CHAPTER V

BERGSON AND ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

I

"By their fruits ye shall know them," not only plants and people, but philosophies also. Nowadays systems of philosophy are not tested by the logic of their arguments or by the light which they shed on the real problems of life and mind. That tradition has changed and the current democratic trend of ideas has taken in its direction even the narrow circle of thinking men. The philosopher's impulse of knowledge for the sake of knowledge has yielded to the practical man's knowledge for the fruits it bears, the consequences it results in. So now systems of philosophy have to view the business of life which is everybody's business, and they try to do justice to the sense and values of the average man. There are certain things which he takes for granted, which he feels to be true through immediate experience, whatever logic might say, such as the reality of our temporal experience. The plain man feels that the real is not the Absolute or the whole, but an incomplete principle which is working itself out, which is accomplishing its nature in time. He believes in a real evolution, in a real time order. To him, a timeless Absolute and an unmeaning evolution are illusory. He will have nothing to do with a philosophy that speaks of freedom not here and now, but somewhere else and hereafter. He has no patience with a doctrine that makes man a mode of God, or a manifestation of the
absolute substance. There is not much love lost between him and the rationalistic systems of absolute idealism which offer dry bones when he asks for flesh and blood, which talk of "How blest the paradise to come" when he cries "How sweet is moral sovereignty." He wants a human system which will insist on the reality of the individual, of the time process, and of his fight for freedom, in short, a system which will do justice to the concrete details of life and the great facts of the world.

True to the tradition of the age, Bergson wishes to be numbered among the orthodox fold, and all that the orthodoxy of the average man requires his system wishes to grant. Since logic does not help him to this end, he surrenders it for mysticism. As rationalism goes against orthodoxy, he exults in the impulse at the expense of reason and reflection. His impudence with intellectualism and his idealisation of impulse have brought him many followers. After the European war broke out, the circle of Bergson's admirers extended, since German methods are regarded as emphasizing the results of intellectualism and hard discipline, while the French embody the ideals of intuition and spontaneity. We have in one the mechanism of matter, in the other the freedom of spirit. In philosophy Bergson regards himself as a reformer of the philosophical method since he reconstitutes the way of approaching and working reality. Bergson takes his stand on life and experience. He is conscious that the popularity of his philosophy is due to his attitude to experience. "Allow me then to say that the spread of what men agree to call Bergsonism is due simply to this, the initiated see, and the uninitiated divine that they have here to do with a metaphysical moulded or experience (whether exterior or interior); with an unpretentious philosophy determined to base itself on solid ground, with a doctrine that is in no sense systematic, that is not provided with an answer to every question and that distinguishes different problems to examine them one by one—a philosophy, in short, capable like science of indefinite progress and
advance towards perfection." (Bergson, *His Life and Philosophy*; Paul and Rico). So Bergson rejects absolutism which runs counter to experience, and intellectualism which seeks to solve all problems of life. It is these tendencies of anti-absolutism and anti-intellectualism which manifest themselves throughout his system that have made it so popular. But on closer examination we shall see that Bergson's philosophy is more absolutistic than it is generally known to be. If freed from its inconsistencies, it must end in an absolutism of the concrete variety. Let us consider the problems of the relation of life to matter, of mechanism and teleology, intellect and intuition, the individual self, freedom and God, with a view to ascertaining whether his solutions of these problems are so far away from those associated with absolutism as he or his interpreters would make us believe.

II

The main tendency of Bergson's philosophy is monistic, for according to him there is a universal principle, spiritual in nature, in which all existence is gathered, an initial psychical movement which is responsible for the whole evolution. Creative evolution may be literally compared to the spreading of different branches from a single root. The slow dialogue, on spreading out new branches, creating new novelties. Matter, life, consciousness are such branches. They are the divergent developments of the unity at the start, where the different tendencies are fused into one. "Evolution arises from an original identity."

"Evolutionary process, sprouting out like a sheaf, sunders in proportion to their simultaneous growth terms which at first completed each other so well that they ceased to (Creative Evolution, p. 124). All life is a unity and the unity is derived from the initial impetus. A single principle of creation is at the base of things (C. E. p. 291).

While thus Bergson's aim as well as the main tendency of his philosophy is monistic, in the detailed development
of his view he postulates the existence of a second factor, matter, which is indispensable for both the origin and continuance of evolution. "When a shell bursts, the particular way it breaks is explained both by the explosive force of the powder it contains and by the resistance of the metal. So of the way life breaks into individuals and species. It is the same, we think, on two series of causes: the resistance life meets from inert matter, and the explosive force which life bears within itself." (C. E. p. 103, see also p. 234). The presence of the resisting force of matter is needed to start and maintain the evolutionary process. Without matter to call forth the activity of the soul, the latter will be reduced to the level of Spinoza's Substance, inert, static, and incapable of developing into the world of sense-perception. The vital impulse is regarded by Bergson as an effort. It meets with the obstacle of matter at the outset of its course. Its mission is to graft upon the necessity of physical forces the greatest possible amount of indetermination. To cope with physical necessity it requires energy, which it cannot create. It makes use of the pre-existing energy at its disposal (see C. E. p. 231). The two, life and matter, through their interaction, create the universe with all its varieties. Matter appears to be quite as original and fundamental for the world-process as the life principle itself. If this is the conclusion of Bergson's philosophy he is not a monist but a dualist. It is this question of the ultimate unity or duality of life and matter that we propose to discuss in the next.

III

In Time and Free-will, Bergson vindicates the freedom of human consciousness. He points out how determinism distorts the flowing life of consciousness by spatialising it and representing it as a succession of states. The illusion of necessity is due to intellect, which twists out of shape duration in the real inwardness of conscious life. "Pure
duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states " (T. and F. W. pp. 109 and 110). Conscious life and inert matter have opposed characteristics. The mechanical ideal may be adequate to the representation of external reality, which is spatial and solid, but it is inadequate to that of life or consciousness which is duration. Life is dynamic while matter is static. In Time and Free-will, the dualism of the opposition between the two, matter and life, space and time, mechanism and dynamism, is the most prominent feature. We have a real material world with a multiplicity of objects, a world of space, quantity and simultaneity; opposed to it there is a world of change, quality and succession. "Within our ego, there is succession without mutual externality; outside the ego is pure space, mutual externality without succession. . . . There is a real space without duration in which phenomena appear and disappear simultaneously with our state of consciousness. There is a real duration, the heterogenous moments of which permeate one another" (T. and F. W. pp. 108 and 110). Bergson here affirms the separate existence of two spheres of reality, conscious life and inert matter. Intellect is viewed as giving a defective vision of conscious life though it is adequate to the representation of matter. This dualism though greatly modified still survives in Creative Evolution. "The human instinct feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids. Our intellect triumphs in Geometry, wherein is revealed the kinship of logical thought with unorganised matter" (C. F. p. ix). Again, "For a conscious being to exist is to change . . . a material object remains as it is or else, if it changes under the influence of an external force, our idea of this change is that of a displacement of parts which themselves do not change" (C. B. p. 6). There is set up a rigorous dualism between soul-life, which is change, and material object, to which change is external.
IV

Some difficulty presents itself. How can we account for motion or change in the external world? If the world outside is purely spatial and therefore timeless, then motion becomes an illusion. If all change is psychical, then motion is not change. It is not a sum of simultaneous deprivations of the very essence of change which is time. But Bergson is not prepared to say that motion outside is eternal. Movement, whatever be its nature, is "an indisputable reality" (Matter and Memory, p. 254). Bergson admits that the world outside is also a becoming. Matter is a kind of motion. Modern science in its analysis of the atom into vibrations supports his view. It is not in his purpose to discuss the much-debated question of the nature of the electron. The whole is of the nature of the self. Concrete movement is "capable like consciousness of prolonging its past into the present" (M. and M. p. 325). "Matter or mind, reality here appeared to us as a perpetual becoming." (C. E. p. 487). That mind is change, we have direct evidence. That matter is also movement "our intellect and senses themselves would show...if they could obtain a direct and disinterested idea of it." (C. E. p. 288). "Pure intuition, external or internal, is that of an undivided continuity. We break up this continuity into elements laid side by side, which correspond in the one case to distinct words, in the other to independent objects" (M. and M. p. 239). Bergson forgets that the reduction of self and universe to motion knocks the bottom out of his defense of freedom in Time and Free-will. Freedom originally confined to human consciousness is now extended to the totality of being. "There is no reason why duration and as a form of existence like our own should not be attributed to the system that science isolates, provided such systems are re-integrated into the whole" (C. E. p. 12). The last part of this sentence suggests the reconciliation between the two views of
matter, that it is an inert thing and that it is a kind of motion. The whole is a flux. The universe endures. Duration is the "very substance of the world in which we live." (C. E., p. 42). "Matter looked at as an undivided whole must be a flux rather than a thing." (C. E., p. 196).

For purposes of science we cut off portions of reality and view them in their isolation. Matter, as the scientist regards it, is subject to complete mechanism. For science we want repetition, according to Bergson, and repetition is possible only in the abstract. In the real world there is nothing fixed, no absolute rest, but all is flow, action, creative evolution. Matter as stable and solid is unreal.

"All division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division" (M., and M., p. 239). Intellcet makes sections in the continuous flow of becoming which constitutes reality, for purposes of science and action. "The distinct outlines of an object are only the design of a certain kind of influence we might exert on a certain part of space. It is the plan of our eventual actions that is sent back to our eyes as though by a mirror when we see the surfaces and edges of things. Suppress this action and with it consequently those main directions which by perception are traced out for it in the entanglement of the real, and the individuality of the body is re-absorbed in the universal interaction which, without doubt, is reality itself. (C. E., p. 12). The mathematical and logical ideals are inadequate to the representation of both life and matter. Bergson does not say that matter is phenomenal in the sense that intellectual categories create matter. He only says that they misrepresent it. Matter exists independently of intellect as soul-life exists. But it is in a fluid condition. Intellect cuts out cross sections of this flow, sharpens their outlines and solidifies their contents. Thus, inert matter on further analysis has become practically identical with conscious life. The real world, subjective as well as objective, is dynamic, and can be grasped only by intuition.
If we start from the side of consciousness it is possible to establish the kinship of conscious life with inert matter. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson has admitted the possibility of treating conscious life from the static standpoint. Though the essence of conscious life is interpenetration or melting into one another, this coalescence is not always present in the same degree. "It is by no means the case that all conscious states blend with one another as raindrops with the water of a lake. The self is as far as it has to do with a homogeneous space, develops on a kind of surface and on this surface independent growths may form and float" (T. F., p. 163). It is also necessary to view conscious life statically, as there is a definite relation to the objective world in all conscious states. "Every moment of consciousness is contemporaneous with a stage of the external world." The distinction between subjective and objective has become so fluid that it is practically impossible to treat the one as dynamic and the other as static. "Neither is space so foreign to our nature as we imagine nor is matter so completely extended in space as our senses and intellect represent it" (C. F., p. 274). "What is given are not inextensible sensations: how should they find their way back to space, choose a locality within it, and co-ordinate themselves there so as to build up an experience that is common to all men? And what is real is not extension, divided into independent parts; how being deprived of all possible relationship to our consciousness, could it unfold a series of changes of which the relations and the order exactly correspond to the relations and the order of our representations?" (M. and M., p. 326). Conscious life and inert matter are both dynamic and static. Possibly, life can be understood in its essence if treated dynamically and matter statically.

It is this community of nature between matter and spirit that Bergson emphasises in his book on *Matter and Memory*. Our intellect, adapted to action, breaks the world into two and devises all sorts of artificial remedies to glue them together. Idealism and realism are futile attempts
in that direction. If we bear in mind that the dualism is a later product, born of and bred by intellect and not primitive and radical to reality, the problem which idealism and realism attempt to solve vanishes. If by intuition we return to the whole, the false distinctions set up by conceptual analysis disappear. "The obscurity of this problem in all doctrines is due to the double antithesis which our understanding establishes between the extended and the unextended on the one side, between quality and quantity on the other" (M. and M. p. 235). Our understanding "creates the opposition which it afterwards contemplates amazed" (id. and M. p. 327). But in reality, the problem of perception is stirred over and not solved by Bergson. He evades it by employing the word "image" in reference to the object of perception. While this use is valuable as a protest against the representative theory of perception, still it is weak in so far as it suggests that matter is of the same essence as consciousness, though Bergson does not hold it. In spite of all his devices the dualism persists in his system. The very title matter and memory indicates the dualism, for memory is the essential function of spirit. What Bergson has actually achieved is the reduction of mind and matter in movement. They are no more two spheres of reality but are two opposed and coexisting movements, two processes opposite in their direction. "This book affirms the reality of spirit and the reality of matter... It is then frankly dualistic" (M. and M. p. viii).

V

In Creative Evolution the independence and self-existence of matter is a vital necessity. The account of the relation of matter to life is transferred from human life to the cosmic whole. In man, the discord between spirit and matter is all in all. Growth and development of self is due to the conquest over material obstacles which thwart the evolution of self. Without the struggle
between the two, there would be no life, no change, and the individual may be regarded as practically non-existent. Even as the cosmic spirit cannot act without the resisting medium of matter. Through the interaction of the two the whole universe arises (see C. E. p. 133). Again, life is an effort to insert into matter the largest possible amount of indetermination (see C. E. p. 132).

"I cannot regard the general evolution and progress of life in the whole of the organised world, the co-ordination and sublimation of vital functions to one another in the same living being, the relations which psychology and physiology combined seem bound to establish between brain activity and thought in man, without arriving at this conclusion that life is an immense effort attempted by thought to obtain of matter something which matter does not wish to give it" (Report of the French Philosophical Society Meeting, May 2, 1901, quoted in Le Roy's A New Philosophy: Henri Bergson, p. 97). This effort requires energy which life cannot create. "All that the effort can do is to make the best of a pre-existing energy which it finds at its disposal. Now it finds only one way of succeeding in this, viz. to secure an accumulation of potential energy from matter" (C. E. p. 131). "The impetus of life consists in a need of creation. It cannot create absolutely because it is confronted with matter" (C. E. p. 365). Matter is thus an essential factor confronting life and provoking its activity. The very nature of the creative evolution will be inexplicable without the independent existence of matter. The evolution of life is not the realisation of a predestined plan for there are a million by-paths which end as blind alleys. "Progress is accomplished only on the two or three great lines of evolution in which forms ever higher and higher appear; between these lines run a crowd of minor paths, in which all the contrary deviations, arrests and setbacks are multiplied" (C. E. pp. 169 and 170). These accidents can be accounted for only as the ways and means put forward by the creative principle to overcome
the resistance of inert matter. If the resisting matter were absent, then these failures, "deviations, arrests and setbacks," will have to be laid at the door of the vital impulse itself. To avoid this Bergson assumes two original and ultimate principles, consciousness and space, or roughly life and matter, for matter is the outcome or reflection of the partial victory of the opposing force, and is not that opposing force itself. When the two conflicting principles are present, the rest of the evolution of the universe is child's play to a philosopher of the brilliance of Bergson.

If Bergson's system is to be viewed as monistic, it is necessary to reduce the duality of life and matter to an ultimate unity by reducing either life to matter or matter to life or both to one common principle. We cannot reduce life to matter, for that is to assume that Bergson has written his volumes in vain. If there is one point more than another that he emphasizes in his writings, it is the absurdity of mechanising life, or spatialising spirit. Can we reduce matter to life and regard it as the first effect of life's evolution? It hardly seems possible to do so, for life cannot evolve until matter is present opposing it. Evolution presupposes the existence of matter. Granted that life with its possibilities can survive even without the resistance of matter, it ought to have engendered something more useful and important than mere matter, especially in view of the fact that the evolution of life is unimpeded by any resisting influence. To imagine that the creative impulse gave birth to matter on account of its importance in the later stages of evolution is to import an anthropomorphic or finalistic tendency into Bergson's philosophy. That life should first throw out matter and then make a play of opposing it and with great trouble pressing through and penetrating it, is not conceivable. We are left with the third possibility, the reduction of the two principles to one common centre. Bergson resolves the dualism by making both life and matter spring from one source. "If our analysis is correct, it
is consciousness or rather supra-consciousness, that is at
the origin of life. 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" (C. E.
p. 273). Thus Bergson traces matter and life to con-
sciousness. All reality is spiritual. The whole is spirit.
Bergson's system is a spiritualistic monism. But there
are difficulties in the way of this theory. Why should
the supra-consciousness fractionate itself? Why should
it break in twain? The evolution of life on this planet
is due to its opposition to matter. We ask if the original
 supra-consciousness or ultimate spirit can evolve into life
and matter without the existence of an outside extraneous
force, why can we not say that even on earth life does the
same? If the supra-consciousness can give our branches,
can work out its evolution without any resisting medium,
why should we presume that evolution of life on this
planet alone requires a resisting obstacle to force it to
come out with its possibilities? Evolution must be
essentially the same whether it is the evolution of ultimate
spirit into life and matter or the evolution of life into
plants, animals, and men. Either both require resisting
forces or both can dispense with them. The latter
alternative does not commend itself to Bergson. So even
for the evolution of the ultimate psychical something, a
resisting matter is needed. We go back to the dualism
of God and matter, supra-consciousness and space.

In this difficulty, Bergson makes matter a negative
idea. Matter and ideality establishes that life and matter
are two opposing movements. There are passages in
Creative Evolution which imply the same view. "Life
as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into
the world, will appear as a wave which rises and which
is opposed by the descending movement of matter."
"Life is a movement, materiality is the inverse move-
ment, and each of these movements is simple, the matter
which forms a world being an undivided flux, and undivided also the life which runs through it, cutting out in it living being a. along its track. " "As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organised beings from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places and in all times, do but evidence a single impulse, the inverse of the movement of matter and in itself indivisible " (C. E. chap. iii.). So long as there are two distinct movements, Bergson is not a monist. But he soon makes out that one of these movements is primary and the other secondary. Matter is not an independent movement but only the inverse of the ascending movement of life. "It is a descent which is only an interruption of a rise " (C. E. p. 291). Matter "endures only by its connection with that which ascends" (C. E. p. 300). Reality is one continuous, creative ascending movement. Its arrest or interruption gives us matter. Matter is thus the negation of the spiritual movement. There is only one movement and that is spiritual. Its interruption gives the inverse of it and that is matter. But we cannot understand why the ascending movement should have been interrupted at all. Why should it ever have become inverted? Why should the original jet of spiritual spray suddenly get solidified into matter? To these questions Bergson has no answer. He does not give us a satisfactory account of how, out of the original psychic force, matter comes. It is not open to Bergson to argue that matter is only a negative idea, a shadow and not a reality. for Bergson's view of negation compels him to consider matter not a pseudo-idea but a definite somewhat. What order and geometrical order are opposed, but geometrical order is not a mere nothing. There is no such thing as absence of order. Were it not something positive, it could not serve the purpose of interrupting the rise of life. It could not occasion the activity of life. So matter is a kind of being
and not non-being. It is different from the being of creative activity, but it is not an illusion. But our difficulty is, how can a mere interruption of a positive process create another positive process, though of an inverse order?

In chapter iii. of Creative Evolution, Bergson urges that intellectuality and materiality rise together. The genesis of intellect and the genesis of matter are correlative (C. E. p. 193). "It is the same operation of the same movement which creates at once the intellectuality of mind and the materiality of things." (C. E. p. 247). Bergson holds that intellect is the interruption of intuition as matter is the interruption of life. But there are passages where he makes out that intellect is something essential to and immanent in the evolutionary movement. It is contained in the same spirit as much as instinct and intuition. Development of the idea has been along divergent lines and intellect is the end of one line of development. Evolution has taken place on three different lines, the line of automatism exhibited in plants, the line of instinct in Hymenoptera, and the line of intelligence in man. The primal impulse must have had in it the promise and potency of these divergent lines. Intellect then is not an interruption or an arrest, but a definite possibility of the idea produced at one stage in its outward and upward course. It is one of the products of the creative impulse (C. E. p. 116). It is created by life. It is hard to comprehend how intellect can be both a primal tendency of life as well as an interruption of it. If intellect is something positive, even so is matter; if it is only an interruption, then matter is only that.

VI

Bergson’s account of matter is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions. Throughout the course of life the dualism is kept up, though Bergson has faith in ultimate unity. The difficulties we have raised in this
discussion will perhaps be brushed aside by Bergson as purely imaginary ones, due to an abstract and vicious intellectualism. If we only rise to intuition and grasp things as they are, then the difficulties will disappear. If we think penetratingly, then our thoughts become one with things and the whole reality, life as well as matter, will appear to be essentially one duration. The difficulties here set forth may be regarded as due to a confusion between the theory of the \textit{Eka v.rat} as the metaphysical principle of reality, and the theory of the historical evolution of life. While the latter is essentially something presented to us as a phenomenon within our ordinary intellectual view, the former requires an effort of intuition. To the intellectual view matter is a condition of life. This necessity is involved in the use of intellect itself. But intellect is only a product of creative evolution, and when we transcend intellect we transcend the duality of life and matter. Thus our difficulties about the relation of life to matter are traced to a confusion between the metaphysical and the empirical, the intuitive and the intellectual views of the universe, between the concepts of the \textit{Eka v.rat} as the ultimate comprehensive reality of the universe, and that of the origin and progress of life as a historical process. This way of getting over the pressing problems of philosophy is strongly reminiscent of the monistic school of Indian Vedanta in which all the puzzling problems of the relation of \textit{Absolutum} to \textit{Maya} are traced to a confusion between the \textit{paramartha\v{r}a}, or the metaphysical or the noumenal, and the \textit{syav\v{r}a\v{r}a}, or the empirical or the phenomenal, conceptions of reality. But the noumenal and the phenomenal cannot be held apart. The metaphysical has to be related to the historical. Absolutist philosophers who make the real immutable being, find it hard to account for change; Bergson who makes the absolute duration finds it hard to account for permanence and stability. The absolutists who are mostly ‘identity’ philosophers reduce difference and diversity to an appear-
ance, illusion, non-being, and irrationality. Bergson, insisting himself in movement, difference, and change, disowns all permanence and identity, and disclaims them as dreams of the mind and abstractions of thought. Bergson bids us to rid ourselves of the illusions of permanence and stability by transcending intelligence and rising to intuition. This is just the discipline the absolutists set us to, if we wish to rise from the world of change to that of motionless perfection. Each of the two, identity and difference, permanence and change, which are organically related to each other, is exclusively emphasised and caricatured. Bergson, instead of giving us a philosophical explanation of the difficulties and contradictions, exhorts us to surrender ourselves to the spontaneity of intuition. We are asked to dispense with all symbols, take shelter in faith, and in that attitude see reality as it is. We then see God who is the centre of all things, the source of all evolution, who is unceasing freedom, activity, and creation. A simple and facile monism is different in the difficulties of rational philosophy is given us.

It is hard to see how the system really differs from an abstract absolutism. In both there is one essential principle from which all things originate. Surprise's Substance is the one real existence. It is the totality of all being. So is Bergson's absolute duration. All aspects of the universe, plants, animals and human personalities, take their rise from the creative principle. Even though Bergson calls the central principle duration, still he has as much difficulty as any absolutist in accounting for change. Plato's non-being, employed to account for the finite universe, is replaced by matter in Bergson's philosophy. This non-being or matter in both systems is neither ultimate, for in that case the monism is affected, nor phenomenal illusory or Maya, for then the play of the universe cannot be accounted for. Indications of a more concrete idealism are not wanting in Bergson's philosophy. The ultimate unity is spiritual. Life and
matter are assumed to have started from the same source and are recognised to be complementary to each other. They both co-operate in promoting the central identity. Life and matter are the mutual implications of the original unity. Human life suggests to us the way in which the relative oppositions between life and matter, conscious-
ness and life, can be overcome in the higher unity. The individual is essentially a discord, he is a limitation of the "vital vital" by matter; "we are the vital current loaded with matter" (C. E. p. 252). The individual can attain harmony and reach the point of view of God by spiritualising the human and the finite. Intuition and intellect are not two opposed methods of grasping reality, for only a complementation between the two can help us in knowledge of reality as it is. But these germs of the concrete idealism in Bergson's account of life and matter we have purpose to elucidate.

VII

What is the absolutist theory of the relation of life to matter and of both to the whole? In idealistic systems of philosophy, the play of the Absolute is looked upon as the manifestation of the creative joy of the one spirit. Activity is the essence of mind, and in its process of self-realisation the absolute mind goes forth into the forms of infinite and difference. The universe is the realisation of the nature of the Absolute. The infinite life has no limit in order to become manifest. All forms are brought forth for the manifestation of its nature. This self-limiting power of the Absolute is called in Indian philosophy Maya. Its life appears as spirit and its maya as matter, and these two are never disjoined during the manifestation. The supreme spirit is thus both force and matter, active and passive, male and female (Purusha and Prakriti).1

1 In Indian Philosophy, the Absolute becomes the self-conscious Iswara among the other. Iswara is the personal Lord having Prakriti as root matter. Prakriti becomes self-same through the other. The root matter later differentiates itself into various beings through the energising of Iswara. Before the manifestation the undifferenti-
The supreme One in relation to the universe breaks into the inseparable two, self and not-self, subject and object, being and non-being. The formless, spaceless, timeless something which would remain if the Absolute should completely annihilate itself is what we call non-being. Being and non-being depend on each other. Subject and object are correlative functions. In all our experience we have this subject-object relation. These imply each other, are broken up out of the whole and attain their reality in the whole of becoming. When the two tendencies are postulated, the rest of the work of the universe is only a struggle of one of them to dominate the other. In the lowest stages we have the pure externality of things to things, the realm of matter where self is at its lowest and not-self at its highest. But still, the purpose of matter is to serve the ends of spirit. It is the object of a subject. We discover a gradual spiritual ascent in plant and animal. This joy of spirit and life never comes to self-consciousness till we come to man. In man the spirit has come to itself. The growth is then forward due to development from within and not to pressure from without. Thus the whole universe is seeking more life and fuller. We have in the world the struggle of life against the lower tendency, to attain self-realisation. But throughout the universe there is the one principle of spirit manifesting itself in a series of forms which have the power of representing the whole in a greater or lesser degree. The history of the world has been a process of the return of the Absolute into itself in the fullness of its self-consciousness. The evolutionary process of the world would be unintelligible without immanent spiritual teleology involving a continual ascent from God’s minute beginnings to ever higher forms of existence and at last to man and superman. There is an underlying spiritual reality which is the source of

what Absolute as well as the unmanifested Absolute are nothing, and as they are indiscriminately called Absolute, the unmanifested. Hegel has justified the usage by holding that pure being and pure non-being are one. It is in becoming that they are real.
evolution, and our consciousness is our expression thereof. The dissociation of the Absolute into the two, self and its other, constitutes the beginning of creation, and the work of the world is only an attempt to get back to the original wholeness through growth. The universe is just the way through which the abstract unity becomes a concrete totality. The world process is the becoming of the whole.

So matter, according to absolute idealism, is the lowest manifestation of spirit. Absoluteism does not reduce matter to spirit, but points out that matter is there for the sake of spirit. It is there merely to pass over and return into spirit. That by which an organism develops cannot be external to it. Man is harnessing nature and adapting her processes to his ends. The external world is there in order to be used by man. It enables him to attain his freedom. Through conflict with it and conquest over it, man reaches his individuality, and so nature is the image of spirit, and Hegel is right when he says that mind is the truth of nature. Quite as much as Bergson or any other vitalist, absolute idealism holds that though life is evolved from the womb of mechanism and is dependent upon it, it cannot be looked upon as the product of mechanism. Thus absolute idealism distinguishes (1) the origin of the universe which is due to the dissociation of the whole into Being and Non-Being, (2) the process of the universe which is the warfare of these two tendencies, where (3) the progress is measured by the supremacy of being over non-being, and (4) the goal or the destiny of the universe which is, the complete supremacy of being over non-being or spirit over matter, when the Absolute comes to its own. But the end and the beginning are merely ideal, and what we have is only the pathway between the two, called the universe, where we all are pilgrims.

VIII

Let us ask whether Bergson admits the reality of a whole that becomes differentiated into the two, being
and non-being, through the conflict and interaction of which the process of the universe continues. The duality admits the reality of a whole which breaks in twain. The nature of that whole is psychical. The absolute is spirit. "The whole is of the same nature as the self." (C. E.). Bergson postulates a spiritual whole of which matter, etc., are forms. For in the historical evolution of the world first comes inert matter, then life; and so, whether Bergson calls matter the relaxation of spirit or the negative effect thereof, matter presupposes spirit. Only, in matter spirit has not come to itself. In other words, matter is a lower grade of spirit. Primordial spirit or consciousness falls asunder and breaks into two. On the one side we have spirit, which is looked upon by Bergson as the creative tendency ever making for fuller and fuller freedom; on the other, it lapses into matter, absolute determination, mechanical adjustment and space. Creative life is the active determining element (Pravrajya). But there are no objects in the world which are purely spatial or purely spiritual. "Although matter stretches itself out in the direction of space, it does not completely attain it" (p. 229). Matter does not wholly coincide with pure homogeneous space (p. 230). There is neither spirit which is completely active nor matter which is completely passive. Matter and life we come across in this world are both active and passive, and the two tendencies are in them struggling with each other. Both of them are kinds of order or activity, one more vital, the other more automatic. Matter is not pure passivity. It is not non-being, as life has to take forms forced on it by matter. Becoming alone is the true reality. Bergson does not view the world as dualistic. He does not consider that the world is broken up into two disparate portions. Life and matter are not two movements separate from each other, but are only the manifestations of the two different tendencies or articulations which we discover in the one real. Reality is one, though we can describe it as a struggle of two tendencies. It is
not a mechanical mixture of two elements but a conflict of two tendencies. It is a current which we call upward when the creative spiritual tendency is conquering and downward when the non-creative tendency is conquering. Becoming, which is the union of the two principles of being and non-being, is alone real. As Hegel would put it, being or life has an impulse to complete itself, and so relates itself to non-being or matter, and passes with it into the higher category of becoming. While becoming is the sole reality, conceptual thought discovers in it being and absolute nought, which is its other. Reality is change, activity, or becoming. The history of evolution is the continuous becoming of being by overcoming its other. The succession of living forms is just the attempt of being to overcome non-being. All the objects of the universe are mixtures of these two tendencies. The relative grades of the objects are determined by the more or less of the creative or the spiritual tendency. The hierarchy of values is determined by the more or less of the spiritual nature. The universe from its beginnings in crude matter to its heights in human persons is struggling towards the attainment of the whole. The life tendency moves on, creating endless forms which advance in the direction of, and beyond, man. When man gives up his subordination to matter, then spirit comes back to its own. But in the universe this goal is never reached. Here the struggle between the two goes on. For if it stops, the universe comes to a stop; it will be the death of the universe. Neither of them can cease to operate. Creative evolution is a continuous becoming where we have the action of being conquering non-being or non-being conquering being. Were the conquest ever complete, i.e., were being without non-being to conquer, or vice versa, we should then have, either pure being or pure non-being, which are both abstractions. The very essence of creation is the strife of being and non-being. We see how what Bergson says about the classical systems of philosophy applies to his case also. He requires something negative or zero to
be added to the original being before he can have the world of change. Bergson’s conception of space corresponds to the “Platonic non-being, the Aristotelian matter—a metaphysical zero which joined to the idea, like the arithmetical zero to unity, multiplies it in space and time” (C. E. p. 334).

When our attention is confined to the universe we see in it a struggle between the two tendencies. Bergson seems to conceive the possibility of real duration pure and spiritual, without any taint of matter or non-being. On this point there is a difference between the absolute idealists and Bergson. If we open our eyes and see the world of experience we find it to be of the nature of becoming. In this becoming we shall soon be able to perceive that there are two tendencies of spirit and matter which both seem to present themselves as equally real and fundamental and existing of their own right. This is the attitude most natural for the unreflecting mind to take up. But absolute dualism will not do, since reality is of the nature of becoming. The two condescend into one whole. So we call them tendencies upward and downward. They are the articulations which conceptual analysis reveals to us in the nature of the real or in the process of becoming. As we find progress in the world, i.e., in this strife of opposites, they cannot be negatively related. They contribute to the ends of the whole. The whole breaks up into the two which are tending to come back to their original union. In this description which is given by Bergson and the dualists, they are employing concepts. If this theory is true, then the two tendencies must have been present from the very beginning. There cannot be a stage where only one tendency is present. The two are correlative, like subject and object. When Bergson occasionally suggests that the two are accidentally related, we cannot follow him. For in Bergson the two are fundamentally related. Even where Bergson admits that spirit acts upon matter, it could not put one step to the front or move out of its circle, were there not
matter everywhere confronting it, pulling it not as it were. If this is the relation of spirit to matter, then it cannot be an accidental relation but an essential one. But Bergson seems to admit the exclusive reality of pure or absolute duration. This seems inconceivable. Perfect duration would mean perfect activity. But perfect activity without something to resist it, is a contradiction in terms. For according to Bergson we cannot conceive of activity or force unless there is something against which it can force itself. The life force is unintelligible unless there is something to push itself against or exert force upon. Bergson is very severe upon the absolutist conception of being. Whatever the absolutists might say about the dynamic spiritual energy of the absolute, he persists in calling it motionless being, which we are taught to take for nothing. But we ask, what about the spiritual current which has nothing to push itself against? Is it not to be viewed as a static blank? Our point is that the upward current of life would have nothing to push itself against, if there was no matter. It would not have been a current or activity at all. Matter is the resisting obstacle, and as such the necessary means of the spiritual activity. Bergson seems to admit the possibility of one of these tendencies existing apart from the other. For he says, matter is spirit relaxed, pure activity condensed, duration precipitated. If matter is the arrest or interruption of spirit, what causes the interruption? Why does the overflowing stream suddenly get itself checked and arrested instead of pursuing its course to no man’s land? If the inhibition of spirit is due to the collision with matter, we are begging the question. In the freedom of consciousness and flow of mind, it is all one swift current without any impediments of solid objects and distinct things. Bergson cannot explain matter as due to the alteration of the upward spiritual current in the inverse direction. That it alters and that in the inverse direction are, as we have already shown, pure assumptions. If these assumptions are accepted, then it follows that till the particular
point was reached where the upward current altered its course, there was no matter at all. But this contradicts Bergson’s view that spirit, whichever way it turns, meets with matter and collides with it. Bergson is not able to give any satisfactory explanation of the interruption or fall. It is there. It is the downward movement potential in the upward. We have the capacity for detestation in our consciousness. This means that spirit contains within it the potentiality of matter. With spirit there is matter. The practical need which is the source of change is in the very heart of reality along with the perennially self-renewing freedom. In account for the return of mind from its own free course, the skeleton must be put into the box, the worm must find its way into the magic circle. Surely we do not have in mind, then matter, and then resistance between the two. Matter is a pristine tendency of life and not an interruption of it. Matter is in the very center of life. Bergson is truly absolutist when he holds that the dualism is not absolute. The two opposite tendencies are unthinkable except in relation to each other. They are the two aspects of the one effort. They are recognized in art through the struggle with the other. We do not know what is apart from the other. Art reality is a collision between the two vital and its antagonistic manifestation which are unknowable as pure forms. Bergson is not consistent with his better and more logical self when he suggests that what exists first is the unlimited movement of spirit, later emerges its effect; and from that point onwards the struggle commences. He is logical when he says that from the beginning spirit collides with matter, that matter is contained in spirit as consciousness contains its detentum. The two tendencies are present from the start, opposing each other and making for richness and variety, in the one life process of the world.

The becoming of the world is constituted by the two tendencies of life and matter. From the slow vital the whole universe develops by divergent evolution. The
Aum vital and the force that opposes it have also a common ground, and so the life and matter of Bergson correspond to the self and not-self of the absolutists. One is the spiritual tendency which by overcoming the other material tendency makes for progress. In the lowest stages, the material tendency has in a sense conquered the spiritual, and we have there neither indetermination, nor choice, nor freedom. The not-self is in the ascendant, and all the changes of the material universe are purely self-repeating. We cannot, simply because it has not the characteristics of spirit, say it has nothing to do with spirit. Reality for Bergson as for the absolutists is spiritual, but this spirit lapsed in the lowest stages where the automatic tendency is relatively supreme. That even matter is not pure non-being Bergson admits when he says that intellect does not give us a true picture of the material world, for it exaggerates its material character. Were matter completely material, intellect would be able to show us reality as it is. Then intellect would become intuition, for it is the nature of intuition to give us things as they are. From this lowest stage spirit is slowly progressing. We have life, and as this life takes on more of the freedom and indetermination characteristic of spirit, consciousness appears, and life becomes elevated to the next higher stage of animal life. Soon the animal consciousness becomes associated with reasoning and gets transformed into the human mind, and this human mind is also a stage to be surpassed.

That all these may well be looked upon as the higher and lower forms of spirit, whose nature is activity or becoming, Bergson admits when he says that all reality is a becoming or an unfolding. Reality is psychical throughout, and one of its indispensable characteristics is embodied in matter, in the pure externality of things to each other. The nature of a psychical content is to change, and this change is present everywhere, and in some cases, where consciousness is needed, it makes its appearance. The ultimate nature of reality is like that
of our inner life which is mind, spirit, freedom. All other reality differs from this only in degree and not in kind. Reality is a whole, concrete and universal, holding together in indissoluble unity aspects which in abstraction from one another and from their unity in the whole are contradictory, absolutely exclusive and even destructive of one another. Life and matter appear diametrically opposed in their nature, properties and the ends they have in view. One seems to be working against the other. But they are so only when they are abstracted from the whole to which they belong. In the whole they are found to live in a harmony; apart from it they say, Kill me or I shall kill you. The opposites are opposed to one another and not to the unity. As Hegel would put it, the only reality is the concrete universal. The opposite aspects are mutually dependent, though antagonistic, moments of the universal. The pulse-beat of the universe is constituted by their unending strife. This is Hegel. This is Bergson. Only Bergson seems to consider the strife to be the end of things, the ultimate expression of the universe, while Hegel holds that their negativity is cancelled in the whole, viewed from a broader standpoint than that of narrow individual existence or experience. Reality ceases to be a strife of opposites and becomes a whole where the parts are mutually indispensable. Their seeming negation expresses the aspect of strife in the real. Reality is neither pure being nor pure becoming, neither one nor many, but a being in becoming, a one in the many. We shall revert to this topic at a later stage.

There are passages where Bergson views the universe of change as the progressive realisation of the ideal of the one in the many. What Bergson speaks of as life and its evolution is really spirit and its evolution. "As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that unindividual movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organised beings from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all
places as in all times do but evidence a single impulsion, the
inverse of the movement of matter, in itself indi-
visible" (C. K. p. 285). The evolution of spirit into
the universe is the everlasting realisation of the ideal of
the one in the many. Throwing itself into endless species
and individuals, it appears as many different lives. This
is difference or plurality, but there is also sameness or
unity. There is one and the same life force at work.
One life has assumed infinite diversity of forms. Indi-
vidual lives are but forms of the ever-individual universal
life. "Charged from the outset with the infinity of the
diverse psychic potentialities of the species and the
individuals which were to be, life realised all its
latent possibilities by branching in many different direc-
tions without sacrificing the unity of its original con-
centrated form." Life process is the progressive realisa-
tion of the One through the Many. It is the supreme
instance of the highest form of the universal which we
call by the name of the concrete identity. Though
 Bergson is not clearly conscious of it, still the logic of his
argument compels him to consent to the reality of a whole
in which strife is.

While the absolutist considers the two tendencies to be
those of self and not-self, Bergson calls them life and
matter. Here Bergson is in the wrong. Further mechanical
explanations cannot account for vital phenomena, since
the properties possessed by organisms are different from
those of crystals, then we may well ask whether purely
biological explanations will account for conscious pheno-
mena and psychological explanations for moral values.
In the process of evolution we have gaps not only between
the organic and the inorganic, but also between the
physiological and the organic, the conscious and the
physiological, the moral and the conscious. It is an
arbitrary procedure to say that life and matter should be
distinguished since physico-chemical explanations will not
do for vital phenomena, but to content myself with saying
that consciousness and morality are only stages of life.
It consciousness and memory, logic and morality, can be looked upon as two grades of life, in spite of the fact that the laws of organic growth are inadequate to account for conscious and mental phenomena, in exactly the same manner, since mechanical explanations cannot account for organic objects, why can we not look upon matter also as a phase of life, lower than organisms? Either we should consider all these, men, animals, plants and minerals as stages of the same essence, or the world must be looked upon as the warfare of two tendencies, life and matter, but four principles, matter, life, consciousness and reason. Bergson with the absolutists is willing to reject the latter alternative. He is anxious to establish a monism, notwithstanding the struggle of the world. If so, is it not better to use a term which is not so clearly associated with one of these stages as life? It will not do to call them all stages of life, as this term is closely associated with biological phenomena. We shall have to say, then, that all three are higher and lower forms of the one essential spirit. The whole manifests itself at one stage as matter, at another as life, at the third as animal consciousness, at the fourth as human intelligence. They are all forms of spirit at different stages. Instead of saying they are types of organisation due to life, we should say they are grades of spirit. As a matter of fact, Bergson is not very careful in his use of the word life. Life and consciousness are sometimes used synonymously. Life sometimes refers to the vital phenomena. We distinguish broadly three different usages: (1) the subconscious whole which breaks into the two, or (2) the upward current which comes into conflict with the downward one: "Life as a whole from the initial impulsion that thrusts it into the world will appear as a wave which rises and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter" (C. E. p. 254). "Life is essentially a current sent through matter, drawing from it what it can" (p. 280), or (3) the process of becoming which is due to the interaction of the two, spirit and space, being
and non-being. "Life is consciousness launched into matter." "Consciousness is distinct from the organism it animates, although it must undergo its vicissitudes" (C. E. p. 284).

Bergson bases his extreme opposition of life and matter on the ground that while in the physical world changes are external, being merely displacements of parts, in the world of vital phenomena changes are internal, being genuine creations of novelty. In what science calls the physical world time does not enter, and the present is determined by the past according to the necessary relations which science may discover; in the world of vital phenomena, time is very real and the future incompletely determined by the present. Predictability is possible in the world of physical phenomena, since all is given at the outset and everything is mechanically determined. In the vital world, which is free and spontaneous, predictability is impossible. Bergson again and again refers in the creative character of life and compares it to the ripening of fruit, while the movement of the physical world consists in a mere reshuffling of the old elements. Bergson emphasizes the discontinuous and contingent nature of life. But a closer examination reveals to us that life is not so full of surprises as we are led to believe. Even Bergson insists on the continuity of life. Its future is not discontinuous with its past. Unless there be something common he would have no right to say that the life is one continuous whole. Emphasis on the continuity of living processes means connection between the past and the present. To that extent contingency is excluded. The only difference between the two lies in the kind of action. While mechanical acts are determined externally, vital acts are determined internally. But from this to infer that the activities of the one are rigid while those of the other are free is wrong and untrue to facts. Organisms are determined from within, by their own nature, while crystals are determined from the outside. When Bergson has an eye on facts, he sees
clearly that life is not a series of takings by storm, or leaps from one thing to another, but a continuous evolution. Life is not a repetition of the same parts, nor is matter that: it is a coherence of differences in a whole. As for novelty, it is not the property of vital phenomena only.

All that Bergson has established is that organisation is not manufacture, nor is an organism a machine. We cannot submit life process to mathematical treatment. "Astronomy, physics and chemistry cannot account for life phenomena. Calculation touches at most certain phenomena of organic destruction. Organic creation . . . we cannot submit to a mathematical treatment" (C. E. p. 21). Life cannot be resolved into matter and motion. Mechanical categories are not an adequate explanation of life process which resembles more the life of mind than that of the mineral. But this does not mean complete discontinuity between the two. "We do not question the fundamental identity of inerrible matter and organised matter." "That life is a kind of mechanism I cordially agree." (C. E. p. 32). The vitalists and the absolutists have an eye on both the continuity and the discontinuity of life and matter. They agree with Bergson in thinking that pure mechanism is insufficient to account for the phenomena of life; but they do not rush to the conclusion that therefore life is in every way opposed to matter. Bergson starts with an absolute opposition between the organic and the inorganic. But he has no right to do so, since there is as much opposition between the organic and the conscious, the conscious and the intellectual. If life is a fight against matter, consciousness is a fight against life. But if there is continuity between life and consciousness, then there is continuity between life and matter. Bergson cannot have much objection to the idealist solution of life and matter. In life matter is not destroyed but only transmitted. Life is not the destruction of matter, but only its transformation. The properties of matter are caught up in a higher synthesis. The idealist as well as Bergson
emphasises the uniqueness of life. He knows that it cannot be reduced to an aspect of matter. Life is more than mechanism, but is still born in it. To him life and matter are higher and lower aspects of a single reality.

That the two, matter and life, are not absolute opposites but relative differences in a whole, promulgating the one unity of spirit, comes out in Bergson's writings. "Life must be something which avails itself of a certain elasticity in matter" (Life and Consciousness). "Life seems to have succeeded in this [overcoming the resistance of matter] by dint of humility, by making itself very small and very insinuating, hemming to physical and chemical forces, consentient even to go part of the way with them. ... Of phenomena in the simplest terms of life, it is hard to say whether they are already vital. Life had to enter thus into habits of inert matter, in order to draw it little by little, magnetised as it were, to another track." (C. E. p. 105-104). Bergson's contention that matter is only the relaxation of spirit, suggests the idealist view that mind has only to reveal the mind in matter. Matter, according to Bergson, is unconscious mind, while according to Hegel it is concealed mind. To both, it is mind come to rest. Materiality is what life itself assumes. Life is only the truth of matter, as in Hegel mind is the truth of nature. In Bergson, while both matter and mind are locked upon as movement they are different because matter is self-repeating movement, while mind is creative movement. Consciousness and memory distinguish life from matter. Memory is just the way in which the past persists in the present. The persistence of the past in the present is common to both matter and mind. But as mind is essentially creative, it retains the past not by way of simple repetition or mere unaltered reproduction but in a different way which is called memory. So memory is only the special form which the common feature of the persistence of the past in the present has assumed in the case of mind. Consciousness again does not distinguish matter from mind absolutely, since for
Bergson, matter is no far from being the opposite of mental contents that it may be spoken of as consisting of images, which we would perceive were our perception pure, i.e. unalloyed with memory and sensation. These images can exist without being perceived. They generally exist so in the case of matter, for since there is no indetermination in it, it has no consciousness. But when it enters the living body the movement is held up for a time in the zone of indetermination provided by the nervous system. This arrest makes it become a conscious perception. Matter is thus only mind which through losing its indetermination no longer has need of either consciousness in memory. Consciousness and memory, then, are our points in which mind differs from matter absolutely, but rather the consequences of what according to Bergson is the fundamental difference, viz. the disappearance of novelty. Whether it is so fundamental as we have already stated, open to debate. It is strange that while absolutist thinkers, although they make mind and matter differ in essential respects, will view them as phases of one whole, Bergson, though minimising the distinction, is not willing to consider them as belonging to one whole. But this absolutist conclusion is the logical implication in Bergson's argument. When he says that the nature of the whole reality is psychical it follows that life and matter are means to each other. They are parts of one whole, to be regarded as higher and lower phases in it.