Automatism and unconsciousness are tendencies of our psychic life. Human beings can or even should *escape* from this and reach freedom. Through freedom they contribute to the general trend of “forward movement of life”. As he says: “Automatism and repetition, which prevail everywhere except in man, should warn us that living forms are only halts: this work of marking time is not the forward movement of life”.⁴⁰² Human beings are not repetitions of a model. At least, according to Bergson, they should not be so. Freedom and creativeness are the main or most perfect goal of both Life and human beings.

Automatism and repetition are the *negative* version of the *genuine* impulse, simple, creative and unforeseeable.⁴⁰³

We saw that human consciousness and Life have something in common. It is a vertical analogy, between the part of the whole and the whole itself. It is the methodical basis for transgressive teleology. Regarding the specific notion of perfection, it seems that Bergson

³⁹⁷ EC, pp. 130-131.

³⁹⁸ EC, p. 130.

³⁹⁹ EC, p. 132.

⁴⁰⁰ EC, p. 137.

⁴⁰¹ CV, in ES, p. 25.

⁴⁰² CV, in ES, p. 31.

⁴⁰³ See the argument from mistakes in Aristotle in 2.1.b.

stresses unpredictability and simplicity. Since in this section I just want to show the terms of the analogy, I will leave the discussion of this concrete interpretation of what is perfection for section 4, where I tackle the issue straightforwardly.

3.1.e. Analogy of impulsion-attraction

In this subsection we have to extend the vertical analogy mind/Life to mind/human history. We move from EC and CV to DS, Bergson's account of history. I recall this sentence from EC:

"... in a general way, in the evolution of life, just as in the evolution of human societies and of individual destinies, the greatest successes have been for those who have accepted the heaviest risks".⁴⁰⁴

We have seen the analogy Life/human soul ("individual destinies", in the passage), but we have still to talk about the other analogy between Life and "the evolution of human societies". As we saw Bergson himself did not distinguish nature from culture. On the contrary he seems to consider culture part of biology. We know that in his view society is an organism and the individuals are cells. The analogy man/society worked in the analogy c for the sake of adaptation. In d we have assessed the great value of the analogy for the sake of evolution: Life. Now we have a mixture of both. Now in e the analogy covers the evolution of societies, but *not any individual society*. The perfective value, again, has no beneficiary in its horizon. Hence, it is not conservative teleology, but transgressive. Its perfective progress may be described for the sake of freedom, one ultimate global goal with no subsequent purpose. This implies a new kind of analogy: it is a vertical analogy between human soul and universal history. It is the last of our set in 3.1.

Human progress is a unique expression of nature. In one place in DS.I he affirms that there are not historical laws in history, but biological ones, if (he adds) we understand the word "biology" by its "wide meaning".⁴⁰⁵ Among other things, this claim implies that much of what we said about Bergson's conception of natural history works with cultural history. Life is, for him, an "instrument of freedom".⁴⁰⁶ So is history. DS continues and develops the doctrine of EC when Bergson refers to "individuals who each represent, as the appearance of a new species would have represented, an effort of creative evolution".⁴⁰⁷

Then he moves afterwards to the vision of the *élan* in history, and he recalls the two perfective tendencies, "two forces to which society owes its stability and its mobility".⁴⁰⁸ As I said in 3.1.c DS represents the systematic nuancement of the two teleological strives in nature and man, and also is only definite articulation:

"In order to define the very essence of duty, we have in fact distinguished the two forces that act upon us, *impulsion on the one hand, and attraction on the other* (...) We should have to open a very long parenthesis indeed if we had to give their due share to the two forces, the *one social, the other supra-social*, one of impulse, the other of attraction, which impart to each moral motive its driving force".

⁴⁰⁴ EC, p. 132.

⁴⁰⁵ DS, p. 101.

⁴⁰⁶ EC, p. 25.

⁴⁰⁷ DS, p. 97.

⁴⁰⁸ DS, p. 91.

We already have seen the *social impulsion*. My current aim is to focus now on *supra-social attraction* and aspiration. Social impulsion is to be found in impersonal laws or impersonal habits. Attraction is anchored in personality and the effect of personal models. Bergson's example is the "attitude of the apprentice towards the master, or rather, to use the language of Aristotle, of the accident in the presence of the essence. There would remain to be defined the *higher ego* to which the average personality defers".⁴⁰⁹ According to Bergson, the *average personality* imitates the *higher ego*, and thereby he or she creates. Whereas in impulsion the ego obeys, in attraction it emerges.

Bergson uses here again analogy. He moves from subjectivity to society. I think this second approach to the idea of aspiration and attraction emphasizes the perfective aspects of the term. Impulsion means conservation, but aspiration means enhancement and a new step forward. Technically speaking, I have been showing throughout these pages that conservation implies one notion of perfection, but progress implies a genuine one: ultimately contributing to the cosmic good. While in the subjective ground Bergson talks about personal authority, in the following passage he is also talking about a *society moved by the personal attraction of a spiritual hero* or a charismatic individual. It is important to note that his *personalistic way of understanding progress*, implies necessarily this figure. There is not any sort of inertial progress or impersonal and gradual law of progress in Bergson. Each spiritual hero implies a sudden breakthrough:

"[a] Now, a mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving, animated by a common will, towards the continually renewed creation of a more complete humanity, is no more possible of realization in the future than was the existence in the past of human societies functioning automatically and similar to animal societies. *Pure aspiration* is an ideal limit, just like obligation unadorned. It is none the less true that it is the mystic souls who draw and will continue to draw civilized societies in their wake. [b] The remembrance of what they have been, of what they have done, is enshrined in the memory of humanity. Each one of us can revive it, especially if he brings it in touch with the image, which abides ever living within him, of a particular person who shared in that mystic state and radiated around him some of its light. If we do not evoke this or that sublime figure, we know that we can do so; he thus exerts on us a *virtual attraction*. [c] Even if we ignore individuals, there remains the general formula of morality accepted today by civilized humanity: this formula includes two things, a system of orders dictated by impersonal social requirements, and a series of appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons who represent the best there is in humanity. The obligation relating to the orders is, in its original and fundamental elements, sub-rational. The potency of the appeal lies in the strength of the emotion it has aroused in times gone by, which it arouses still, or can arouse: this emotion, if only because it can indefinitely be resolved into ideas, is more than idea; it is supra-rational. The two forces, working in different regions of the soul, are projected on to the intermediary plane, which is that of intelligence".⁴¹⁰

[a] and [b] show the analogy from the society to every one's life. In [c] the idea of attraction becomes even more complete. It is an "appeal". The appeal is active, personal. One can say that the appeal inspires privately the free soul to be free or to create while it imitates the master. Within impulsive matters, there is no freedom involved. Attraction is the social movement towards a new step forward, and it is the main *internal dynamic of progress* in Bergson.

There is an intermediate teleological drive here, absolutely new in Bergson. Earlier in his works, there was adaptation, on one hand, and freedom or creation, on the other. In DS there

⁴⁰⁹ DS, p. 66.

⁴¹⁰ DS, p. 84-85, italics are mine.

appears this middle term: imitation. It is perfective since, unlike impulsion, it permits us to create freely, to participate in progress and it also produces progress. In Bergson's view of history, heroes emerge like mutations and just change the world, but also, they attract regular people from within. Progress, made by attraction and imitation, comes just after the hero's work. Attraction is not made for heroes, but exerted by the hero's inspiration. The heroes are, as we saw, like Life itself: unpredictable. Average people create by imitating that.

Bergson thus introduces creativity in this mimetic model.⁴¹¹ Human beings have to be free as a condition for attaining the goals and values that the hero (who is "more free" than him or her) creates. As Bergson said from the beginning, although free-will is our most important feature, we are not usually free. On the contrary, we are "rarely free".⁴¹² His neo-Romantic vision of the human being entailed that artists are the most "commonly free" among us. Then he developed a new way which lead him towards religion and mysticism. The spiritual heroes and not the aesthetic ones are "the best of mankind".⁴¹³ In any case, spiritual and artistic reformers are on the top of his hierarchy of beings. Although Bergson rejects Nietzsche's dualistic vision of human beings, Bergson himself holds that there are two different types of human being: the creative and active, and the passive imitator. What he denies from the Nietzschean account of morals is the excessive duality regarding human beings, because Bergson thinks that in the end everyone has the two tendencies.⁴¹⁴

The attractor and the attracted are the two main roles in history, according to Bergson. Attraction is the main original concept of DS, regarding global creative teleology. There are, thus, two analogical factors to be mentioned in this subsection. First, we are creators, and history is like one creation. This is the primordial movement of progress. Second, we are inspired, attracted and we aspire to be like our personal models. That expresses a secondary or derived, but still global, transgressive and perfective trend of humanity. As we can see, also within Bergson's global teleology there is mimetic teleology. There are neither heavenly bodies rotating for the sake of gods imitation nor living beings reproducing for the sake of imitating the rotations. Here in Bergson there are geniuses who imitate the *élan vital*, and, subsequently, there are regular ordinary people that imitate the great creators in a more modest way. In our consciousness there are analogical patterns to establish that analogy.

Furthermore, I want to propose briefly an interpretative hypothesis of the origin of the terms impulsion/attraction in DS that reinforces that parallel. It is relevant for us since it is based on Bergson's peculiar interpretation of Aristotle in EC.IV. To my knowledge I am the first interpreter to call attention to this particular link between DS and EC.IV. The duality impulsion/attraction appeared for the first time in EC.IV in the context of Aristotelian theology:

"There is, then, immanent in the philosophy of Ideas, a particular conception of causality, which it is important to bring into full light, because it is that which each of us will reach when, in order to ascend to the origin of things, he follows to the end the natural movement of the intellect. True, the ancient philosophers never formulated it explicitly. They confined themselves to drawing the

⁴¹¹ DS, pp. 74-78.

⁴¹² DI, p. 231. "The moments at which we thus grasp ourselves are rare, and that is just why we are rarely free".

⁴¹³ CV, in ES, pp. 31-34.

⁴¹⁴ The third great figure of the 19th century that he quotes, along with Comte and Spencer, is Nietzsche, in DS, p. 278, regarding his doctrine of the slave and master. Bergson holds that every soul is both, slave and master, and he rejects Nietzsche, but the truth is that in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.IX. §260 Nietzsche seems to affirm something similar to Bergson's interior duality.

consequences of it, and, in general, they have marked but points of view of it rather than presented it itself. Sometimes, indeed, they speak of an *attraction*, sometimes of an *impulsion* exercised by the prime mover on the whole of the world. Both views are found in Aristotle, who shows us in the movement of the universe an aspiration of things toward the divine perfection, and consequently an ascent toward God, while he describes it elsewhere as the effect of a contact of God with the first sphere and as descending, consequently, from God to things”.⁴¹⁵

Surely influenced by Ravaisson’s account of Aristotle, Bergson defends there a twofold causality exerted by god upon the cosmos. “Attraction” in Bergson’s account is a teleological term. It explains how the first heaven is attracted by God, just like something “beloved” (“*erómenon*”, *Met.* XII. 7. 1072b2) attracts the lover. Furthermore, Bergson defends a “broad sense” of this attraction, and means that the whole world, in different degrees, expresses the same tendency. It is clear that, although in Bergson there is neither a causal God, nor a prime mover, as we saw in 3.2.3 there is an ascending tendency. The term “impulsion” comes from one theological interpretation of Aristotle, further developed in *Histoire de l’idée de temps. Course au Collège de France 1903-1904*.⁴¹⁶ It is based on the direct movement applied by the first mover upon the first heaven according to *Phys.* VIII.

I find this comparison interesting in the current analogic framework. It is difficult to prove whether Bergson translated Aristotelian theology into psychology, but what we can see is that in both applications of the word “attraction” there is teleology and mimesis implied. The final cause of god upon the first heaven, or the whole supralunary world or, even, maybe, the entire cosmos is seen as imitative. As we know, in the context of DS the main idea is creation. But Bergson adds the idea of imitation. The paradox here would be that *for being creative one needs to imitate first*. This never appeared before in Bergson.

Attraction and creation are the authentic motors of history. It is necessarily a vision of history in which the genius have a key role. In Bergson the genius, like mutation in the realm of Life, introduces newness and the transgressive impulse. The subsequent attraction implies the general change in history, from epoch to epoch. Bergson bases this view in freedom and the personal models of exemplarity in everybody’s life.

There is also a negative or deflationary version of that analogy. As we saw above in the analogy d): Life can succeed or not. There are different trends in Life’s evolution. Some of them fall into unconsciousness or retrogression, as parasites do. In general, there are, according to Bergson, few successes in nature. In the end, automatism and repetition of the same form mean some sort of materiality. The greater is *homo sapiens*, because every human individual is not a repetition. Or, better, every human individual *shouldn’t* be a repetition.

Just as in history there is progress and retrogression, we could also find in us those psychical features. Although in general Bergson is a progressive philosopher, the whole of chapter IV of DS, “Final remarks: mechanics and mysticism”, is written under the fear of an imminent historical retrogression and faces the possibility of human extinction.⁴¹⁷ Hence, decay is an analogical value too. Immanent teleology is anchored not only to perfection but also to the lack of that presumed perfection, just like in the Aristotelian framework.⁴¹⁸ Our mind is

⁴¹⁵ And adds: “The Alexandrians, we think, do no more than follow this double indication when they speak of *procession* and *conversion*”. EC, p. 323.

⁴¹⁶ Bergson, Henri. *Histoire de l’idée de temps. Course au Collège de France 1903-1904*. PUF, Paris, 2016.

⁴¹⁷ DS, p. 317.

⁴¹⁸ See 2.1.b.

analogous to history because of its progress, its stagnancy, and also its retrogression. Genuine and negative versions of the analogical value are at work there.

3.2. Hierarchy and the problem of anthropocentrism

This section does not analyze a methodical element but still a *structural* one. This means that the issue I address here is not openly expressed in the analogical method but implied in it. As in the case of Aristotle,⁴¹⁹ it completes the teleological world-view. The issue to tackle now has to do with anthropological philosophy and it is part of the structure of this vision of nature called immanent teleology. Behind the five analogies we saw in 3.1 there is a philosophical anthropology at work, composed of a theory of knowledge and a theory of life.

In 2.1.c I nuanced Johnson's commentary on anthropocentrism. He states that anthropocentrism is not compatible with immanent teleology, although he proposes one axiological hierarchy, since some goals in nature (human goals) are more important than others. Johnson concludes that this later notion is more harmonic within the teleological paradigm. I proposed another term, clearer in its meaning: mitigated anthropocentrism. It is equally against absolute anthropocentrism and also against evolutionary relativism.

3.2 may complete Bergson's theory of life. In Bergson, the theory of evolution plays a definitive role in his theory of life, and, hence, in his mitigated evolutionary anthropocentrism. It is naturally far from Aristotle since he was alien to evolutionary thought. At the same time, following other scholars who have pointed out similarities between Aristotle's rich philosophy and other contemporary authors, I claim that there is some structural basis in common between the mitigated classic anthropocentrism and the mitigated evolutionary anthropocentrism. In any case, I come back to this question regarding global teleology in Chapter 4. Namely, this issue will be tackled in 4.2.

For Bergson humans *are* animals, but *special* animals. In his immanent teleological context, human beings play a special role. I argue that Bergson's view can also be called mitigated anthropocentrism, although in his model of nature there are more elements of anthropocentrism than in Aristotle. It is due precisely to his evolutionary position.

This is important for one reason. Some of the elements mentioned in 3.2.b are the ones that permit a vertical analogy. The unique features of human beings make possible the analogy between individuals (parts) and Life in evolution or history (whole).

3.2.a. Historical sum

In Bergson, the human can also be considered a sum of the rest of the biological realms. Human beings recapitulate the basic previous stages of life. EC.II is the main textual basis for this claim in Bergson. He distinguishes life in a scale of superiority. He is a hierarchical author, as I defended in the Introduction. There are different degrees of life, and each one presupposes the previous and adds a relative superiority. For Bergson plants are defined in terms of reserve of energy and torpor. These two vital tendencies may define the whole reign in general terms. Bergson talks about animals, in general, as a tendency toward locomotion

⁴¹⁹ See 2.1.c,

and instinct. He defines the human (who also can be examples of torpor and instinct) with some unique features: intelligence, freedom and intuition.

Although, in ontogeny, the Aristotelian man *recapitulates* the three degrees, there is not a historical perspective at stake. In the case of Bergson there is. This may mean that human beings traverse previous stages in the history of life. All these stages are to be understood regarding conservative teleology: survival, reproduction and well-being.

My thesis is that, in comparison with Aristotle, on the one hand, the evolutionary perspective of EC strengthens anthropocentrism, and on other, it mitigates it. In any case, Bergson's anthropocentrism is *still mitigated*. Bergson's world-view is a clear recognition of non-human goals in nature: that is why his works are full of animal and vegetative life.

Bergson's evolutionary perspective reinforces anthropocentrism, in comparison with Aristotle. He holds the evolutionary perspective and, as we will see in depth in 4.2, he does not get rid of the natural scale. The *historical perspective* implies that the scale has been erected progressively: from the lower to the higher level. This means that plants can be understood as "for the sake of animals", and animals "for the sake of humans" in a new sense which, to be sure, is alien to Aristotle. The most anthropocentric reading of Aristotle reads *Pol.I.8* literally,⁴²⁰ in the sense that plants or animals exist, *among other things, for the sake of being used* by humans, in terms of food, clothes or anything else. The anthropocentric reading of *Pol.I.8* presupposes a teleological reading of the natural scale, and the outcome is something similar to the Stoic passages that we read in 2.1.c.

Despite the fact that Aristotle's embryology seems to endorse recapitulation and one of his passages refers to a trophic scale, in Bergson it is still different. Evolutionary thought entails a great change of mind. The teleological reading of the scale in EC reinforces anthropocentrism in a new way, since it is not based only on hierarchy and use. That is, Bergson's scale is not a trophic or utilitarian scale, although it does not exclude it: regardless of their use, in Bergson plants and animals exist for the sake of the next level of the scale. The vegetative realm and the animal realm are for the sake of freedom and mankind *not* in terms of use (although, again, it does not exclude it), but *in terms of constitution*. Recapitulation in Aristotle traverses different realms of living beings, but it is *not* representative of a chronology: natural history, in its successive stages. I will come back to my reading of EC.II in 4.2.b but for our current purpose we can say that humans do not just sum up nature, they recapitulate the previous basic forms of life.

It seems in EC that he accepts the recapitulation theory in evolution. At least, Bergson presents it as in the first chapter as very probable. He does not enter much into it, so it is uncertain what his position would be regarding the most prominent theories of recapitulation at that moment. François warns us to disregard this as one part of Spencerian evolutionism: it would lead to the idea of evolution as uni-linearity, and not a branching tree (see 4.2.b).⁴²¹ Recapitulation in Bergson may mean something peculiar to his philosophy. Every stage (vegetative/animal/human) may be understood as different in kind, and not in degree. I think this it is perfectly possible to make room for recapitulation in embryology in his framework. As he puts it, it is a result of science. It is nothing that he has deduced, but taken from the evolutionary biological investigations:

⁴²⁰ See Sedley and Owens in 2.2.b. "Ecology: order among species", around the second passage.

⁴²¹ François, Arnaud. "Ce que Bergson entend par 'monisme'. Bergson et Haeckel". Lire Bergson, PUF, 2011.

“It [observation] shows that up to a certain period in its development the embryo of the bird is hardly distinguishable from that of the reptile, and that the individual develops, throughout the embryonic life in general, a series of transformations comparable to those through which, according to the theory of evolution, one species passes into another. A single cell, the result of the combination of two cells, male and female, accomplishes this work by dividing. Every day, before our eyes, the highest forms of life are springing from a very elementary form. Experience, then, shows that the most complex has been able to issue from the most simple by way of evolution. Now, has it arisen so, as a matter of fact?”⁴²²

In Bergson, the highest forms are human forms and human beings reproduce part of the previous history of life. They are also the most recent product of it. He says that, according to his teleological understanding of Life (the best, ontologically speaking, comes chronologically last): “Now man is probably the latest comer of the vertebrates”.⁴²³ All this does not imply that the previous stages exist only for the sake of humans (that would be falling into anthropocentrism). I repeat that for teleological models like Bergson’s *every being has its own goal from the moment it is alive*.

But there are additional reasons for noticing this mitigation of anthropocentrism. I count two. I develop them in detail in 4.2.b, so I will merely mention them here. Divergence and contingency balance the possible anthropocentrism involved in the evolutionary teleological reading of the natural scale. Apart from the intrinsic pluralism of teleology, Bergson holds the branching pattern of chapter 4 of *The origin of species*, which emphasizes this pluralism. Life is developed in many different divergent tendencies. Although, as we saw, Bergson finds that one of these branches is the central one that can coexist with the plural tendencies of Life. Furthermore, there is his idea of contingency. It comes from his own philosophical assumptions. Bergson put contingency at the center of his conception of evolution. This means that although humans relatively fulfill nature’s need for indetermination, the concrete process of evolution (which includes the vegetative, the animal, and the human form) is unpredictable. It is an outcome of contingency. This mitigates Bergson’s anthropocentrism, since on hand Bergson understands Life apart from the global tendency that leads to perfection. Furthermore, the form human is central, especially and overall, because of its freedom. There is, then, a great deal of evolutionary contingency in human beings. With Aristotelian words, we could say that only one specific part of the human’s being is *divine*.

Also, it is true that there are general tendencies. Among this tendencies Bergson defines the most important ones. Among these is freedom, which is the one that we should notice, since it is the goal of nature. The rest, like the human form, is contingent. It also can be overcome by nature.

⁴²² EC, p. 23-24.

⁴²³ EC, p. 134. He adds a footnote: “This point is disputed by M. René Quinton, who regards the carnivorous and ruminant mammals, as well as certain birds, as subsequent to man (R. Quinton, *L’Eau de mer milieu organique*, Paris, 1904, p. 435). We may say here that our general conclusions, although very different from M. Quinton’s, are not irreconcilable with them; for if evolution has really been such as we represent it, the vertebrates must have made an effort to maintain themselves in the most favorable conditions of activity—the very conditions, indeed, which life had chosen in the beginning”.

3.2.b Addition

Bergson also bestows upon human beings a number of unique features. In the monograph on Bergson's anthropology, N. Kisukidi states that "the specificity of the human being [is to be found] based on its creative activities and not based on a determination of the essence".⁴²⁴ I am not so sure whether one should make this distinction between creative activities and essence. In the end, for Bergson, humans are *essentially creative*, even when being free is so difficult, occasional and rare. Anyway, my aim here is to show that Bergson considers human beings not just a part of nature but the *best* part of nature. I am not sure what Kisukidi means with "determination of the essence", but for Bergson, the human's spiritual superiority is necessarily linked to the "human type". It is expressed by human culture and even human physiology (the brain and the hand). Bergson states that, according to his own standards of perfection, humans are *not best in degree, but in kind*.⁴²⁵ And that is because they are essentially free. Bergson writes:

"...among conscious beings themselves, man comes to occupy a privileged place. Between him and the animals the difference is *no longer one of degree, but of kind*".⁴²⁶

Although Bergson is not fond of talking about forms or essence, I would say that this remark is not to be underestimated. Note that the vegetative, animal, and human faculties are all different versions of attention to life or maturity. They are all conservative teleology. With regard to the concept of "addition", we can state that human beings have supplementary powers that go beyond the previous boundaries. As I will show, humans are part of transgressive teleology.

The sharp difference between mankind was implicit in MM, it becomes more explicit in EC and is re-affirmed later in DS, with some religious echoes. I will mention now EC and DS, and some short texts in between. I divide human uniqueness into a twofold view: differences *in nature* and differences *in history*. The first concerns human nature as such, and the second aspect stresses human successes in the past. The main aspect of human uniqueness is related to freedom, invention, intuition and, also, moral charity. These are spiritual faculties of human nature, and they are all linked to the first of them. Not surprisingly, their systematic relation is not clarified at all in Bergson's works, but they are all related. The capacity to grasp our own duration, to fear death, and to have a social life are less stressed by Bergson in his essays.

The second aspect is more relative and contingent than the first. In Bergson's view, human beings are the newest species on earth among the vertebrates, and also are the best adapted to the world, since they are a success in terms of dominion. At some points of Bergson's discourse, it seems that it is a shared uniqueness, since also the Hymenoptera have reached the same apex of adaptive success. Historically, human society has advanced thanks to special people. These special people are the last anthropocentric aspect I study. The geniuses are the most perfect social individuals among human beings. Thus, Bergson makes a sharp distinction, in terms of morals, between regular people, on the one hand, and special, gifted individuals, charismatic, spiritual heroes, and creators, on the other. The latter group has

⁴²⁴ Kisukidi, Nadia. *Bergson ou l'humanité créatrice*, CNRS, Paris, 2013, p. 73, my translation.

⁴²⁵ See Chapter 4.

⁴²⁶ EC, p. 182, my italics.

changed human history, and they can be identified because their trace can be found in cultures.

- Difference in kind

- **Creation, invention, intelligence, brain:**

As we saw, the difference between humans is a difference of kind.⁴²⁷ It is time to see why. For Bergson, human beings are free and animals are merely spontaneous. Human beings re-create the world; they add unforeseeable newness to it. As I said, I will lay out some aspects of this very same thing. Freedom in terms of creation, technical invention and intuition are unique to human beings. Bergson started in DI to focus on freedom. In MM, along with freedom again, there appeared for the first time the notion of intuition, which became central in IM. The idea of invention came in EC, above all, and is certainly important in DS. In DS.III Bergson emphasized the idea of contemplation but, especially, the idea of Christian charity. The comparison between human beings' faculties and the rest of nature can be found in EC, when the author directly tackles the idea of the *place of humans in the cosmos*.

We can now address the central idea. In Bergson creativeness is understood as freedom. As I said, freedom is probably the core question in Bergson's philosophy. Bergson devotes the third chapter of his first book, DI, to this question. This also appears in MM (see the "Conclusion", for instance). Human features such as language, society or the great capacity of the brain are mere expressions of human freedom. Human freedom is different from animal spontaneity not in terms of degree, but in terms of kind or nature. He states this on different occasions in EC, and it is the central idea of his mitigated anthropocentrism. Bergson repeats this idea in the following passage:

"Doubtless he owes this to the superiority of his brain, which enables him to build an unlimited number of motor mechanisms, to oppose new habits to the old ones unceasingly, and, by dividing automatism against itself, to rule it. He owes it to his language, which furnishes consciousness with an immaterial body in which to incarnate itself and thus exempts it from dwelling exclusively on material bodies, whose flux would soon drag it along and finally swallow it up. He owes it to social life, which stores and preserves efforts as language stores thought, fixes thereby a mean level to which individuals must raise themselves at the outset, and by this initial stimulation prevents the average man from slumbering and drives the superior man to mount, still higher. The superior man's destiny is in the end to evolve, in the sense of progress. *But our brain, our society, and our language* are only the external and various *signs* of one and the same *internal superiority*. They tell, each after its manner, the *unique, exceptional success which life has won at a given moment of its evolution*. They express the *difference of kind, and not only of degree, which separates man from the rest of the animal world*".⁴²⁸

The "internal superiority" is related to freedom:

"Radical therefore, also, is the difference between animal consciousness, even the most intelligent, and human consciousness. For consciousness corresponds exactly to the living being's power of choice; it is coextensive with the fringe of possible action that surrounds the real action: consciousness is synonymous with invention and with freedom. Now, in the animal, invention is never anything but a variation on the theme of routine. Shut up in the habits of the species, it succeeds, no doubt, in enlarging them by its individual initiative; but it escapes automatism only for

⁴²⁷ EC, p. 182, my italics.

⁴²⁸ EC, p. 264-265, my italics.

an instant, for just the time to create a new automatism. The gates of its prison close as soon as they are opened; by pulling at its chain it succeeds only in stretching it. With man, consciousness breaks the chain. In man, and in man alone, it sets itself free”.⁴²⁹

Later on, in CV, he bestows human beings again with uniqueness: “Automatism and repetition, which prevail everywhere except in man”.⁴³⁰ If “consciousness seems proportionate to the living being's power of choice”,⁴³¹ in human beings this proportion is new. As we saw, “possible action” is identified with “freedom” and equally with “invention”. As I said, they are linked. Bergson says:

“As to invention properly so called, which is, however, the point of departure of industry itself, our intellect does not succeed in grasping it in its *up springing*, that is to say, in its indivisibility, nor in its *fervor*, that is to say, in its creativeness. Explaining it always consists in resolving it, the unforeseeable and new, into elements old or known, arranged in a different order”.⁴³²

Freedom, invention and intuition are concepts and human features that refer to each other. Namely, in my view, the unpredictable capacity for free choice is the basis for understanding the two others. Invention emphasizes the positive or progressive power of intelligence led by creativity. Bergson’s account of intelligence is here absolutely positive. Intelligence and the brain express human’s spiritual superiority, as I will show. This can be surprising for those who read Bergson in terms of irrationalism and pure spiritualism. Along with freedom and invention there is intuition. The latter implies freedom and appears to refer to a certain kind of contemplation and self-disinterested introspection. It nuances the Bergsonian definition of man as pragmatic *homo faber*. It adds another dimension to our nature: contemplation.

“To what date is it agreed to ascribe the appearance of man on the earth? To the period when the first weapons, the first tools, were made”.⁴³³ The human being uses intelligence for practical and utilitarian purposes: adaptation and dominion. Bergson proposes the name *homo faber*, rather than *homo sapiens*,⁴³⁴ because he wants to stress the practical capacity of human beings. Intelligence is naturally linked with invention,⁴³⁵ which in human beings is important, since it expresses human creativeness. The history of human freedom is, among other things, the history of invention: progress.⁴³⁶

Thanks to the creative use of our intelligence, human beings have changed throughout the centuries. The craft or the artefact is the sign of the *homo faber*. I think that the anti-intellectual view of Bergson is misguided. But whilst the products of intelligence change and progress, it means that intelligence is the very way of creativeness towards new “horizons”:

“Fabricating consists in shaping matter, in making it supple and in bending it, in converting it into an instrument in order to become master of it. It is this *mastery* that profits humanity, much more even than the material result of the invention itself. Though we derive an immediate advantage from the thing made, as an intelligent animal might do, and though this advantage be all the inventor sought, it is a slight matter compared with the new ideas and new feelings that the invention may give rise to in

⁴²⁹ EC, pp. 263-264.

⁴³⁰ ES, p. 31.

⁴³¹ EC, p. 179.

⁴³² EC, p. 164.

⁴³³ EC, p. 137.

⁴³⁴ EC, p. 139.

⁴³⁵ EC, p. 138.

⁴³⁶ See EC, p. 138.

every direction, as if the essential part of the effect were to raise us above ourselves and enlarge our horizon".⁴³⁷

Regarding human essential perfection or superiority in kind, it is important to notice that, along with language and society, the human body, and specifically the brain, is an *expression* of this sharp difference. Bergson states that: "The difference [between the human brain and that of other animals] at first appears to be only a difference of size and complexity. But, judging by function, there must be something else besides".⁴³⁸ It's then not a difference of complexity (degree), but "something besides", that is, "kind": "A difference of the same kind, we think, would be found between the brain of an animal and the human brain".⁴³⁹

It is important to note the place of the human brain in Bergson's discourse regarding freedom and invention, and not intuition, since the human brain is an "essential" element of the human body. As Kisukidi rightly says, human creativeness is the center of Bergson's discourse. But it is expressed also in concrete organs, like the brain. It means that human superiority is expressed also in terms of the body, not only in terms of actions, etc.

The human brain is different from the rest of nature: it is the organ of human agency and invention. It is not, again, a difference in degree, but a difference in kind. Only after reading MM and ES, this idea of difference regarding the brain could be expressed, since there he attacks the philosophical overemphasis of the value of this organ among the positivist physiologists of the late 19th century. Bergson thought throughout his life that consciousness should not be reduced to cerebral matter. In his view, this idea of material consciousness comes from an interpretation of modern metaphysics, and its roots are to be found in Descartes. In short, Bergson does not say that the human soul is *in* the brain or is *part of* the brain, quite the opposite. *But* he states clearly in MM and in EC that the brain is an *expression* of human consciousness.⁴⁴⁰

In EC, Bergson compares the brain of the human and the brain of an ape. Between both there is a difference comparable to the notion of "limited" and the notion of "unlimited":

"The consciousness of a living being, as we have tried to prove elsewhere, is inseparable from its brain in the sense in which a sharp knife is inseparable from its edge: the brain is the sharp edge by which consciousness cuts into the compact tissue of events, but the brain is no more coextensive with consciousness than the edge is with the knife. Thus, from the fact that two brains, like that of the ape and that of the man, are very much alike, we cannot conclude that the corresponding consciousnesses are comparable or commensurable.

But the two brains may perhaps be less alike than we suppose. How can we help being struck by the fact that, while man is capable of learning any sort of exercise, of constructing any sort of object, in short of acquiring any kind of motor habit whatsoever, the faculty of combining new movements is strictly limited in the best-endowed animal, even in the ape? The cerebral characteristic of man is

⁴³⁷ EC, p. 183.

⁴³⁸ EC, p. 183.

⁴³⁹ EC, p. 184.

⁴⁴⁰ The purely spiritualist reading of Bergson would be misleading. He defends a strong idea of creativeness, unique to humans, but at the same idea he holds a physiological position, focused on the development of the central nervous system along biological successions. I recall Bergson's remark regarding this matter in EC: "Philosophy introduces us thus into the spiritual life. And it shows us at the same time the relation of the life of the spirit to that of the body. The great error of the doctrines on the spirit has been the idea that by isolating the spiritual life from all the rest, by suspending it in space as high as possible above the earth, they were placing it beyond attack, as if they were not thereby simply exposing it to be taken as an effect of mirage!" EC, p. 268.

there. The human brain is made, like every brain, to set up motor mechanisms and to enable us to choose among them, at any instant, the one we shall put in motion by the pull of a trigger. But it differs from other brains in this, that the number of mechanisms it can set up, and consequently the choice that it gives as to which among them shall be released, is unlimited. *Now, from the limited to the unlimited there is all the distance between the closed and the open. It is not a difference of degree, but of kind*".⁴⁴¹

As we have already seen, freedom is the main aspect of this anthropology. The uniqueness of human beings regarding this question is also the center of DS. While in EC Bergson emphasizes human creativity by discussing technical inventions and the use of metaphor by the artist, in DS the scope is much broader: progress which leads to the threats of technology in 20th century.⁴⁴²

- **Intuition:**

Intuition appears for the first time in Bergson in MM.IV and is used in a more technical way in IM. It also appears in the last section of EC.II, where it is related with the animal faculty of sympathy. We also have it in the "Introduction" of PM. In PM there is also one essay called "The philosophical intuition" which contains an approach to the history of philosophy, focused on Berkeley and Spinoza. In LR.III the philosopher relates the knowledge of animals (wolves) to aesthetic understanding. I think the latter is a precedent of the comparison sympathy/intuition in EC.II. However, the role and importance of the famous term "intuition" in Bergson is controversial and my task here is not to disentangle the doctrinal uncertainties that it raises. My only aim for the moment is to show that Bergson considers intuition a higher-order faculty that is *unique* to human beings.

In the first important account of the notion of intuition, in IM, Bergson states that it "attains the absolute".⁴⁴³ Since perfection is, for Bergson, absolute,⁴⁴⁴ one can say that intuition is more perfect than intellect and analysis, as he does. We call intuition here the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of "an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it".⁴⁴⁵ In the context of IM the main object of intuition is the self, although Bergson cryptically suggests an expansion. He proposes an attempt to go beyond the human state by using intuition, which I interpreted in 3.1. In this context, with the faculty of the intellect (which uses analysis and symbols) this very operation of self-intuition and subsequent expansion is simply impossible.

With this short background in mind we can now go further. At some point in Chapter 2 of EC, it seems that the intelligence of humans and the instincts of Hymenoptera are equally far from intuition. Instinct grasps things, intelligence grasps relations.⁴⁴⁶ Bergson claims that it is thanks to intuition that instinct can become "disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely".⁴⁴⁷ Instinct is sympathy,⁴⁴⁸ which is

⁴⁴¹ EC, p. 263, italics are mine. Also, Bergson compares a dog brain and a human brain in EC, p. 180.

⁴⁴² DS, p. 304.

⁴⁴³ PM, p. 226.

⁴⁴⁴ PM, p. 118.

⁴⁴⁵ PM, p. 189.

⁴⁴⁶ EC, p. 148. It is interesting to note that in EC.IV, the historical account, the Greek intelligence grasps "ideas", and only the modern intelligence grasps "relations".

⁴⁴⁷ EC, p. 176.

also linked to animals. When Bergson talks about intuition, he says: "... it is to the very inwardness of life that *intuition* leads us—by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely:

"That an effort of this kind is not impossible, is proved by the existence in man of an aesthetic faculty along with normal perception. Our eye perceives the features of the living being, merely as assembled, not as mutually organized. The intention of life, the simple movement that runs through the lines, that binds them together and gives them significance, escapes it. This intention is just what the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model. It is true that this aesthetic intuition, like external perception, only attains the individual. But we can conceive an inquiry turned in the same direction as art, which would take life *in general* for its object, just as physical science, in following to the end the direction pointed out by external perception, prolongs the individual facts into general laws".⁴⁴⁹

As we can see, Bergsonian intuition is a non-utilitarian and disinterested faculty. I understand Bergson's intuition as a "free science" or wisdom. It implies the use of a contemplative faculty. There is nothing of irrationality here. This feature is emphasized in EC.II, at the end of the chapter, when the author talks about the Newcomen engines.⁴⁵⁰ These machines represent the capacity of human beings to emancipate themselves from the practical necessities and start to contemplate. But for Bergson, intuition or contemplation is linked to self-consciousness and, moreover, to aesthetics. Both creativity and intuition, practical activity and contemplation, are the two different but related perfect faculties of mankind in EC.

My sole aim here is to show that intelligence and instinct are not *situated equally* for Bergson, since *only* intellectual beings can experience intuition. Bergson considers that intuition implies a wide range of spiritual operations, like grasping the self, aesthetics, philosophical systems and life in general: it seems also that the first self-understanding is the key and basis for the rest.⁴⁵¹

The basis of intuition is self-apprehension: "In short, pure change, real duration, is a thing spiritual or impregnated with spirituality. Intuition is what attains the spirit, duration, pure change".⁴⁵²

In his talk "On personality", the contemplation of the self, or duration as a flux or continuum, is *unique* to human beings. Although the superior animals (he mentions the ape, the elephant and the dog) can have consciousness of themselves, in the end they just cannot experience the continuum of the inner life.⁴⁵³ To this extent, if I am not wrong, intuition is not possible for animals or instinctive beings. Moreover, we have seen in the text the capacity for contemplative and disinterested activities as well as aesthetic faculties. Bergson has never affirmed that aesthetics can be found among the animal interests. Animals are only interested in life.

⁴⁴⁸ EC, p. 176.

⁴⁴⁹ EC, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁵⁰ EC, p. 184.

⁴⁵¹ "The intuition we refer to then bears above all upon internal duration. It grasps a succession which is not juxtaposition, a growth from within, the uninterrupted prolongation of the past into a present which is already blending into the future. It is the direct vision of the mind by the mind" "Intro.II" in ES, p. 34.

⁴⁵² "Intro.II", in PM, p. 36.

⁴⁵³ Bergson, Henri. *Écrits philosophiques*. Op. cit., pp. 520-521.

The irrationalist conception of intuition, found for instance in his early 20th century readers like Bertrand Russell, is not based on the texts. Bergson considers his doctrine “a philosophy that attempts to reabsorb intellect in intuition” and not viceversa.⁴⁵⁴ Hence, intuition, like freedom and invention, is unique to human beings. These are positive features and entail superiority, human superiority *in kind*. Like in Aristotle,⁴⁵⁵ there is ambivalence in humans in Bergson: naturally, they are the best in nature, but they can also be the worst. I want to focus on one case of ambivalence and human fragility in Bergson: the human’s unique tendency toward depression when facing the idea of death. This is balanced by society: it has the power of calming down the depressive force of that idea. For Bergson, as for Aristotle, humans are social animals.⁴⁵⁶

- Difference in history

- **Domination of the world**

As we have seen in section 3.2.a. “Sum”, human beings recapitulate the world of nature in historical terms. Bergson’s progressive and teleological vision of evolution leads to the idea that the most complete beings on earth should be the latest. “... man is probably the latest comer of the vertebrates; and in the insect series no species is later than the Hymenoptera, unless it be the lepidoptera, which are probably degenerates, living parasitically on flowering plants”.⁴⁵⁷ His teleological assumption implies that the ontologically prior is probably the chronologically posterior. There is another progressive criterion, apart from the order in time: evolutionary success in terms of dominion and adaptation.

While the previous historical hypothesis would be rejected nowadays, the dominion criterion is still valid for evolutionary thought. It is caused by the social essence of human nature. Only the social animals have dominated the world: the hymenopterans and human beings. In the case of human beings, it is difficult to pin down whether we are at the level of conservative teleology or transgressive teleology. On the one hand, it involves the conservation of the human being regarding one already given environment. On the other hand, human success involves invention, which is caused by the use of intelligence led by creativeness, the spirit of transgression. It is surely a mixture of both tendencies, but the adaptive, conservative, perfective tendency prevails. In the end, dominion is always for the sake of adaptation within one fixed already given environment.

As Bergson says:

“It is unquestionable, for example, that *success* is the most general criterion of superiority, the two terms being, up to a certain point, synonymous. By success must be understood, so far as the living being is concerned, an aptitude to develop in the most diverse environments, through the greatest possible variety of obstacles, so as to cover the widest possible extent of ground. A species which claims the entire earth for its domain is truly a dominating and consequently superior species. Such is the human species, which represents the culminating point of the evolution of the vertebrates. But

⁴⁵⁴ EC, p. 270.

⁴⁵⁵ See 2.1.c.

⁴⁵⁶ DS, p. 130, see pp. 129-134.

⁴⁵⁷ EC, p. 134.

such also are, in the series of the articulate, the insects and in particular certain hymenoptera. It has been said of the ants that, as man is lord of the soil, they are lords of the sub-soil”.⁴⁵⁸

Up to this point, we see that we are facing a *shared* exclusivity. In terms of success, the species of the *homo sapiens* (or *homo faber*) and the order of the insect Hymenoptera are the apex of nature. Human intelligence and the insect’s instinct are compared in EC.II, but this does not mean that, as Bertrand Russell said, Bergson is defending the view that humans ought to live according to animal instinct. Bergson is saying that the exclusively human faculty called intuition has something of the instinct of the “perfect insect”, namely, the unmediation. This idea appears also regarding aesthetics in LR.III.

Turning back to the idea of the success of these two versions of social life in nature, in humans and insects, which remains at stake in his next long essay,⁴⁵⁹ it has to be said that there is shared success. It is success in terms of dominion. Anyway, the great dominion over the world is meant to be uniquely human later in DS. There the biological approach becomes more spiritual and more cultural, focused on morals, politics and technology. As I argue in 4, the reduction of all of Life to two goals, in EC, tries to avoid an excessive anthropocentric approach. It seems to me to be a certain complex reservation concerning his own view or maybe a provocative suggestion. Thus, the success criterion implies the best adaptation to the greatest number of different environments. The real *télos* of nature is better indetermination. Human beings are both successful (adapted to every territory) and undetermined (which implies, we know, invention, freedom and intuition). Again, human beings are the only success in terms of indetermination. I think he is talking about this when he says: “The creative effort progressed successfully *only* along that line of evolution which ended in man”.⁴⁶⁰

In DS, human invention (technology) appears as a *non-shared* position, regarding success and dominion.

But the midpoint between the *shared* conception of success and the *non-shared* one is CV. There he recovers the divergent directions of Life. Hymenoptera and man are the culminating points of evolution, regarding instinct and intelligence, respectively. Both lines of culmination reach the social life. Bergson says: “The societies of ants and bees are admirably disciplined and united, but fixed in an invariable routine. If the individual is forgotten in the society, the society on its part also has forgotten its destination”,⁴⁶¹ he says. There is no change forward “to a greater social efficiency and a completer individual freedom”. And he adds, in a deeply teleological way: “Human societies, *alone*, have kept full in view both the ends to be attained”.⁴⁶²

- **Genius as evolutionary goal of human societies:**

Finally, I want to refer to a major human historical peculiarity. In the context of the human societies there are for Bergson two kinds of individuals. There is the regular individual and the genius. I have talked about the analogy of the artistic genius in 3.1.d. The artistic analogy is so important for Bergson as a causal model. In the last quoted text, Bergson says about

⁴⁵⁸ EC, pp. 133-134.

⁴⁵⁹ DS, p. 116.

⁴⁶⁰ EC, p. 209, italics are mine.

⁴⁶¹ CV, in ES, p. 33.

⁴⁶² CV, in ES, p. 33.

artists that “richness and individuality of forms do indeed indicate an expansion of life”,⁴⁶³ but “the standpoint of the moralist is higher”.⁴⁶⁴

As we have seen, mankind is *almost* unique in terms of adaptation. Humans can share their dominion with other species, but in terms of freedom the uniqueness is indisputable. Freedom, intuition and invention are part of humanity. Now we can take a step forward. With human artists and, moreover, moralists, Life and nature reach the very apex. More or less like the contemplator of *EN.X. 7-8* in Aristotle. That is the maximum of affirmation of nature.⁴⁶⁵

The spiritual genius or moral creator fulfills the potentiality of nature in a totally new and unique way, like the philosopher in Aristotle, according to *NE.X. 7-8*.

The next passage will convince us about the absolute uniqueness of mankind in nature and, at the same time, about the uniqueness of the genius among humans:

“In man alone, especially among the best of mankind, the vital movement pursues its way without hindrance, thrusting through that work of art, the human body, which it has created on its way, the creative current of the moral life. Man, called on at every moment to lean on the totality of his past in order to bring his weight to bear more effectively on the future, is the great success of life. But it is the moral man creator who is a creator in the highest degree, -the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and, itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity. The men of moral grandeur, particularly those whose inventive and simple heroism has opened new paths to virtue, are revealers of metaphysical truth. Although they are the culminating point of evolution, yet they are nearest the source and they enable us to perceive the impulsion which comes from the deep”.⁴⁶⁶

Invention and freedom are unique to human beings, in comparison with singular animals. Humans have freedom in a new qualitative dimension. The human brain, along with human language and human progress, are expressions of it. Intuition has elements in common with instinct, but it is still a human faculty. Intuition implies self-consciousness, and this is unique to human beings. Human beings are also fragile and can experience depression by thinking about their moral nature. The human is ambivalent, maybe fragile, but in society it is the most perfect among the rest of beings of nature. In terms of adaptive success or dominion and of newness, sometimes Bergson seems to give to humans a shared uniqueness with Hymenoptera. Nevertheless, in general terms human beings *alone* are the great success in creation. “Success” can be interpreted in terms of adaptation (success in relation to different environments) and, more importantly, in terms of spirit (success in relation to the past stages in the world history, regarding freedom). At last, we have seen that the human genius is higher in this scale than the regular human, since the aforementioned faculties are in their case more developed.

In this sense, it can be said that for Bergson the human genius is the most perfect being. This is similar in the other model of immanent teleology that we know, the classic one. Only philosophers can establish analogies between them and god, for instance.

⁴⁶³ CV, in ES, p. 31.

⁴⁶⁴ CV, in ES, p. 31.

⁴⁶⁵ For human as *affirmation of nature* in Aristotle see Rémi Brague in 2.1.c.

⁴⁶⁶ CV in ES, p. 32.

Bergson is a biomorphic author, and thinks that human beings are part of nature. Natural entities, like plants, animals and humans have irreducible goals. But human beings are not *mere* living beings. They live, as the others, but they (i) recapitulate the scale, and are also different in kind because of (ii) unique faculties. In my reading this implies a mitigated anthropocentrism, based on evolutionary theories of the epoch. The great difference with Aristotle is the evolutionary framework. That is because, in philosophical terms, evolution does not mitigate the anthropocentric assumptions, but, on the contrary, it strengthens the anthropocentric perspective.

Bergson's is not, however, an absolute anthropocentrism, because of his defense of biomorphism. First of all, Bergson is a defender of immanent teleology, and this implies that every being has its own perfection. Every living being can be conceived as a tendency toward action. This aspect of its existence is elemental and irreducible. As we know, from immanent teleology unfolds recognition of an innate value in every being. This is the basis for horizontal analogies and individual teleology.

This can be seen in Bergson also from a global view. As I said, Life tends in many directions. Some of them are absolutely deviated from the one that Bergson finds more important. Bergson combines the Darwinian "tree of life" branching pattern with the Aristotelian natural scale. Both coexist in his view. There is no solid basis for Pearson's statement: "On Bergson's model no dominant tendency within evolution can be identified"⁴⁶⁷. There are many tendencies in evolution, that is true, but following certain criteria above we can select and value specially the particular lineage that leads to human beings. Without doing this EC would be difficult to understand. That is because that reading tends to see a tension between two Bergsons: on the one hand, there is pluralism. On the other, there is "residual anthropocentrism". From the perspective of immanent teleology and mitigated anthropocentrism that is not a problem. Both are compatible. I address again the topic of the place of the human being in the cosmos in 4.2.b, applied to the phenomenon of evolution.

We have seen the main features of Bergson's human and its place in the cosmos. On the one hand, the human is a summary of different faculties in the living nature. The unavoidable evolutionary perspective of the beginning of the XX century puts this summary in historical terms. The natural scale, which is static and ahistorical in ancient thought, becomes chronological. To this extent, human beings represent the previous stages of natural history. I have pointed out the additional features of humanity in Bergson. The most remarkable ones are included in the section "Difference in kind", since it addresses specifically human faculties, all related with freedom, creativity and intuition. "Difference in history" can be considered an addendum of the previous, since there I have given the account of the specificity of human history, given its unique natural capacities. Human history is only an outcome of human nature.

Bergson's entire conception of human beings, their superiority and uniqueness, is mitigated by his conception of nature in general. I have addressed the most important *mitigating* features in Bergson, but there is still one more to examine in detail: evolution is unpredictable and, thus, human beings and their physiology and habits were not pre-designed in any sort of providential plan. The vegetative, animal, and human form are, to a certain extent, contingent. Freedom, and not humanity as such, occupies the central place in Bergson's

⁴⁶⁷Pearson, Keith-Ansell. *Philosophy and the adventure of the virtual. Bergson and the time of life*. Op. cit., p. 81.

worldview. Bergson's global teleology combines what I called primary teleology, for regular events, and secondary teleology, for contingent events, as I will clarify in the next structural chapter.

3.3. The temporal dimension of teleology. Regularity and irregularity

In general terms, we have seen that the first analogy, between one soul and one insect, is horizontal and conservative. The second analogy, the vertical one, is transgressive. Conservative teleology is conceptually linked to the classic developmental teleology, where the beneficiary is individual and concrete, and its goal is to persevere in being, in terms of the individual or the species.

On the other hand, transgressive teleology is conceptually linked to the global teleology of contribution, since the individual is seen as a part of something bigger. But here there is neither an eternal cosmos nor a god inspiring all the perfections, but one compound entity called Life or *élan*. The gap between the teleology of contribution in Aristotle and Bergson's version is considerable since in the first case it means eternity, while in the second, contribution means progress, and implies a growth of freedom.

One rather illustrative example is found in how Bergson addresses the "law" of biology. When Bergson talks in MM about a "fundamental law of life",⁴⁶⁸ it is implied that it is at work any time we conceive living beings. Although the term "law" is absent in Greek natural philosophy, Bergson's conception of individual teleology in MM fits with primary teleology, as we saw in 2.1.d. But in his later work DS the temporal perspective of Life is different. See the meaning of the term "law" here:

"We do not believe in the fatality of history. There is no obstacle which cannot be broken down by wills sufficiently keyed up, if they deal with it in time. There is thus no unescapable *historical law*. But there are biological laws; and the human societies, in so far as they are partly willed by nature, pertain to biology on this particular point. If the evolution of the organized world takes place according to certain laws, I mean by virtue of certain forces, it is impossible that the psychological evolution of individual and social man should entirely renounce these habits of life. Now we have shown elsewhere that the essence of a *vital tendency* is to develop fan-wise, creating, by the mere fact of its growth, divergent directions, each of which will receive a certain portion of the impetus. We added that there was nothing mysterious about *this law*".⁴⁶⁹

The biological laws, along with the fundamental law of life, make the living survive, reproduce and maybe also be well. There are no historical laws, since habits are contingent. Furthermore, there is one tendency, also called a law. It is historical, since it works in time. But he may avoid fatalism. Between the fundamental law of life in MM and the tendency-law, there is a difference with respect to the temporal dimension.

3.3.a. Primary teleology: regularity or perfectiveness for the most of the time

As we saw, regularity is part of the argument of teleology in Aristotle. Nature regularly tends toward the best. The embryo, for instance, tends regularly toward the complete figure, the

⁴⁶⁸MM, p. 150.

⁴⁶⁹DS, p. 293-294.

growth of the teeth tends regularly toward a good development so that one can chew and bite correctly, and the spider regularly works quite sophisticatedly on its web for the sake of nourishment and survival. The regular succession of the seasons due to the sun is, ultimately, based on teleology, since it is the consequence of the regular movements of the heavens, by the perfective attraction to god, the regular aim of heavenly bodies. According to Aristotle, then, regularly, every being tends to fulfill its potency, just as humans tend to be happy during their lifetime. Regarding the notion of contribution in Aristotle, it is exactly the same. That is, everything tends toward its completeness for the sake of a general arrangement. Regularly there is reproduction, for the species are eternal. And regularly everything occupies its range in the best way. In the infralunary world everything happens *aei* or *hos epi tò poly*. Moreover, the heavenly supralunary matters happen always.

For Bergson there is a regular fulfillment in nature and society, and as we know he uses neither the concept of form nor that of *éidos*. The same goes with the argument of teleology as happening “always” or the “most of the time”. But regarding the latter, regularity is certainly *implicitly used* in his account. Bergson talks as if it had happened always. It is, so to say, a relative *always*. The basic claim here is that Bergson doesn’t use a historical paradigm regarding this very kind of teleology.

Bergson deals with this kind of regularity in MM and the articles on mind and body in ES (like “The soul and the body”, “Dreams” or “Brain and thought”), in LR, in the pages of EC regarding adaptation, and in DS.II regarding closed society.

Regularly or for most of the time the body tries to be adapted to its environment, for the sake of something good or in order to avoid something bad. Regularly, the embryo continues the life of the past in the future for the sake of maturity. Regularly, society reacts in a defensive way regarding dissolvent powers, such as egoism, fear of death or absurdity or vanity, for the sake of its conservation. For instance, in his talk on “Dreams” he says that wakefulness is “adaptation and choice”, “willing and striving” and that being asleep is “to be disinterested”.⁴⁷⁰ Wakefulness is then a part of the so-called attention to life, which understands life in terms of functions: being and well-being. And, again, this happens always. When he addresses in MM “fundamental law of life”⁴⁷¹ the regularity is clearly implied.

Thus, the phenomena that Bergson is describing until now, in this section 2.3.a, are regular events. This doesn’t mean that there is some sort of eternity implied here. We already know that Bergson believed that there is not such an everlasting and permanent reality.⁴⁷² But *his approach* is that of regularity. It is a relative regularity. Since we are talking about regular features, the classic approach does not vary: *it happens that living things act always or most of the time for the sake of being or being in the best way possible*.

I have identified regularity with individual conservative teleology, but there is something important to add. In a complex system such as Bergson’s there are different aspects that are difficult to pin down. In Bergson’s global transgressive teleology, there is, certainly, one fixed property. That is, natural historical events like the plant or human form, or historical ones like the formation of new trends of the spirit, are an outcome of contingency.

⁴⁷⁰ “Dreams” in ES, pp. 125-126.

⁴⁷¹ MM, p. 150.

⁴⁷² Whatever he wants to mean with “eternity of life” and “eternity of death” in IM, in PM, p. 220, already quoted, is unclear for me.

Technically speaking they are unforeseeable. *But* Bergson's teleological cosmology relies upon one "impetus of life [that] consists in a *need* for creation". It is difficult to interpret that as if it was not a claim in terms of regularity. The perfective dynamic of that need of nature is also clear enough. Nature understood in the widest sense "strives to introduce into it the largest possible amount of indetermination and liberty".⁴⁷³ Bergson does not say that the *need* and the *goal* are so *sometimes, but always*. This is not something unforeseeable or contingent. Hence in Bergson's global teleology there is one element of regularity and also one element of irregularity. Therefore, the need and the goal of the cosmos is to be interpreted within the model of Aristotelian primary teleology, and the outcome of this need, is to be interpreted within the model of the secondary teleology that we saw in 2.1.d.

3.3.b. Secondary teleology: retrospective perfectiveness, unpredictability and narratology

In this subsection I address Bergson's view on global teleology from the perspective of time. To the extent that I refer to some sort of globality, this means that I understand nature as a whole, and each individual now is a part of this whole, and contributes to it by fulfilling its task.

The problem arises regarding the idea of progress and contribution in EC and DS, when we have the concept of Life, with capital letters. As we saw in Aristotle, entities regularly contribute to an eternal good. While in Bergson the wholeness cannot be thought in an eternal-like way, but only in historical terms, contribution, participation or imitation do not refer to any fixed or eternal ground of being, like the supralunary world or god. Now everything is perishable: there are no eternal items. Now there are no perishable individual entities that progress in some eternally fixed way, according to the general view of teleology. This leads us to the current problem: the time of teleology, because the universe, Life or history do not rely on fixed structures. Individual mutable cases of perishable entities are not expressions or examples of something eternal. There are no imperishable forms, there is no imperishable infralunary realm, there are no eternal, heavenly bodies and there is no prime mover.

In EC, Life covers the realm of biology. It is the synonym of the history of evolution. It has not ascended eternally and it is not one event to be understood in some bigger framework in which it is only one case. To this extent, it is not regular. One could say, as Bergson does, that Life, and its history, is one storyline. We really do not know what biology will be like beyond this particular and unique historical development. *Each part of Life's narrative is unique too, since it will not be repeated again ever: that is what being historical means ultimately*. This means, among other things, that *it is not to be repeated*.⁴⁷⁴ The temporal dimension is totally different now.

Bergson has to deal with a new problem: the teleology of singular events. Unlike with Aristotle, in modern language we could say that for Bergson the idea of Life is linked to the sciences of the spirit, namely, to history. I will soon propose some features for this. Regarding this second kind of teleology, I will tackle the issue of "retrospective finalism". Following Camille Riquier, I still defend a possible link between Aristotle and Bergson in

⁴⁷³EC, p. 251. My emphasis. Also EC, p. 261. This second passage shows the analogy between individual beings and cosmos. See 4.2.d.

⁴⁷⁴Note that "law" is a modern term, and that Aristotle defends regularity but does not use such a term.

global terms. Although I admit that the speculative assumption is considerable in this case; also in this case I follow an already indicated interpretative path. In a word: in the Aristotelian framework there is room for retrospective finalism.

The vital impetus or *élan*, and the idea of human history or progress, are different from the regular phenomena I have mentioned just above. The main problem of global teleology in Bergson is that it leads to fatalism, as we saw in 1.1.b. It leads to some kind of providentialism where there is no room for indetermination, just what happens to certain deterministic evolutionary views. If we accept that there is an objective constitutive progress, an ontological tendency forward, we see that mankind does not lead to its own future. Moreover, we individuals are just puppets of destiny. And destiny is this overarching tendency called by Bergson Life or *élan vital*.

Bergson defends indetermination in nature and human indetermination at the same time. It is clear that during his career he progressively expanded the boundaries of indetermination. He started with human indetermination but his project of developing a philosophy of nature according to the model of immanent teleology entailed naturalizing almost all human features. This entails, in his case, also humanizing nature. Hence, freedom is not only to be found in our societies, but also in nature. Evolution is an expression of this nature. But he started everything from human experience.

At the moment in which Bergson constructed his philosophy of nature he was positive about the fallacy of fatalism: our direct experience of life denies any kind of overarching determinism. Bergson defended individual freedom from the beginning of his career, in the third chapter of D.I. A hard critique of determinism was implied in EL and, moreover, it became the center of his polemic approach to duration in DI.III. To be alive, to endure, implies being for the sake of conservation. Duration, later on applied to embryos, is an example of conservative teleology. But this goal coexists with another one, called freedom. According to this goal, human life is for the sake of freedom, which is a transgressive goal.

But in IM, EC and DS it seems that his position is on the verge of individual freedom and Life. In any case global teleology may lead to determination. Therefore, Bergson introduces natural contingency and human freedom or creativeness as part of the same anti-determinist feature of nature.

“We cannot contemplate it [progress in societies]”, Bergson says “without saying that, here too, across innumerable obstacles, life is working both by individualization and integration to obtain the greatest quantity, the richest variety, the highest qualities, of invention and effort”⁴⁷⁵

I will start with Life or history of evolution, including human history. In the universe there is need or also “exigency of creation”.⁴⁷⁶ Creation means unpredictability or “inflorescence of unforeseeable novelty”.⁴⁷⁷ Predictability is not one of the scopes of the sciences of Life, or, at least, of evolutionary biology.

Also “there is progress, *if* progress means a *continual* advance in the general *direction* determined by a first impulsion; but this progress is *accomplished only* on the two or three

⁴⁷⁵ CV, in ES, p. 34.

⁴⁷⁶ EC, p. 360.

⁴⁷⁷ CV, in ES, p. 31.

great lines of evolution”.⁴⁷⁸ Besides: “with the human being life of consciousness reaches, at least potentially, its *highest state* of emancipation from the restrictions imposed on it by matter”.⁴⁷⁹ In the last sentence from DS we have even a more bombastic statement on the same teleological ground. According to Bergson, humans should “intend to make the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods”⁴⁸⁰

But, if the universe or Life is defined as an exigency of creation, then he is talking about a need and a natural tendency. The outcome of this natural tendency is progress and we can also talk about a highest state. Clearly, this is a global teleology scheme. This is also primary teleology. On the other hand, we need creation and unforeseeable novelty. It cannot be the development of a pre-designer. The natural progressive tendency has to fit with unpredictability and creation. This is the temporal dimension of secondary teleology. This is the great philosophical tension in Bergson, in my view: to make primary teleology and secondary teleology compatible within his global framework.

As Worms says, Bergson’s global finalism contains a retrospective and extraordinary original species of finalism.⁴⁸¹ Bergson’s vision of the *élan* entails a constitutive and objective teleology: evolution is the outcome of a natural tendency to progress and perfection. Hence, once more, *progress is real* and at the same time it *has to be* unforeseeable. If not, there would not be creation. In fact, it would never be real progress. It would be just Spencer’s evolutionary visions (the inexorable “law of evolution”⁴⁸²) and ultimately we may fall into fatalism: this is “false evolutionism”. Bergson’s creative teleology should be the opposite. It tries to combine his naturalistic view and something that maybe we could call humanism.⁴⁸³

His concepts of divergence in EC.II and dichotomy DS.IV meant to be precisely the avoidance of determinism. Life and history split into divergent branches, he says. There is not only one line of progress, but many.

The objectivity and non-reflexivity (this is not heuristics), on the one hand, and unpredictability (contingency), on the other, are characteristics of the *élan* or creative teleology. There is a certain tension between contingency and perfection, but they are just compatible. We should add that it implies *singularity* and divergence. Life and history are something unique, they will never be repeated for Bergson, and is in constant creation of new goals by divergence.

⁴⁷⁸ EC, p. 104, my emphasis.

⁴⁷⁹ Vaughan, M, Miquel, P-A, Pearson, K-A. “Responses to evolution”. Op. cit. p. 360, italics are mine.

⁴⁸⁰ DS, p. 317 and DS, 2012, p. 338.

⁴⁸¹ Worms, Frédéric. *Bergson ou les deux sens de la vie*. Op. cit.. p. 175: “finalisme rétrospectif pleinement original”. Worms talks about a: “Lecture psychologique et finale, mais rétrospective de l’évolution”. Ibid., p. 195. See also Ebénézer Njoh Mouelle. *Henri Bergson et l’idée de dépassement de la condition humaine*. L’Harmattan, Paris, 2013, pp. 192-211.

⁴⁸² It is formulated, among other places in *The first principles* chapters XIV-XVII. In Chapter XVII, §145 Spencer writes the formula that can be applied upon a vast range of phenomena, from physics to biology, from biology to culture, from individuals to the cosmos: “Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation”. Spencer, Herbert. *The first principles*. Williams & Norgate, London, 1867, p 396.

⁴⁸³ See 4.2.c.

We can see singularity. Life is *one* story.⁴⁸⁴ In its origin, that was one feature of our own life or duration, also in DI. Duration is a continuum of the heterogeneous and it is *irreversible*. It is also unique.⁴⁸⁵ Hee-Jin Han has pointed out this characteristic in “L’heuristique du vitalisme”.⁴⁸⁶ In the short text “False recognition”, Bergson writes: “yet we know full well that no life goes twice through the same moment of its history, that time does not remount its course”.⁴⁸⁷ In subjective terms, in MM he talks about two memories: a memory that imagines and evokes singular events and another that forgets the singular property and just knows how to repeat, like every habit.⁴⁸⁸ In EC, in DuSim.III and in DS he talks about a great singular historical and irreversible tendency.

Since evolution is singular, it should be understood as one event. Predictability means that there are innumerable events that fit into some law-model. Life is not the case, so, in my view, it can only be an *event*. It is a complex event, one irreversible story. It can be interpreted by a narratology. Narratology is the method of the sciences of the spirit and does not aim to predict.⁴⁸⁹ Narratology interprets singular events. The singular events cannot be predicted, since prediction is so to say anchored around the repetition of some phenomena. *The irreversible singular events can only be interpreted retrospectively* as if they were narrated.

When Bergson differentiates between the “science of matter” (physics, but also physiology and chemistry) and the “sciences of the spirit” (psychology and a “vitalist biology”), I think he is talking about an essential difference between two branches of knowledge. On one hand, there is measurement, predictability, and precision. On the other, there is the unpredictable and unique phenomena called consciousness.⁴⁹⁰ Consciousness (understood according to the various meanings it has in Bergson’s works) is *always* an irreversible singular case to *be interpreted retrospectively because it is naturally directed towards change*. In his view, matter is inertia, geometry and necessity, and life is indetermination,⁴⁹¹ but also an impulse to higher efficiency.⁴⁹²

It is important to insist on the idea that this retrospective global teleology is not entirely *as if* teleology, although it has elements of contingency; it is in any case grounded in constitutive teleology. However, when Bergson says that there is in the world an exigency of creation he means two things: i) there is a teleological impulse towards something; ii) it is constant,

⁴⁸⁴Letter to H. Gouhier in 9th of June 1932: “La relation causale entre deux termes dont chacun est unique en son genre ne peut ressembler que de loin à ce que nous appelons causalité dans notre expérience humaine”. *Correspondances*, 1377-1378; and also in DS, 2008, “Lectures”, p. 622.

⁴⁸⁵ On uniqueness in his treatise on duration, DI, p. 239: against the notion of law, Bergson refers “this psychic state being unique of its kind and unable ever to occur again”. Also: “Now we must not make exaggerated use of the word “law” in a field which is that of liberty, but we may use this convenient term when we are confronted with important facts which show sufficient regularity”. DI, p. 296

⁴⁸⁶ Han, Hee-Jin. *Annales bergsoniennes*, IV. PUF, Paris, 2008.

⁴⁸⁷ “False recognition”, in ES, p. 167.

⁴⁸⁸ MM. pp. 81-82.

⁴⁸⁹This expression has nothing to do with Gérard Genette and literary criticism. At least, I have taken it from the biologist and historian Mayr, who, by the way, rejects Bergson’s valuation of biology. Despite this criticism, like Bergson, Mayr considers evolutionary biology different from physiology and closer to the sciences of spirit, regarding their historical method. Mayr, Ernst. Chapter.2 “Evolutionary biology as historical science”, *What makes biology unique?* Harvard University Press, 2007, pp. 32-33, italics are mine.

⁴⁹⁰“Phantasms of the living”, in ES, pp. 100-103.

⁴⁹¹ CV, in ES, p. 17.

⁴⁹² CV, in ES, p. 24.

which we call “world” as such. Creation is led by the direction of teleology. That is because human beings are the apex of that.

There is still an important element of contingency there. That is, human beings are products of contingency. Although nature is directed towards something (creation), there is variation in the forms of that process and there are also failures. So, nature would be different, *regarding the living species on earth, although the exigency would remain*. In his view, however, in comparison with other possibilities, there has been a success, called human being.

In short, teleology implies that creation is not chaos but indeterminacy. Teleology and novelty are compatible, while there is unpredictability regarding forms and the natural tendency or exigency remains. The teleological tendency of Life is certain: to seek indetermination. The outcome of that is purely unpredictable. There is indeterminacy and novelty to a certain extent (particular forms and species), because the exigency or tendency of the world does not change. This must remain.

As I said, I follow Riquier in his enlightening consideration of the *élan*. I agree with him regarding the understanding of the *élan* itself:

“L’*élan* n’a pas pour finalité absurde de déjouer toute prévision. Ce serait prendre pour une fin en soi ce qui n’arrive que par accident. Il a pour *finalité de réaliser la liberté dans la nature, finalité à laquelle il n’atteint que progressivement à cause de la contingence qui frappe son activité* (indétermination au premier sens). Autrement dit, si *les formes de l’évolution sont indéterminées parce qu’imprévisibles, l’évolution de formes est en revanche nécessairement déterminée*: elle tend à créer des formes capables de servir de plus en plus de véhicule à l’activité libre et créatrice. Bergson est donc manifestement hostile au thème romantique de la vie luxuriante, d’où jailliraient des formes innombrables, riches et variées, qui manifestent sa puissance d’éclosion”.⁴⁹³

There is a goal for nature: indetermination. The singular, irreversible process of striving toward that goal is unpredictable and only grasped by narratology. There is no law of Life that ultimately could predict everything. Life is singular and unforeseeable. Every moment is singular and takes part of a tendency in a certain historical context. The only axiom we have is teleology: tendency toward the best. Bergson shows that teleology; in this case, global teleology, is not necessarily determinist. Life is undetermined, apart from that. The state of the fauna of 1868 would not be predicted by anyone, as the evolutionist and determinist Huxley said.⁴⁹⁴

There is a global teleology, which includes a global tendency to something good. Every part of the living realm has contributed to the progressive fulfillment of that good. To my understanding, the ideas of divergence and dichotomy do not have the central importance that other authors have given to them. In a divergence scheme the idea of height or progress is perfectly possible, as it is in EC. It just fits better with the Darwinian tree of life, that is, with the modern science account. Global irreversible progress is historical and singular. It cannot be compared with any event similar to it, so it is a narratology and not a law. It is a retrospective interpretation. It implies that the phenomena cannot be measured. There is no experiment possible, since the conditions have always changed.

⁴⁹³ Riquier, Camille. “Vie et liberté”, *Études & Commentaires*. Ed. A. François. Vrin, Paris, 2010, p. 146. My italics.

⁴⁹⁴ EC, p. 38. See 1.1.b.

Global, irreversible, progressive, historical and singular: these are the features of Bergson's transgressive teleology. The, so to say, "optimistic" conception of history remains intact in EC, but it is not necessarily the case. It lasts to explain the last feature: uncertainty. Uncertainty means that Bergson's conception of progress is not necessarily optimistic, but ambivalent. Although there is progress and a clear tendency in nature towards it, it is not *assured*. My point is that the exigency and tendency of nature understood as a whole, to the best or the higher development of its potencies, is for Bergson unquestionable, *but* it is not certain that in the future the progress will keep moving forward. It is not certain that this tendency to perfection will *succeed*. Stops, stagnation or decay are included among the future possibilities of our world. To some extent, this is something promising in one way since human history understood as progress, for instance, depends on us. In DS he writes: "the future of humanity remains indeterminate, precisely because it is on humanity that it depends"⁴⁹⁵.

We have to *make*, or rather *create*, progress. This would be natural, since it would fulfill human capacities and also the original need of nature, according to Bergson. Uncertainty, or even risk, in this context, leaves room for real creativity. Leaving aside human nature and human needs, only regarding Life, the story of evolution has not ended. At some point, nature could overcome human nature. In a way, from the point of view of spirit and ethics, geniuses are the proof of that. These questions on the future, according to Bergson, cannot be answered. We have seen why: Life and history compose a single case. Every step beyond them is just unpredictable.

I have talked about ascending all the time. Humans are the highest point in this trend. It is true that, in the *past*, for Bergson, the history of Life is clearly ascension. But his vision about the *future* is necessarily uncertain. The negative possibility of this uncertainty means basically that Life and humans *can decay*. In other words, although the progress is for Bergson *more natural* (or better) than retrogression, since we are talking about a singular event, the future remains open to different possibilities, better or worse ones. Although in EC and in CV the progressive and optimistic vision of Life and history seems quite central, in DS that changes. Namely the fourth chapter of DS, "Final remarks: Mechanics and mysticism", is colored by a different mood.⁴⁹⁶ Human choice is progress or decay, or even more dramatically, humans have to decide "whether they want to live or not"⁴⁹⁷.

Bergson's global teleology is global, irreversible, progressive, historical, singular, creative and uncertain.

Again, Riquier gives us an important clue in his commentary of EC. He links the idea of retrospective teleology in Bergson with Aristotle. As he rightly points out, Bergson knew pretty well Aristotle's notion of *tyche* or luck, where one could find the secondary teleology. He gave a course in the period of germination of EC, between 1902 and 1903, in which he commented on that issue.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ DS, p. 299.

⁴⁹⁶ I think this is quite illustrative regarding the problem of technology. In EC the future of the human being is unproblematically linked to technology and craft invention. In DS, after the First World War, his optimistic vision has changed. See Zanfi, Caterina. *Bergson, la tecnica, la guerra*. Bononia, Bologna, University Press, 2009.

⁴⁹⁷ DS, p. 317.

⁴⁹⁸ *Mélanges*, p. 572. 1902-1903.

Riquier says:

“Ne serait-ce pas qu’il trouvait dans cette quasi-cause qu’est la *tyche* le modèle pour commencer à penser le jeu spécifique qu’entretiennent les forces vitales avec les forces matérielles? À partir du moment où l’élan vital agit en vertu d’une finalité immanente, il doit y avoir dans sa rencontre avec la matière des effets collatéraux qui n’étaient pas initialement compris en lui, effets qui arrivent non par soi, mais par accident (*symbebekòs*). *L’évolution creatrice* serait ainsi, comme la finalité et la chance, une finalité sans fin, c’est-à-dire une rencontre fortuite d’où procèdent des forms imprévisibles, mais susceptibles d’être expliquées rétrospectivement en termes de causalité mécanique ou finale”.⁴⁹⁹

According to Riquier, these ideas of global retrospective teleology and *tyche* have a lot in common. Organic forms, Riquier says, “come from unpredictable forms, but liable of being retrospectively explained in terms of mechanic and final causality”. It is difficult to say whether Bergson was conscious of that or not; this remains in the field of speculation. What is beyond doubt is that he knew perfectly well chapters 4, 5 and 6 of *Phys.II* and taught them in several lectures on that subject. He also taught the neo-Aristotelian Alexander of Aphrodisias, and particularly the doctrine of *On fate*, where the Aristotelian doctrine of chance and luck is used.⁵⁰⁰ However, Bergson does not comment on it. So the most prudent position for me now is merely to suggest the similarities.

The main problem and the main distance between the notion of *eutychía* in *Phys.II.4-6*, that I addressed in 2.1.d and the notion of *élan* in *EC.I, II and III* is threefold: i) Aristotle says that the cases of fortune are not just cases of the for the sake of. Bergson, on the contrary, thinks that evolution is for the sake of an innate natural function. ii) The cases of *eutychía* are beneficial not in an absolute sense, but in relation to the particular good of the individual involved. In *EC* the *télos* is absolute and non-relative, just like the general good in Aristotle’s global texts. iii) The case of *eutychía* and the *tyche* in general is secondary teleology. In *EC* it is not an alternative, but an essential part of global teleology. They have three elements in common: i) retrospective finalism; ii) indeterminism; iii) singularity. *We can see that, in any case, contingency has a much more important role in Bergson than in Aristotle.* But it is also important to see that in this case secondary teleology (history) is also derived from a non-historical claim, thus primary teleology.

According to Aristotle, the human is free to a certain extent. He or she is the principle of action and our actions depend on us (*EN.III. 3-5*). His teleological approach in *EN.I. 7* or *EN.I. 13* does not seem to be a problem for him. In general terms, all humans tend toward their natural goal, which is happiness, as we saw in 1.3. But their concrete future is contingent. Aristotle’s approach to deliberation, deliberated choice and voluntariness has nothing to do with chance,⁵⁰¹ although they have in common the “inherently unpredictable future” of the infralunary world of Aristotle.⁵⁰² The personal goal-directedness of every human being seems to be both natural and non-deterministic.

In Bergson every human being is goal-directed, but the paradox is that this requires transcending a previous step. *This is not pure contingency, but a relative one.* Bergson, as we

⁴⁹⁹Riquier, Camille. “Vie et liberté“, *Études & Commentaires*. Ed. A. François. Vrin, Paris, 2010, p. 145.

⁵⁰⁰Ibid. “Vie et liberté“, *Études & Commentaires*. Ed. A. François. Vrin, Paris, 2010; and *Archéologie de Bergson*. Op. cit. See the Introduction of Chapter 2.

⁵⁰¹ Although, luck or *tyche* has to do with deliberation and rational calculative faculties.

⁵⁰² Dudley, John. *Aristotle’s concept of chance: accidents, cause, necessity and determinism*. SUNY, New York, 2012, p. 278.

know, stresses the idea of creativity. Being free is to create oneself, as we will see in 3 and 4. Every personal life is a story of maturity, and, apart from dichotomy and divergence, it has the same features as the global teleology: Bergson's global teleology is global, irreversible, progressive, historical, singular, creative and uncertain. As the history of Life and human beings, our personal story is to be interpreted retrospectively.

I think that Bergson does not solve the problem I referred to regarding individual freedom. He defended the existence of Life as one assembly of entities. We can ask *whose* freedom is Bergson's freedom in EC. If Life is free, then we individual free beings can be mere puppets of that bigger entity. Then, the problem would be the same as in determinism, with the difference that there is contingency and freedom in the world. But this freedom, transmitted to the world through individuals, would be always one. Bergson defended that every human being is historical, creative and singular, not just analogue to Life itself, but a prolongation of it. At the same time, Bergson defended the autonomy of the human individual

Conclusion of Chapter 3

[A] Bergson emphasizes much more than Aristotle the vertical analogy. The cosmic passages in Aristotle establish analogies with compounds, like the army, or use analogical verbs, like to imitate or to desire. Aristotle also uses the vertical analogy for establishing analogies between humans and heavenly bodies and god. Only in one case he seems to accept the world/organism analogy. In contrast, in Bergson there are innumerable cases of microcosmos/macrocosmos, human/world. In Bergson there are no theological analogies and, naturally, no heavenly psychological bodies.

In Bergson there are two kinds of analogies, horizontal analogies and vertical analogies. That is how I see the claim in IM about an “effort” to “dilute ourselves”.⁵⁰³ Horizontal analogies are held between one singular living entity, such as a human being, especially regarding his or her body, and another one, such as the amoeba, the embryo, the society. Vertical analogies are held between the human being, especially regarding his or her soul, and just one item: Life or history. The *télos* in the horizontal analogy is development or conservation and the *télos* in the vertical one is contribution or transgression. In the first case there is a clear beneficiary, in the second there is rather an aim.

Like in Johnson on Aristotle, pluralism in Bergson can be understood can be understood in ecological terms, as Gunter did.⁵⁰⁴ This sheds light on the famous statement in IM, section IX, according to which “philosophy should be an effort to go beyond the human state”.⁵⁰⁵

[B] The two models are biomorphist, since they defend immanent teleology, and in both there is a certain kind of anthropocentrism, what I called mitigated anthropocentrism. In my opinion, the anthropocentric reading of Bergson’s global teleology is maybe easier to defend than Aristotle’s one.

In any case, in Bergson the evolutionary perspective means a peculiar case of mitigated anthropocentrism. On the one hand, it permits the teleological reading of the natural scale. On the other hand, Bergson understands evolution through the branching pattern of divergence, taken from the Darwinian framework. This means that Life tends in many directions, and only one (the most important) leads to the development of the central nervous system, and, ultimately, man. There is a third question: many aspects in the living world, and, namely, in man, have to be attributed to contingency. Humans are the goal of human beings insofar as humans are the best expression of freedom on earth.

Regarding the place of human beings and human knowledge in nature a dualistic view can be found in Bergson. Biomorphism is the first aspect we should consider, since it is required for immanent teleology. Biomorphism is the basis of the horizontal analogy and implies the worldview of the model of immanent teleology: pluralism. Mitigated anthropocentrism would complete the account of Bergson’s philosophy, since the human being is the most important or the highest entity or species in nature. Bergson’s is not, however, an absolute anthropocentrism, since plurality necessarily entails the recognition of goals in nature that are not human. His progressive view of evolution reinforces his anthropocentrism, since the rest

⁵⁰³ IM, p. 220.

⁵⁰⁴ Gunter, Peter. “Bergson and the war against nature”. *The new Bergson*. Ed. John Mullarkey. Manchester University Press, 1999.

⁵⁰⁵ PM, p. 227.

of nature can be understood as a previous step towards the form human: vegetative faculties and animal faculties are summed up in human beings, who are for Bergson the most recent species. The development of the central nervous system is, in Bergson, a tendency towards freedom and spirit. Only human beings qualified as free beings. Besides the recognition of non-human goals in nature, we have to add that what I have said of humans does not imply that the general perfective tendency is directed to the human form. It means that humans are a relative success of this the tendency towards freedom: partially, the human form, like the previous forms in the natural scale, is contingent. Regarding the former question of analogies, it is clear that the horizontal teleology relies on biomorphism while the vertical one relies on anthropocentrism. The human is a natural but unique entity. It is natural since it has basic things in common with the rest of the natural beings. It is unique since humans sum up the wide range of natural faculties and also add unique features, such as invention, freedom, intuition, self-consciousness. In terms of adaptiveness or dominion, humans share their label of success with the Hymenoptera. Like in the classic model, Bergson's human beings are ambivalent and require living in society.

[C] Temporality in both philosophers is definitely different. In Aristotle there are two grounds, the eternal one, which is better, and the perishable one. The perishable realm is equally eternal although the substances within are not. The teleological processes happen, it seems, always in the eternal realm and always or usually in the infralunary one. Individual teleology is thus regular, in Aristotle, and even more in the global one, since it involves the supralunary realm. That is not the case of Bergson. To be sure, regularity is not part of an explicit argument, as we find in Aristotle *Phys.*II. It is however implied in Bergson's approach to individual teleology. It is also part of the basis of his global teleology, since he talks about a regular exigency, need or perfective tendency in the cosmos, but its outcome gives a central role to contingency. The history of Life, human progress and personal life qualify as individual and unpredictable events. Like the Aristotelian fortune, it is to be understood as retrospective secondary teleology. The main difference is that this sort of teleology is in Bergson at the center of his natural worldview. He puts exceptionality at the core of his framework.

Bergson's more accentuated philosophical dualism appears here too. Based on biomorphism, Bergson erects horizontal analogies as if they were absolutely regular. This means that the human body and habits, living beings and society regularly tend to develop themselves, to adapt themselves and to persevere on earth as much as possible. Secondly, Bergson holds vertical analogies, based on anthropocentrism as global, irreversible, progressive, historical, singular, creative and uncertain teleological process. Now the question is mixed. On the one hand, he considers nature as a whole in regard with a regular goal. But its outcome, Life or evolution, human history or progress and our own subjective history are unique stories. In all these, contingency and unpredictability plays a central role. This is definitely far from Aristotle.

[D] Since the model of immanent teleology is grounded in analogies with human beings, it is also a reflection of humans. In Aristotle both development and contribution to perfectiveness can be easily understood as something simultaneous. The first is focused on the entity and the second on the relation between the entity and the whole. They both are grounded on the order of parts and wholes, something that is part of rationality. The order of development and the order of contribution are analogous with rational art and thought. There is only human reason

at stake. Bergson's view is, again, more dualistic. In Bergson development is made by a vital force of every living being which endures, matures and functions, whereas contribution is made by general biological trends (lineages) or mutations and by human freedom. The first one is a classic teleology of the *érgon*, the second one is a teleology of freedom. The analogy is grounded on two different human faculties or perfective tendencies.

As Bergson said, teleology is based on psychology or the human mind, and is doctrinally flexible. Also, we saw that notions, such as Life, imply that, *if* there is internal or individual teleology there is external teleology. In the first chapter I noted that Bergson talks about "effort". The effort should extend itself beyond the notion of individual effort, which completes the notion of external teleology. The human mind, individuals and individual efforts are elements of the horizontal analogy, biomorphism and regularity. The human mind, Life, and human cultures take part in certain kinds of "external effort", which is irregular, since it is unique. We have seen what means "going further" in structural terms. In Chapter 4 we will see in detail all the domains in which this philosophy is applied.