

III.—BERGSON'S "CREATIVE EVOLUTION" AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

BY REV. OLIVER QUICK.

IN a sense the aim of every metaphysic is and must be to make a unity of existence, to discover a principle or form of Being which underlies all its individual and particular manifestations. A good deal of recent philosophy however has regarded the problem from a new standpoint. The tendency of the traditional systems, it would tell us, whether of the idealistic or of the materialistic school has always been to find this unity either in abstract mind or in abstract matter. But recent criticism of intellectualistic methods rests fundamentally on the assertion that the living personality is a wider entity than the intellect which is one of its instruments, and that the self-conscious life of a person does provide a sort of knowledge which the intellect cannot either prove or deny. It is affirmed therefore that the activity which abstracts is more real than the abstractions whether of mind or matter which it makes; and the tables are thus turned on the traditional logic both of materialism and absolutism. Once this point of view is adopted, it is clear that the nature of the unity which the metaphysician must seek to establish has undergone a very considerable modification.

Prof. Bergson's *Creative Evolution* is perhaps the first serious attempt to construct a metaphysic which shall employ to the full this new method in philosophic thought. Any such endeavour must obviously be faced with a peculiar difficulty in relating the individual to the universal, and it is interesting to examine what means Prof. Bergson would use to deal with this problem. His philosophy starts with the affirmation of individual freedom. His criticism of determinism and its psychology ascribes a real undetermined activity to the human mind. But Prof. Bergson is emphatically not a thoroughgoing individualist. Though its method is novel, the aim of his metaphysic like that of its predecessors is to establish an underlying unifying principle beneath the particular manifestations of life. Only, true to

his great conviction of the inadequacy of intellectual abstractions, he tries to find this unity not in any static or formal identity which transcends differences, but in a dynamic actual force which works through them. All life, he tells us again and again, is one. The one *elan vital* runs through all the divergent lines of evolution, though the one current splits up ever more and more and its various branches separate ever more widely from each other as it advances. In spite however of the widest divergence of the three main channels into which the stream has divided (the channel of automatism developed in plants, the channel of instinct in insects, the channel of intelligence in man), the facts of science can prove a parallelism of development along various lines of evolution which cannot be accounted for by the operation of any mechanical causes such as those of natural selection and adaptation. These facts of observation, combined with the deepest intuitions of our conscious life, reveal a real activity, one yet undetermined, trying to realise itself by diverging efforts and different instruments, and so dissipating itself along the paths of an age-long journey of which the goal, if goal there be, is utterly unforeseen.

ἅπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς κἀναρίθμητος χρόνος
 φύει τ' ἀθῆλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται·
 κοῦκ ἔστ' ἀελλπτόν τιδέν.

The vision is not lacking in a certain cosmic magnificence. But however far scepticism of intellectual criteria may proceed, an appeal to intuition must not be used as an escape from criticism. The vicious bias of the intellect in favour of what is clear-cut must not be made an excuse for offering what is only vague. When it is judged by the ordinary methods of critical philosophy Prof. Bergson's vision presents at first sight a strange discrepancy in its treatment of individual value. On the one hand we have the fundamental assertions of the freedom of the will in the individual, and that the effect of life upon matter is in a real sense to individualise it into organised bodies.¹ And on the other hand we find a number of metaphors and quasi-metaphors which distinctly suggest that the individual and separate sources of action are in a measure illusions which only find their reality in the one universal activity of life itself. We may instance the metaphors representing life as an ocean and as a super-man to which we shall return later. Still more often again the individual activity is mysteriously represented as the means of the transmission of the universal, whereas

¹ Cf. *Creative Evolution*, p. 13 sqq.

sometimes it is said to run counter to it. Thus on p. 243 we read that "life can progress only by means of the living which are its depositaries": whereas on p. 53 we had been told "each species, each individual, even retains only a certain impetus from the universal vital impulsion and tends to use this energy in its own interest;" and on p. 14 individuation and reproduction are said to be hostile tendencies. What then apart from metaphor is the relation of the cosmic impulse to the individual freedom, of the universal life to its particular manifestations? Neither materialist nor absolutist finds much difficulty in giving an intelligible, if unsatisfactory, account of the relation of his universal to the particular. Both frankly sacrifice the latter to the former. The materialist tends to find more and more that the apparent divisions and discontinuities of matter are arbitrarily fixed and unreal, and that the final reality is a kind of mechanical energy to which all things may be reduced. The absolutist, at any rate if Prof. Bergson's criticism of the intellect be sound, must follow what is up to a point much the same process. Starting from particular minds he tends to break down the barriers between them, and to conceive his ultimate as some universal Mind which transcends and includes all oppositions in an eternal Being. The essential similarity between the two methods of reasoning lies in the fact that both try to find an ultimate identity inclusive of all reality, the datum of reality being first conceived as a plurality of static objects, whether mental or material, inter-connected by relations. Both, it might be said from the point of view of Bergsonian criticism, are fundamentally in search of a transobjective identity. This is the whole alleged vice of the intellectual method, which, just because it involves the arresting and analysing of reality as permanent object, cannot but ignore or make nonsense of activity and change. But the moment we try to follow Prof. Bergson and start from activity, we are confronted with the fact that activity is essentially of the subject. We may indeed perceive motion and change in objects, though only as relative to rest and identity. But an activity we cannot perceive or even represent to our minds as an object. Our knowledge of activity is our experience of ourselves as conscious subjects and we can only infer its presence in the external world. Hence, since to analyse reality we must regard it as object, the inevitable determinism of logic and science. But hence also a difficulty for Prof. Bergson. The activity from which he started must be of the individual subject. How then can it be universalised? He has discarded the traditional method which looks on reality

as made up of objects and their relations. Therefore no transobjective identity however conceived will help him. The unity he seeks is that of a trans-subjective activity. This is the reason why, when he wishes his readers to realise the nature of the vital impulse, he appeals to the deep inward intuitions of their self-conscious life.

Before however we proceed further, the question may be raised whether in some ways Prof. Bergson's own language does not tend to confuse the issue. He is continually using almost interchangeably, without any attempt to define their relations to each other, the terms motion, change, and activity, apparently for the not very good reason that the intellect cannot grasp any of them. This vagueness tends to obscure important distinctions. It is at any rate fairly obvious that all movement in space involves (1) a thing to move which must itself maintain a certain internal identity and fixity, and (2) a relatively static environment of some kind in relation to which the movement takes place. Even the movements of the heavenly bodies must be conceived as taking place in relation to some kind of fixed environment, and to talk of a moving universe is strictly speaking nonsense.

Again, since the days of Plato philosophy has been familiar with the proof that absolute change is impossible, because change in order to have any meaning must always be relative to the identity of the thing changing. The nature of the relation between movement and change however is not so clear, and it is hard to see that any new suggestion of the ultimate reality of flux is conveyed by Prof. Bergson's demonstration that the intellect is unable to grasp the process of motion. Whether or not the plausibility of Zeno's famous paradox is due to the inability of the intellect to grasp the continuity of the arrow's flight, the arrow in order to fly must maintain a fixed identity in space separate and discontinuous from its environment. In abstract terms then it may be said that motion is change in the spatial relations of objects and as such excludes change in the objects themselves. Hence the incapacity of the intellect to grasp the process of movement not only fails to prove that movement is in any sense more real than its opposite, but also, since movement is only a special kind of change excluding other kinds, leaves the problem of change in general practically untouched.

Turning next to the relation of change and activity, a vital distinction must be remarked between change in inanimate and in animate objects. In the case of an inanimate object a mere quantitative difference of outline is sufficient to destroy its individual identity, the reason being that that identity

consisted simply in the outlines or spatial determinations of that object presented to our senses. When therefore we realise that these outlines are always changing more or less, we come to the conclusion that the identity of the object is only an abstraction and even a figment of our minds; and if we reflect still further we see moreover that in so far as we destroy identity in things we destroy change also as its correlative.

But with animate objects the case is quite different. Their individual identity does not depend on identity of outline presented to the senses. Nothing could be more different in outline than a moth from a caterpillar or an oak from an acorn. Yet in the caterpillar and the moth, in the acorn and the oak, we find a real identity, although their outlines are more obviously in a state of continual change than those of a stone or an ink-pot. And for this fact only one reason can be assigned. The identity consists in some form of subjective vital activity which we attribute to the animate object. It is this activity which makes real together identity and change which in inanimate objects seem like mere abstractions and figments. When I say, "The rock crumbles," both identity and change are abstractions, because I have no idea of what the rock, as itself, is: as it crumbles it fades gradually away into "no rock," and yet nothing is dead and there is no break in the matter which constitutes both the rock and its environment. When I say, "The tree grows," identity and change are real in so far as the vital activity which is their source separates the tree into a real individual. Now Prof. Bergson clearly lays stress on the superior individuality of the living body over the inanimate object. He even goes so far as to assert that it would be wrong to compare the living body to an object at all. "Should we wish," he says (p. 16), "to find a term of comparison in the inorganic world, it is not to any determinate material object but much rather to the totality of a material universe that we ought to compare the living organism." But in laying the whole stress of the contrast between animate individual and inanimate object on the difference between organised body and unorganised matter he loses sight of the more vital distinction to which the same contrast points, the distinction between activity and mere change or flux. Change and identity in objects are equally relativities and abstractions, meaningless when treated as ultimate realities. Change and identity are realised together in the conscious personal activity of a subject; and it is only so far as we postulate something of the same kind, though in infinitely lower degree, in the tree or the amoeba,

that its individuality and life become intelligible to us. Activity in subjects, not change in objects, is the reality of life. It is a trans-subjective activity alone which can give to life an essential unity.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the reality of this difficulty has been obscured in Prof. Bergson's own thought by his tendency to speak loosely of activity and life in terms of movement and change. This confusion, if such it may be called, has unduly simplified his metaphysical task. It enables him to evade the problem of unifying and universalising the subjectively realised and individual activities from which he must start by speaking vaguely of the whole of life and indeed of the whole of reality as a movement. Now movement and change considered as belonging to objects are clearly abstractions correlative to their opposites, and when as felt in consciousness they are given a non-spatial significance, they are then mere aspects or products of individual activity, in which identity and change are together realised. Hence to talk of the whole of life as movement or change without carefully examining the limits and application of the metaphor is a mere figure of speech which cannot carry more than a poetic significance.

Leaving out of account, then, generalities about the ultimate reality of change and movement, let us ask in what sense Prof. Bergson regards all the various individual activities of life as one, and by what arguments he seeks to establish this unity. The first main argument on which he relies is drawn from the fact of evolution. He notices striking similarities in the developments of life along diverging lines. Neither the developments themselves, he argues at length, nor their similarity can be accounted for by the operation of purely mechanical causes, such as those of natural selection and adaptation to environment. The only possible hypothesis, therefore, is that the developments and their similarity are the products of a real activity which is fundamentally one. But the different lines of evolution tend to diverge more and more, and the future is unpredictable. Hence the unity is behind, not in front. It is the unity of the original impulse which started all life upon its course. "Harmony," we are told, "is behind us rather than before. It is due to an identity of impulsion, not to a common aspiration" (p. 54). The phrase, "original impetus of life," occurs on p. 92, and on p. 268 the impetus is said to have been given "once for all". Let us ask ourselves carefully what is the precise meaning of the highly elusive identity thus established. The unity of life is the unity of its original impulse or *élan*.

This is really a metaphor and it is one which is singularly difficult of precise application.

(1) I may in the first place think of the impulse I can impart to a material body, *e.g.* a stone, when I throw it through the air. If I throw several stones simultaneously the similarities and divergencies of their motion will be accounted for by the unity of the impulse which started them. Obviously however this simile will not help us in the present case. A case of inert matter acted on by a living activity external to it is radically different from a case in which living activity is both the agent and the thing acted on. The resemblances in the motion of the stones are only reduced to an original unity just in so far as it is asserted that the stones are not themselves active at all but are determined by an external force. But *ex vi definitionis* the resemblances between the particular activities cannot be thus explained; for life is that which is not determined by external forces. Spontaneous activity implies a subjectivity, and must not be confused with the motion of objects. To take Prof. Bergson's account of the unity of life in this sense must destroy the spontaneity which he affirms to be life's essence. And in fact Prof. Bergson has carefully guarded himself against such misinterpretation.

(2) We must then think rather of the way in which my activity may impart an impulse to various other activities which in turn impel others so that in a sense my activity goes for ever outward in widening circles. The various activities are ever more and more remotely affected by mine, yet all may be said in a sense to have in it an original unity. This is the kind of interpretation Prof. Bergson suggests when he admits (p. 271) that the term "impetus" is only a physical metaphor and that life is in reality of the psychological order. The illustration rests on a fact of everyday experience which is a commonplace with the poet and the preacher. Unfortunately it only means here a change of simile which does nothing to solve the present difficulty. For all the activities of which it speaks are individual. On this showing, then, the original impulse of life becomes simply another individualised activity added to all the others, the resemblances and developments of which it is somehow supposed to explain. But just because it is only an addition to their number it cannot do so; for what Prof. Bergson professes to discover in it is the unity underlying the very plurality and differentiation of individuals. It is vain to urge (as on p. 271) that "it is of the essence of the psychical to enfold a confused plurality of interpenetrating terms"; for so far as

our experience goes, this is characteristic only of the individual mind and tells us nothing of the nature of a universal psychic life enfolding the individuals. This second simile, then, while it enables us to retain the spontaneity of individuals gives us no account at all of their unity.

(3) Probably our mistake so far has lain in trying to regard the original impulse as separate from and external to the individualised activities of which it is the source. Possibly all Prof. Bergson means by his doctrine of an original unity is the observed fact that, as the streams of evolution are traced backwards, differentiation becomes less and less marked, individuality less and less defined, until when the process reaches its logical conclusion the origin of life is found in a single primitive impetus acting upon matter. But the objection to this third attempt at exegesis is that it fails to explain anything. For it is obvious that as vital activities are traced farther and farther back towards their source they lose more and more all special characteristics. As they become more and more one, they become more and more a bare principle of inexplicable spontaneity in matter. When therefore the conclusion is reached the original impetus is seen to be quite characterless. It is called an *elan* because it is nothing more. It is called one because it is not nought. Now to discuss whether such an impetus (if the word "such" may be used of that which has no specific quality) has or had any real existence is clearly superfluous and beside the point. For obviously such a bare form of spontaneity can do nothing to explain particular resemblances in the behaviour of different individualised activities. Spontaneity itself cannot possibly make different activities act in the same way.

To put the argument shortly. Resemblances between particular activities can only be explained by reference to one original activity if that activity has some character. But characteristics are all, relatively at least, individual, in the sense that they all belong to special forms of life. Hence the original activity must also be a special form of life. But then it cannot be the unity underlying special forms.

The hypothesis, then, of one original vital impulse is quite incapable of fulfilling the purposes of explanation for which it was formulated. No doubt Prof. Bergson sees that to call the unity strictly original can never be satisfactory. For it is only postulated to account for derivative resemblances and developments, and a unity which manifests itself in derivatives cannot be merely original except in a purely logical and formal sense. So he speaks clearly of the impetus being "sustained right along the lines of evolution into which it gets divided"

(p. 92). But even when we take full account of the modification thus introduced into the originality of the impulse which unifies life, the only result is a vague impression of a substratum of unity permeating the whole stream of individuals, but found in greater purity the nearer we ascend to the source. It is undoubtedly the idea of such a substratum that Prof. Bergson's language often suggests, *e.g.* when he speaks of the original impetus "passing from one generation of germs to the following generation of germs through the developed organisms which bridge the interval between the generations" (p. 92). A complete physical illustration is presented by Weissmann's hypothesis of the continuity of germ-plasm. But unfortunately Prof. Bergson's whole philosophic attitude makes this conception in his case almost unintelligible. The unity is not a substance or essence but an activity. How then can an activity which, as far as our experience goes, is only realised subjectively as individual and discontinuous be in any sense represented as a universal substratum of identity? To call life a "visible current" (p. 27) is in this connexion only a darkening of counsel. Nor can we evade the difficulty (as Prof. Bergson might seem at times to suggest) by finding the unity of individualised activities in the bare principle of spontaneity itself. For not only is this an abstraction, but it is manifestly futile as an explanation of likeness, however reasonably it might account for difference. The conception of an *élan* at once individual and universal, at once original and sustained, at once discontinuous and immanent, causing at once divergence and likeness, a characterless spontaneity itself, yet determining the character of spontaneities, is surely a feat of mental gymnastics which even the least intellectual of minds might well find difficult to follow.

But the argument from the facts of evolution is of course by no means the only, or even the chief, proof by which Prof. Bergson seeks to establish his theory of the unity of life. In dealing with activities which can only be realised in the conscious life of a subject, it is only reasonable that the external methods of science should be regarded as ancillary to the internal method of intuition. There is no need to discuss here the nature of intuition itself or the possibility of criticising the validity of its somewhat oracular deliverances. It will be enough to notice a subtle change which seems to come over Prof. Bergson's conception of the unity of life when he adopts the intuitional rather than the scientific point of view. "Philosophy," he declares (p. 202) when he quits scientific discussion to sketch the method of metaphysic,

"can only be an effort to dissolve again into the whole." Surely a passage like this suggests a very different idea of unity from that described on p. 83: "each species, each individual even retains only a certain impetus from the universal vital impulsion and tends to use this energy in its own interests". In this latter the individual is an active force external to and even opposing the universal, which in spite of any attempt to avoid the implication becomes dangerously like a common and unchanging substratum of essence. In the former case the universal activity has become "the whole," and the individual seems to appear only on its surface practically as a sort of epiphenomenon possessing as it were a kind of bastard freedom, the only philosophic exercise of which is suicide. In the one case the universal is a common datum on which the individual works. In the other it becomes a sort of superconsciousness into which the individuals are compounded. In the one case the unity tends to be original. In the other it tends to be final. Of these two contrasted points of view Prof. Bergson seems to effect no real synthesis. Rather he continually seems to halt and oscillate between them. "Life," he says, "can progress only by means of the living which are its depositaries" (p. 243). Again, "we shut our eyes to the unity of the impulse which passing through generations links individuals with individuals and makes of the whole series of the living one immense wave overflowing matter". (p. 263). Yet again, "It is as if a vague and formless being whom we may call as we will man or superman had sought to realise himself and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way" (p. 243). "Vague and formless" is perhaps a more exact description than Prof. Bergson himself would care to admit. To return to our starting-point, how can we conceive a universal trans-subjective activity, an activity which can in a sense explain and embrace the individual subject without destroying the reality of its freedom? That is the problem, and thereof Prof. Bergson does not really attempt a solution. Instead he offers the reader a series of metaphors, generally concerned with wind, water or explosives, ignoring the fact that the whole question hinges upon their application. Otherwise he contents himself as in a passage already quoted with appealing somewhat vaguely to the analogy of our individual consciousness. But this is beside the point. For the problem is not one of the relations of individuals to each other, nor of the inter-relations of the component parts of an individual consciousness, but of the relations to individuality of a universal life.

Let us in conclusion try to define some of the conditions

on which alone a metaphysic of real activity can become intelligible.

(1) Assuming the standpoint of the Bergsonian criticism no activity can ever, as he rightly insists, be apprehended by any process of intellectual analysis. Reality to be analysed by the intellect must be arrested and considered as object. This is the essence of Prof. Bergson's contention that the intellect is suited only for operating upon matter. Activity cannot ever belong to the analysed object as such but only to the analysing subjects. In other words the intellect can only deal with the determined and never with the determinator, though a determinator is ultimately involved by the idea of determination, as the Greeks saw when they personified *Ἀνάγκη*. This is why the idea of cause, which involves the whole process of determination, is found by strict logic to be meaningless, and can only be realised by reference to the causation experienced in himself by a conscious agent.

Perhaps it may here be suggested in passing that Prof. Bergson's description of matter as "necessity itself" is vague and misleading. The idea of necessity is an abstraction which to be realised involves a necessitator and a necessitated. Now if life be typical of that which is active and determining, matter is typical of that which is passive and determined; and this relation seems somehow analogous to that of subject and object. Just as life as such is never conceived strictly as object and as determined except by being in thought somehow materialised, so matter is never conceived as subject and as active except by being in thought somehow vitalised. True, a mutual transference between life and matter of the terms proper to each is continually necessitated by common speech and thought; and yet this process of metathesis when reflected on is felt in a sense to involve a metaphor, though undoubtedly it expresses a reality. Here lies another problem which a too easy use of physical metaphor tends to obscure. Surely the relations and inter-relations of the opposed categories of life and matter, active and passive, subject and object, demand more attention than Prof. Bergson has been able yet to bestow on them. Unfortunately his own attempt to relate life and matter as inverse directions of the same movement seems unintelligible without some discussion of the nature of movement and its relation to activity.

To return however from this digression, it may at any rate be affirmed that a universal activity can only be apprehended by an intuition similar to that by which we either feel immediately in ourselves or infer in others the reality of individual activities.

(2) The universal activity must be supra-personal. A peculiar difficulty in conceiving a universal activity lies in the subtle danger that, just when we think we have succeeded, our universal may turn out to be no more than a hypostasised aspect of the individual which it therefore cannot possibly embrace. Whether we call our universal a Will, an Intellect, an Energy or an *Élan*, it becomes clear on reflection that it is only an abstracted aspect of our whole personal activity, and we do not make it any the more able to embrace that activity by extending it through all space and time, or even by writing it with a capital letter. And how deep does this habit of partial projection of personality extend? It has already been suggested that the very idea of change has no more than the relative significance of an abstraction until it is realised in the personal activity of conscious subjects. The same appears to be true of causality which admittedly becomes meaningless when supposed to exist objectively in material phenomena. How far might similar reasoning be applied even to the idea of negation? Prof. Bergson spends much skill in arguing (p. 287 *sqq.*) that the so-called idea of annihilation only means the substitution of one thing for another, and in the case of material objects he seems to prove his point. But when we come to our own consciousness the case is different. I have completely lost consciousness for a time. Certainly I cannot know or affirm it till consciousness is regained. But then nothing can persuade me that there has not been a real gap to which no notion of substitution bears any relation. And surely we can all conceive that in an absolute sense *ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦμεν*. Or take the negative proposition. "Negation," says Prof. Bergson, "is only affirmation in the second degree" (p. 303). When, he argues, I make the statement "the table is not white," I am warning you or myself that a hypothetical judgment affirming the table's whiteness is about to be replaced by another affirmation. True, but take a judgment negating my activity, "I cannot find my spectacles". What are the two implied affirmations? And do I not experience a real negation here? And if negation is only realised by reference to my activity experienced as limited, how far is every use of an active verb a metaphor from my activity experienced as effective? The more we follow this line of thought the more it seems that the unity and harmony of life exist not in its original germ but in its final product, not in the objectivity of a movement but in the subjectivity of a person. At least we may conclude that which claims to embrace the personal must be more and not less than personal itself. And it must always be remembered that

when we are dealing with persons and subjects the terms "more" and "less" have nothing to do with objective extension through space and time.

(3) A universal activity must be other than the mere aggregate of individual activities. It is obvious that activities cannot be compounded into a whole like drops of water. To say that the universal activity is the aggregate of individuals is to say exactly nothing; for the whole difficulty consists in understanding how and in what sense activities can be summed. If on the other hand the unifying principle is merely a common factor in all, we return to the idea of a substratum, to which, as we have seen, it is equally hard to attach a meaning in this connexion.

(4) The universal activity must in a sense be timeless, *i.e.* it must transcend what Prof. Bergson calls real duration. This real time is a medium of absolute change in which the absolutely new is continually coming to birth. It is then pertinent to ask in what sense can a real unity run through it? How can life of which it is the stuff be really one? To this question Prof. Bergson himself does not supply a clear and direct answer. To say that the unity is change itself does not appear to mean anything. We have however already suggested that change and identity are only realised together and in individual life. Can we say then that life as a whole is one through the change of real duration in the same sense that the individual is one? Is not this again to beg the whole question by speaking of the universal in terms of individual? To this it may be replied that, as Prof. Bergson points out, individuality is only a matter of degree and development. As we look back up the stream of evolution individual distinctions seem to fade away and yet we find life. Consequently unity through the change of duration belongs not only to life as individual but to life itself of which individuality is but a development. But it is just this kind of reasoning which supplies the main objection to Prof. Bergson's theory of evolution. It ignores the fact that only in the self-consciousness of the individual is life experienced and apprehended as an activity, a unity in change, an identity in difference, in short as an ultimate reality. The life out of which this individuality is supposed to have developed is really only an *x*, an inexplicable principle of spontaneity in matter looked at externally and consequently inapprehensible, since spontaneity can only be grasped as real in individual consciousness and is only really significant in connexion with that personal whole. If then "we must no longer speak of life in general as an abstraction or as a

mere heading under which all living beings are inscribed" (p. 27), the universal must embrace and not negate the complete individual distinction which is at once the highest and latest development of evolution and the only means by which we realise the idea of life at all. Hence the unity of life if it exists as anything more than an abstraction of individual thought is seen to be final quite as much as original; which is to affirm its transcendence of real duration.

Now it is a perfectly true criticism of the foregoing remarks that, though they are to some extent positive in form, they are altogether negative in content. They do not help us at all to conceive a universal activity acting through the subjectivity of individuals without destroying their freedom. It may be that their effect is only to make nonsense of the whole problem considered from this point of view. Or possibly again, as the late William James might have held, they point to some form of supra-normal experience as the only method of overcoming the difficulty. The purpose however of this rambling discussion will have been achieved, if it serves to point out and define a certain vagueness and confusion in Prof. Bergson's whole conception of universal life and of its relation to the individual. If the vice of most metaphysical unities is their abstractness, and if the new method is to be based on the exaltation of the whole personal activity over the abstractions which it makes and the instruments which it employs, let us at any rate think out quite clearly how deep that principle of abstraction goes into all our thought. We shall not then content ourselves with hypostasising an impetus or a spring which is no less an abstraction because it happens to be derived from the active as opposed to the cognitive aspect of our personality. Above all things let us beware of bridging the gulf that lies between individual and universal activity with the flimsy thread of physical metaphor. Otherwise the new metaphysic may turn out to be worth no more than the old yet ever fresh discovery of Strepsiades—

Δίνος βασιλεύει τὸν Δι' ἐξεληλακώς.