

Chapter 1

Decolonizing Bergson

The Temporal Schema of the Open and the Closed

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The remnants and legacies of colonialisms—from geographical and spatial orders to material exploitation and cultural imaginaries—often continue, in refracted modes, in postcolonial contexts. Underlying and sustaining these ways of knowing (and hence of constituting meaning) are temporal frameworks, economies of time, that persist largely unquestioned. The dichotomy of the open and the closed is one such schema; it not only plays a structuring role in colonial ways of knowing, but it also continues to be assumed in some theories of development in postcolonial settings. That colonized societies have a tendency to closure (being resistant to progress and to inclusivity and otherness) is taken to justify colonial and neocolonial paternalism.

In this chapter, I propose to attend to this well-worn temporal schema of open/closed by examining its elaboration in the philosophy of Henri Bergson and by critically parsing the possibilities his philosophy offers for its destabilization. Though Bergson wrote in a colonial context, this context barely receives acknowledgment in his work; at best, it could be read obliquely and ambiguously from his examples.¹ That Bergson was politically self-aware, having engaged in diplomatic missions and polemics for France during the First World War and having been instrumental in the establishment of the League of Nations, has been well documented.² His wide-ranging influence, including on the *Négritude* movement, means that this omission—or “colonial aphasia,” to borrow Ann Stoler’s term—must

be attended to.³ For this masks the uncomfortable resonances between Bergson's philosophy of time (especially in his late work, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, published in 1932) and the temporal narratives that accompany and justify French colonialism. This is doubly important given Bergson's uptake by more recent French philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze, and by contemporary feminist and political theorists, especially some who identify under the umbrella of "new materialism" (including such diverse thinkers as Elizabeth Grosz and William Connolly).

I mean for the project of this chapter—that of *decolonizing Bergson*—to have relevance both to Bergson studies, then, and to contemporary scholars of race and colonialism, who may wonder whether and how such questions could be addressed from within Bergson's philosophy. Rather than attend simply to Bergson's examples, I believe that a methodological approach can reveal how colonizing and racializing frames may be implicitly at work, no matter his explicit intentions. More importantly, I aim to show how questions about colonialism and racism are not simple afterthoughts, but can gain traction by attending to the structuring assumptions and methodologies of Bergson's own texts. In this regard, I not only attend to Bergsonian philosophy critically, but I mine that philosophy for the critical resources and generative tools from which such decolonizing critique finds its impetus. Thus, I understand the project of *decolonizing Bergson* to have two sides—to be at once a critical and a creative reconfiguration of Bergsonian philosophy. What is at stake in decolonizing Bergson is, in my view, the very Bergsonian recognition of the weight of the past—the pressure it exerts on, and the difference it makes for, the present. Our pasts are structured by colonial durations and imperial formations. This is the past as a whole, the past as unconscious and multiplicitous, coexistent with the present. This past is not transcended and gone, but forms the invisible glue that makes itself felt in the present, even when selectively disregarded and unattended to in so-called *postcolonial* and *postracial* presents. I understand the past as atmospheric or thalassic; it can submerge us, buoy us up, or bog us down; it ebbs and flows. Without a critical mapping and recollection of this past, the weight of the past will only lead to confirmed and habitual routes being followed through. Creative reconfigurations of Bergson hence need this critical ground, but decolonizing critique of Bergson also requires a generative rereading of his philosophy. I aim to hold together both sides of this decolonizing project in my chapter, turning to Bergson's last monograph in order to do so.

In *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, Bergson theorizes social life through the lens of what he considers a grounding difference: between

the open society, on the one hand, and closed societies, on the other.⁴ While the first aspires to include all human beings, linking them through love, the latter is based on need and obligation, defensively and antagonistically closing in on itself. Most contemporary critics of Bergson focus on the inclusiveness and “fraternity” of the open society, its borderless love and vision of humanity, finding there a justification for Bergson’s schema.⁵ In my view, however, it is the dichotomy of open/closed itself that is troubling. Though Bergson clarifies that these are tendencies, so that all existing societies are mixtures of openness and closure, the dichotomy nevertheless provides the tools for constructing a hierarchy of societies and a teleological vision of civilization. It is this logic that we see in contemporary cultural racism, where discrimination against so-called illiberal cultural-religious minorities (in particular, Muslims, but often also Hasidic Jews) is justified based on their supposed intolerance and closure to change.⁶ More precisely, this logic is often used to distinguish groups *within* a religion or a society, to mark out those who are tolerant or moderate from those who are fundamentalist.⁷ But what if we were to begin with a different conceptual schema, that of the “half-open or ajar [*entr’ouvert*]” (as Vladimir Jankélévitch suggests in his reading of Bergson)? Could we then theorize the mixture that is society as more than compromise and negation? Thus, a different way of seeing and understanding social life might emerge: one that attends to multiplicity and difference without opposition and hierarchy.

I will proceed in four steps. I begin with the recent resurgence of interest in Bergson, examining how *Les deux sources* has been taken up and what has been elided or made visible in those readings. Second, I look more closely at *Les deux sources*, asking how colonial formations may be on the horizons of this text and what hesitations they may call into being. Third, rather than focusing on particular examples, I ask what Bergson’s method is in *Les deux sources* and how the schema of open/closed—and more deeply, the couple of “primitive” and “mystic”—undergird this method. Finally, it is this question of method that will allow us to see the divergence between *Les deux sources* and the rest of Bergson’s philosophy; for *Les deux sources* not only introduces a new and definitive distinction into Bergson’s philosophy—that of open and closed—it also puts an end to the movement of that philosophy by defining its possibilities *as if they had already been given*. It is by turning the tools of Bergsonian critique onto *Les deux sources* that I aim to provide an alternative to the dichotomy of open/closed—that of the half-open or ajar—creating in this way the (uncertain) condition of possibility for its decolonization.

Reading *The Two Sources*

Suzanne Guerlac remarks that *Les deux sources* “can produce a distinct feeling of estrangement, even in admirers of Bergson’s earlier works.”⁸ I would describe this feeling as one of disappointment. The reception of the book at the time of its publication was mixed, but the disappointment that has been expressed around it has had to do, in large part, with Bergson’s appeal to Christian mysticism (taken as the actualization of the “pure” tendency to openness).⁹ On the one hand, this was because Bergson’s account of mysticism removed it from both theology and faith—making the mystic into an “auxiliary,” albeit a “powerful” one, of philosophy.¹⁰ On the other hand, the appeal to mysticism was taken to establish, once and for all, Bergson’s spiritualism and antirationalism (his affective and intellectual allegiance to Catholicism, despite being Jewish). Either way it was suspect. It is, hence, around the figure of the mystic that much prior critique has centered.

In contrast, at the limit of the closed tendency lies the figure of the “primitive.” While there have been a number of critical studies of Bergson’s use of this figure, these discussions have generally been limited to the French literature on Bergson and almost always pivot on Bergson’s critique of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl.¹¹ Such a focus sheds some positive light on Bergson’s account, since Bergson argues against Lévy-Bruhl that there can be only differences of degree between “primitive” and “civilized” humanity, both sharing a common nature.¹² While the contrast with Lévy-Bruhl is significant for understanding *Les deux sources*, the lack of typology in Bergson’s account of humanity has often meant that other ways in which Bergson constructs the difference between “primitive” and “civilized” go unnoticed (see the section on “Open/Closed”). By comparison, Bergson’s “primitive” is rarely mentioned in the recent English-language resurgence of Bergsonism, so much so that it is a different *Les deux sources* that seems to be reflected back in these readings. Not only are large sections of Bergson’s text disregarded—in particular in the long second chapter of *Les deux sources* on static religion—avoiding the unease produced by, or the need to confront, Bergson’s secondhand stories of “primitives.” But it is sometimes *Les deux sources* as a whole that is avoided, as in for instance new materialist readings of Bergson. We stop with the methodological essays that later became *La pensée et le mouvant* (published in 1934, but the majority of which were written in the period 1903–23).¹³ I believe that the rest of my chapter will, at least indirectly, explain this avoidance.

But in case this seems like a facile criticism of contemporary Bergsonian interpretation, I want to include my own work in this self-critical gesture (having for some time avoided directly addressing the book). *Les deux sources* today tends to produce a form of discomfort that is not yet sufficiently self-reflective to call itself disappointment—an *aphasia* to recall Stoler's term. In my view, this discomfort is not simply about the use of the term *primitive* in the text (which often designates, for Bergson, "the primitive [*le primitif*]" in humanity, and so what is "natural," to be distinguished from "*les primitifs*"). It has to do, more broadly, with the way in which colonial formations seem to saturate the horizons and interstices of the text, while absent from the analysis. What runs across the contemporary literature on Bergson—whether English or French with a few exceptions—is an avoidance of this colonial question: the difference that colonial horizons and colonial durations might make in reading Bergson.

In this vein, Bergson's critique of imperialism and militarism in *Les deux sources* may do more to obscure, rather than clarify, what he thinks of French colonialism.¹⁴ While imperialism and colonialism are often thought to be coextensive, this cannot be assumed in Bergson's theory. In a 1915 interview (later published in his *Correspondances*), Bergson remains uncritical of French colonial politics, even while he condemns German imperialism. He is able to hold such an aphasic position by distinguishing nations (France, Germany) from tribes (French colonies). Bergson argues: "[i]t cannot be said that these [colonies] were nations. They are warring tribes. [. . .] They had not proved to the world the usefulness, even to themselves, of their turbulent condition. So our theory [. . .] does not apply to bands of individuals in the state in which the inhabitants of Algiers, Morocco and our other possessions were before France took charge of them."¹⁵ While the polemical and "circumstantial" character of his wartime texts mean that we must treat them with caution (and not on a par with his *œuvres* as set out in his will), the distinction Bergson draws is nevertheless telling. When they consider the colonial question, even exacting readers of *Les deux sources* assume that what Bergson says of imperialism carries over to colonialism and that, as Suzanne Guerlac argues, his reference to "colonies" in the conclusion of *Les deux sources* constitutes a critical gesture aimed at French colonial politics.¹⁶ Indeed, Bergson notes that "people consider that life is not worth living if they cannot have comforts, pleasures, luxuries [. . .] a country considers itself incomplete if it has not good ports, colonies, etc. All this may lead to war."¹⁷ But since the reference to "colonies" is embedded in a larger critique

of how nations come to see their well-being and comfort as dependent on territorial expansion in the age of mechanization, Bergson's critique points to how luxuries come to be felt as necessities (becoming a secondary cause of war) and does not, in my view, problematize colonization as such. The critique of the luxury of spices later in the conclusion—ginger, clove, pepper, and cinnamon—focuses on the energy of navigation put at the service of acquiring these spices and glosses over the consequences that this navigation had for non-European peoples and the violence of colonization that it facilitated.¹⁸ And while Bergson sees colonial rivalry as destructive, this remains within the perspective of an intra-European problem of rival nations and intra-European wars.¹⁹ This means that we must look elsewhere in *Les deux sources* to uncover Bergson's views of colonized peoples and to find a foothold for decolonizing critique.

It may be time for Bergson studies to address the difficult question of the colonial horizons of *Les deux sources*, and by extension Bergson's philosophy of time. Two recent books open the way for such a questioning, and provide opposing responses. Donna Jones, in *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*, sees in Bergsonism the source for racist narratives of the early twentieth century, including those taken up by the Négritude movement,²⁰ whereas, in *Bergson postcolonial*, Souleymane Bachir Diagne finds Bergson to be the common inspiration for the postcolonial philosophies of Léopold Senghor and Muhammad Iqbal.²¹ While neither of these works closely examines the open/closed dichotomy, or asks after its role in colonial formations of time, they address questions to Bergson that contemporary scholarship does not seem ready to take up.²² Though Jones rightly criticizes Bergson's discussion of "primitive" life, she focuses on his troubling examples and misses the methodological troubles this figure creates for his philosophy.²³ Jones's analysis also tends to misrecognize the forms of racialism that Bergson's work displays, reading it by "imbrication," sometimes biologically, sometimes "noumenally," rather than culturally, as hints in *Les deux sources* imply.²⁴ More seriously, however, Jones focuses her critique on the conservation of the past in Bergson's thought, missing in my view the creativity and half-openness of the Bergsonian past and undermining the import of her own critique.²⁵

This dynamic conception of the past, to which I will return below, is more productively and accurately taken up by Muhammad Iqbal in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, and it is emphasized in Diagne's reading of Iqbal.²⁶ In reading Bergson and Islam through one another, intertwined with his exegesis of Quranic verse, Iqbal says:

Pure time, then, as revealed by a deeper analysis of our conscious experience, is not a string of separate, reversible instants; it is an organic whole in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with, and operating in, the present. And the future is given to it not as lying before, yet to be traversed; it is given only in the sense that it is present in its nature as an open possibility. It is time regarded as an organic whole that the Qur'an describes as *Tagdir* or the destiny—a word which has been so much misunderstood both in and outside the world of Islam. [. . .] In one word, it is time as felt and not as thought and calculated.²⁷

But more than this, Iqbal draws from the Qur'an and finds in Bergson arguments that the whole is not already given and, hence, that “[reality] is a growing universe and not an already completed product which left the hand of its maker ages ago.”²⁸ That the past *moves* along with the present, that it is not only preserved but supplemented, is a vital thread by which Iqbal thinks the question of interpretation and *ijtihad* as open in Islamic thought.²⁹

While I find Iqbal's and Diagne's readings of Bergson more fruitful, I recognize the colonial context that motivates Jones's critique, despite the shortcomings in her interpretation. I should note that such opposing readings of Bergson are not surprising, given the ways in which his philosophy transforms itself between texts, attempting to create ideas that fit the phenomena at stake (e.g., inner consciousness, memory, evolution) rather than apply ready-made concepts. But Bergson not only rejected system-building; he also refused to adjudicate the opposing interpretations of his thought that arose under the label “Bergsonism.” In this chapter, I focus on Bergson's writings and method rather than the historical Bergsonisms to which they gave rise and whose markedly divergent interpretations and political tendencies have been well documented.³⁰

The Two Sources of Morality and Religion

In what follows, I argue that decolonizing Bergson means questioning not merely this or that passage of *Les deux sources*—correcting dated accounts or tired images and stereotypes—but rather asking after the method that Bergson employs. The method of *Les deux sources* is grounded in the dichotomy of open/closed. But if, as Bergson seems to suggest, this distinction is not

possible without the mystic-primitive couple, then their role becomes one that haunts any reading of Bergson's text. To clarify what is at stake, I will briefly present the structure of the book, and point to cracks where background assumptions, colonial, imperial, or otherwise, may have forced the argument, before turning my attention to method.

Les deux sources begins with an account of the sociality of life, not simply in human life but also in animal and insect life—hence appearing to continue and supplement the philosophy of life from *L'évolution créatrice* (1907).³¹ Society is, in this sense, immanent to its members;³² it is “natural” or “biological” (in Bergson's broadened sense of biology).³³ In human societies, cohesion is maintained through obligation, which Bergson describes as a force of pressure and likens to a *virtual* instinct.³⁴ Although the content of obligation is contingent and varies, what holds together society is “the whole of obligation,” in other words, the necessity of having obligations or the habit of contracting habits.³⁵ It is through the force of obligation that we first see what Bergson means by a “closed society”: Bergson introduces the case of war (which he argues is neither abnormal nor exceptional) to show that social obligations *always already* applied only to the members of a given society, to the exclusion of others.³⁶ Bergson thus conceives of the tendency to closure as both constitutive of social wholes—in an inward and circular movement of conservation and identity-formation³⁷—while, at the same time, oppositional, defensive, and exclusionary.³⁸ It is in this sense that love as charity, “love of humanity” without limits, is incomparable to love of family or attachment to nation, requiring Bergson to search for a second source of morality, as we shall see.³⁹

Here, I note two limitations of this account that should make readers of Bergson hesitate. First, that obligation functions like a virtual instinct should already inscribe it within a movement of duration that is *opening*, just as it is being instituted and closing in on itself; instinct in *L'évolution créatrice* was vital movement and sympathy with life from within, not simply the sedimentation of quasi-automatic mechanisms.⁴⁰ Second, the tendency to closure describes the materialization of social life by turning inward to form self-reflexive, organized, and cohesive wholes. That such wholes are *oppositional* groupings does not seem to follow immediately. This would imply conceiving social groups in the abstract and through negation, a mode of understanding that Bergson had previously criticized (arguing instead that living wholes, forms of order, and ways of becoming should be understood on their own terms, and not as privations).⁴¹

The second source of morality also comes from life, but indirectly through the mediation of particular individuals: “mystics” who, through creative emotion, take the *élan* of life farther by “partial coincidence with the creative effort which life manifests.”⁴² The second source takes the form of a “call” or “aspiration” rather than pressure.⁴³ It involves a teleological pull, transcendence, or “virtual attraction” toward—not a defined end point, but a form of movement that Bergson glimpses in the creative emotion of love.⁴⁴ For Bergson, this movement is *modeled* by mystics’ actions and lives, not explicated in doctrine.⁴⁵ This second source can transfigure morality into an open form of love that includes not only humanity, but “may extend to animals, to plants, to all of nature.”⁴⁶ This is what defines the tendency to openness, which, for Bergson, breaks the circle of habit and communal or national obligation to make a leap in a “forward movement.”⁴⁷ But, paradoxically, it is neither the specific direction that emotion takes in escaping the circle of self-regard and interest,⁴⁸ nor the object of love that matters here; “its form is not dependent on its content.”⁴⁹ Indeed, though this love goes *through* humanity, it is ultimately objectless (“humanity” being more than the assemblage of all human beings, for Bergson, and hence not an object that can be aimed at). By “forward movement [*marche en avant*],” Bergson is not evoking the idea of gradual or developmental progress;⁵⁰ rather, he points to a qualitative change that makes a “difference in kind,” so that one is no longer turning around in place (hence, he also says “leap [*saut*]”). Thus, while there is a concept of progress in *Les deux sources*, Bergson explicitly localizes it *within* closed societies (though some seepage will occur, as we shall see).

Two aspects of this account should make us hesitate. But they find limited critical discussion in the literature (since they are generally taken as complements, completing rather than undermining Bergson’s philosophy). First, *aspiration* in *Les deux sources* is a new, teleological force for Bergson’s philosophy—one that assigns an end goal that “completes” the movement of the famous *élan vital*. While this end should not be read as a state of rest, it does define a form of movement as that which we should performatively (and normatively) aspire to. Though Bergson is ambiguous as to whether pure aspiration is a virtual limit or could be actualized,⁵¹ his method in *Les deux sources* will require the existence of actualized models, taking the Christ of the Gospels as complete exemplar.⁵² In contrast, *L’évolution créatrice* puts aside the possibility of aspirational force, leaving the push of the *élan* to differentiate and diverge contingently and without finality (at the cost of impasses and failures on its way). In *L’évolution créatrice*, he says:

Harmony, therefore, does not exist in fact; it exists rather in principle [. . .] Harmony (or rather “complementarity”) is revealed only in the mass, in tendencies rather than states. In particular (and this is the point on which finalism has been most seriously mistaken) harmony is rather behind us than ahead. It is due to an identity of impulsion and not to a common aspiration. It would be futile to try to assign to life an end, in the human sense of the word. To speak of an end is to think of a pre-existing model which has only to be realized. It is to suppose, therefore, that all is given, and that the future can be read in the present.⁵³

It should be clear from this that there can be no immanent aspiration or goal to life. The aspiration of the mystic individuals of *Les deux sources* is a supplement that takes up life but also transcends it. The conditions of possibility of this aspiration are not immanent to life, rather they need to be created through the performative actions of mystics themselves. It is, in this sense, that *Les deux sources* describes the way aspiration proceeds as follows (here, the example is the transition from relative to absolute justice):

The method consisted in supposing possible what is actually impossible in a given society, in imagining what would be its effect on the soul of society, and then inducing some such psychic condition by propaganda and example: the effect once obtained, would retroactively complete its cause; new feelings, evanescent indeed, would call forth the new legislation seemingly indispensable to their appearance, and which would then serve to consolidate them.⁵⁴

Leaving aside the worries a democratic sensibility may have about this passage (while Bergson is describing justice, the procedure itself is neither deliberative nor necessarily democratic), I want to point to a second problem with the account of openness in *Les deux sources*. While Bergson uses the terms *open* and *closed* in his previous texts, they are neither guiding nor framing concepts there. In *L'évolution créatrice*, for instance, to be open means to be, at once, unpredictable and incomplete. Anything for which time makes a difference—living bodies of all sorts, the whole material universe, as well as any parts of matter that are not artificially isolated within this universe—is open.⁵⁵ Although life has a *tendency to closure*, by

materializing into species and individuating into separate organisms, this does not stop them from becoming and aging.⁵⁶ In this account, what are closed are artificially isolated systems of matter that can be treated as inert and reversible—although Bergson’s famous example of having to *wait* for the sugar to dissolve in a sugared-water mixture is supposed to show that such isolated systems are matters of perceptual closing and theoretical construction.⁵⁷ Thus to be open is to become, to have duration.⁵⁸ It would not make sense to ask, here, what this might be an opening *to*. In contrast, the openness of *Les deux sources* is both too much and too little. Too much, because it posits an aspirational openness that is measured according to a prospective limit or end—that *to* which it is supposed to be open. Too little, because the concept of “open to” is left empty and contentless, while normatively weighted. It appears to wait to be retrospectively filled, but already anticipates and prefigures what is to come, since Bergson sees this emptiness actualized as objectless and mystical love. At the same time, closure comes to be defined by *indifference* to this aspiration or lack of effort in following it through. The borders of open/closed have thus shifted, as has the sense and usage of the terms; they become even more sharply and normatively distinguished once the difference between static and dynamic religion comes into focus. With this I will turn to the central chapters of *Les deux sources* and the question of method.

Open/Closed: Questions of Method

It is in the central chapters of *Les deux sources*, on static and dynamic religion respectively, that the method of the book becomes clear. Static and dynamic religion are not extensions or foundations of the two moralities, but run in parallel, bolstering the closed and open ways of life.⁵⁹ Specifically, it is because intellect hesitates and resists in cases of obligation—through both self-interest and fear—that a social counterweight is needed to assure against this hesitation, “disorganization,” or “depression.”⁶⁰ This is the role of the “*fonction fabulatrice*” that defines static religion for Bergson, a defensive reaction of nature against the “dissolvent power” and risks of reflective consciousness.⁶¹ Static religion creates ideas that have the force of perception (“*idéo-motrices*”), that structure and make sense of the world, and that strengthen the attachment to life.⁶² It is in this context that Bergson criticizes Lévy-Bruhl for assigning to “primitive mentality” a different logic.⁶³

For Bergson, both “civilized” and “non-civilized” societies have in common not only the ground of obligation (the obligation to have obligations), but also the risks of reflective consciousness and the “*fonction fabulatrice*,” which is needed to assure against these risks. Static religion, like the structure of obligation in general, is hence “natural” to human societies; it is not only a means of social conservation, but also a tendency to closure.

Thus, for Bergson, both so-called primitive and civilized societies are on the side of closure. But lest we think all difference is dissolved, Bergson introduces a way of measuring the difference of degree between coexistent social formations. This relies on distinguishing, on the one hand, “*le primitif* [the primitive]” of humanity—which is taken to underlie cultural acquisitions and points to a *virtual* foundation or origin that can only be probabilistically described—from “*les primitifs*,” who are *actually* coexistent societies.⁶⁴ While much more can be said about this distinction, Bergson’s argument proceeds in three steps. First, he insists that “we are only acquainted with humanity as already evolved, for the ‘primitives’ we observe today are as old as we are.”⁶⁵ As soon as coexistence is established, however, it is forestalled and deferred. For, second, this means that they “have had plenty of time to exaggerate and to aggravate, as it were, the possible irrationalities contained in elementary tendencies, natural enough though they are.”⁶⁶ “Marking time [*piétinant sur place*],” Bergson continues, “they ceaselessly add and amplify. Through the double effect of repetition and exaggeration the irrational passes into the realm of the absurd, and the strange into the realm of the monstrous.”⁶⁷ Humanity, it seems, has aged equally but differently; and this differential way of living the same interval of duration marks an irreversible threshold from which one cannot recover. Third, though partly accidental, this also shows a lack of effort or “ *paresse*,” which deepens the effects of irrational practices, so that “[s]ubsequently, it was too late; the society could not advance, even if it wanted to, because it was contaminated by the products of its own laziness [. . .] the practices of magic.”⁶⁸ It is no wonder that Donna Jones sees an implicit justification for colonial (and missionary) intervention here.⁶⁹

Little by little, after dissolving any difference in nature, Bergson shores up the difference of degree between “civilized” and “primitive,” so that it is finally their very duration that works against “the primitives.” Within closed societies, then, there are degrees of progress with a new distinction at play: that between stagnating societies (“*piétinant sur place*”) and “societies in movement.”⁷⁰ Their actual difference owes to the degree and form of

accumulation of cultural acquisitions, and hence to the *thickness* of layering that covers over the same nature.⁷¹ Since Bergson has already rejected any inheritance of acquired traits, it is through social milieu that he explains how acquisitions are transmitted, arguing that they accumulate superficially in one case and intensify in depth in another.⁷² Moreover, while mystics emerge in all societies, according to Bergson, the mystic call will find an easier foothold and greater receptivity in societies that are already in movement; there will be a more fluid acceptance of changing habits.⁷³

Given that “*les primitifs*” only differ in degree, it may appear that they are unnecessary to Bergson’s method in *Les deux sources*. Indeed, Bergson suggests early on that “the observation [. . .] of civilized man of the present day” may be sufficient; all one would need is an introspective method, what Bergson has elsewhere called intuition, to get at “*l’humanité primitive*” (i.e., nature) within everyone.⁷⁴ Yet if we read deeper, Bergson seems to need “the primitives,” just as he needs actual mystics, to make his method work. What is this method and what use are “the primitives” put to in this method? Bergson describes his “probabilistic” method in *Les deux sources* as one that begins in experience, but also extends the tendencies of experience to their virtual extremes, in order to find their intersections or conditions. The method is at once empirical and metaphysical. Here is his most succinct description:

We have alluded elsewhere to those “lines of fact [*lignes de fait*]” each one indicating but the direction of truth, because it does not go far enough: truth itself, however, will be reached if two of them can be prolonged to the point where they intersect. A surveyor measures the distance to an unattainable point by taking a line on it, now from one, now from the other, of two points which he can reach [*L’arpenteur mesure la distance d’un point inaccessible en le visant tour à tour de deux points auxquels il a accès*].⁷⁵

The analogy to the surveyor makes us see that Bergson needs two accessible points of experience to which he can move (at least imaginatively), in order to triangulate from them the desired point of intersection (the conditions of both experiences in duration). The experience of mystics provides one such point, allowing Bergson to imagine, or more precisely “intuit,” a tendency to openness that he calls “*élan d’amour*.”⁷⁶ But the second point is provided by

“primitives.” Since Bergson believes that theirs is a thinner layer of cultural acquisitions, “the road may be shorter” to arrive at the tendency to closure that grounds social life, the pressure that explains not only obligation but also static religion.⁷⁷ Indeed, this method instrumentalizes both “primitives” and “mystics” in order to guide introspection to find the natural and mystical tendencies within the self.⁷⁸ That this introspection requires *external* support or auxiliaries is key. The tendencies, Bergson explains in *Les deux sources*, need to be grasped at their culmination or completion, “à son terme,” in order to be understood.⁷⁹ These end points are inexistent; for all we have is the mixture or composite which is experience.⁸⁰ But both mystics and “primitives” come closer to the extreme, and hence trace out the angle of the direction at which the surveyor can aim.

This is what Vladimir Jankélévitch has called “*le maximalisme bergsonien*” (though he did not mean this critically).⁸¹ *Les deux sources* inscribes a teleology of life, which the rest of Bergson’s philosophy had disavowed (at most we can find an “inverted” or retrospective finalism in *L’évolution créatrice*). Bergson is able to claim this teleology, while remaining (relatively) consistent with his previous work, because it is a teleology that is not immanent to life, but emerges from the resumption of its creative effort by the actual mystics whose experience he relies on. According to Bergson, the mystic is situated “at a point that the spiritual current, in its passage through matter, probably wanted to reach but could not [*aurait probablement voulu, jusqu’où il n’a pas pu aller*].”⁸² The mystic here delineates a future, an aspirational end.

But I would add that there is also a *minimalism* in *Les deux sources*. Although the extreme that lies at the end of the other tendency, “primitive humanity,” is just as inexistent a limit as that of the pure mystic, Bergson thinks that its direction, too, can be externally traced through descriptions of actual “primitives.” While this “nature” is supposed to follow the same vital schema as in *L’évolution créatrice*, there are important differences in its conception of closure. The closure of the organism was always also an opening—becoming, aging, and undoing—whereas the closure of obligation goes to an extreme and takes the form of a virtual instinct that has become quasi-automatic. That both the tendency to openness and the tendency to closure go to the extreme is confirmed by Bergson in the final chapter of *Les deux sources*, when he articulates this as a law, “*la loi de double frénésie*.”⁸³ Whereas in biological life, tendencies divide and diverge in order to develop into coexistent species, he posits that in psychological and social life tendencies develop successively and go as far as possible, “*comme s’il y avait un bout* [as if there was an end].”⁸⁴ In other words, these tendencies

proceed to completion—a strange turn for a philosophy that had always defined duration by its incompleteness and unpredictability.

At first glance, the method of *Les deux sources* seems to be a continuation of that outlined in *Matière et mémoire* (1896), almost forty years earlier.⁸⁵ Bergson certainly presents it as such, a gesture that may have misled his readers. But a closer reading of the method of *Matière et mémoire* shows us the elided possibilities of Bergson's philosophy: "It would be to take experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* [*au-dessus de ce tournant*] where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly *human* experience."⁸⁶ While this may look like the same method, it is conceived *differentially* in *Matière et mémoire*, according to a different calculus than the linear geometry of the surveyor. In other words, the tendencies of experience are extended to their limit, but this is a limit that remains virtual and whose actuality can only ever be grasped within the mixture of experience. Tendencies are extended according to their curves (differentially by taking the tangent), and not in a geometrical projection from two points. To follow through the movement of a tendency, its directionality must be grasped *in process*, neither at the beginning nor at its end, if end there be. In *Matière et mémoire*, the intersection of tendencies at their "source" is likened to the crossing of two railway lines that never fully coincide, but where we can cross imperceptibly from one to the other. This does not mean that one can make do without external support. *Matière et mémoire* relies heavily on the psychological studies of aphasia of its time, but it does so in order to exclude theoretical interpretations of memory as localized in the brain, not as positivist experiences.

How does this help us parse, or even decolonize, the Bergsonian distinction of open/closed? I have shown that this distinction needs to assume the actual existence of mystics and "primitives" as points of departure for its methodology, so that readers of Bergson's *Les deux sources* cannot elide his discussion of "primitives" in the text, as I believe they have done in the literature. But there is a deeper problem. *Les deux sources*, as its title indicates, sets up a dichotomy between open and closed that, I think, Bergson's philosophy cannot sustain. In *Les deux sources*, Bergson takes the open and closed tendencies as conditions of possibility, as guiding concepts, with which to search out actual experiences that can provide their confirmation: the mystic and "the primitives" provide such empirical mirrors. Yet these were already prefigured in the way the problem of sociality was posed in *Les deux sources*, so that Bergson's method is skewed toward one of linear projection from assumed, external experiences.

Conclusion: Half-Opening or Decolonizing Bergson?

It is by employing Bergsonian methods that the Bergsonian distinction of open/closed can be destabilized. Bergsonian intuition (read through Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, but also through what Bergson says in the last chapter of *Matière et mémoire* and in *L'évolution créatrice*) is a method of discerning "pure" conceptual elements within any actual mixture.⁸⁷ But the method does not rest with these virtual elements; rather, it understands these elements not as static states but as *tendancies*, and it traces them back to a multiplicitous and self-differentiating virtuality (duration) that links them and shows their interpenetration. This addition is crucial, for the originality and promise of Bergson's method lies therein. Thus, memory (mind) and matter form a mitigated and interactive dualism that is traced back to different rhythms of *duration* in *Matière et mémoire*. Matter is an inversion, slowing down and undoing of the *élan* of life in *L'évolution créatrice*. To my mind, *Les deux sources* sets itself apart from Bergson's other works by getting stuck in the distinction of open/closed that it presents. This despite Bergson's warnings that there are no "pure" open or closed societies.⁸⁸ This is because the open and the closed, while tendencies, are also sources; rather than tracing them back to a common virtual source, they are presented as a dichotomy. Yet we only need to recall *L'évolution créatrice* to find a common theme and explanation for these two tendencies: openness and closure are tendencies of life as it both evolves/creates and conserves; forms of life reflexively turn in on themselves and materially sediment but also age, grow, and become otherwise. Time (*durée*) is then, as it is in the rest of Bergson's philosophy, the key to understanding openness (change, becoming-other) and closure (stasis, materialization, habit, and form). When open/closed are understood in this way, we perceive how they are, in fact, inseparable sides of temporal becoming. Openness and closure are here relative tendencies; both are necessary, neither is normative nor moralized. Moreover, *tendency* is not a teleology in this picture, but itself changes orientation and direction as time passes. Tendencies, whatever their directionality, are themselves half-open.

But how is a tendency half-open? Tendency connotes not simply movement, but "*nascent change of direction.*"⁸⁹ Its course is structured at once by hesitation and delay and by elaboration as invention. To hesitate is to feel one's way tentatively and receptively. Tendency is "*tâtonnement,*" to use Bergson's term; it is a search without finality, an experimentation and elaboration that does not dictate the future it will find.⁹⁰ But neither is the past a self-same or congealed idea, on this account. Though the past

as a virtual whole pushes on each present, actualizing itself there, this past is dynamically reconfigured through the passage of events and through the creation of possibility that ripples back from these events (their virtualization). The past is not a container that accumulates events, but the continuous immanent transformation of directionality and sense that is tendency.⁹¹ This implies, for Bergson, that the whole is not given, that there is no completion or closure for an enduring reality—whether in terms of the future or at the level of the past.

Rather than understanding the social realm in terms of the open and the closed, I would suggest that a more productive, and more difficult, concept would be that of the *half-open* (*entr'ouvert*). Jankélévitch, in his reading of Bergson, suggests that this is precisely what Bergson has missed about Judaism; that the gesture of opening is what we should attend to, and that to be completely open is to be nothing at all.⁹² If we recall Walter Mignolo's criticism that opening is not yet decolonizing, then more would be required.⁹³ Is it possible to find a way of thinking the mixture of experience as more than a mixture, but as different temporalities and tendencies that run across each other as vortices?

I think that Bergson's early texts preserve the possibility for such a decentered and decolonizing temporality, a possibility that is foreclosed in *Les deux sources*. This possibility requires thinking temporal multiplicity: the nonhierarchical coexistence of rhythms of becoming and ways of life, their *coevalness* to use Johannes Fabian's term.⁹⁴ Most importantly, it presupposes a nonlinear theory of time, where the past coexists and is *reconfigured* with the present; as a whole or network of relations that includes the present, the past is not determinately closed or gone, but "half-open," capable of being inscribed with new structures of possibility.⁹⁵ It is this opening of the past that grounds the unpredictability of the future. And it is this that allows other ways of being and thinking to make a difference for, and to reconfigure, our sedimented conceptual schemas themselves.

This conceptual shift from the open/closed to the half-open means that, in the social sphere, we can understand how people who share a history of oppression may wish to conserve their identity, without being subsumed to the cosmopolitan ideal of a shared humanity, or "love of humanity," in which they are asked to renounce their *resentiment*. Openness is no longer the equivalent of progressiveness or perfectibility, and closure is no longer a moral or political failure, as they are in our common liberal parlance; neither openness nor closure can be used to justify assimilation or domination.

One last note. Bergson opens *La pensée et le mouvant* with a discussion of the abstraction and lack of precision of philosophical systems that apply

ready-made concepts to all the phenomena they encounter. He proposes, instead, a method of local knowledge that takes its point of departure in the realities it engages with and that creates concepts as responses to these calls. These concepts, which he calls “intuitive,” will not be immediately understood but may, with time, uncertainly, create their own conditions of intelligibility, as their mobile sense is reflected back from the phenomena they seek to illuminate.⁹⁶ I would suggest that the open and the closed are the kinds of ill-fitting concepts that Bergson describes. Whether the *half-open* will fare better depends on the nuance and complexity it makes perceptible, how it allows us to perceive differently. But in making us think and questioning complacency, it fulfills one criterion of Bergsonian local and situated thinking: to judge concepts by what they enable us to do and the conditions of possibility they help create.

Notes

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1. Suzanne Guerlac is one of the few readers who attempts to critically gauge Bergson's stance on colonialism in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (hereafter “*DS*”). But I believe she is overgenerous in attributing an anticolonial stance to Bergson based on the reference to “colonies” in the conclusion of the book (see my argument in the next section). Suzanne Guerlac, “Bergson, the Void, and the Politics of Life,” *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 40–60.

2. See Philippe Soulez, *Bergson politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989).

3. Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France,” *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011).

4. Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1932); *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977). Cited as “*DS*” with French, then English pagination.

5. See Alexandre Lefebvre on the “open love” that, for Bergson, defines the open tendency of society and upon which the survival of humanity depends in *Human Rights as a Way of Life: On Bergson's Political Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 83–109. And Alexandre Lefebvre, “Bergson and Human Rights” in *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 193–214. See also Frédéric

Worms on the imbrication of love and creation in *Bergson ou les deux sens de la vie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 329–35.

6. When I began writing this chapter, I was thinking of the example of Quebec, where in 2013 the provincial government proposed a “charter of values” aimed explicitly at excluding the wearing of conspicuous “religious signs” by public service workers. The backdrop for this was not only a desire for secular “neutrality,” but also an assumption that such workers would themselves be prejudiced and intolerant in their dealings with the public. Etienne Balibar describes this form of racism (which he argues is not new) in “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism?’” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 17–28.

7. Indeed, this is taken by principle readers of Bergson to be the positive import of his distinction. Frédéric Worms writes, “First, in the religious domain: more than ever, the distinction between the closed and the open seems to us to cut like a sword—not between religions but within each religion” in “The Closed and the Open in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion: A Distinction That Changes Everything*,” trans. Alexandre Lefebvre and Perri Ravon, in *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 25–39.

8. Guerlac, “Bergson, the Void, and the Politics of Life,” 40.

9. See Ghislain Waterlot, “Penser avec et dans le prolongement des *Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*” in *Bergson et la religion: nouvelles perspectives sur les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*, ed. Ghislain Waterlot (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 1–42.

10. Bergson, *DS*, 266/250. For one of the best instances of this form of critique, see Camille De Belloy, “Le philosophe et la théologie” in *Bergson et la religion: nouvelles perspectives sur les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*, ed. Ghislain Waterlot (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 303–19.

11. For two excellent studies, see Brigitte Sitbon-Peillon, “Bergson et le primitif: entre métaphysique et sociologie” in *Annales bergsoniennes I: Bergson dans le siècle*, ed. Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 171–94. And Frédéric Keck, “Le primitif et le mystique chez Lévy-Bruhl, Bergson et Bataille,” *Methodos: Savoir et textes* 3 (2003). Robert Bernasconi’s incisive study of the influence of Lévy-Bruhl on French phenomenology does not include a discussion of Bergson. See “Lévy-Bruhl among the Phenomenologists: Exoticisation and the Logic of ‘the Primitive,’” *Social Identities* 11, no. 3 (2005): 229–45.

12. *DS*, 149–59/143–52.

13. Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1938); *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2007). Henceforth cited with French, then English pagination.

14. *DS*, 331–32/310–11.

15. Bergson says this in an interview with A. J. Beveridge, the manuscript of which is included in “Bergson à A. J. Beveridge (4 mars 1915)” in Henri Bergson, *Correspondances*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 623–24. I thank Ghislain Waterlot for pointing me to the location of this interview. The interview is also mentioned in Soulez, *Bergson politique*, 60. That Bergson’s position on French colonialism is uncritical, and generally positive, is reinforced by Bergson’s 1923 “Rapport sur ‘Le Maroc, école d’énergie’ d’Alfred de Tarde” in *Mélanges*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 1395–96, where he positively interprets “l’effort colonisateur” in line with his philosophy of life.

16. Guerlac, “Bergson, the Void, and the Politics of Life,” 51. Soulez also assumes this, despite recognizing that Bergson had earlier distinguished the two (*Bergson politique*, 292). See also Mark Sinclair in an otherwise critical account of Bergson’s early attitude to imperialism, in “Bergson’s Philosophy of Will and the War of 1914–1918,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 3 (2016): 486–87.

17. *DS*, 308/289.

18. *Ibid.*, 323/303.

19. While I believe she takes this in a less critical sense than I do, Yala Kisukidi reads *Les deux sources* as dependent on its context, inscribing a moment of European historicity and European empires. Nadia Yala Kisukidi, *Bergson ou l’humanité créatrice* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013), 219–20.

20. Donna V. Jones, *The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Négritude, Vitalism, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

21. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Bergson postcolonial* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011). See also “Bergson in the Colony: Intuition and Duration in the Thought of Senghor and Iqbal,” *Qui Parle* 17, no. 1 (2008): 125–45.

22. Diagne’s work has been better received in Bergson studies than Jones’s. While this might be attributed to Diagne’s comparatively sympathetic reading of Bergson, I think it also reflects the productive potential of the links Diagne forges. I should note that Diagne’s reading deals mainly with Bergson’s metaphysical concepts prior to *Les deux sources*, concepts with which Iqbal and Senghor engaged. See Yala Kisukidi’s excellent analysis in “Présentation: Penser un Bergson postcolonial?” in *Annales bergsoniennes V: Bergson et la politique, de Jaurès à aujourd’hui*, ed. Frédéric Worms (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 49–59, introducing Diagne’s “Bergson dans les colonies: Intuition et durée dans la pensée de Senghor et Iqbal,” trans. Yala Kisukidi, *Annales bergsoniennes V*, 61–84. Sometimes, however, Diagne’s reading has been taken as a confirmation of Bergson’s affinity with postcolonial philosophies, rather than a call to search out or create such affinities, which I think it represents. See, for instance, Vincent Peillon, “Préface: Du renouveau des études philosophiques en France,” *Annales bergsoniennes V* (2012): 9–27.

23. For example, Jones takes Bergson to task when he uses his childhood memory of visiting the dentist (he thought the dentist enjoyed pulling out teeth, so much so that he paid for it) to explain away the difference in

kind that “mentalité primitive” has for Lévy Bruhl (Jones, *Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*, 125–126). But Bergson’s point is that a kind of magical thinking exists in the “civilized” mind, not that “primitives” are like children (*DS*, 158–59/151–52). While Jones is right that the examples Bergson gives from “[*les récits des missionnaires*]” are highly problematic, the problem is not that Bergson describes “primitives” as “*ayant vécu autant de siècles que nous,*” but that he sees their duration as stagnating (*DS*, 142–43/136–37). For Bergson, there is nothing essentially “biological” or “noumenal” (having to do with the deep self) about this, as there is no inheritance of acquired traits.

24. Jones argues that an internalist or “noumenal” metaphor of race is made possible by Bergson’s idea of the deep self, a self that can be made to carry occult qualities that are the cause of race. She proposes that Bergson’s philosophy contributes to a reconceptualization of race as “dynamic essence” (Jones, *Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*, 101, 117–19). Yet a reading of *Les deux sources* tells us that if there are differences between societies for Bergson, it is on the level of cultural acquisitions and not in any essence (*DS*, 133/127).

25. Jones, *Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy*, 102–10.

26. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 40, 43–44. See Diagne, *Bergson postcolonial*, 109–10, 112. It is important to note that most of Iqbal’s lectures, which make up this book, were delivered in 1930, before *Les deux sources* was published; he met Bergson in Paris in 1931 (Diagne, *Bergson postcolonial*, 65).

27. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 39–40.

28. *Ibid.*, 44, 8.

29. *Ibid.*, 131–33; Diagne, *Bergson postcolonial*, 84–88. In this vein, Iqbal conceives of Islam as a “social experiment” (*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 133).

30. See Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

31. Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1907); *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1998). Henceforth cited as “*EC*” with French then English pagination.

32. *DS*, 3/11.

33. *Ibid.*, 102–3/100. For a critique of this enlarged concept of “biology,” see Philippe Soulez, “Bergson as Philosopher of War and Theorist of the Political,” trans. Melissa McMahan, *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 99–125.

34. *DS*, 23/28.

35. *Ibid.*, 21/26–27.

36. *Ibid.*, 26–27/31–32.

37. *Ibid.*, 49/51.

38. *Ibid.*, 28/33.

39. Ibid., 28–29/33.
40. Vladimir Jankélévitch also makes the point that instinct becomes a conservative principle in *Les deux sources*. See Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 194–95.
41. See *EC* 224/223, 298/299.
42. *DS*, 233/220. I will not be translating *élan*, since I want the reader to hear multiple senses in the term, which Bergson plays on: both impetus and momentum.
43. Ibid., 30/34, 48/50.
44. Ibid., 85/84.
45. Ibid., 99/97.
46. Ibid., 34/38.
47. Ibid., 50/52.
48. Ibid., 285/267.
49. Ibid., 34/38.
50. Ibid., 286/269.
51. Ibid., 85/84.
52. Ibid., 254/240.
53. *EC*, 51/51, translation modified.
54. *DS*, 78–79/78.
55. “Partout où quelque chose vit, il y a ouvert quelque part un registre où le temps s’inscrit” (*EC*, 16/16).
56. Ibid., 128/127–28.
57. Ibid., 9/9.
58. Suzanne Guerlac notes that the origin of Bergson’s open/closed distinction lies in thermodynamics, but whereas this may be its starting point, it is clear that the concepts change over the course of Bergson’s texts. See *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 9.
59. See Worms, “The Closed and the Open,” 33–34.
60. *DS*, 127/122, 137/131.
61. Ibid., 127/122, 144/139.
62. Ibid., 223/211.
63. Ibid., 106/103, 149–59/143–52.
64. Ibid., 131–32/126–27.
65. Ibid., 113/110.
66. Ibid., 142/136.
67. Ibid., 143/137.
68. Ibid., 180/172.
69. Given also that the accounts Bergson relies on here are “missionary stories,” a circular justification is put in place (ibid., 142/136).
70. Ibid., 134/129, translation modified.
71. Ibid., 133/127.
72. Ibid., 133/128.

73. Ibid., 180/171.
74. Ibid., 132/127.
75. Ibid., 263/248.
76. Ibid., 98/96.
77. Ibid., 170/162.
78. Ibid., 185/176, 170/162.
79. Ibid., 241/228.
80. Ibid., 85/84.
81. Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson*, 199.
82. *DS*, 226/213, translation modified.
83. Ibid., 316/296.
84. Ibid.
85. Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1896); *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991). Henceforth cited with French, then English pagination.
86. Ibid., 205/184.
87. Cutting nature at its joints rather than according to an artificial grid, says Bergson citing Plato (*EC*, 157/156).
88. See essays in the volume *Bergson, Politics, and Religion*, for this insistence, especially Lefebvre, "Bergson and Human Rights."
89. Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, 188/211.
90. Ibid., 93/101.
91. *EC*, 4/4.
92. Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson*, 274–75.
93. Walter D. Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (2002): 80.
94. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
95. I have developed the concept of the *reconfiguration* of the past in Alia Al-Saji, "SPEP Co-Director's Address: Hesitation as Philosophical Method—Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective Weight of the Past," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 32, no. 3 (2018): 331–59.
96. Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, 12/1, 36/31.