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Author(s): Arthur O. Lovejoy

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## THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN RECENT FRENCH PHILOSOPHY.

### I. RENOUVIER AND RECENT TEMPORALISM.

THE purpose of the study here begun is to set forth certain important episodes in the development of temporalism, and, in doing so, to make a critical examination of the argument from temporalism to 'anti-intellectualism.' By temporalism in metaphysics (and it is with the metaphysical aspects of the tendency that I am here concerned) I mean any doctrine which maintains the following four propositions: first, that time is not 'ideal' in the sense that it can be regarded as unreal, as an illusion or a 'false appearance' of something non-temporal; second, that temporal succession and duration constitute a qualitatively unique mode of reality, which can not, without falsification, either be reduced to any other type of serial ordering or be conceived as forming part of any whole which, as a whole, is non-successive or changeless; third, that, since the experience of temporal succession involves an essential distinction between the givenness of past content of experience and the unrealized character of the future, the reality of the time-experience proves that reality as a whole can at no moment be truly called complete, self-contained, an organic unity; fourth, that the reality of the time-experience likewise shows that the total sum of given reality receives from moment to moment an increase in *some* sort of content, and that, therefore, the notion of becoming or process is fundamental in the description of the general nature of reality. To put all this more briefly and loosely, temporalism is the metaphysical theory which maintains the reality and irreducibility of time (or at the least, of the successiveness of conscious experience), the essentially transitive and unfinished and self-augmentative character of the reality known to us through experience, and the pertinency and primacy of the time-concept and of temporal distinctions in the treatment of most, if not all, philosophical problems.

It is manifest that the doctrine thus defined is incompatible with the more extreme sort of rationalism in metaphysics—*i. e.*, with the assertion that all that is real is rational and all that is rational is real. For 'rational' here must mean 'forming part of an organic system of which all the parts, with strict logical necessity, reciprocally imply one another and are implied by the idea of the whole, which latter idea is one of which the essence involves existence.' But in such a 'rational' system all the parts or elements must obviously be realized all at once and eternally; in so far as the idea of time is introduced into it, and it is declared that at some moments certain elements are not yet 'realized' in the same sense or to the same degree as others, the rationality of the system is destroyed. Between the purely logical, and therefore non-temporal, notion of reciprocal implication, and the notion of the actual successiveness of the moments in a time-sequence, there exists the utmost uncongeniality; and a metaphysics which takes the one notion as primary can not come to terms with a metaphysics which is based upon the other.

The term 'intellectualism' has sometimes been used to designate this sort of rationalism. Thus M. P. Landormey defines<sup>1</sup> an intellectualist as "one who believes in the absolute value of the principle of intelligibility or sufficient reason and affirms that everything has its reason for being, that everything is intelligible." It is not merely as the negative of this doctrine that the word 'anti-intellectualism' is used in this paper; for such a negative 'alogicalism' would be the better word. It is one thing to maintain that reality, because it is temporal, contains an alogical factor, that the universe is not wholly reducible to a system of intelligible conceptual necessities; and it is quite another thing to maintain that reality is illogical, that entities may exist, and are known to exist, which are not merely undeducible from, but are in conflict with, the supposed fundamental requirements of conceptual thought—which, in a word, are incongruous with the principle of contradiction as well as the principle of sufficient reason. It is this more extreme view that I here mean by 'anti-intellectualism.' It is true that some of the writers whose opinions are presently to be examined do not always themselves use

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. de Mét. et de Morale*, IX, 1901, p. 481.

the word in precisely this sense. They sometimes, indeed, in their disparagement of 'the intellect' as a means of acquaintance with reality, seem to say no more than that concepts are never identical with, or so 'full' as, the realities conceived; or again (what comes in the end to the same thing) that experience itself contains other elements besides conceptual thought—sensation, feeling, volition,—which elements necessarily can never have their entire essence expressed in terms of conceptual thought. But this, it seems to me, must appear, to everybody except the type of extreme rationalist already mentioned, to be a harmless truism. It can shock only those who have seriously supposed that the universe is and contains nothing whatever except "an unearthly ballet of bloodless categories." That there is in any concrete item of given sensible experience something *not* wholly given in any concept or scheme of concepts by which that item is represented in reflective thought, few in these days would be likely to deny; and there seems no good reason for calling all who make this admission anti-intellectualists. I shall, then, employ the term in its stricter use as a name for those who affirm, not simply that reality transcends and overlaps conceptions, but also that it flouts and nullifies the logical principles of conceptual thinking. But since these two positions, and others intermediate between the two, are apparently sometimes treated by the writers in question as identical, it will not be possible to adhere absolutely to this use of the term. In what follows, then, 'anti-intellectualism' will denote both those doctrines which explicitly assert that reality may be in conflict with the 'laws of thought,' and also those doctrines which imply this assertion but, through insufficient analysis, fail explicitly to discriminate it from the other forms of anti-rationalism which have here been defined.

That temporalism is one of the most important and vigorous of the new tendencies in philosophy must be apparent to all who follow current philosophical literature. That temporalism shows a marked tendency to issue in anti-intellectualism is equally apparent. It is, for example, in consequence of the paradoxical characters which he believes himself to have discovered in "real duration" that Bergson is led to his assertion of a congenital incompatibility of temper between "intelligence" and reality as

given in intuition. Similarly Professor James was brought, through Bergson's and his own reflection upon the paradoxes of our time-consciousness, to an impeachment of "conceptualist logic," and even to doubts about the applicability of the principle of contradiction to reality. In the flux of experience, James<sup>1</sup> found that "every minutest thing is already its Hegelian 'own other,' in the fullest sense of the term," and this, he observed, unquestionably "*sounds* self-contradictory. But as the immediate facts don't sound at all, but simply *are*, until we conceptualize and name them vocally, the contradiction results only from the conceptual or discursive form being substituted for the real form." This appears to be equivalent to saying that *as* "conceptualized," and when viewed from the conceptual or logical point of view, temporal reality is self-contradictory. An extreme expression of the same opinion is given by E. D. Fawcett.<sup>2</sup> "Contradiction," he writes, "is not always a test of falsity. . . . If *A* is real and if, when analyzed, . . . it proves . . . [to be both *B* and not *B*], what more is there to be said? The Real, while alogical, may be rich. And if it genuinely supports both sides of the Antinomy—well, both sides of the Antinomy will have to be accepted." And as a conspicuous example of a "Real" which is at the same time self-contradictory, Fawcett instances "the time flux." "We cannot admit change as an ultimate fact and uphold the sacrosanct generalization of contradiction as well." But "the empiricist" is not disturbed by this; he is prepared to discover that "the universe as a whole ignores the rigid 'law' of contradiction. The entire universe is perchance continually becoming what it is not, the expression of its native contradictoriness being what we call Time." A recent German writer<sup>3</sup> has employed similar language. "The essence of motion consists precisely in a thing's being in a certain place and at the same time not being in it. But these two predicates are contradictory, and according to the Principle of Contradiction they can not both at once be ascribed to one and the same subject. Yet in the concrete we find them united in the same thing.

<sup>1</sup> *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> *The Individual and Reality*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Erich Frank, *Das Prinzip der dialektischen Synthesis und die Kantische Philosophie*. Ergänzungsheft der *Kantstudien*, 1911, pp. 9-10.

Equally incongruous with the principle is change of any kind. . . . And the idea of time is so far from rendering the conjunction of two contradictory predicates conceivable, that it is itself simply a case of such a contradictory conjunction. For in time the moment before and the moment just after must be simultaneous, since there can not be any time—nor, therefore, any temporal boundary—between the two.”

To some readers the last two citations will probably give the impression that the argument from temporalism to anti-intellectualism consists simply in making the fallacy of accident the basis of metaphysics—in treating the expression ‘becoming what it was not’ as directly equivalent to ‘becoming what it is not.’ But in the case of the more important recent representatives of the argument in question, the logical procedure employed, though perhaps not wholly different in essence, is a trifle more complicated; and the resultant anti-intellectualism is not quite so unambiguous or so simple. The considerations which have led James and Bergson and their disciples to their despair of “conceptualist logic” and to their paradoxical characterizations of the time-flux can not be quite so concisely formulated. There is, however, nothing really novel in the paradoxes which these latter temporalists discover in the time-concept. Their difficulties are ancient, long-familiar and long-troublesome difficulties. They are in the last analysis reducible to certain of the paradoxes of the Eleatic Zeno (or to the corresponding antinomies of Kant), especially those arising out of the infinite divisibility of the continuum; and to Kant’s favorite puzzle concerning the apparent inconceivability that a succession of perceptions should constitute a perception of succession.

From these and kindred difficulties various forms of scepticism or of mysticism have, in the past history of philosophy, repeatedly arisen. It is not, therefore, in its logical roots that the novelty of the new anti-intellectualist argument inheres. It appears to me to inhere rather in two things: first, in a redundant complication of the analysis of the time-notion whereby these difficulties are again brought to light; second, in the nature of the conclusion drawn from the discovery of these difficulties. That conclusion, when properly put, is in essence such as I have already indicated;

and it is the reverse of the conclusion usually drawn from the same premises. The common conclusion is that time, since, upon analysis, it proves subject to these logical difficulties, must be 'unreal'; the temporalist's conclusion is that logical difficulties of this sort, since they have been shown to belong to the most certain of all realities, time, are no evidence of unreality, and that reality accordingly is not to be reached in its true nature through the processes of the intellect. Unfortunately, in M. Bergson's case, as we shall see, the conclusion can not be quite so unequivocally stated. Bergson has the air, though it is an illusory air, of finding in the notion of 'duration' not so much an example of, as a means of escape from, these ancient antinomies; when our idea of the nature of the temporal experience is properly purged and rectified, he seems to assure us, we shall at last have a conception of reality that is free from the Zenonian and the Kantian perplexities. It turns out, however, that this writer's purgation and rectification of that idea consists precisely in leaving at the heart of it the baldest self-contradictions and, with some slight disguises, the old paradoxes. In their true character, therefore, his mode of argument and his conclusion do not differ from the type which I have formulated.

The series of episodes in the history of temporalism here to be considered covers the work of four philosophers—Renouvier, Bergson, Pilon, James. Of these four I shall examine the reasonings with respect to the reality of time, to the alleged paradoxes of the time-notion, and to the consequent relation of the principle of contradiction to reality. In view of the title borne by this article, the reader will perhaps ask what William James is doing in this company. We all, certainly, like to think of him as a characteristically American philosopher; and we are not unjustified in doing so. But though his personality and his style were singularly American, he none the less truly belongs, as a technical metaphysician, to the apostolic succession of French temporalism. At the beginning of his career he was decisively influenced by Renouvier; though that influence doubtless served chiefly to strengthen, and to give form to certain temperamental inclinations of James's own mind. To Renouvier he seems unquestionably to have owed his initial conversion to a conscious

and explicit pluralism and temporalism. From Renouvier, also, he took that life-long preoccupation with the antinomies of the notion of infinity, which was apparent to all who knew him, though in his writings it was not conspicuous until the posthumous publication of his *Some Problems of Philosophy*. And it was apparently Renouvier who inspired in him that sturdy loyalty to the principle of contradiction, and that conviction that philosophizing consists in fairly facing and choosing between incompatible alternatives, which was especially characteristic of his earlier attitude. The essentials, also, of what may be called James's voluntaristic epistemology may be discerned in Renouvier's teaching. For example, Renouvier's statement of what he considers the proper meaning (largely missed by Kant) of 'the primacy of the practical reason,' might pass for the programme of James's essay on "The Will to Believe." Neo-criticism, Renouvier pointed out, does *not* maintain that a thing may be true from a practical point of view and false from a theoretical point of view. But it maintains "that certain truths indemonstrable to the reason when it is reduced to its intellectual elements (purely theoretical reason), obtain grounds for being believed (*motifs d'être crues*) when we take account of the moral elements of the reason (practical reason)—though with this proviso, that we limit our affirmations to points against which no insurmountable objections can be raised on theoretical grounds."<sup>1</sup> But in the course of his own reflection upon the implications of temporalism James came upon certain difficulties; and—by his own account of the matter—it was Bergson's example which emboldened him to seek an escape from these difficulties by that plunge into anti-intellectualism—though into an anti-intellectualism not quite fully conscious of its own meaning—which was exemplified in *A Pluralistic Universe*. Thus, in passing from a pluralistic, temporalistic and voluntaristic philosophy *not* associated with a radical anti-intellectualism to the anti-intellectualist temporalism of his later years, James represented in his own career the movement of French reflection from Renouvier to Bergson; and at least in the logical formulation of his positions at these two *termini* of his intellectual history he owed much to the direct influence of

<sup>1</sup> *Crit. Philos.*, 1874, t. II, no. 29; cited by Séailles, *La Philosophie de Charles Renouvier*, pp. 29-30.

these two writers. Thus, though he was an eminently American philosopher, his work in a proper and an important sense constitutes a chapter in the history of French philosophy.

1. *Renouvier*.—Of temporalism as a definite and explicit tendency in recent French and (through James) in recent Anglo-American philosophy, Renouvier may, I suppose, more justly than anyone else be considered the initiator. Of the outlines of his system it would, in this REVIEW, be superfluous to offer an exposition; though I am not sure that even professional philosophers always adequately appreciate how interesting and important a figure in nineteenth century speculation *le Solitaire d'Avignon* is. The purpose of the present study requires only a brief indication of the logical sources of Renouvier's temporalism, of its relation (as conceived by him) to the rationalism of the 'principle of sufficient reason' and to the principle of contradiction, and of his neglect of certain aspects of the notion of time which left some pregnant difficulties to his temporalist successors.

The temporalism of Renouvier is a special consequence of his general phenomenalism. Like the German post-Kantian idealists, he transformed the Critical Philosophy by eliminating from it that dualistic agnosticism latent in the conception of an unknowable thing-in-itself over against the world of experience. But he did so in a very different spirit and with an essentially different result. Kant's more influential successors in Germany, inspired as much by the preconceptions of Spinoza as by those of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, speedily rehabilitated the sort of metaphysical speculation over which Kant's greatest work had ostensibly been a funeral oration. For they developed the Synthetic Ego of the Transcendental Analytic into a supersensible and supratemporal Absolute—an achievement in which they were encouraged by Kant's own persistence in the affirmation of a noumenal Ego in his ethical writings, and by certain tendencies manifested in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Renouvier, on the contrary, proceeded by rigorously purging the Critical Philosophy of what he regarded as a noxious residuum of "the ontological tradition." The 'principle of relativity' is fundamental with him; according to this principle, "the nature of mind is such that no knowledge can be reached and formulated, and conse-

quently no existence can be conceived otherwise than by means of its relations and as, in itself, a system of relations." Renouvier does not hesitate to say that the principle of Comte's positivism is 'correct,' though it does not justify that "systematic abandonment of the psychology of knowledge and of the criticism of knowledge" which was characteristic of Comtism. The general types of relatedness to which all phenomena are subject and by means of which they are constituted are the categories; and these, as Kant rightly held, can be known *a priori*. But it is precisely the known indispensability of these categories in the constitution of our world of objects which makes it certain that nothing which transcends their limitations can be conceived by us as real, or be thought without paralogsms and self-contradictions. Even the conscious self, the 'person,'—though this is the culminating conception of Renouvier's metaphysics—is for him no supernatural entity behind experience, no 'substance' ontologically antecedent to an experience whose forms it generates; it is neither more nor less than the phenomenon of self-consciousness as actually found *in* experience, complemented by the phenomena of memory and of anticipation.

"The idea of the person thus given by the individual's own consciousness, when extended to other like consciousnesses, becomes the general idea of a conscious being—an idea which has nothing in common with the *Ego* of Fichte's doctrine, that universal Absolute of realistic idealism. The character of a law and a function remains attached to the proper definition of this being; to which there is added, in every individual ego, that inner self-perception which constitutes it."<sup>1</sup>

There is no such entity as "*le moi théorique de l'idéalisme absolu*," no *représentatif* prior to the empirical characters and contents of representation; there is only the concrete empirical ego. "*La représentation n'implique rien qu'elle-même et . . . ne sort d'elle-même que pour poser la représentation, la représentation à d'autres titres, en d'autres termes, mais encore et toujours et partout la représentation.*"

It was primarily through his fidelity to this *méthode phénoméniste* that Renouvier was a pioneer of that reaction against

<sup>1</sup> *Dilemmes de la métaphysique pure*, 1901, p. 234.

'absolutism,' and against the whole procedure and temper of 'neo-Kantian' rationalistic idealism, which has come to be so conspicuous in recent metaphysics. But it was, more particularly, through the combination of this phenomenalism with apriorism in epistemology that his own species of temporalism was generated. Time, as the 'form' or mode of relation characteristic of the process of consciousness itself, as one of the 'categories' apart from which we are incapable of representing experience, can be known *a priori* to constitute a determination of all possible concrete existences. "It is evident that both the subjective and the objective element in consciousness equally imply relations of succession. And this property is not peculiar to sensible things or those which belong to immediate experience. Duration is, in the last analysis, a law that conditions predications (*attributions*) of every sort, since, . . . however abstract a proposition may be to begin with, and however independent of all succession, we always are brought round finally for the subjects of our predications to *ensembles* of phenomena represented *in time*; outside of such *ensembles* no attribute whatever can subsist. Finally every representation relative to the categories of causality, finality and personality, as well as becoming, implies relations of succession as conditions presupposed by those categories."<sup>1</sup>

Thus "all the phenomena which experience offers belong to Becoming"; not only is this true of each particular phenomenon but likewise "Becoming is characteristic of the Whole of Being." For by definition, the "Whole of Being" embraces all the relations among phenomena; consequently "*le Tout-être devient, en ce sens que les choses deviennent dans le Tout-être.*"<sup>2</sup>

Such, very briefly indicated, are the logical grounds and the historical relations of Renouvier's temporalism. It is not upon these, but upon the further consequences and applications of the doctrine that I wish chiefly to dwell. The particular detail in the working out of the principle which is of most interest in connection with the theme of this paper, is due to Renouvier's combination of temporalism with finitism. This is not an arbi-

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de critique générale*, 2<sup>e</sup> édition, *Premier Essai*, 1875, I, p. 343.

<sup>2</sup> *Premier Essai*, 1875, III, p. 147.

trary nor a merely external combination. Every metaphysician (unless he be a pure illusionist), whether he conceive reality as ultimately temporal or as ultimately eternal, is called upon to face the question concerning the quantitative aspect of reality, and, consequently, to make choice between finitism and infinitism; and while his choice may be partly predetermined by his theory concerning what may be called the qualitative nature of reality, it will in any case itself determine the interpretation of the latter theory in certain fundamentally significant respects. Not a few philosophers, however, by one lame device or another, evade the quantitative problem in metaphysics. Renouvier attacks it with the utmost directness. For him (after his first period) the primary obligation of the philosopher is to bring all speculative hypotheses to the touchstone of the principle of contradiction; and to that principle he finds the notion of an infinite number or quantum to be manifestly repugnant. Hence, the series of successive phenomena which constitute reality (or, at any rate, the only reality which we are capable of apprehending) is limited *a parte ante*; in the phraseology of Kant's first antinomy, the world had a beginning in time.<sup>1</sup> Now, a temporalism thus interpreted in a finitist sense has obviously broken decisively with metaphysical rationalism. Renouvier himself, perhaps, did not always realize the extent of this breach; but it has been sufficiently apparent to his disciples. M. Pillon, for example, has pointed out<sup>2</sup> that the real basis of Kant's argument for the antithesis of the first antinomy is the principle of sufficient

<sup>1</sup> M. Henri Bois, a neo-criticist theologian writing in *L'Année Philosophique*, 1909 (p. 117), finds a certain wavering in Renouvier's utterances on this question. "At times," says M. Bois, "he boldly affirms, as a positive dogma, that all things—including God—had a first beginning; at other times he merely regards the first beginning as a limit reached by our thought, behind which he does not forbid us to assume the existence of something else. The world we know, the God who now exists, had a beginning; but behind, before, there was—what? Renouvier answers: '*l'abîme*;' and this *abîme* he seems, at bottom, to conceive somewhat after the fashion of the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, which thus—exorcised from all the other parts of Renouvierism—here reappears." M. Bois doubtless knows his Renouvier far better than I; yet I cannot but think he gives much too positive a sense to Renouvier's references to this *abîme*; which I take to be nothing but the vacuity which our imagination *now* necessarily represents as antecedent to the beginning of concrete existence.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Année Philosophique*, 1909, pp. 50-57.

reason; the antinomy, in fact, consists precisely in an opposition between the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. The former calls for the finitist answer to the quantitative problem; the latter protests against that answer. "The world, you say, is limited in time. But why one limit rather than another? You declare that the sum of coexisting and successive beings, up to the present moment, constitutes a number, and a finite number. But why one number rather than another? The number of coexisting and successive beings, it logically follows from the doctrine of the finitude of the world, is inexplicable, arbitrary; therefore, one is justified in saying, irrational."<sup>1</sup> To accept the thesis of the antinomy as valid is, therefore, to rule this protest, and the principle which gives rise to it, out of court. The world of a finitist temporalism is a world which came into temporal existence out of nothing, without antecedent or cause or reason; and it is therefore a world in which the like discontinuous and causally inexplicable and non-rational emergence of new entities and characters may conceivably at any time occur again. For the principle of sufficient reason once abandoned, there remains no reason why new beginnings of existence should be limited to the first moment of the cosmic calendar.

The scope of this paper does not call for a defence of finitism, a doctrine now much out of fashion. But (though it is a digression from my theme) I think it worth while at least to point out that it was through no ignorance of 'the new infinite' that Renouvier adopted that doctrine. The property of infinite numbers which forms the basis of the so-called 'new definition' of infinity—the fact, namely, that in such numbers a part may have all of its elements put into a one-to-one correspondence with all the elements of the whole—was set forth at length by Renouvier in his earliest discussions of the subject as constituting precisely the evidence of the self-contradictoriness of the notion of infinite number.<sup>2</sup> The new number-theorists have, in the neo-criticist's eyes, somewhat naïvely supposed that they have rendered the notion "harmless" (as Russell has called it) by merely explicitly

<sup>1</sup> Pillon, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Troisième Essai*, 1864, I.

incorporating the contradiction into the definition itself! "The radically illogical character of such a definition," as Renouvier wrote in one of his later volumes, "consists in this, that the concepts of whole and part and of equality are introduced into it and at the same time are violated by the proposition itself."<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the possibility of absolute and spontaneous 'first beginnings' in the temporal order, which follows from Renouvier's finitism, results, when it is elaborated, in a philosophy of nature that anticipates many of the elements of Bergson's. Both philosophers, though in the main for different reasons, introduce indeterminism not only into psychology but also into biology. Most of the traits of that *élan vital* of which our distinguished contemporary has so much to say were already apparently in the *spontanéité radicale et irréductible* of which his predecessor discoursed eloquently over forty years ago. "This primal spontaneity," wrote Renouvier, "this energy which awakes and comes into existence of itself at the beginning of time and in the nothingness of space—whether it bursts forth [*s'élançe*—the figure is the same as Bergson's] at once in a highly complex form or starts from humble beginnings, growing by shoots (*jets*) which merge with one another and augment the whole, through the ever-unfinished period of Becoming—this ought not to surprise the philosopher whose reason has once led him to reject self-contradictory definitions of the nature of things, . . . and to consider phenomena as pulsatile, erectile, intermittent, and consequently to recognize in all of them *something* of that character of spontaneity which was the *exclusive* law of the earliest-appearing of them."<sup>2</sup> Such a sentence as the following, again, might easily pass for an excerpt from *L'Évolution créatrice*:

"The world is one immense pulsation composed of an unassignable (though always determinate) number of elementary pulsations, of which the harmony—whether less or more comprehensive, whether blind or conscious—after being established and developed in many kinds and degrees, finds its consummation in the production of autonomous beings, in whom it, appearing at

<sup>1</sup> *Dilemmes de la métaphysique pure*, 1901, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Troisième Essai*, 1864, I, p. 44.

first merely as spontaneity, tends finally to become voluntary and free."<sup>1</sup>

With all this there is naturally associated the doctrine of the logical discontinuity of the hierarchy of the sciences, of the impossibility of ever 'reducing' psychology wholly to biology, or biology wholly to physical or chemical principles. Thus organisms, though they are combinations of physico-chemical complexes that, when existing separately, obey mechanical laws, are in their characteristic vital functions *êtres nouveaux*, and manifest *lois irréductibles* which it will never be possible to deduce from any more fundamental laws manifested alike in the organic and inorganic realm. This doctrine was emphasized by Renouvier as early as 1864, some ten years before it (together with several other important contentions common to Renouvier and to Bergson) was more methodically developed by Boutroux in his *La contingence des lois de la nature*. Finally, Renouvier's cosmology gets a certain intelligibility and consistency which I find lacking in Bergson's very ingenious but elusive views of the nature of matter, from the fact that it is frankly animistic. Even inorganic matter is supposed by him ultimately to consist *en de certaines représentations pour soi*, the character of which we can not define with precision, but which we must conceive somewhat after the analogy of our own sensation and appetition. Physico-chemical phenomena, Renouvier writes, are, "I do not say so inert and inanimate as abstract mechanics assumes (agreeing in this with the superficial appearances of things), but are at least limited to the degree of consciousness—of feeling and of invariable spontaneity—which the simple forces of attraction and repulsion presuppose."<sup>2</sup>

In spite of these approximations to the later doctrine of Berg-

<sup>1</sup> *Troisième Essai*, 1864, I, p. 43. In view of these expressions of Renouvier's one is not surprised to find M. Pillon saying, in his review of *L'évolution créatrice*: "We applaud this conception of the *élan vital*. It is in fairly close accord with the views which we have often had occasion to express concerning the minimal degree of consciousness and of liberty which it is necessary to ascribe to the elementary beings or inferior monads. The study of organic and mental evolution has led M. Bergson to a doctrine of contingency which in a certain measure . . . approximates that of neo-monadistic idealism, as we understand it" (*L'Année Philosophique*, 1907, p. 183).

<sup>2</sup> *Troisième Essai*, 1864, I, p. 100.

son, Renouvier (in the first edition of the *Essais de critique générale*) refused to see in evolutionary cosmology and biology the philosophical importance and value which the author of *L'Évolution créatrice* seems to find in them. Renouvier held back from this in part for reasons of philosophic caution. About "the Whole-of-Being" we can not generalize, except in so far as *a priori* necessities of thought are available. Our planet, even our solar and galactic system, is not the universe; and even though, within their limits, we could discover the total tendency of the sequence of changes, we should have no right to universalize the results of so partial an induction. Though we can logically demonstrate that the Whole-of-Being is subject to becoming, we can not prove any specific kind or direction of change in the whole.

"The change of the Whole, *as a whole*, could be determined by science only if we could compare the Whole with itself at two successive moments. . . . And even if, *per impossibile*, we could do this, it would still remain to discover the general law of the series of changes."<sup>1</sup> But, apart from these considerations, Renouvier had, at the time at which he was formulating the neo-criticist system, a curious aversion from biological evolutionism even as a purely scientific hypothesis. This seems to have sprung chiefly from a conviction, bred of his finitism, that the abrupt, discontinuous diversities of things, organic or inorganic, can never be eliminated or explained away by conceiving those diversities as parts of a series of continuous, imperceptible gradations. Of all continua the philosopher of finitude had a natural suspicion; and evolutionism seemed to him to consist precisely in the pretension to *account for* all diversities by assuming a real continuum of temporally successive forms. Consequently, in the first edition of the *Troisième Essai* (1864) we find him admitting the modifiability of species only within limits, and rejecting Darwinism and *cette thèse du progrès, fondée si peu profondément et si peu garantie*. The "principle of specificity" he sets up as a primary law of thought. "Species, their genesis, their number, are irreducible given facts" (*données*). In the second edition of the *Premier Essai* (1875) this position is slightly

<sup>1</sup> *Premier Essai*, III, p. 148.

modified. Darwin is absolved from the charge of error in scientific method, on the ground that "he carries out the desired reduction of species" to unity only "with a happy timidity"; he still admits that there may have been, for example, "four or five primeval forms" of animals. Thus the *principe de l'espèce* is by him sufficiently conserved; and, with that principle properly safeguarded, philosophy need have no prejudice against "the legitimate hypothesis of the indefinite variability of organisms and of the gradual formation of new species." Renouvier's real concern, it is manifest, was for the logical principle of the discontinuity of qualitative differences and the consequent impossibility of 'explaining' new forms in terms of the properties of the antecedently existing forms from which they are supposed to have arisen. In other words, his initial attitude of suspicion towards both Darwinian evolutionism in biology and Spencerian evolutionism in cosmology was due to a conviction closely related to that which has made M. Bergson a far more radical evolutionist than Darwin or Spencer—to the conviction, namely, that any emergence of qualitative novelties would always amount to a sort of new creation, to an abrupt, discontinuous irruption into existence of new reality, not in any intelligible sense 'given' in what went before. But Renouvier, overlooking the most obvious possibilities of his temporalism and the most natural biological implications of his conception of a "radical spontaneity" in things, tended, when dealing with the problem of the origin of species, to construe his principle of discontinuity in a static rather than a temporalistic sense. His general attitude towards the theory of organic evolution was thus, even in his middle period, rather one of reluctant and quibbling acceptance than of enthusiastic adoption of a conception important for the elaboration of his own system. He laid down the principles which logically generate the idea of 'creative evolution'; he did not himself quite fully work out that idea in its biological applications.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the writings of his final period Renouvier's acceptance of the theory of descent was complete and unequivocal enough (cf. *Le Personnalisme*, 1903, pp. 121-3). But behind this he placed those fanciful hypotheses concerning cosmogony and embryogeny to which he had by that time become attached; and these

It should, however, by this time be evident that Renouvier's temporalism carried with it not a few of those subsidiary ideas which play so great a part in contemporary forms of the doctrine. But the anti-intellectualism which has accompanied much recent temporalism can be traced to him only in the sense that he raised the problem which has chiefly generated that tendency, and failed to deal with the problem in a wholly clear and conclusive manner. That the problem had latent in it difficulties which would presently cast a shadow of uncertainty upon the principle of contradiction itself, he was apparently far from imagining. In his treatment of the 'category' of time, Renouvier was guilty of three omissions. (1) He never made it altogether clear how duration can be free from the antinomies of the continuum. (2) He seems never to have fully considered Kant's difficulty concerning the possibility of deriving a perception of succession from a succession of perceptions. (3) He made no radical difference between time and space with respect to their ontological status or 'degree of reality'; and he ascribed to the two a large number of common attributes. It was precisely at these three points that the later growths of French temporalism germinated.

Renouvier had avoided the admission of an infinite regress, in the case of time, by his doctrine of a first beginning. But there remained the question of "the infinite of composition." On the face of it, duration seems, like space, to be a continuum. But a continuum is divisible *ad infinitum*, and a 'given' or realized continuum must therefore constitute an actual infinite magnitude; otherwise the possibility of its endless subdivision would not be grounded in the reality of which that possibility is predicated. Thus the worst of the old Zenonian paradoxes hypotheses were, in a metaphysical sense, essentially non-evolutionary. For they assumed that the world was originally 'created,' and created perfect; that through the abuse of the freedom of the originally created spirits a 'fall' took place; and that this led to the destruction of the primitive physical order and the conversion of the material universe into the nebulous state—from which the present scheme of things has gradually evolved. The 'germs' of the original monads, however, he supposed to be indestructible; they therefore have survived the cosmic catastrophe, and, passed through the lower and higher forms of animal life, appear as human beings, who will eventually be restored to their original perfection in a perfect society.—But upon the aberrations of a great intelligence in old age it is not fitting to dwell.

about change and motion seem to return to plague the temporalist—and most of all the temporalist who is determined to be also a finitist. It is true that Renouvier repeatedly denied that duration is a continuum of the sort that involves infinity. In the *Troisième Essai*, 1864, he endeavored to formulate the conception of a *minimum divisible* of duration, a *durée dernière*; these ultimate elements of succession are “extremely small,” much too small to be separately perceptible. “Thus it is only through the composition or excessive accumulation” of these “elementary durations” that there are produced “phenomena of which we can appreciate the duration by our senses.” Because we can not, in clear consciousness, apprehend these time-elements separately, they appear to us as a continuum, just as a series of small dots, at a certain distance, is perceived as an unbroken line. But in fact, behind this *continu apparent*,” there are *intervalles réelles, intermittences réelles*. “Intermittence is,” in fact, “a universal law of nature; and the rational proof of it is to be found in the *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine of a real continuum or actual infinite.” Here, evidently, our finitist philosopher is making a hard struggle to save time from the fatal charge of continuity. Yet the struggle can not be regarded as successful, nor as consistent with the same philosopher’s account, in other passages, of the attributes of time. Have the ultimate units of duration themselves any duration or temporal magnitude? If so, the whole problem breaks out afresh within their limits, no matter how “small” they may be supposed to be. If not, they are mere temporal points, and not even an “excessive accumulation” of them could amount to a real duration. Again, if between the “pulses” of duration there are “intermittences,” what are these intermittences made of, where and how do they subsist? And if they do not enter the consciousness of duration, does not that mean that, *in* consciousness, duration *is* continuous, without intermittences? To such questions, Renouvier’s doctrine seems to offer no satisfactory reply.

Moreover, in his own formal analysis of the meaning of the category of time, he plainly implies that duration is a continuum. Anything which is represented as in time, as having temporal relations, is thereby given a certain “position” in a certain

scheme of ordering. Now position, whether in time or space, involves two other distinguishable though inseparable notions, that of a "limit" and that of an "interval." In space, for example, there must be determinate points; and between any two distinct points there must be an interval not reducible merely to more points. In succession the limit is the "instant," the interval is "time," the synthesis of these two constitutes "duration." "In the definite interval between any two instants, other instants may be placed at will, *ad indefinitum*. Were it otherwise, the instant would be something other than a limit and time something other than an interval; for two instants can not be represented as two without an interval between them, nor can an interval be represented unless it be thought as affording places within itself for other possible limits. Thus *duration* is a *synthesis of the interposition of possible instants between two given instants.*"<sup>1</sup>

When Renouvier describes this as a merely "indefinite" possibility of the interposition of "instants" within any duration, he is patently evading the consequences of his own definitions. His logic requires that there be an infinite possibility of such interposition, and not of points merely but also of intervals, since each pair of points presupposes an interval. And if duration is 'real,' this contained infinity must apparently be not merely a possibility but an actuality. The reader may, however, urge that Renouvier's phenomenalism saves him here; that these necessities apply only to conceptualized duration, while real duration, for a phenomenalist, need have neither more nor less magnitude and division than it is immediately experienced as having. But it is not clear that the neo-criticist phenomenalism means quite this. Renouvier frequently seems to argue in this manner: An immediate datum, *A*, if it is to be conceived as other than self-contradictory, implies a certain other fact, *B*, not immediately given; in such a case *B* is known to be not less real than *A*. It is by an argument of just this type that the assertion of a first beginning of time is reached. Why, then, should not a like argument be applicable to the internal constitution of time? The temporal experience, the fact of succession, it is assumed, is

<sup>1</sup> *Premier Essai*, 2d ed., 1875, I, p. 339; the italics are Renouvier's.

an immediate datum; but in order to avoid contradictions, it seems necessary to represent succession as a continuous quantity; the notion of a continuous quantity, however, is itself (upon Renouvier's principles) self-contradictory; hence the conclusion of an anti-intellectualist temporalism—a reality actually given baffles the 'intellect' by refusing to be conceptually 'thought through' without absurdity.

Besides the Zenonian paradoxes of the continuum, there is another puzzle about time, which, somewhat obscurely indicated by Kant, has become a common-place of the psychology of temporal perception. This is what Ward calls "the truism—or paradox—that all that we know of succession is but an interpretation of what is really simultaneous or coexistent," that in our time-perception "all that corresponds to the differences of past, present and future is presented simultaneously."<sup>1</sup> If two moments, *A* and *B*, are not merely to be successive, but also to be experienced as successive, it seems necessary that both be present in consciousness together; the time-relation can not be given, it appears plausible to say, unless the two terms of the relation are both jointly given. "Unless," as Royce<sup>2</sup> has put it, "we could overlook a succession and view at once its serially related and mutually exclusive events, we should never know anything whatever about the existence of succession." Now this paradox has more than once been used as an argument against temporalism of all sorts; it is one of the principal weapons in the armory of idealistic eternalism. It therefore calls for very serious consideration from the temporalist. If it be not disposed of, his temporalism at least seems obliged to avow itself a paradoxical type of metaphysics. The requisite consideration can hardly be said to be given it by Renouvier. In Bergson's earliest discussion of the time-problem it will be found to play a not unimportant rôle.

Finally, Renouvier has been criticized by his principal disciple, Pilon, for ascribing to time and space the same sort and degree of reality and, consequently, leaving the actual ontological

<sup>1</sup> *Enc. Britannica*, 11th ed., art. "Psychology."

<sup>2</sup> *The World and the Individual*, II, p. 117. The best exposition of this paradox known to me is to be found in this chapter of Royce's.

standing of both curiously ambiguous. For Renouvier's monads are in space just as truly as in time; they are, in Pillon's<sup>1</sup> words, "nothing but the dynamic atoms of Boscovich endowed with perception and appetite." But if the monads exist at least punctually in space, it is necessary that the space—with its 'intervals' as well as its 'limits' or points—be there for them to exist in. Thus Renouvier still "leaves subsisting the realistic view of spatial relations"—a view which "accords ill with the law of number and with the finitist logic in general." In other words, the spatial as well as the temporal continuum reappears, and reappears as a reality necessarily implied by a given reality; and with the real continuum those *bêtes noires* of Renouvier, the paradoxes of the actualized infinite, again invade his philosophy. This is not only awkward in itself, but it incidentally endangers his temporalism. For if time is no more genuinely real than space, if the category of succession has no more coherency and no more fundamental significance than that of position, it is, from the logical point of view, in a rather bad way. The proper view for a finitist temporalism to take, Pillon insists, is that "space ought to be separated" in these regards, "from time and the other categories," that the phenomena of the "outer sense" have an "illusory character," precisely because the antinomies, and especially the paradoxes of the continuum, are applicable to these in a way in which they are not applicable to time. In other words, a temporalist, if he be unwilling to be an anti-intellectualist, can not be a physical realist, even in the modified sense in which Renouvier may be so described.

Such seem to be the ways in which Renouvier anticipated the more recent developments of temporalism in French philosophy, and such were the oversights by which he left to his successors unsolved problems, out of which anti-intellectualist tendencies were generated. With these later developments I hope to deal in a subsequent paper.

ARTHUR O. LOVEJOY.

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

<sup>1</sup> *Année Philos.*, 1905, p. 116.