

*Another kind of madness, constantly wanting to draw attention to one's own insights, like some placard-carrying apocalyptic in Time's Square.*

– Damian Lanigan, *The Ghost Variations*, Weatherglass Books, 2022, opened at random, p. 69

What follows was written when, while writing the long note about cinematic time, as always, I encountered something along the way that, only tangentially related to that theme, seemed to demand another note. Unless I am mistaken and as I write up the note here the tangent feeds back in again to the other, long note on cinematic time. The tangent was suggested—the same source as provided the seed for the other, long note—by John Ó Maoilearca and Keith Ansell Pearson's introduction to *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, 2021.

There they write, Bergson's Kantianism and his Berkeleyism, in short his idealism, is *shallower* than either Berkeley's or Kant's. It does not have its roots in the categories of human understanding, as with Kant. It does not originate solely in the perception of the mind, as with Berkeley. It is instead *virtual*.

What is Bergson's idea of the virtual? What is it in light of his views on time?

Time for Bergson is duration. The time marked out by the clock is time translated to the dimension of space, since the clock is counting spatial divisions. These divisions are contingent on conventions of counting the day and night as fundamental units, so, according to a conventionally 12 hour day, they are broken up in space but not in time.

Science tends to use clocktime. Philosophy says Bergson need not, because a philosophical understanding of time should try to get at what time is in itself. Bergson also takes duration, time as duration, to be free of the determinism that its contingency installs.

He thinks duration free of the constraints the conventions of measuring time lead to, that duration is a freedom for creativity beyond conventionalism. This creativity is neither abstract, like the geometric measurement of time as space, nor actual, like the spacetime given in relativity theory as a chrono-geo-determinism. It is instead virtual.

What this *shallower* of Ó Maoilearca and Ansell Pearson means to me is a reflection. Transcendental ideas for Bergson are as shallow as a reflection. I see a reflection on still water of the trees above and, above them, the sky and stars, but this leads me to think of another sort of reflection, one equally as shallow, as on-the-surface, as the reflection in the water. Whereas this one is in space, the other is a reflection in time.

Everything that makes up the reflection in space, in the water, is actual. The surface is an actual surface. It exists. It may only be made of light but that light exists and it is the condition for there being a reflection. I say this because of the mystery and magic, the not-quite-real quality, mirrors traditionally invoke. Their not-quite-reality is not yet virtuality.

A reflection in time is virtual. So the virtual for Bergson relates to time, time as it relates to itself and is in itself, apart from space, contingency and the conveniences of measurement. The virtual is time reflecting on itself, on its own duration.

Deleuze further qualifies the virtual as being distinct from either the possible or the potential. What is virtual is not a pool of possibilities that are held in potential. Possibility and potentiality relate to reality along that continuum going from possible reality to existing reality. The constraints of possibility are again in evidence.

The virtual in contrast relates to actuality and is unconstrained by either possibility or its potential for realisation. Freely creative, the virtual resolves, works itself out in what is actual. The virtual is real without existing in actuality.

The possible exists without being real. Existence adds to possibility what was missing, reality. The formula stating that the virtual is not yet, not quite and no longer is insufficient and misleading. It limits the virtual to complete realisation only when actualised, when nothing is missing from virtuality.

Thinking about a reflection in time I think is a better idea. It also relates virtuality to Bergson as an aspect of his insight into time being pure duration. Like the reflection in space, from it nothing is missing and everything is at the surface. This is what I take from Ó Maoilearca and Ansell Pearson's *shallower*.

The virtual is a reflection not in space, in time. It doesn't necessarily lessen the difficulty of imagining the virtual. However if we move from this surface or across this surface according to Deleuze's ideas about counteractualisation I think we can come closer to understanding how the virtual works and, how usefully to think of it. Counteractualisation is to go from the actual back to the virtual.

Counteractualisation of transcendental ideas, for example, without removing their reality removes their depth or height. It sets ideas jostling on the same plane or surface. It returns them to their shallowness.

No longer are they standing in judgement. No longer transcendent, not yet subjected to a moral tribunal, they are not quite themselves but no less real. The reflection in time effected by counteractualisation reintroduces the freedom and creative play to what was thought to be determined and determining.

The question of idealism for Ó Maoilearca and Ansell Pearson comes up in relation to Bergson's use of the term images. All four chapter titles of *Matter and Memory*, 1896, feature the term. Bergson's use breaks with philosophical convention and is suggestive

of there being a link to cinema, of this not being a tangent and of its relevance to the note on cinematic time. What are images if not pictures, whether moving or not?

Ó Maoilearca and Ansell Pearson point out that in other places than *Matter and Memory* Bergson makes use of the word *ideas* to mean the same thing. The etymology of *idea* is from the Greek word εἶδον for *to see* and then to ἰδέα, meaning *form* or (visual) pattern. Bergson's *shallow* idealism more or less flattens the meanings of *idea* and *image*. Images are as much physically present as they are in play on the surface and as they are registered on a reflective surface or recorded on film.

The note on cinematic time takes up on the confusion of images in play and bodies in movement and what that means for our sense of time and duration. The purpose here is to go in the reverse direction, rather than from (cinematic) images to (temporal) forms or ideas, to go from images that have a reflection in time to ideas which have virtuality, virtual and transcendental ideas. Counteractualisation is not only meant for either ideas or images, ideal forms or transcendental ideas.

I think of counteractualisation as engaging a surface or plane of temporality or, as Deleuze and Guattari say in *What is Philosophy?*, I think of it as taking slices of chaos. Art, science and philosophy each does so in its own way. My practice, as a director with Minus Theatre 2014-2017, was to bring to the depthless surface of the stage the deepest and most intensely felt experiences where they could be brought into play, like transcendental ideas, where they could jostle against one another, free of their *baggage*, of judgement, of moral implication. This free and creative play, whether it is of transcendental ideas or physical bodies freed from defensive moralising, is of the virtual reflection in time or, better, is on it.

Not then improvisation, the movement in play is *ex-temporised*. It takes place by coming into being. The reflection in time is what makes in chaos the virtual slice. The reflection

Plan vital: *virtual plane of reflection and transcendental ideas*

in time, not in space, is that of reflective consciousness, consciousness reflected in the *plan vital* of duration.