Intellectual Effort and Linguistic Work

Semiotic and Hermeneutic Aspects of the Philosophy of Bergson

by Kristian Bankov

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Dedicated to my mother, my father and Giuseppe

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Acknowledgments

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Three and a half years later, I can report that everything went in the best possible way, and the present work is the result of a successful international and inter-university exchange. All of this would not have been possible without the selfless and continuous help of Eero Tarasti, to whom I wish to express my deepest gratitude. Thanks to him, I twice received scholarships that enabled me to work in ideal conditions for almost a year in Helsinki. In addition to his expert guidance, his friendship and cordiality made the distant Finland a second home for me. I would also like to thank the Center for International Mobility (CIMO) for their generosity in twice granting me a scholarship. I owe much to my second tutor, Ugo Volli; his advice and comments since my graduation from the University of Bologna have greatly helped me to organize my philosophical views. I also want to acknowledge the readiness and openness of my supervisor, Esa Saarinen, and the benevolence of Ilkka Niiniluoto, both of whom welcomed me into the Department of Philosophy at the University of Helsinki. My participation at the semiotic seminar there, in the Department of Musicology, brought me into contact with other doctoral researchers and students, whose acquaintance helped sharpen my own thinking. I am also grateful for my

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Preface

This study was inspired by the philosophy of Henri Bergson – not so much by the enormous success of his books, nor by the unmerited decline in the popularity of his doctrine, which began so soon after he had been a major figure in both French and world philosophy. Rather, the present study draws its inspiration from the philosophical truth contained in Bergson's works, and more precisely, from the difficult challenge of communicating that truth to others. Numerous theoretical questions arise in the course of such an enterprise, to which I hope to give at least partial answers.

Bergson treats the question of *philosophic truth* in a way that allowed me to frame my research in terms of contemporary semiotic and hermeneutic discourses. In his famous essay "Philosophical Intuition" (CM[1]: 107–129), he defines this kind of truth as "something simple, infinitely simple, so extraordinarily simple that the philosopher has never succeeded in saying it" (109). This dialectic between intuition and its "saying" is examined in terms of the hermeneutic dialectic between *understanding and interpretation*.

At the same time, this study has the programmatic aim of sparking renewed interpretations of Bergson's philosophy, and especially his notion of *Intellectual Effort*. I see this notion not only as central to Bergson's philosophy, but also as constitutive for the sign-character of our being and for the very possibility our

[1] Those are the abbreviations of the works of Bergson:
(BS) "Le bon sens et les études classiques" (1895)
(IE) "Intellectual Effort" (1902a)
(IM) "Introduction to Metaphysics" (1903)
(Essai) *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1960)
(Mélanges) *Henri Bergson. Mélanges* (1972)
(ME) *Mind Energy: Lectures and Essays* (1975)
(MM) *Matter and Memory* (1988)
(CM) *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics by Henri Bergson* (1992b)
(CE) *Creative Evolution* (1998)

persisting in the world. For me this hypothesis is so true and obvious that I would compare it with truths such as “the Earth revolves around the Sun” and “man must keep his dignity”. The problem comes, of course, when I have to defend this view. Contrary to the two truths just mentioned, mine is not susceptible to deductive proofs. There are no logical positions or experimental facts on which to base the credibility of this study. For this reason, it was necessary to provide the brief introduction which follows, entitled “On the Method of This Study”. There I try to justify the viability of an entire doctoral dissertation that discusses philosophical questions in a hermeneutic and interpretative way.

After the comments on methodology, the study unfolds in two main parts. Part One is dedicated to the philosophy of Bergson and, specifically, to his notion of Intellectual Effort. In Part Two, I read some central semiotic and hermeneutic problems from the point of view of Bergson’s “theory” of Intellectual Effort.

In Part One: Chapter I, my aim is to describe both the intellectual context in which Bergson’s philosophy appeared, and its interesting interpretative fate thereafter. I pay particular attention to those authors whom I call “advocates” of Bergson, and, in the course of taking their side, I further clarify my own interpretative method. I also examine the problem of philosophical authority and its relation to the concept of intellectual effort, to the extent that philosophy is a mode of “authorizing” concepts by putting them into play as discourse.

Part One: Chapter II presents an analysis of Bergson’s philosophy and reveals the fundamental role that the concept of intellectual effort plays in it, despite the limited number of pages he explicitly dedicates to this topic. Of great interest are Bergson’s earliest public speeches, which submitted to analysis demonstrate a well-developed ethics of intellectual effort. In this chapter I also consider Bergson’s many-sided concept of language and how intellectual effort determines its creative use. Most importantly, this chapter systematically presents what I call the “theory of intellectual effort”. Here I try to develop the

full phenomenological and hermeneutic potential of Bergson's concept of temporal "duration" (*durée*) as constituted by the memory (especially in his work *Matter and Memory*). My interpretation includes a discussion of how language participates in this phenomenological process.

In Part Two: Chapter I, I relate the theory of intellectual effort to Italian philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's attempts to establish a homology between material work (labor) and *linguistic work*. In Chapter II of Part Two, I discuss the mostly ignored, yet rich parallels between Bergson and the father of semiotics, Charles Peirce. I attach considerable importance to the parallels between Bergson's *duration of consciousness* and Peircian *semiosis*, and between the former's "immediate data of consciousness" and the latter's "iconism". These parallels allow me to propose a new version of the famous semiotic triangle; my version includes the role of intellectual effort in semiosis.

Chapter III of Part Two develops a hermeneutics of intellectual effort that is based on the distinction between *Strong and Weak hermeneutics* made by Nicholas Smith (1997). Here I defend my position on the pertinence of a hermeneutics of intellectual effort and on its contribution to the "strong" branch of that discourse. I do this by enlisting *human intelligence* on the side of "strong" hermeneutics. Chapter IV ends the book with some speculations concerning the status of intellectual effort in today's "consumer" society. With these speculations, I hope to turn what might be considered only a theoretical and philosophical truth – intellectual effort – to the useful practice of understanding the world in which we now live.

A few words on the method of this study

For the non-Kantian philosophers,
there are no persistent problems
save perhaps the existence
of the Kantians.
– Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 93

Any study of someone's intellectual efforts that are expressed in words, if that study is to meet certain academic standards, itself becomes an intellectual effort expressed in words. This "circular" fact makes the present study its own closest referent. Such a situation is no novelty in the fields of semiotics and philosophy of language, which is precisely where our interest lies. A similar situation to our own is the case of a famous author. He stands out from other authors crucial to this study, in that he poses a problem relevant to our own, in his analysis of how a dissertation should be constructed. We are speaking of Umberto Eco, and his well-known book, *How to Make a Graduate Thesis* (Eco 1977). Readers well-acquainted with Eco's writings might object that the book mentioned does not speak of semiotics at all, and thus that my analogy fails. Yet it is exactly this objection that is worth focusing on, because our response to it contains our interpretation of Eco's text and, correspondingly, the positioning of our method in relation to the one prescribed in his book.

Eco's directions for making a dissertation are imbued with the spirit of encyclopaedism, in the sense that the basic part of the scholar's work consists in getting to know what scholars before him have said on a given issue. Eco's book thus speaks of preparing a comprehensive bibliography that omits none of the published works on a given problem. Eco offers valuable advice on how to orient oneself in various kinds of libraries, and how to use their resources to one's best advantage. He also provides a detailed description of the ways to cite

references, so that the sources can be followed easily by anyone interested in the subject.

In the same spirit, Eco goes on to define the scientific character of a thesis, which can be attained if one follows these four rules: "1) The study should have *an easily recognizable and well-defined subject so that it is distinguishable by others, as well*; 2) the study should say *things* about this subject *which have not been said yet*, or review things already said, but from a different perspective; 3) the study should be *useful for others;* 4) the study should *offer all elements needed to check and confute the proposed hypotheses*, as well as the elements necessary for development of these by others" (Eco 1977: 37–41; his italics).

As stated earlier, these criteria for preparing a dissertation seem to be dominated by the ideal of the encyclopaedia, which is the leading one in all Eco's works after *Trattato di semiotica generale* (*A Theory of Semiotics*; Eco 1974). I deal at length with the encyclopaedia model in Chapter III. Here let us observe that, according Eco's scheme, the fundamental prerequisite for successful interpretation of a text, is the overlapping of the encyclopaedic competencies of author and reader. This overlap results in the collaboration or cooperation among the two. Though *How to Make a Graduate Thesis* is not about semiotics, it nevertheless provides effective rules for attaining the textual cooperation just mentioned, and guarantees the student optimal efficiency in communication. Eco's book presupposes a model Student whose success is related to his zeal for new knowledge. As a whole, the book is dominated by a spirit of erudition which distinguishes Umberto Eco not only as a semiotician, but also as a philosopher and writer.

On the basis of the foregoing observations, I can now say why a study of theoretical-philosophical problems can hardly meet Eco's requirements for a dissertation. If all the rules proposed by Eco are aimed at minimizing the risk of underevaluation of the student's work, then in dealing with theoretical-philosophical problems this risk probably cannot be reduced to nor fall below certain levels. Eco seems to propose that the bulk of the dissertation be

historiographical, and that the innovative, theoretical contribution come last, in a single chapter or as a conclusion (Eco 1977: 25). This advice perfectly suits the overall logic of his book. I summarize this logic as follows: the scholar's main task is to acquire comprehensive knowledge of a given problem and then to present that knowledge in a way that contributes to everyone's improved understanding of the problem. With reference to some theoretical-philosophical problems, and without questioning the general validity of Eco's model, it is my view that the balance between acquiring a comprehensive knowledge and offering innovative ideas should be reconsidered. It is, of course, rather difficult to determine precise criteria for measuring the ratio between the acquisition of knowledge and the production of innovative ideas – two aspects that characterize every serious study. Still, we can try to formulate our idea from the viewpoint of the scholar's predisposition, as determined by his tendencies to encyclopaedism and creativity. A study of theoretical-philosophical issues would "make sense" if it did nothing other than give a new interpretation of a given problem. The historiographical approach, however, requires that each new interpretation assign definitions according to the encyclopaedic background of a given issue. By contrast, in the theoretical approach – at least in philosophy – each new interpretation has a creative and risk-taking character. To "risk" implicitly suggests that we engage another fundamental methodological problem of the present study – the problem of Truth. That means asking, To what extent does this study lead to the truth of the matter that we are investigating?

Eco is careful not to use the word "truth", which would be an easy target for certain critical views of his method. And yet, he does not openly state that the truth of a matter cannot be attained. To make such a statement would cause doubt or hesitation among many Ph.D. students who are not pursuing philosophical disciplines. For most people will devote themselves to prolonged inquiry only if they have the sense of being in contact with the truth of the subject which they have chosen to study. On the common-sense view (which is not obligatory for considering philosophical problems), it is quite normal that

one should strive to find out something true about a given subject, and be ready to defend the contents of his study as true. This inclination is rooted in the scientific concept of a world for which truth exists, a truth which we have to discover. A good stimulus for such an inclination in the young scholar is the requirement for scientificity that Eco gives in 4), above: the study should lay out everything necessary for one to check and confute its hypotheses. This is the main reason that Eco places such great importance on bibliography. The scholar finds the texts that are important to his subject, just as the scholar finds the truth of a given phenomenon. Eco sees a dissertation as a certain task (problem) having a correct solution. The scholar should find this solution in his bibliography. Eco follows this dictum in his own work, as it appears in the paragraph titled "Scientific Humility" (Eco 1977: 156–157). We can see, from the following quote, the great importance Eco places on finding the correct solution: "[...] (if there was ever something original in my graduation thesis, it was precisely the question [that it posed] and its corresponding answer, which had to come from somewhere)" (157; author's parentheses). Eco discovers the answer to this rather important question almost by accident, in the work of a second-rate author from the end of the last century. And this is precisely the answer that none of the distinguished authors could help him find. The moral of this story is that we should never be so haughty as to ignore any work pertaining to our problem. Everything must be read; otherwise, we might overlook keys to the correct interpretation, and the result of our work would be unsatisfactory.

Such a formulation of the problem of truth demands a more precise description in its relation to our method. This description comes further on, since this study is profoundly influenced by philosophical hermeneutics, for which the problem of truth is crucial. One of the most important aims of these methodological specifications is to affirm the pertinence of the study. At the same time, we seek to avoid the paradoxical situation in which the interpretive essence of the world we live in – and of which this very statement is a part – is claimed to be beyond doubt. In this line of thought, a guiding notion of the

present study is that of *intellectual effort*, a concept introduced by the French philosopher Henri Bergson. This concept holds importance even today, for every type of philosophical attitude based on the idea that the essence of being is linguistic (Fr. "langager", not "linguistique").

After some specifications concerning truth, the focus of this study shifts to the limits of interpretation. How far may we rightfully go in drawing inferences from texts that do not directly state the inferred things? Eco's answer to this question is very clear: the study should contain all elements that allow for the verification or confutation of the presented theses. This explains Eco's emphasis on historiography (which is based on verifiable textual sources) over theory.

Emphasizing the hermeneutic character of philosophical discourse, we must once again allow ourselves a certain leeway. More specifically, while we accept unconditionally the position that every rigorous study should be based on a diligent exploration of existing sources, and that such activity forms the better part of the work to be done, we shall, in a study such as this, unavoidably consider interpretations whose objective verification is hardly possible, and thus shall be personally responsible for them. Naturally, such a justification can be very dangerous and serve as an alibi to say (write) anything. Eco is right to remind us that a dissertation is in fact a test of the professional abilities of the candidate in his field, and that the doctoral committee can hardly be expected to evaluate "outbursts of genius", which are almost impossible to quantify, while overlooking established, well-defined academic standards. In our view, a study containing a reasonable amount of such interpretative "outbursts" can be subjected to valid judgement; however, the criteria of judging should also include the pertinence of the interpretations, which in turn establishes their validity. As pertinent to this mode of research we consider Richard Rorty's reflections on "Philosophy in America Today" (Rorty 1982: 211–230). According to the American philosopher, the current situation forces philosophy to "move away from an image of itself as a science which achieves results and toward an image in which it is simply a free – and, one might almost say,

'speculative' – exercise of *argumentative skill*" (223; italics mine). Thus the limits of interpretation should not be located solely in that which can be claimed, but also in the philosopher's abilities at argumentation. This argumentation, however, has become more and more freed of the necessity to use verifiable sources, in favor of a kind of philosophical-interpretative performance. In this very sense, the philosopher takes personal responsibility for the interpretations he offers but, at the same time, nothing prevents his criteria for judging his own professional background from covering this aspect of his work. In fact, this is what happens. The defense of a graduation thesis is precisely a performance of this kind, but, at least according to Eco's criteria, this performance should be made with the protection of bibliographical guarantees for the truthfulness of the thesis. The difference between Eco's and Rorty's student is this: in the graduation thesis of the former, the "official" solution to a problem should be found in a pre-existing text; by contrast, the latter kind of student finds a solution whose validity depends on his ability to defend it convincingly and to integrate it within the general pertinence of his work.

Obviously, we are inclined, methodologically, to follow the second type of research competency – all the more so because it is precisely the above-mentioned "argumentational ability" that draws us near to the central problem of the study, namely, intellectual effort. Thus, with a certain degree of precision, we can establish the desired ratio, mentioned above, between intellectual effort and philosophical research. And its simplest formulation is as follows: those elements of a philosophical work that prevent it from attaining methodological perfection (Eco's criteria for scientific character) can be made up for by interpretative intellectual effort.

This short formulation, to be taken seriously, demands more specific elaboration. Thus, bearing in mind that the present study resists easy comparisons, let us view from the position of the above-stated dictum the fate of one famous Ph.D. thesis – that of Henri Bergson, published as *Time and Free Will* (Bergson 1960 [1889]). We can immediately say that Bergson's thesis

meets almost none of the criteria for scientific character. Its subject is an obscure intuition which Bergson describes to his friend William James in the following way: "When analyzing the notion of time, the way it is to be found in mechanics and physics, an overturn of all ideas of mine occurred. I was rather surprised to find out that the time of science is a non-enduring one.... Thus, in *Time and Free Will* I summarized these considerations on scientific time, which determined my philosophical orientation and on which all my further reflections are focused" (*Mélanges*: 766). What would that "non-enduring time" mean? It is certainly not a subject that is "well-defined", as Eco would have it. On the contrary, it remains obscure throughout the author's entire presentation. Bergson's strategy consists in formulating his study as dedicated to the problem of freedom (a topic which Eco would in no way recommend), but that problem remains almost completely in the background in the interpretative fate of the book. The difficulty in understanding this (non-)enduring time is evident from Bergson's constant remarks that his thought is interpreted incorrectly. In his most famous statement of this kind, made in a letter to Höffding, Bergson expresses this view directly, when he declares "the intuition of duration" to be the "core" of his doctrine (op cit.: 1148).

In 1915 Bergson is at the pinnacle of his fame, and Höffding is a philosopher of some distinction who dedicates a monograph to Bergson; but this does not mean that he has grasped the core of the doctrine. One of Bergson's most devoted followers, the poet Charles Péguy, writes in 1914 that the former's philosophy "is equally misunderstood by both his opponents and partisans" (Péguy 1914: 84). As for Eco's fourth rule, it can be claimed that Bergson's dissertation contains nothing to help anybody check the verifiability or refutability of the theses that he presents. His bibliography is extremely modest – he quotes no more than 20 titles, among which are articles and studies. These sources belong mainly to the field of psychology, but the conclusions Bergson draws from them are more philosophical than psychological. Yet in spite of

these evident methodological disadvantages, Bergson's dissertation marks a significant stage in the development of philosophical thought.

In many philosophy textbooks, Bergson's contribution is identified with the several notions he deals with in this work. In saying "notions", we arrive at the linguistic aspect of our study. From this point of view, we can say that each theoretical study contains one (or more) unsolved linguistic problem(s). And Bergson's great problem was that he did not have the vocabulary needed to express his very simple intuition in not more than a few words. He expressed his insight with the existing vocabulary, and immediately a whole work originated from it. This work is the philosopher's intellectual effort, which is necessary to compensate for the initial shortage of notions. At the same time as he is being criticized for his notion of time, Bergson draws criticism from the point of view of the existing language, whose proponents soon label him as an "enemy of language in general". Thus, he becomes the target of choice for critics of "modern thought" (who are united by the idea of the linguistic essence of being). In reality, however, Bergson's philosophy is a constant struggle with inadequate philosophical vocabulary that is unable to express new necessities of thought (a large part of Chapter 1, below, deals with this problem). Bergson has definitely chosen the harder way – one that calls for the philosopher's creative effort, formulation of a new doctrine, and many other challenging demands. How much easier it would have been, if Bergson had looked for the solution of the initial conceptual (terminological) problem in the works of other authors. With a perfect study from a methodological point of view, he would have managed to get better positioned in his problem and would have had more things to say. Yet by doing so he would have disposed of a richer vocabulary, for every author is said to employ new notions and to draw new shades of meaning from pre-existing ones. From a purely pragmatic point of view, Bergson would have had fewer problems with his dissertation if he had gone the established route, since he would have had to take much fewer interpretative risks. Through rigorous exploration, his bibliography would have revealed to

him the solutions to conceptual problems. On the other hand, many of the solutions he arrived at, by making his own way, would have turned out to be inappropriate. To draw a moral from this example, we can think of the various types of effort needed in both cases. In a historiographical study, the scholar takes recourse in the writings of other authors in order to find the solutions to the issues he raises. The desired result is a new configuration of pre-existing notions (Rorty's "vocabulary" and Eco's "encyclopaedia"), whose novelty should contribute to a better understanding of the subject by everyone. In a theoretical study (I speak always of philosophy), at certain key points the effort is aimed at offering new notions or metaphors (images in Bergson) that should contribute to the configuration of a new system and to the opening of a new way of thinking about a subject or problem, rather than just to a better understanding of it. (Here arise some analogies with Kuhn [1962, 1970], although I refer to something smaller than "scientific revolutions".)

To complete our methodological specifications, we should ask to what extent the contemporary situation of Philosophy predisposes us to one or the other kind of intellectual effort. Right away, without profound analysis, we can say that the time has passed for revolutions in thinking. They are impossible not only because no one would dare undertake such a thing nowadays, but because the very idea of revolution has been devalued. This century has witnessed so many revolutions, mainly in the field of arts and aesthetics, that subsequent ones are no news at all. In philosophy, the most significant activities of today are the criticism and deconstruction of the great ontologies of the past; there is hardly room for creating new, revolutionary ones. It is as though a merciless logic of programmed innovation, determined by consumerism, homogenizes all human practices in the name of a global market. Marketing is a universal system for the exchange of ideas, goods and services. The researcher gradually turns into aprofessional consumer of information, and the "task" of the market is to answer his needs. In recent years, access to all types of information has grown

exponentially. A personal computer enables one to consult a 30-volume encyclopaedia in 10 minutes and take from it everything one might be interested in; one can subscribe to innumerable periodicals that are received by e-mail on the very day they come out; one can "visit" in a single afternoon all the national and world congresses in one's field, download dissertations on one's subject from every university in the world, and ask whatever one wants in the countless on-line discussion groups. Nowadays the scholar has little difficulty in finding the solution to any conceptual problem. Moreover, with this oversaturation of information, and the vast quantity of data that are instantly available on any topic, one can never be sure that one qualifies as an expert on anything – except, perhaps, those who choose to major on subjects like "the Chapel of St. Mary at the castle of Alessandria" (Eco 1977: 31). Paradoxically, the inexhaustible supply of information on the Internet – the vast communication system to which we all subscribe – makes it impossible for one to stay informed about all that is said or written on a given topic.

Against this background, we can reconsider the criteria for an adequate study. We have already observed that a competent dissertation of today is expected both to manifest innovative ideas concerning the topic of study, and to cite and summarize everything that has been written it. At the same time, we have indicated the impossibility of meeting such an expectation, given the current state of Philosophy. As a way around this seeming impasse, I consider it a reasonable solution for the scholar to work on certain authors with which he or she is familiar. This strategy grants the writer the freedom to combine the ideas of different authors so as to "reveal" the (perhaps hidden) connections between those ideas and authors, and thereby to cast new light on a given subject, or even produce a new subject altogether. Moreover, such interpretive combinations do not require legitimation by reference to authorities.

The combining of ideas in new or unusual ways has its parallel in the ways one combines seemingly unrelated words so as to form metaphors. Thus, the

following comments by Aristotle concerning metaphor might further illuminate our own project:

> "It's a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies *an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars*." (*On Poetics*, 1459a, 4–11; italics mine)

> "Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related, *just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart*" (*Rhetoric*, 1414a, 8–13; italics mine)

On the significance of the above postulates for philosophical discourse, I refer below to authors such as Ivor Richards (1936) and Paul Ricoeur (1979). It is not hard to link this interpretation of metaphoricity with the idea of the linguistic essence of Being. The great ontologies of the past can be viewed precisely as such innovative arrangements of things – arrangements that are not obvious from the position of the acquired worldview. "The being is said (says itself) in many ways", says Eco, interpreting Aristotle (Eco 1997: 10–42). Our present-day situation of "information overload" leaves no room for such activity. Nevertheless, we can say that a good philosophical study is based on interpretative work concerning hypothetical similarities between seemingly dissimilar authors, with which similarities the scholar becomes personally involved and whose reasonableness he defends with the pertinence and the argumentation of his own work. The philosopher is not obliged to "justify" the discovered similarities, just as the poet is not obliged to defend his metaphor as true. Despite the differences between these genres, in terms of key-aspects the general validity of the work should in both cases sanction "outbursts of creativity". In the first case, it is a matter of skill at argumentation; in the second, it is a question of artistic gift.

From this perspective, the problem of truth acquires its peculiar characteristics, too. Indeed, the scholar works not with facts but with

interpretations, which are the core of his method; but this does not mean that nihilism remains the only possible (anti)method. Rather, we subscribe here to an all-embracing understanding of truth that frees it from the hegemony of the scientific method, namely, Gadamer's philosophical-hermeneutical interpretation (Gadamer 1979). This issue will be discussed in detail further on, but even now I anticipate that the key-moments of "observing" unobvious similarities between authors are moments of truth. The truth, whose model is our experience with art, appears in the very act of understanding, of grasping that which, like the beautiful, "makes itself immediately apparent in its being" (Gadamer 1979: 438). Mere skill in argumentation, in our view, cannot be exercised effectively without the drawing of pertinence from such an authentic act of understanding and truth. The need to study anything at all amounts to the need to say something true. This is the situation with both scientific and interpretative methods, the difference between them being that the former believes in the *discovery* of truth, while the latter takes it as an epiphany in the linguistic environment in which we persist and which makes our interpretations possible.

This concept of truth allows for reflection on another reality of philosophical study. I am referring to the choice that always must be made in order for philosophical discourse to be possible. This choice comes prior to the interpretation of similarities between different authors – it is the choice of the which authors to compare. The selection of authors is of primary importance, for it predetermines the overall strategy of truthfulness of the discourse to follow. If we examine contemporary thinkers, we find hardly any of them that do not ground their own discourse in that of some great authority from the past. To express this idea, Eco uses a very appropriate aphorism, a metaphor: "We are dwarfs on the shoulders of giants" (Eco 1979: 49; 1977: 26). The giant on whose shoulders Eco stands is obviously Peirce. But what was the criterion for Eco's choice of giant? Is this criterion compatible with the requirements for the scientific character of a dissertation? Has Eco discovered the Truth in what

Peirce has said? But if this is *the Truth*, then why didn't Greimas also discover it there? At the crucial moment when we choose a giant on whose shoulders we are to stand, truth obviously acts more as an epiphany than as a discovery. Mention of epiphany brings to mind another great philosopher, Emanuel Lévinas, for whom such a moment of realization is the face of the Other, the face that transcends the knowledge of this world. The truth, the beautiful, and the face – all of these appear in a way that exceeds rationality and verification, but that is decisive for the scholar's choice and that predetermines the whole interpretative course of his study. The truth, the beautiful, the face, or "intellectual sympathy", as Bergson puts it – all these, paradoxically enough, seem to offer the last source of rationality in an age of total deconstruction, decentralization, and fragmentation.

PART ONE

INTELLECTUAL EFFORT IN BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY

I. The Interpretative Character of Bergson's Philosophy and the Role of Intellectual Effort

I.1. Psychology or Philosophy?

The first thing that strikes us about the notion of "intellectual effort" is how old-fashioned that expression sounds today. Though this locution seems to be out of its proper time, the very title of my study foretells its concern with certain matters of history. As proposed in the methodological introduction, and instead of the conventional "pre-interpretation", my interest also lies in the theoretical implications of this notion in the field of Philosophy, which today is the same as philosophy of language (according to Eco [1984], the latter fits neatly within the framework of General Semiotics). Before looking at those implications, we first need to consider the origin of the notion of "intellectual effort", and its role in Bergson's philosophical doctrine, in terms of both its ideational value and also its "empirical" relationship with the genesis of philosophical discourse itself.

Not only does the notion of "intellectual effort" strike us as outdated, but it is also difficult to identify the domain or discourse to which it belongs. This difficulty is not an abstract matter of semantics, but a direct observation related to the origin of my own project. "Intellectual effort" is most often associated with psychology, inasmuch as it refers to mental activity. The term is inappropriately fuzzy, however, to find a place in experimental psychology – a field whose scientific character and methodological exactness surround it on all sides with signs that read "No Admittance!"

There is another category of texts that relate to my topic in a purely metonymic way, and that we can roughly define as contemporary instructions for the effective use of mental resources. Typical titles in this genre are "Intellectual Teamwork", "Tools of the Mind: Techniques and Methods for Intellectual Work", "Brainstorming" and so on (Galegher & Co 1990; Stibi… 1982). These kinds of text may provide entertaining reading, but they are in no way related to Bergsonian "intellectual effort"! Furthermore, among the hundreds of articles, monographs, and other documents listed in the

bibliographies of the two publications cited above, one finds not a single philosophical work.

The notion of "intellectual effort" in fact originates from an intermediate zone between psychology and philosophy (metaphysics) that gave birth to the philosophical school of Spiritualism. (The question of whether Spiritualists took it from other sources is beyond the scope of this study.) Whatever its origin, it is certain that, before Bergson, this notion was not applied directly to the usage of language (which from now on I shall identify as "linguistic work"). Bergson himself attributes the introduction of the notion of "intellectual effort" to Main de Biran, calling him "the most metaphysical among the psychologists of the last [i.e., nineteenth] century" (*Mélanges*: 688) and the source of the idea of "a sort of mutual penetration between facts and being, between psychology and metaphysics" (op. cit.: 408). Bergson notes also that "this immanent-to-consciousness effort" occupies a "privileged place in the philosophy of Maine de Biran" (op. cit.: 667). Maine de Biran's influence on Bergson is a rather complex issue that we can refer to only in passing (for specialized studies on this influence, see Serini 1923; Janicaud 1969; Soulez 1997: 39–57). Nonetheless, it brings us closer to the question of philosophers' "labels", which is an issue of primary importance to us because it is a kind of interpretative process.

What does it mean to label a philosopher? Mainly it facilitates the work of historiographers, humanists and philosophers, when they have to render an account of the labeled author. On the one hand, such labeling is a positive phenomenon since it is a form of sanction (in the Greimassian sense), by which the author acquires an official status. Thus, the labeling of young Bergson as a follower of the tradition of French Spiritualism proved to be an important moment in his career as a philosopher. But on the other hand, a label narrows interpretation by calling attention to aspects of thought related only to a certain tradition, while other traditions, correspondingly, are rendered obscure.

In Bergson's case, the game of labeling undergoes various phases, almost all of them of negative effect. The situation is aggravated by the change of centuries which, together with the label of "representative of spiritualism" (Soulez 1997: 74), fixes Bergson squarely among nineteenth-century philosophers, although his most famous works were written after 1900 (*Introduction to Metaphysics, Creative Evolution*, *Laughter*, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*).

I.2. "Bergsonism"

Bergson is sometimes regarded as a "spiritualist" – mostly by positivist philosophers, whose typical representative is Bertrand Russell (cf. Russell 1912). And most histories of philosophy present him as a "nineteenth-century" thinker. Yet both of these labels are much less misleading or erroneous than the expression "Bergsonism". This latter rubric is the ultimate sanction of an internationally recognized philosophy. By bearing the surname of its author, one would expect it to compensate for the inconveniences that an "anonymous" philosophical school might call forth. But that is not the situation at all. "Bergsonism" is in fact a vulgarization of the philosopher's doctrine, and unfortunately the term by which it has become accessible to the "general public". By the 1920s, the Bergson phenomenon has attained the faddishness of a fashion trend. According to some statistics from that period, Bergson's popularity ranks "second after the actor Maurice Chevalier and just a step above the fighter Carpentier" (Mathieu 1971: 389). It is then that talk begins of the Nobel Prize, which Bergson is awarded in 1928. In such conditions, as can be expected, he becomes an institution in the circles of French academic philosophy (from 1914 onward Bergson is a member of the French Academy). In philosophy such institutionalization quickly summons much negative criticism, which, of course, centers on the superficial and easily refutable aspects of the doctrine in question. This is more or less the situation that Merleau-Ponty has in mind, when in a famous essay he says that "established Bergsonism deforms Bergson" (Merleau-Ponty 1960: 239). Interestingly, in the initial phase of his career Merleau-Ponty himself is one of the main protagonists in the dethronement of Bergson's philosophy. Thus, another particularity of Bergsonism comes forth, one that consistently accompanies labeling. The Italian philosopher Vittorio Mathieu quite aptly calls this phenomenon "polarisation". By this he means that all interpretations of Bergson's philosophy tend to take some side, be it positive or negative. According to him, a neutral attitude toward this doctrine is impossible, from the very moment of its appearance (Mathieu 1971: 387). Thus, the relationship of the doctrine to today's philosophical schools is to a great extent predetermined. Existentialist phenomenology openly declares war on Bergson. Structuralism and its branches ignore him *a priori* as a mentalist and vitalist. Analytical philosophy takes a negative attitude toward Bergson's work from the very beginning, and pragmatism after William James simply remains silent on the subject.

I.3. The Polarisation of Interpretations

In the introduction to this study, I mentioned sympathy as a criterion of truth. From this point of view, the fate of Bergson's philosophy is particularly illustrative. The idea of *polarisation* introduces one of our fundamental problems: Why bother with our research if we cannot count on objective results? And yet, in order to remain in the realm of common logic, I shall again have to resort to noting the hermeneutic background, this time, however, not only that of my study but also of the seeming polarisation-paradox. The polarisation effect in Bergson is marked also by the fact that his philosophy left behind no school and no official followers. Yet despite this lack of a center of "tradition" by which to evaluate and legitimate various interpretations, remarkable books have been written on Bergson's philosophy, their interpretative bias notwithstanding.

A particularly eloquent example is the essay by a young Marxist, Georges Politzer, called "La fin d'une parade philosophique: le bergsonisme", and published in 1929. Ronchi's monograph, "Bergson filosofo dell'interpretazione" (Ronchi 1990: 9–21), offers a remarkably precise analysis of the qualities and theoretical validity of Politzer's reading of Bergson. Ronchi's main prediction is that "Politzer's critical thesis will be rediscovered and reconfirmed every time the future existential phenomenology (from Sartre to Merleau-Ponty and Taminiaux if we are to mention only the most important authors) comes to Bergson" (op. cit.: 13).

The significance of this prediction can be fully appreciated when we recall that existentialist phenomenology's own fight for recognition (a fight engaged in by each new philosophy) is aimed at the "demolition" of institutional academic philosophy, represented, as already mentioned, by Bergson. Thus, in an essay of such a theoretical, and even prophetic character, we come across expressions describing Bergson as a "worm of official philosophy" who has dug himself a hole in "the cheese of idealism"; that he was a "tamed circus dog", a "lackey", an "agent provocateur and traitor" and also a "servant of the bourgeoisie", and even a prostitute "of taste and necessity"! (Politzer, cited in Ronchi 1990: 34). This vitriolic, to put it mildly, reading of Bergson might make us think that, at least from a materialistic point of view, many "objective" reasons exist to impose a lasting negative label on the doctrine and, thus, to limit interpretative freedom, even if it is from a single perspective.

Countering such an attitude, however, we find a no-less-significant interpretation of Bergson by one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of communist Russia of the time, V. Plechanov. In the *Savremenna burjoazna filosofia* anthology (AA VV 1972: 181) we read that, according to Plechanov, the true essence of Bergson's philosophy is *dialectical materialism*! On this

reading, Bergson has helped draw attention to the fundamental role of the practical, material activity of man. Unfortunately, he was misled and diverged from this "true" direction, thus failing to reach his natural philosophical essence; namely, dialectical materialism. This interpretation can hardly be regarded as unimportant, as a momentary diversion of the Soviet Marxists. For there is scarcely another language in which Bergson's philosophy has been so comprehensively translated and published.

The interpretative polarisation of Bergson's philosophy that supports my hermeneutic attitude towards this discourse is quite evident in another case. This instance involves two authors whose historical friendship, as well as their belonging to the same philosophical school (despite various terminological misunderstandings), would hardly suggest that they would so radically differ in their interpretations of the philosophy of their contemporaries. Yet precisely such a radical difference appears in the attitudes of William James and Charles S. Peirce toward the French philosopher. Plenty has been written on the mutual influence of Bergson and James, and it can scarcely be summarized into a single aspect. But one thing is for sure: the positive sign is present everywhere, in spite of the usual disputes over who has influenced whom and how. Since the contrast with Peirce points to what I shall deal with in Chapter III, here I limit the exposition of attitudes among this philosophical triangle to the citation of two letters, for the only evidence of Peirce's attitude towards Bergson is epistolary. One finds a rich choice of passages in the correspondence between Bergson and James, but most appropriate among them seems to be a letter of 1907, which contains the impressions of the American pragmatist upon his reading of *Creative Evolution*: "Oh, my dear Bergson, you are a magician and your book is a miracle, a real miracle in the history of philosophy[....] If your next book excels this one the way it excels both your previous books, be sure that your name will live for the generations to come as the name of one of the great creative spirits philosophy knows"; and on the conceptual affinity between them: "We both fight the same battle, you as a general and I as an ordinary soldier. The position we defend is called Tyche, i.e. a world of value, a true world of growth and living" (*Mélanges*: 724–725). And here comes Peirce's reaction (1909), in an attempt not to be compared to Bergson: the question of whether "philosophy is either a science or not is balderdash, and [...] a man who seeks to further science can hardly commit a greater sin than to use the terms of his science without anxious care to use them with strict accuracy; it is not very gratifying to my feelings to be classed along with a Bergson who seems to be doing his prettiest to muddle all distinctions" (in Gunter 1986: 101).

I.4. Philosophical Advocacy

In the context outlined thus far, the problem of intellectual effort acquires clearer contours. An innovative philosophy appears on the intellectual horizon and tries to find its proper place among the existing schools. Despite the success of pragmatism, in those years the horizon of philosophy is the discovery of Truth. The affinity of the new doctrine to the spiritual tendencies of its time grants it quick recognition which, however, in purely philosophical circles leads to a paradoxical status. On one hand, it takes on the role of a fad and is accepted uncritically (something Bergson not only enjoys but also complains about), while on the other hand it is mercilessly attacked and accused of being misleading, of promising things it could not do, of being literature and not philosophy, and so on (cf. Ronchi 1990). More and more palpable in Bergson's philosophy become those elements that I view as a defense of the validity of the original intuitions that generated it. Vladimir Jankélévitch, author of the best monograph on Bergson's philosophy so far, describes this peculiarity as follows: "Bergsonism is one of those rare philosophies in which the theory of research is conflated with the research itself, thus avoiding the kind of reflexive splitting that engenders epistemologies, propaedeutics and methods"; but if we must find some method, then "the method is true knowledge; and far from offering a doctrinal deduction of notions, it is created gradually, together with the development of spiritual progress, to which it finally is just the physiognomy and the inside rhythm" (Jankélévitch 1959: 5–6). This method is none other than intellectual effort, which is the most important concept for my reading of Bergson. This is the notion that has survived the influence of time and that provides the ground on which Bergson's philosophy confronts some modern tendencies of thought in which everything seems to arise *ex nihilo*, and where the subjects behave like sleepwalkers rather than sentient beings, and wander the labyrinths of Language, whose boundaries are firmly fixed or, similarly, are riven by the lack of one or the other linguistic structure. Bergson's intellectual effort attempts to surpass the boundaries of language, which is inherited and which, so to speak, "recommends" to us the world in which we live. My constant and guiding idea is this: no matter how radically we reconsider the role of language and of all sign systems for our cognitive apparatus, no matter how we emphasize the linguistic nature of the world we live in, no matter how deeply convinced we are of the finitude of being, we cannot imagine existence without intellectual effort and all the consequences of indeterminacy it brings. Precisely this constitutive indeterminacy opens the horizon of the interpretative, and not of the somewhere given, fate of being.

Despite all my attempts to secure a certain interpretative freedom, however, I ought to ask to what extent Bergson's texts are open to such emphasis on intellectual effort. Knowing the answer in advance, I can claim in sound historiographic style that the better part of this study will deal with the presentation of the various strategies, interwoven as a part of the theory and with which Bergson solves the problems resulting from the discrepancy between the available philosophical language and its expressive intentions. But in a rather synthetic way, at the end of an exhaustive evaluation of his philosophical doctrine in 1922, Bergson says exactly what we would like to hear:

> Thus I repudiate facility. I recommend a certain manner of thinking which courts difficulty; I value effort above everything. [...] Tension, concentration, these are the words [with which] I characterized a method which required of the mind, for each new problem, a completely new effort. I should never have been able to extract from my book *Matter and Memory*, which preceded *Creative Evolution*, a true doctrine of evolution (it would have been one in appearance only); nor could I have extracted from my "Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness" a theory of the relations of the soul and body like the one I set forth later in *Matter and Memory* (I should have had only a hypothetical construction); nor from the pseudo-philosophy to which I was devoted before the Immediate Data – nor from the pseudo-philosophy to which I was devoted before the *Immediate Data* – that is to say [only] from the general notions stored up in language could I have extracted the conclusions on duration and the inner life which I presented in this first work. (CM: 87–89)

Although deprived of the comforting thought that I am presenting the Truth about Bergson, I can seek support from other studies. As already mentioned, they are characterised by an initial polarisation, which facilitates their grouping. If I take those with a positive bias, to which I can add the parts of this study involving Bergson, we see that their positivity has a well-defined form, and that it consists not in simply praising various aspects of the doctrine, but in defending the validity of fundamental though overlooked ideas. To put it another way, they defend the Bergson of "Bergsonism". I find in Rorty support for giving the present study such a status, in the same essay from which I quoted the notion of "argumentative skill" in my introductory remarks on method. Rorty asserts that "Perhaps the most appropriate model for the analytic philosopher is now the *lawyer*, rather than either the scholar or the scientist" (1981: 221; Rorty's italics). For this reason, I add to the methodological notes my observation on the polarisation of Bergson's interpreters.

Perhaps such an ambiguous relationship, which connects the lawyer and the idea of truth, answers our needs most thoroughly. On one hand, the lawyer serves the institution, which more than any other stands for the truth, on the other hand however, especially in the USA, this is definitely not the category of people who would always tell the truth. It is rather that lawyers stand on the

opposite sides of a fact and construct truth. The best-constructed truth wins and becomes, so to speak, the official one of a given fact. However, the methods of construction are completely dependent of the lawyer's know-how and argumentative skill. And pushing forward the interpretative freedom in the reading of Bergson to such an extent, as far as he is an important philosopher of the past, I am relieved to be in a good company, the best possible in the context of this study. Eco, author of *The Limits of Interpretation*, in his latest book (Eco 1997: 80–99), says the following in a note to the chapter entitled "Rereading Peirce": "But it is known that one can make Peirce say everything, depending on which side one turns him" (n 28: 394). The "advocacy" of a philosopher consists precisely in making the interpreted philosopher "say" things that confirm one's thesis, the only limitation being that of the good intention not to betray "the spirit of Peirce[2]" (ibid.). Correspondingly, to me the measure of such constructed truth belongs to those monographs on Bergson which I most often quote and which have helped me to undertake this study. Among them, the nearest one in time and orientation to my own is Rocco Ronchi's "Bergson filosofo dell'interpretazione". Its author proves the validity of the notions of "attentive recognition" and "intellectual effort", as viewed against the background of general criticism that situates Bergsonism as standing apart from existential phenomenology. I am deeply obliged to that essay for its observations on the thoroughly hermeneutic character of the notion of attentive recognition. Those observations have inspired me to undertake a critical reconsideration of some general conditions in semiotics.

I.5. Bergson as Columbus

One of the strongest supporters of Bergson's philosophy is Leon Husson. His monograph *L'intellectualisme de Bergson* (1947) is a touchstone in the development of the doctrine of intuition and intellect, and it once and for all puts an end to the groundless charges of false irrationality and even the supernaturalness of intuition as modes of thought in Bergson. Husson brilliantly shows that intuition is merely a higher form of intelligence, a creative rationality. In so doing he makes a significant contribution to the construction of the truth about Bergson's philosophy – the same "hermeneutic" kind of truth that makes the present study possible. What is inspirational in Husson's case is

[2] After writing this chapter I came across the same remark, made this time by Susan Petrilli (1998: 123). As I do, she stresses the fact that the author of *The Limits of Interpretation* considers Peirce in this way. Unlike myself, however, she does not approve of such interpretative liberty.

that his advocacy of Bergson includes a programmatic attitude that resonates with my own. Toward the end of his essay "La portée lointaine de la psychologie bergsonnienne", Husson reflects on what it would be to remain loyal to Bergson's thought. His reflection occurs in the context of a comparison of Bergson's thought with the situation of philosophy and psychology several decades after the peak of the doctrine. According to Husson, this is a difficult and risky task, which consists in predicting the possible consequences of a thought that, due to its time, could only be a start:

> "As a beginning, an explorer always has to draw his route according to already existing maps, though later on his discoveries might show their insufficiency and a need for revision. Like Maine de Biran in his *Memoires sur l'habitude*, in *Matière et mémoire*, Bergson resembles, according to the happy simile of Gouhier, a Christopher Columbus searching for America on the maps of his predecessors. It is very easy to reject him today by arguing that his maps are old-fashioned when to a great extent we owe him the fact of having others[....] Anyone who would undertake this effort [a new reading] will discover in Bergson's philosophy plenty of resources that are not yet exploited. The moment has come for those who admire Bergson to denounce the stereotyped clichés, which, under the pretext of an authentic reading, conserve only that which is the corpse of a thought young and vital in its essence." (Husson 1959: 161–162)

This remarkably apt passage outlines a clear picture of what I have just called "the constructed truth of Bergson", and provides us the occasion to consider another milestone in such construction.

In her monograph *Bergson l'educateur*, Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide bases her reading of Bergson's philosophy on a notion that at first seems of secondary importance. This is the notion of "bon sens", which is a quality that Bergson relates to the aims of education. Bergson introduced this notion in a speech he gave to graduating students at the end of the academic year in 1895. He describes what he considers to be a well-developed sense of combining true (pure) and practical knowledge. A close analysis of his presentation reveals that precisely this combination of two types of knowledge is the foundation of all the basic "binaries" from which Bergson elaborates his concepts: body / soul, intuition / intellect (analysis), open / closed morality, and the like. Mossé-Bastide's greatest contribution is to relate this seed of the doctrine to Bergson's activities as a lecturer and professor. This is the same relation I shall be looking for, between intellectual effort as a theoretical subject on the one hand, and as a prerequisite for realization of the doctrine on the other. "Bon sens" is but a synonym for "intellectual effort": "And so, in *bon sens* I see the internal energy of an intellect, which reconquers itself every moment, eliminating ready-made ideas in order to leave more room for ideas that are being created and modeled according to the real, through the persistent effort of a persevering attention"

(BS: 365). In addition to its pertinence for our own ideas, Mossé-Bastide's monograph is also a masterpiece of historiography. Before the publication of *Mélanges* (1972), her book was the main source of texts and documents related to Bergson's life and work.

Though I am convinced that something new and original can be said about intellectual effort, thus contributing to the rediscovery of a quickly forgotten philosophy, I must first mention how Bergson himself referred to the work of one of his staunchest advocates, Vladimir Jankélévitch, whose book on Bergson, as stated above, is considered the best monograph of its kind. In addition to the high quality of that book, it was published before Bergson's death (in 1941). Thus Bergson himself was able to provide "positive feedback" on it. The letter Bergson writes to Jankélévitch after reading the latter's book is unique among the many documents testifying to his (Bergson's) judgment of how his philosophy is received and understood. It is the first totally positive response we encounter, without a trace of obscurity or reserve on Bergson's part: "Your exposition is not only precise and correct; [...] above all, it gives evidence of a remarkable extension of the doctrine and an intellectual sympathy [for it]" (*Mélanges*: 1495). Most important for my purposes is the approval or even blessing with which Bergson endorses Jankélévitch's effort: "I would add that this analytical work is accompanied by a particularly interesting effort at synthesis: often the points I reach become your points of departure for personal and original speculations" (ibid.). Intellectual effort guided by intellectual sympathy, which together develop the doctrine further, in an original and individual way – perhaps this is the real Bergsonism. And it shows that the truth for him exists somewhere, as already given. Still, these are the master's words. And how far is it possible to think of philosophical discourse as derivative of an interpretative effort that is required always to be new, and that strives to remain aloof from general, ready-made attitudes? This we shall see in the closing chapters of this study.

I.6. Bergson and Saussure

Continuing the comparison with Columbus, we notice that Bergson, too, made discoveries that would spark further exploration. Ideas that he anticipated or implied remained largely in embryonic form, as if determined to belong to the nineteenth century. This fact provoked intellectual efforts to bring his philosophy into contact with modern discourse include the following: Mathieu (1971), Deleuze (1956, 1966), Hyppolite (1949a, b, c) and Péguy (1914); the latter, although contemporary with Bergsonism, nevertheless fits in this

category. Of course, these publications are only the bare bones of living Bergsonism, the full body of which consists of myriad critical works about the philosopher. For example, *Henri Bergson: A Bibliography* (Gunter P.A.Y. 1986) lists more than 6000 titles pertaining to the philosopher's work, and still more exist that are not mentioned in that publication.

To continue our own addition to that literature, we can compare Bergson to another "Columbus" in his own field, a contemporary of the philosopher, about whom no less has been written – Ferdinand de Saussure. The theoretical ramifications of this comparison will be developed in Chapter II. 3. (d). Here I shall only sketch some differences in the interpretative fates of the two thinkers.

Saussure published a single book during his lifetime, and this while he was still very young. Although important for its day, the book did not bring him fame. That would come after his death in 1916, when notes were published that were taken by students during courses which the Swiss linguist taught between 1906 and 1911 in Geneva (Saussure 1974). Those notes became the famous *Course in General Linguistics*. Even after its appearance, a few more decades would pass before the ideas in the *Course* gave birth to "structuralism". In France, structuralism was comparable in scope and influence to the "bergsonism" of the beginning of the century. But despite the fact that the two modes of thought arise at approximately the same time, that both enjoy wide recognition and wield considerable influence, structuralism belongs to modern thought, while "bergsonism" remains bound to the past. Saussure, too, has strong intellectual ties with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But one must search hard to find them in Saussure's writing, whereas in Bergson such ties are immediately obvious. For both thinkers, psychology is the discipline that makes linguistics and metaphysics possible.

We have already noted some of Bergson's appeals to psychology, and will discuss them further below. Saussure, too, openly calls on psychology: "Everything in language is basically psychological, including its material and mechanical manifestations" (op. cit.: 6); "mental facts (concepts) are associated with representations of the linguistic sounds (sound-images)" (11); "Indeed we should not fail to note that the word-image stands apart from the sound itself and that it is just as psychological as the concept which is associated with it" (12). These quotes are not meant to diminish Saussure's contribution to modern thought. On the contrary, the limited corpus of his work keeps its extraordinary insights safe from much trifling debate. For had Saussure gone on to write more books, he undoubtedly would have had to dialogue with many mediocre authors of the time.

Saussure himself might have gone on to expand his doctrine. Doing so

would have forced him to take account of contemporary authors in much more detail than his teaching demanded of him. To conform to recent forms of critique, however, he would no doubt have had to explain many more of his observations as "delusions" – which is how some of his followers characterize Saussure's quainter or outmoded ideas that do not fit his image as the father of modern structural thought. A good example of this is Tullio de Maruo's famous critical edition of the *Course* (Saussure 1967), which from one point of view demonstrates how to carry out a successful "philosophical advocacy". In a long note, de Mauro characterizes Saussure as a pioneer in the movement to reevaluate the notion of the "abstract". But for the same reason, the Swiss linguist has no valid epistemological grounds, and the existing terminology "forces" him to say that *langue* is not in the least abstract, but is "spirituelle", without his "being a spiritualist at all" (op. cit.: 389, n70).

When many such "delusional" moments accumulate, however, they exceed the limit above which a summary reading of an author may take them as exceptions or delusions. In fact, they give evidence of his far-reaching ability – his "portée lointaine". Considering his philosophy in this way, it appears that Bergson's greatest "sin" was to succeed in establishing the ideas of the duration of time, and of intuition as a philosophical method. Some of his ideas were "modern" enough, but they were made banal by much influential, yet misguided, discourse about them at the time. Such discourse received much negative criticism from the next generation of philosophers. The work of those who want to relieve Bergson of the burden of the epoch proves to be much more complex than the work of the interpreters of Saussure. Seen from the point of view of intellectual effort, however, what both Bergson and Saussure develop as a hermeneutic practice provides the common denominator between these two "founders of discoursivity", as Michel Foucault calls them (see I.9, below).

I. 7. Intellectual Effort and Paradigms

In view of the genesis of Saussure's *Course*, it is somewhat ironic that Bergson's last publication consists of notes taken by students in his courses on Metaphysics and Psychology, and Aesthetics and Morals, which he taught from 1882–1887 at Clermon-Ferrand College (Bergson 1990; 1992; 1995). The relation of those notes to my main topic will be discussed later on. For the time being we point out that, even at this early stage in his career, Bergson practices a form of philosophizing that becomes a permanent characteristic of his method.

When Bergson wants to establish a position, he begins by demonstrating how preexisting, seemingly controversial concepts all make the same mistake,

thus forcing the philosopher into the same dead-end street. For a thorough exploration of this argumentative strategy, the reader can consult the chapter "Il duale in Bergson" in Mathieu (1971; also, Mossé-Bastide 1955: 277–279). Here I am more interested in how this approach realizes what I called in the previous section a "discoursivation of intuitions". That is to say, it is by this method – of opposing two apparently contradictory views, then proving that both are wrong – that Bergson introduces his own intuitive solution to a given problem. For example, in these lectures Bergson introduces one of the most important concepts in his philosophy, that of Life Force (*Élan vital*), by first demonstrating the weakness of both Determinism and Finalism in the explanation of evolution. Bergson begins by showing the final concepts in which these views would inevitably result if taken to their logical extremes. He then shows how his new idea provides the proper solution to the problem. Thus, for Bergson, Determinism leads to an unacceptable situation (related to the name of Laplace), for this reason: if a super-intellect comprehends all of the powers that animate nature and all of the parts of which nature consists, then such an intellect would also know, without the slightest uncertainty, the past and future of the universe, from the largest bodies to the smallest atom (CE: 38). On the other hand, the seemingly controversial Finalism, in its ultimate form (and connected with Leibniz), regards evolution as merely the unfolding of a pre-established plan (CE: 39). Both doctrines, according to Bergson, play a speculative game of notions, by which the intellect produces inferences that are "congenial to thinking", but that have little relationship to reality.

In the language of Thomas Kuhn (1971), Bergson opposes two seemingly different "paradigms", then proves that they in fact express the same way of thinking. By overturning or overcoming that way of thinking, we can understand the true essence of a problem. This is the way "paradigm shifts", as Kuhn calls them, take place. In this case, both Determinism and Finalism consider everything in nature as given; whereas for Bergson, the core of the Life Force is creative. It is unclear to what extent we can speak of a new paradigm with Bergson. Still, such a tactic of discoursivation links Bergson rather closely to intellectual tendencies of his time. He also uses argumentation triangles of this kind for key notions such as memory (MM, Chapter I), where the idea of the "image" replaces the "unity and fight" between realism and idealism; he also shows how "intuition" finds itself wedged between empiricism and rationalism; and so on. When we add to this argumentative technique Bergson's typical disdain for specialized terminology (see, for example, *Mélanges*: 999–1000), we begin to see why it is difficult to view him as a founder of discoursivity beyond the time to which he belongs. We have the opposite situation with Saussure,

who systematically keeps his distance from the debates of the day, and who introduces technical terms that, although few in number, prove crucial to the understanding of all his work.

A close reading of Bergson's courses reveals an inconsistency in his argumentative strategy. This "flaw" fits perfectly in the framework of this study, although it could as easily provide the grounds for much different interpretations than my own. Bergson dedicated one of his lectures to General Ideas, which are foundational to his concepts of language and intellectual effort in his (see II. 3. c, below). The young philosopher introduces the General Ideas in his typical way, casting them in terms of an argumentative triangle. Atypically, however, he chooses his problem-solving paradigm from among ones already existing in philosophy. He opposes nominalists to realists, then argues that the truth in fact lies in the paradigm of the conceptualists (Bergson 1990: 198). A decade later, when Bergson returns to the General Ideas in Chapter III of *Matter and Memory*, the triangle has a different configuration. Now the delusive paradigms in opposition are nominalism and conceptualism, and the answer to the problem is an authentic part of the theory of memory and spirit as it is presented in that book.

This "inconsistency" need not be read as an index of negligence or error. Rather, it can serve as a hermeneutic window through which one sees how, in crucial moments of philosophical discourse, "normal" argumentation is more an obligation of acceptability, than it is the right method of philosophizing. In these moments, truly innovative thought shatters existing paradigms, and thereby accepts the risk of being easily refuted, misunderstood, or even denounced. It is appropriate to note here the place of *Matter and Memory* in Bergson's output. Though one of the most misunderstood of his works in its time, the most authoritative advocate of the philosopher describes that book as the most "genial" of them all (Jankélévitch 1959: 80), a judgement with which I heartily agree.

Another "hermeneutic" moment occurs in *Matter and Memory*, which according to Husson is a recurrent characteristic of Bergson's thought:

> "Indeed, no matter how direct his statements are generally, in crucial moments (for example, in the opening lines of Chapter II of *Matter and Memory*, when he introduces the difference between the two types of memory and distinguishes the various levels of association of ideas) Bergson, as if discretely, modulates them with a conditional and an 'Everything happens as if', which should (although then the author is caught in his own game) keep us watchful" (Husson 1959: 160; also, Ronchi 1990: 152 and 196).

I. 8. Intellectual Effort as Conquest

Henri Hude is the person charged with the daunting task of editing Bergson's courses. While this work is underway, Hude publishes a two-volume monograph in which he offers a new reading of Bergson's philosophy. This new reading of all Bergon's philosophy is made necessary, Hude thinks, by the discovery of those course-lectures. Not surprisingly, this reading is illuminated by various findings Hude made while editing the courses (Hude 1989 and 1990a). Although Hude's claim seems a bit exaggerated, we cannot deny that, as regards the problem of intellectual effort together with its linguistic realization, we do find some crucial moments in those lectures.

Premier among those moments is a metaphor that Bergson borrows from the Scottish philosopher William Hamilton. This particular metaphor seems to be a kind of archetypal image of all reflections on the problems that Bergson engages in his later work. Bergson uses this figure in a lecture on language; with it he represents the dynamic relationship between language and thought. Words are viewed as an indispensable to the conquest of a territory, such as the advance of the Russian army in Asia. Words are like small fortresses erected in the newly captured territories: though the battle is waged by an army of 100,000, without these fortresses, staffed by only five or six men, the new territory cannot be considered occupied. In Bergson's opinion, effort of thought constitutes the "army", but without the words, the army would be powerless (Bergson 1990: 224–225). Checking most of Hamilton's voluminous works, I could not find this figure in its entirety. But the following fragment will suffice to prove our point:

> "A country may be overrun by an armed host, but it is only conquered by the establishment of fortresses. Words are the fortresses of thought. They enable us to realize our dominion over what we have already overrun in thought; to make every intellectual conquest the basis of operations for others still beyond. – or another illustration: – You have all heard of the process of tunneling, of tunneling through a sand-bank. In that operation it is impossible to succeed, unless every foot, nay almost every inch in our progress be secured by an arch of masonry, before we attempt the excavation of another. Now, language is to the mind precisely what the arch is to the tunnel. The power of thinking and the power of excavation are not dependent on the word in the one case, on the mason work in the other; but without these subsidiaries, neither process could be carried on beyond its rudimentary commencement." (Hamilton 1882–84: 138–139)

One cannot overstate the importance of this metaphorical figure of the conquest. For if it is accepted as the key to understanding Bergson's theory of language, it proves false the criticism that he was an "enemy of language". That label, when joined with the charge of "anti-intellectualism" and the rejection in advance of the significance of language for Bergson's philosophy, has led to a

dearth of criticism, positive or negative, concerning many crucial aspects of the doctrine. And "intellectual effort" takes first place among such omissions.

An eloquent example of how the notion of intellectual effort is ignored because of labels applied *a priori* to Bergson's philosophy is provided by two readings of Bergson's theory of language in relation to Saussurean linguistics. On one hand, the article "Charles Bally: de Bergson á Saussure" (Medina 1985) opposes two different conceptions of language – langue-nomenclature and langue-systéme . Bergson is represented with the banal version of Bergsonism, which casts him as an "enemy of language" and a fan of the old-fashioned idea that language is nomenclature. Saussure, on the other hand, is viewed as the innovator, thanks to his groundbreaking idea of language as a system. (*langue-systéme*) (op cit.: 99ff).

The opposite relation between Saussurean and Bergsonian theories obtains, when the French philosopher is represented not from the standpoint of anti-intellectualism, but of intellectual effort. Thus, in Roudet's article (1921), "Sur la classification psychologique des changements sémantiques", we read the following:

> According to Saussure, in *parole* we have to look for the embryo of all changes occurring in langue. A change is an innovation, which has originally appeared in certain individuals[....] When it becomes universal, it already belongs to *langue*. Applied to semantic changes, this doctrine may seem incontestable. A change in sense always originates from an individual effort to express a thought in language. This effort, which can be termed an *effort of expression*, is of the same nature as all other intellectual efforts. This is a transformation from implicit to explicit thought, or, if we are to use the words of M. Bergson, an appeal of concept and image from a 'dynamic diagram.' (Op cit.: 678; Roudet's italics)

The above quote is instructive in many ways. Most pertinent for us is that it clears a path for bringing the notion of intellectual effort into (post)modern discourse. Of course, this cannot happen if I do not mention once again that all comparisons belong to the sphere of "as if", and are based on what I referred to at the beginning of this study as the "discovery of similarities between seemingly dissimilar authors". This is a metaphorical sphere, but one of combining authors rather than words. From this perspective, Bergson's philosophical style is very helpful, especially when it comes to the role of images and figures in his system (discussed below). And when he uses figurative language instead of the argumentative clichés of his time, called "delusions" above, it facilitates the task of researchers like myself whose interpretative milieu is that of metaphor. In addition, the figure of the conquest, which is central to Bergson's theory of language, seems eminently compatible with the theoretical models and strategies used by most modern authors. Such

figural language helps us to avoid "delusions" of the time, and takes us at once into metaphorical space, which is the natural milieu of similarities between authors.

The figure of the conquest also appears in Eco's encyclopaedia as a "territory" where language and thought interact (for more on this analogy, and on Peirce's role in it, see Chapter II of Part Two, below). Since our interest lies in intellectual effort and linguistic work, we can disregard the fact that in Bergson language and thought are of different natures, while in Eco they are both linguistic. It is enough to see that in the encyclopaedia the acquisition of new territory is a crucial concept. The following quote, absent from the English translation, comes from the Italian edition of Eco's *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*:

> "[The encyclopaedia] is the recorded sum of all interpretations, objectively conceivable as the library of libraries, where library is also the archive of all non-verbal information, registered in some way, from paintings to cinema. [...] the encyclopaedia, as the totality of interpretations, also accommodates contradictory interpretations; textual activity based on the encyclopaedia, and operating on the contradictions of the latter, continuously introduces a new re-segmentation of the continuum; this happens also as the effect of progressive experiences and, in time, transforms the encyclopaedia; so [the encyclopaedia's] global representation is impossible, because it would already be false at the moment in which it is terminated; also, the encyclopaedia, as an objective system of interpretations, is possessed in different ways by different users." (Eco 1984: 109–110)

What to Bergson, as interpreted by Roudet, is an effort of expression that results in semantic innovation, is called by Eco "textual activity", a locution that neatly dispatches the subject. Notice, also, that Eco's main interest shifts to the result, which is the ever-enlarging encyclopedia. It is hard to imagine, however, that the linguistic work required to make this enlargement is performed by anything other than the free initiative of communicating subjects (see Part Two, Chapter I). As we shall see, the fate of the term "abduction", during its transition from Peirce to Eco, is illustrative in this connection (see Part Two, Chapter II). Also, key semiotic concepts like "semiosphere" and "intertext" provide similar reasons for us to ask *whose* activities are in play, on the basis of the phenomenon they theorize. For such theorizing ignores the role of acting and creating subjects, in favor of the illusion that language is speaking the subjects rather than vice versa.

For Richard Rorty, the notion of "vocabulary" functions similarly to the way "encyclopaedia" does for Eco. It is also easy to see in this (post)modern thinker – or "post-philosophical", as Rorty prefers to be called – an affinity with the Bergsonian figure of conquest. In the process of an expanding vocabulary /

encyclopaedia, Rorty emphasizes the criteria by which one description of the world replaces another. More precisely, he argues that reference to any criterion not immanent to the descriptions themselves (such as the Good in Plato, Reason in Kant, the Universal Structure, and so on) results in undesirable effects for the development of the discourse. Rorty himself sometimes uses metaphorical language, with characteristic precision:

> "One can use language to criticize and enlarge itself, as one can exercise one's body to develop and strengthen and enlarge it, but one cannot see language-as-a-whole in relation to something else to which it applies, or for which it is a means to an end. The arts and the sciences, and philosophy as their self-reflection and integration, constitute such processes of enlargement and strengthening." (Rorty 1982: xix)

Here again we see that, in contrast to Bergson, who still considers language and thought as two different things, Rorty sees no difference in the nature of the "territory", the "army", and the "fortresses". But there is no doubt that the expansion – the conquest of territory – takes place through the efforts of the individual user of language.

The notion of individual effort brings us at last to Paul Ricoeur, whose work has been crucial to the present study. Ricoeur lends support to our argument that the idea of intellectual effort, as a linguistic practice, is fundamentally compatible with modern philosophical discourse. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, in a chapter called "The Metaphor as 'Change of Meaning' ", Ricoeur refers to Roudet's article, and his interest lies in the term 'effort of expression' " (Ricoeur 1979: 117). Ricoeur notes that Roudet borrows this term from Bergson, since the latter has "described [it] in the famous essay on 'L'effort intellectuel' " (op. cit.: 118). The fact that Bergson's hypothesis comes from the field of psychology gives Ricoeur some pause. Nevertheless, he generally views the concept of intellectual effort as "trés positive" (ibid.), and he gives the notion the attention it deserves. In Ricoeur, the figure of the conquest is reduced to its purest form, though the relationship with the Bergsonian notion of intellectual effort is indirect[3].

This lack of direct relationship, however, comes at the expense of the fact that the similarity between Bergson and Ricoeur is introduced into the heart of the hermeneutic discourse, and especially after it has been compared to the semiotic approach (op. cit.: 65–100; 120–138; Studies VI and VII). Thus, Ricoeur perceives the transgression of an existing boundary in order to invade new territory as an act which

[3] In the preface to the anthology *Paul Ricoeur: Les métamorphoses de la raison herméneutique* (AA. VV. 1991: 12), the theme of the creative conquest of new meanings is presented as a leading one in all of the French philosopher's work.

> "[...] naïve and uncritical – is that of ontological *vehemence*. I will not renounce it, I will only mediate it. Without it, the critical moment would be weak. To state 'that is' – such is the moment of *belief*, of *ontological commitment*, which gives affirmation its 'illocutionary' force. There is no better testimony to this affirmative vehemence than the poetic experience. Along one of its dimensions, at least, this experience expresses the ecstatic moment of language – language going beyond itself. It seems, accordingly, to attest that discourse prefers to obliterate itself, to die, in the confines of the being-said." (op cit.: 249; Ricoeur's italics)

I. 9. The Founders of Discoursivity and the Figure of the Conquest

In my advocacy of Bergson, I have been trying to show the relevance of "intellectual effort" and linguistic work to current modes of thought. To do so, it has been necessary to bring Bergson into contact with some significant representatives of modern thought. The figure of the conquest provides further support for my thesis, from the standpoint of the notion of the "founders of discoursivity" as described by Foucault and Kuhn.

Foucault introduces this term in his essay "What Is an Author?" (in Foucault 1984): "They [the founders of discursivity] are unique in that they are not just authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts" (114). This means that certain parts of the encyclopaedia, such as intertext and semiosphere, can be regarded as resulting from an individual, constitutive act of foundation. The novelty here is that the need for intellectual effort is regulated to some extent. A superficial reading of *Creative Evolution* may depart from the assumption that all human beings, upon reaching a certain stage of evolution, become sources of creativity. Such a reading may go on to identify this stage with the romantic ideal of the Genius. Readings of this kind probably contributed to the widespread approval and popularization of "bergsonism" at the beginning of the century. That is why a comparison with one of the most severe authors of today can help disentangle Bergson from "bergsonism". Foucault focuses our attention on how creativity can exist within the bounds of modern discourse, yet without resorting to the transcendental categories of the nineteenth century. Bergson himself responds to that attention to creativity in a way that fits perfectly within the framework of the basic figure (see I. 8.), again in a metaphorical manner, in spite of using the philosophical vocabulary at his disposal. This contributes quite a lot to the immediacy of the comparison.

For Bergson, the originary act is akin to drilling the ocean depths, inasmuch as it brings to the surface the "very different materials" on which "disciplines

normally work" (IM: 199). What makes the analogy even more appropriate, and brings it closer to Foucault's concerns, is the problem of truth. Bergson notes that, in deep-sea excavations, the fundamental event is the strike of the drill, and not the "truth" that is mined out and brought up for all to see. Here precisely lies the extreme similarity between all great thinkers, though disputes between them may arise later, when analysis has begun to "dry up" and "harden" the excavated material (ibid.). Bergson's equivalent term for discoursivation is "logical perfectioning"; in contrast to the originary act, which is ephemeral and momentaneous, the process or refinement can go on for centuries (op. cit.: 192).

In his essay on authorship, Foucault outlines a key difference between the above-mentioned founders of discourse – of which Marx and Freud are "the first and most important cases" (Foucault 1984: 114) – and scientific discourse. The former are marked by a creativity that is more personal and of greater responsibility than is the creativity of great scientists. The latter are limited by the scientific method, and their responsibility lightened, inasmuch as it is shared by the objective proceedings of science. Bergson, on the other hand, focuses on the lack of such a boundary: "I take the view that several of the great discoveries, or those at least which have transformed the positive science or created new ones, have been so many soundings made in pure duration" (IM: 193). Without going into too much detail, and with the explicit reminder that "modern science is neither one, nor simple" (op. cit.: 197), as Bergson reminded the positivists, let us recall here Kuhn's view of the development of science. Kuhn distinguishes between periods of "normal science" and periods of "revolution". Revolutions lead to the formation of a new paradigm, which does not accumulate over the previous one, but instead changes fundamentally the research problematics and agenda. When Foucault grounds the difference between discourses, saying that if one reexamines Freud or Marx, this would result in changes in Freudianism or Marxism, whereas to reexamine Galileo's texts would not bring a change in mechanics (Foucault 1984: 116), he obviously sticks to a model of normal science. Moments of paradigm shift, however, are rather close to the other type of discoursivity as represented by Freud and Marx.

Kuhn argues that philosophy and the other humanities do not function much differently than science does; however, the criterion for progress in science cannot be applied with the same convincingness to the humanities as it is to the hard sciences (see the chapter "Progress through Revolutions", in Kuhn 1971; see also, Vattimo 1983). Like the sciences, the humanities also oscillate between periods of the normal and the revolutionary, but the oscillations occur much more frequently there than they do in the sciences. This is what Bergson has in mind when stating that the notion of intuition (the strike of the drill) is

fundamental for both types of discoursivity, while "logical perfecting" is secondary. One of the most radical of Kuhn's conclusions refers to the problem of truth. The very idea of "revolutions" in science implies that the latter cannot be progressing toward truth. Thus, science resembles an army that conquers new territories on its way to the Promised Land. But each time the victory seems to be within reach, someone appears who convinces everyone that the army is on the wrong planet. Then everything starts anew, the only change perhaps being that all concerned have gained a bit more experience.

Kuhn compares his inferences about science to Darwin's theory. At the time Darwin first advanced his views on evolution, it was not difficult to agree with the idea that species are not given, but that they evolve and that man descends from the ape. The greatest problem was caused by the idea that evolution has neither plan nor destination, neither scheme nor *telos*. Both the evolution of species and the development of science, however, are intimately connected with the idea of progress. And progress presumes a leading to something, towards some form of truth, no matter how various the versions may be.

In the same way, my reading of Bergson, led by the figure of the conquest, disregards everything in his philosophy that refers to the nature of the territory, the army, the aims of the conquest and so on, so as to focus single-mindedly on intellectual effort, a notion which, as we have seen, has much in common with some basic ideas of outstanding modern thinkers and theoreticians. The following chapters will explore this commonalty and its importance for the reevaluation of certain axioms of modern thought, such as "The limits of our world are the limits of our language". Before that, I shall first make more precise the concept of intellectual effort by tracing its ethical, practical and theoretical relevance to and in Bergson's philosophy.

II. The Phenomenology of Intellectual Effort

It seems to me time to deny oneself the convenience,
which has become a laziness in thinking,
of lumping the whole of western thought
together under a single word,
metaphysics.
– Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 311.

Before we explore the various aspects of the notion of intellectual effort in Bergson's philosophy, some particularization is needed. The interpretative perspective I offer does not at all question the core importance of the notion of intellectual effort. On the contrary, it is the very key to the reading of Bergson's philosophy. The model for our reading is the monograph by Moss_-Bastide, who, as already mentioned, takes the concept of "bon sens" as her key to interpreting Bergsonism. From that point of view, Bergson's philosophy constitutes a "phenomenology of intellectual effort[4]", and my task is to make it appear from the psychological framework. Indeed, the notion of intellectual effort itself first arises from the conjunction of two fields, metaphysics and psychology, and this determines Bergson's philosophical position as a follower of Maine de Biran. As Mossé-Bastide puts it, the realm of intellectual effort is where spiritualism combines with the spirit of science (Mossé-Bastide 1955: 275 n1). It is from this starting point that Bergson later approaches the problems of evolution and morality.

As mentioned above, in his first significant work, *Time and Free Will* [1889], Bergson introduces the idea of "duration" (endurance), and in doing so he encounters unexpected obstacles of communication. Because "nous parlons plutôt que nous pensons" (49) ["we speak rather than think"], the usual situation is one in which "speech dominates over thought" (70). To communicate successfully, Bergson must help the reader overcome the disposition to privilege word over thought, in order to give himself over to the immediate data of consciousness. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson develops the dynamic principle of the duration of consciousness. "L'attention à la vie" – intellectual effort – is

[4] Soulez (1997: 79, 85) speaks about the "phenomenology of passion" in Bergson.

the principle by which memory determines the materiality of perception. Several years later the essay "Intellectual Effort" is published; in it Bergson further clarifies the dynamic principle discussed in *Matter and Memory*. According to Bergson, "if metaphysics is possible, it can only be an effort to reascend the slope natural to the work of thought" (IM: 183). On the basis of the dynamics of intellectual effort, Bergson considers issues such as dreaming, *déjà vu*, and even the comic. It is not difficult to detect the principle discussed in *Matter and Memory* in *Creative Evolution*, too, for in the latter we find the same mutual penetration of memory and matter, only now expanded to global dimensions. Life Force is the effort with which super-consciousness penetrates matter, impregnating the latter with indeterminacy. The human species constitutes the successful accomplishment of this effort. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson reveals the outcome of this effort in the realm of social existence. That outcome is open morality, which is the love for all people, as opposed to a closed morality directed toward family, ethnic group or nation. Open morality, characteristic of religious mystics and heroes, concludes the adventure of the founding effort.

Of course, this second phase of Bergson's thought – the globalization and "cosmologization" of principles – takes away from the modernness of the notion of intellectual effort. Even so, the relation of this second phase to the rest of the doctrine enables me to argue that the issue of linguistic expressive effort (linguistic work) is not of the secondary importance that philosophy textbooks ascribe to it. In this way we can raise the status of the notion of intellectual effort by demonstrating both its relevance to today's philosophic-linguistic discourse, as well as its centrality to Bergson's philosophy. This is our goal in the following examination of ethical, practical and theoretical facets of intellectual effort.

II. 1. The Ethics of Intellectual Effort

Bergson's philosophy can be understood, very schematically, as being composed of two basic tendencies. The first of these tendencies is his thesis on the manners or modes of philosophizing; the second deals with the realization, through these manners, of the doctrine itself. The first tendency directly pertains to intellectual effort as a method of philosophizing. The second one refers to the discoursivation of the method within the framework of the philosophical and epistemological situation of Bergson's day. This two-fold division is not obvious, but such non-obviousness is one of the most precious elements in Bergson's philosophy, according to Jankélévitch (1959: 5).

It is precisely the exploration of the non-obvious which leads us to the connections that Bergsonism has with modern thought. It is a way of separating the doctrine from its dynamic relations with the discourse of time, without making the a-historical claim that we are getting closer to those elements in it which refer to its own "thrown-ness" in an epoch. As already mentioned, some studies reconsider Bergson from the standpoint of existential phenomenology, which is generally based on epochal thrown-ness (see Ronchi 1990 and the exhaustive bibliography there). In *Bergson éducateur* comparisons are also made with Sartre, whose thought was the philosophical fashion in France at that time (see Mossé-Bastide 1955: 252). The present work takes its place within that line of studies.

Mossé-Bastide clearly demonstrates the close relatedness between Bergson's philosophy and his activities in education, which include 40 years of teaching and active participation in the reform of secondary education in France in the 1920s. Today, we find Richard Rorty claiming in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, after a detailed panorama of modern, post-metaphysical thinking, that a single opportunity remains – philosophical discourse as "edification" (Rorty 1979: 357–394). In arguing this conclusion, Rorty draws on ideas from Gadamer, the most hermeneutical of all authors. Gadamer's basic notion is that of Tradition, of which education and "sensus communis" are basic components. He refers directly to Bergson's concept of "bon sens" (1979: 19–20) when introducing his thoughts on Tradition. The similarities between Tradition and "bon sens" go much deeper than it first seems. They will be further explored here and in Part Two.

After referring to Bergson, Gadamer goes on to describe the life of Tradition (its truth) as consisting in its need always to be resumed in each new hermeneutic situation or interpretative endeavor. This is the essence of Bergsonian "bon sens", with the additional requirement for intellectual effort, which every interpretative endeavor of this kind demands. The paradox of the hermeneutic relevance of the "old-fashioned" Bergson reaches its ultimate dimension when it turns out that today's "radical hermeneutics" (Caputo 1987) comes closest to his thought. John Caputo criticizes Gadamer, saying that although the latter has correctly outlined the hermeneutical problem, he has taken the easy way out by relying on something already established, such as tradition. Caputo considers such compromises unacceptable, because a radical hermeneutics attempts "to stick with the original difficulty of life" (op. cit.: 1). This original difficulty consists roughly in perceiving life as "flux", and in realizing that there are no grounds for referring to something outside of that flux in our efforts to understand and interpret it. If flux is the very physics (*phisis*) of

life, then every attempt to transcend it is a "meta". Radical hermeneutics should teach us "to get up the nerve to stay with it" (op. cit.: 3). When Bergson introduces us to metaphysics, he says essentially the same thing: Life is duration (= flux); intuition is the effort to overcome all easy, ready-made and rigid solutions that we find in language, in order to get in touch with the fluidity of life. Bergson says, "I value effort above everything" (CM: 87–88). And Caputo seconds him: "Hermeneutics thus is for the hardy" (1987: 3). It appears that Bergson's metaphysics is a radical hermeneutics!

Despite the irony of this observation, and the limitations of Caputo's project, the connection between Bergson and Caputo is stimulating for my study. Even to one who is not a radical "hermeneutician" or a metaphysician of duration, and even without "thinking" as yet being defined, the positive value of intellectual effort is obvious: to think more is better than thinking less; the life of one who has the ability to think, and who does it as often as possible, is more sensible than the life of one who doesn't; and finally, a society of individuals who have the right and the ability to think, and who do so regularly, is more humane than a society in which this does not happen. The ethics of intellectual effort starts from the acceptance of this position. Such an ethic calls for "getting up the nerve to stay", and it calls for endurance, in view of the fact that the living world (*Lebenswelt*) cannot be "said" once and forever, but that life consists in a continuous "saying". Whether this "saying" is theory, interpretation, signification, *phronesis*, dissemination, conversation, metaphorisation, foundation of discoursivity and so on is a matter of great importance, but the mode of saying takes second place to the primary ethics of intellectual effort.

We thus turn to places in Bergson's philosophy where the ethical aspects of intellectual effort are exposed most directly. They are concentrated mainly in four speeches Bergson delivers between 1882 and 1902. Mossé-Bastide has proved the significance of those speeches to the essence of Bergsonism. Here we want to stress that Bergson's manner of directly addressing students points up the faintness of the boundary line between intellectual effort and edifying philosophy. Although the speeches just mentioned center on four different topics – science, attitude towards the Other, classical education, and creative effort – they are linked by a common concern: the location of the subject within a ready-made system or paradigm. The subject may remain placidly within the given system, or he may attempt to get out of it. To do the latter necessarily requires intellectual effort.

II. 1. a) "La spécialité" and the System of Science

One of the most consistent aspects of Bergson's philosophy is his concept of education, and it corresponds significantly to the "tradition" that Gadamer discusses in *Truth and Method* (1979: 25–38). In general, Bergson promotes education free of any practical purpose. Education, for Bergson, involves the mental formation of personality, not its practical or professional realization. This is the axis along which most educational reform projects are developed. The more the state tries to provide educational opportunities for everyone, the more pressing becomes the problem of a return on this considerable investment. No wonder that in the eyes of the most pragmatic people in the world, the politicians, it is not morally justifiable to fund studies of Latin, Greek, metaphysics and so on when the same funds can provide the state with specialists for operating its industrial and bureaucratic apparatus.

Between 1919 and 1925, as the most prominent French intellectual of the day and a member of the Higher Council of Public Education, Bergson directly participates in the development of educational reform projects. But even as early as 1882, when barely 23 years old and a philosophy teacher at a *lycée*, Bergson responds to these issues with enviable clarity and persuasiveness. He calls his speech "La spécialité" (*Mélanges*: 257–264), and in it he attacks the image of the specialist: "The man of only one occupation resembles a lot the man of only one book" (258). Bergson describes the specialist as a hostile individual who compensates for the fact that he cannot talk about anything but his own specialty with the pleasure of noting his interlocutor's mistakes. "He has practiced his science too much to have mercy on you" (ibid.). And here lies the main ethical problem: because he has devoted himself completely to his specialty, the specialist is unaware of everything that he does not know. To him the boundaries of the world are those of his own expertise. Within these boundaries he feels himself omnipotent, which is why modesty is unknown to him. To Bergson, such specialization is just the opposite of true education. He compares the situation of the beginning student to mankind's first steps toward understanding the world. Just as people from Antiquity to the Enlightenment who had the "noble and naïve ambition to know everything" (259), the student who is introduced to education must be guided by the innocent and generous desire to understand everything. Bergson equates truth with the ability to look first at all specialties from above, as it were, "in their most general outlines" (ibid.), and only then to participate in any of them. He compares this with the process of looking under a microscope. In his field of vision the specialist clearly sees all that is under the microscope; but because he does not have the

ability to go beyond his specialty, he does not know what he is looking at. One first needs to view with the naked eye of common sense that which one places under the microscope, so as to be able to associate it with the rest of the world. After these initial comments, Bergson makes an observation to which Thomas Kuhn would surely subscribe. The prevailing ethics of specialization has led to the situation in which "in an environment of abundant inventions there are almost no discoveries" (260). According to Bergson, scientists are more and more taking on the role of fact-collectors and fact-combiners at the expense of the search for principles. To them, "the principles are already given" (ibid.). To Bergson this lack of aptitude for general knowledge "serves as a fulcrum for rising above specialized science, dominating it, and arriving at principles" (260). Specialized scientists bring science down to the level of a "commérage scientifique". The furthest antipode to this attitude towards science Bergson recognizes in Descartes, who has "judged that it is better to study all the sciences in order to extend one of them" (261). Even better is the example of Pasteur. The latter is a contemporary of the specialized scientists of whom Bergson speaks, but the difference between Pasteur and them is enormous: "It is not by accident that he [Pasteur] is a philosopher and man of letters at the same time" (ibid.). It is this attitude that has elevated the great scholar to "posing anew the problems of this science and refining its methods" (ibid.).

Bergson's instructions to his students call to mind Kuhn's distinction between "normal" and "revolutionary" science. The French philosopher also defines two possible scientific approaches, but he does so from an ethical standpoint. He does not oblige his students to be revolutionary scholars, but recommends to them the "noble and naïve" attitude that mirrors the attitudes of real pathbreakers such as Pasteur and Descartes. Here the implication of intellectual effort is obvious, although Bergson does not point it out directly. Philosophy, or general knowledge, forces the scholar to think across a broad range of problems. Doing so places him beyond the methodologically sanctioned domain or paradigm, and forces him to create pertinence all by himself.

Scientific discovery is viewed as intellectual effort in Bergson's system, and it is one of the examples he uses in the essay on "Intellectual Effort". In addition to the figure of the drill (see I. 9., above), which also refers to scientific revelation, Bergson describes Newton's discovery of the principle of gravity as an "effort of imagination" (Bergson 1990: 192), which draws together two different subjects and abstracts a single quality from them. On the whole, thinking is an "effort of abstraction" (op. cit.: 190); by contrast, intellectual laziness is the acceptance of ready-made abstractions and using them for

specific task.

In his speech on specialization Bergson describes the consequences of this kind of thinking in the humanities. His protest accords with that of all the hermeneutic authors considered in this study: "[The humanist] is succeeded by the research man engaged in research projects. These, rather than the cultivating of erudition, lend to his works its atmosphere of incisiveness. The research man no longer needs a library at home." These words encapsulate the whole of Bergson's thesis, but are written by Heidegger (in Caputo 1987: 229). The time limitations of a speech do not allow for lengthy development of this core issue of hermeneutics, but what Bergson does say to his audience is enough for my thesis. Bergson points out that the specialist in literature, for example, avoids the problem of revealing the meanings of what the author wrote, and instead examines all the facts related to the material creation of the author's works. His effort goes into becoming acquainted with all the versions of a certain work and discovering the mistakes in them. In that misplaced effort, according to Bergson, "we assimilate mental work as physical [i.e., manual labor]" (262). He compares the specialist to the worker who performs simple tasks well. But though division of labor is the major necessity for effective production, its merciless logic reduces man to a machine. The alienation of the worker from the totality of the production process deprives him of the possibility for self-reflection. The machine is in fact the perfect specialist: it makes no decisions. The specialist seeks situations in which the facts will speak for him and thus relieve him from having to make interpretative decisions. In the humanities, the demand for "facts" pushes the researcher towards a philological, historiographical, and positivist approach in which "everything remains dry and sterile" (262). Bergson finds in Nature another example of specialization leading to inhumanity: "And this, my young students, is what primarily differentiates intelligence from instinct, man from beast. The whole inferiority of the beast is here: it is a specialist" (263).

This fundamentally ethical position generates in Bergson's future philosophical system a complex concept of science that only a surface reading could label as entirely negative. All the basic components of this multi-faceted attitude are concentrated in his talk on specialization. As we have seen, Bergson is well-acquainted with the epistemological system of the time. *Matter and Memory* is based completely on observations from scientific psychology; *Creative Evolution* deals with the evolution of life; *Duration and Simultaneity* (1965a [1922]) is dedicated to Einstein's theory of time; and so on. Bergson says nothing against science as such. His entire polemic is directed against the inertia that the scientific approach induces toward understanding the life of

consciousness. He argues against the unreasonable facility which the positivist approach (having acquired its fame in the description of matter) projects on attempts to understand the mental and spiritual side of man. This inertia leads one to describe something dynamic and in process, such as duration or flux, in terms of ready-made, static, and ultimately inappropriate categories. Bergson, on the other hand, is for the hardy of mind. Bergson is for intellectual effort.

II. 1. b) "La politesse" and the System of Etiquette

"La politesse" is a speech that Bergson first delivers in 1885, then again with some revisions in 1892. In it Bergson touches on ethical problems that he will deal with exhaustively 45 years later in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. As does his lecture on specialization, this speech, too, contains the seeds of ideas that generate his entire theoretical corpus.

The power of Bergson's speeches comes from the fact that they directly address the students and that they do not merely impart data. Freed from the burden of writing, Bergson advances the innermost principles of his doctrine. The topic of politeness is particularly related to the practice of this kind of ethics. Here Bergson explores an area that lies on the very boundary of that which can be taught and/or learned, and that which goes beyond it.

The point of departure of all Bergson's speeches is etiquette, or "les Codes de la civilité" (319). Bergson asks whether this set of rules and clichés can guarantee valid interpersonal dealings in a society. In other words, "it remains to be seen whether it is true that civility and politeness are one and the same" (ibid.). Taking his usual approach, Bergson distinguishes two types of politeness, and the need for effort (here, pain) immediately comes as the point of differentiation: "I do not believe that ready-made formulae, which can be learned by heart without even minimum pain, are the latest thing in politeness" (320). Thus, Bergson opposes formal graces, or social politeness, to "politeness of spirit". The latter, of course, does not completely disregard existing rules of etiquette. It simply shifts the emphasis from the signs being exchanged to the attitude that is realized through this exchange. Such an attitude, more than any other, calls for a flexibility of spirit that has empathy for the uniqueness of every single moment. This kind of higher intellectual effort, referring to Otherness, is taken up in the Conclusions of this study. Thus I shall present here only its main principle.

If formal politeness (formalities, the politeness of manners) is based on the idea of equality, then politeness of spirit, quite to the contrary, predisposes one to look for the qualities and talents of the Other, distinguishing him according to

his virtues. This is not just a matter of good will, but an effort that demands "intellectual flexibility" and "moral plasticity" (332). Social life clothes people in roles and professions that cover up their individuality, which is precisely the stuff of true politeness. Intellectual work is needed to penetrate behind the layers of labels that are deposited by social existence and that facilitate identification – labels, which themselves are the language of formal politeness. "[This] calls for another ability, which corrects or softens the consequences [of layering], the ability to renounce, finally, the habits that have been formed or even the natural disposition one develops in himself; the ability to take the place of others, to be interested in their occupations, to think their thoughts, in other words, to live their life and to forget ourselves" (322). The ethical result of such an attitude is the impression made by the polite person: "that he has a secret preference for us and that he is not the same with everybody" (ibid.).

The difference between formal and true politeness towards the Other is the difference between habit and effort. Herein lies the embryo of such basic notions in Bergson's philosophy as static and dynamic ethics, open and closed morality, and so on. The speech on politeness continues with a discussion of communication as a talent, and a comparison of politeness to even more delicate behaviors. To explore these matters, however, would lead us astray from my project here. Yet is worth mentioning that these are some of the most gracious pages of Bergson's work.

II. 1. c) "Le bon sens" and the System of Languages

"*Le bon sens* and Classical Studies" (1895) is the most famous of all Bergson's speeches and the only one published in a separate edition. In French dictionaries the definition of "bon sens" long ago acquired the essence of Bergson's description.

As we have mentioned several times, "bon sens" is intimately connected with intellectual effort. It is the ability to behave appropriately in every situation, social or non-social. It is the instance that decides if there is a need for intellectual effort to harmonize, or "syntonize", our behavior with reality. At the same time, *bon sens* is this work itself. "Resembling the very principle of life, it [*le bon sens*] alerts and works unceasingly, more burdensome because of the matter it spiritualizes, but aware of the realness of its action due to the materiality of its effort" (BS: 363). After describing this most precious human quality, Bergson presents to his young audience its connections with classical education. Matter, spiritualized by *bon sens*, concerns mostly "the dead weight of vice and prejudice" (366) that is passively absorbed by the environment and

that limits the spiritual scope of a person. Language is the fundamental carrier of such elements since pure intellect has an affinity to its formal building blocks. Thus, the attitude that sees the world as constantly changing and demanding continuous attention departs radically from the attitude that everything is given in a clear and stable formal system.

> "You have probably noticed in front of our monuments and museums those foreigners with an open book in hand, in which undoubtedly are described all the surrounding splendors. But do they not forget sometimes, absorbed in reading, the beautiful things that they have come to see for themselves? Thus, some of us travel through existence with eyes fixed on the formulae we read in some kind of internal guide that, ignoring the observation of life itself, follows only what has been said, with thought focusing on the order between words and not between things." (367)

Having thus posed the problem, Bergson sees the role of education as not so much to expand students' "encyclopaedias", but to prepare them to be less dependent on the closed system of language which they inherit. The most effective strategy for this purpose is to offer them the alternative of a language that, so to speak, "originally" revealed the world to them. Although the study of Latin and Hellenic Greek is associated mostly with erudition and encyclopaedism, for Bergson classical education contributes to the better intellectual performance of the student, making him distrustful of what culture offers as ready-made:

> "In classical education I see precisely that it is an effort to break the ice of words and find underneath the free stream of thought. The practice of translating your ideas from one language into another, young students, accustoms you to crystallizing them in *(more) different systems*; from there, they are released from any irrevocably closed, verbal form." (my italics, 368).

Having in mind this very paragraph, in *Truth and Method* Gadamer blames Bergson for not also inverting the question: "how helpful is *le bon sens* for classical studies?" (1979: 26). By failing to do so, Bergson leaves the hermeneutic valence of the notion unexplored. It is evident, however, that here Gadamer is influenced by the context in which he quotes Bergson, and it is the introduction of fundamental notions of the tradition of the sciences of man. But when Gadamer outlines the mechanisms for "the production of truth", for its happening in each new hermeneutic situation, he dedicates a whole chapter to "The Hermeneutic Relevance of Aristotle" (op. cit.: 278–289), and there we can see that the notion of *phronesis* makes almost no difference to Bergsonian *bon sens*. Gadamer emphasizes the difference that Aristotle claims exists between moral and theoretical knowledge. This difference is based mostly on their relation to the universal. Moral knowledge is a knowledge that cannot draw its validity only from the universal, for it always involves within itself the subject

who exercises it and the particular situation in which it is exercised. Hermeneutic consciousness does not directly concern moral issues. Yet both moral and theoretical knowledge are based on application (op. cit.: 281). When Bergson explores the relation between *bon sens* and truth, he notes the same hermeneutic relevance of this notion:

> "If [*bon sens*] resembles science in its care for the real and its insistence on always being in touch with facts, it differs from science by the kind of truth it is after; since it does not strive, like science does, for universal truth but for the truth of the moment, and does not insist so much on being right once and forever but on commencing over and over again to be right" (BS: 362).

Bergson compares the inertia of applying scientific methods to ethical matters to the kind of excessive endeavor that leads some people to use laboratory scales in their kitchen: "There is a big mistake that consists in reasoning about society and about nature in the same way" (369). Without doubt, this is the general position of all hermeneutic discourse.

At first glance it might seem that Bergson's effort goes entirely toward overcoming prejudices, while philosophical hermeneutics, as outlined by Gadamer, is aimed at rehabilitating them. Thus it is easy to understand Gadamer's misjudgment of the notion of bon sens. But the affinity between the two thinkers becomes clear immediately, when the exact meaning of "prejudice" is questioned. At the beginning of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer says, "that which changes forces itself far more on the attention than that which remains the same" (Gadamer 1979: XIII–XIV). Precisely what remains the same – tradition – is of the nature of prejudice, and so is our experience with truth. When science pretends that there is a universal method for finding truth, it in fact cuts itself off from and represents itself as something greater than Tradition, in the sense that through natural science we can learn the truth about nature and through the science of man we can learn the truth about history, arts and so on. Gadamer's thesis is that we can understand science better if we take it as one means, among many, of realizing tradition (i.e., science as a kind of pragmatic metaphysics, which begins with Plato and Aristotle). The main idea is that we cannot go beyond this tradition, for we are originally "abandoned" to it; we can only interpret it in each new hermeneutic situation. What, however, is the basis for an always new hermeneutic situation? What must interpretation fight against in order to draw its truthfulness from tradition? And what conceals things, so that there is a general need for the hermeneutic process? In my view, it is prejudice. That which remains the same and that which changes are prejudices. "What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from all the countless ones, and what [must]

critical reason overcome?" (Gadamer 1979: 246). Posing the question this way, Gadamer focuses on one side of the hermeneutic process. If we are able to understand the world, it is because we are involved in a tradition, which enables us to have a world at all. But our being in this world is inclined to totalize itself and project its stability in all directions. Thus, it clothes in ready-made answers many spheres of the potential experience of the subject. Tradition opens to us the world we inhabit, but its specific form limits that world. It is this presentation of the world as being easy to understand that makes possible the practical life of community. Thus, self-forgetting is necessary for practical purposes, a forgetting of history and of the finitude of being. At least from Heidegger onwards, the hermeneutic project is aimed at limiting self-forgetting. *Bon sens* is the intellectual effort that must "break the ice" of prejudices which obstruct spiritual growth. It is the appeal of consciousness not to remain formed by the system of prejudices the situation offers, but to fight constantly against "reality" so as to gain personal experience in every moment, so as to continuously gain truth (in II. 3., I use Ricoeur's notion of "ontological commitment" for this particular attitude). In other words, Bergson and Gadamer focus the hermeneutic problem on the two different types of prejudices it is occupied with. The one rehabilitates "the good ones"; the other discredits "the bad ones". But the idea of an intellectual attitude that demands constant and active thinking in every new situation, is the same in both philosophers.

Bergson also discusses briefly the problem of the knowledge of history. He brings up this issue within the framework of the criticism of prejudices, whose differentiation is made even more obvious: "Certain sciences have the advantage of placing us as close to life as possible. Thus, a profound study of the past helps us in our understanding of the present, given, however, that we remain watchful for wrong analogies and that in history [...] we seek for reasons rather than for laws" (369). Scientific method itself is one of today's greatest prejudices, and it has to be overcome by critical reason. The application of the scientific method to history leads to a cause-and-effect explanation of events and thus subordinates them to a kind of truth that is not their own. In Bergson's time this tendency is very popular, and whenever the problem of history is mentioned, he expresses the same opinion. Mossé-Bastide (1955: 250–259) explores in detail these moments and summarizes the general position of Bergson as follows: "Above all, what opposes history to physics is that the former is populated with creations of human personalities, and once we have creation, there is neither equivalence, nor necessary links between causes and effects" (253–254).

Bergson witnesses World War I, in which he participates by accepting a

diplomatic mission to the USA. As early as 1921, together with other notables, Bergson takes part in an initiative to revise history textbooks, in which wars are praised, and the images of certain nations are deformed and reduced (141). The idea is to replace these negative images with ones that are free from narrow-mindedness and that are dominated by an optimistic view of international relations. This kind of positive rehabilitation is necessary, as opposed to the mere representation of facts, which leaves no room for interpretation, nor for doubting the truthfulness of so-called objective data. In recent years the need for such an initiative as regards the Balkans has become manifest, after the outbreak of many ethnic conflicts that turned into wars.

II. 1. d) "The Creative Power of Effort" and the System of Metaphysics

In the last speech of this kind, known under two different titles, "La puissance créatrice de l'effort" and "De l'intelligence" (Mélanges: 554–560) and delivered in 1902, Bergson most directly formulates the ethics of intellectual effort. He summarizes the ethical logic of overcoming closed systems as an effort to overcome oneself. Here, the closed system is the totality of all the systems that build up the intelligible environment of the individual. In this speech Bergson presents education as a culture of continuous effort, which makes the student used to going beyond what is given. Bergson's wants to make his students trust themselves, by demonstrating the relations between the world they inhabit and their own intellectual performance. Intellectual effort increases their capacity for understanding, which itself results in an increase in their exchanges with the world. With this speech more than with any other, Bergson aids the hermeneutic reading I have undertaken. The problem of understanding is central to his argument, and thus we are carried to the very core of the hermeneutic project, at least according to Bergson's own most competent formulation. Indeed, in Gadamer's opinion, "The problem of understanding [...] pervades all human relations with the world" (Gadamer 1979: XI). For this purpose, Bergson employs two different words, "comprehension" and "intelligence", both of them equivalent to "understanding". This particular text has not been translated into English. But in a very similar context, the sentence "Cet achèvement de l'intelligence du texte dans un intelligence du soi caracterise la sorte de la philosophie reflexive" has been translated as "This culmination of understanding of a text in self-understanding is characteristic of that kind of reflective philosophy" (in Ricoeur 1970). To help explain to his students "the creative power of effort", Bergson gives the example of a classmate of his, who

was rather mediocre in all disciplines, but who later became a highly respected physician. According to Bergson, the reason for his classmate's success was that he found a field that stimulated him enough to concentrate all his efforts. This is also the way to overcome oneself. Mediocrity is not something that is given; rather, it is a lack of the will to overcome oneself (555). Unfortunately, "intelligence" is used as a label by which to favor some students over others. To provide a safeguard against such prejudice, Bergson analyzes this quality, reducing it to "comprehension". In his view, there are two types of understanding: the first kind is a general, quantitative understanding; the second is the more purposeful and qualitative one. Instead of dividing the students into intelligent and not-intelligent ones, they would be better served if they were taught to discern the mechanisms of understanding by which they relate to their studies and to the world in general. The first type of interaction with what is studied consists in a distant acquaintance with a growing set of themes, which is "a rather general ability to understand, infinitely expandable, that is something like a greater elasticity of intelligence" (556). In the second type of interaction there is no distance between student and object: "True understanding is that by which we enter the interior of our study, when we touch it in its depths, and it inspires us with its spirit, as we feel the pulse of its soul. Whether it is the understanding of a lawyer or a physician, of an entrepreneur or a tradesman, understanding is always the current of sympathy which flows between people and things as between friends who understand each other without words and who have no secrets" (ibid.). After determining sympathy as a basis for understanding, Bergson refines the explanation by describing the mechanism of its functioning. Also, in contrast to the first type of interaction between student and object, this latter kind is not gradual and systematic, but sudden. Once we have devoted ourselves to something, understanding comes as if "by sudden enlightenment" (359). As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the happening or moment of truth in Gadamer's formulation of the hermeneutic problem is given in the same way. It is compared to the experiencing of the beautiful. Both truth and the beautiful "make themselves immediately apparent in their being" (Gadamer 1979: 438). What Bergson adds to the understanding of the hermeneutic experience, is the idea that, although it is an epiphany, truth does not appear randomly nor everywhere. While the opposition between hermeneutic and scientific truth emphasizes the former's epiphanal nature, it at the same time ignores the process before its appearance – ignores it, because scientific method acknowledges the discovery of truth only if that discovery is preceded by positivist research practice. Correspondingly, the scientific method rejects the truthfulness of any other type of experience.

Epiphany is the opposite of discovery, although this opposition seems to involve ignoring the methodological preparation for the discovery of truth. To the fact that truth is an event and not the monopoly of a universal method, we can add that it happens where cognitive initiative uses effort to question the coherence of that which we have so far taken to be the order of things, and to reach out for the very source that makes it possible. Of course, Bergson does not name this source "tradition" or "Lebenswelt", but he often employs expressions like "life", "the things themselves", and "duration". Whatever term we choose, the lesson of Bergson refers to the overcoming of oneself through the effort to understand. And as a primary mode of being, the overcoming of oneself is a constant re-opening of the thought/being relation in a new way.

At the time Bergson delivers his speech on the "Creative Power of Effort", he is also preparing one of his most important works, which he publishes the next year. This is the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), and in it he introduces the notion of "intuition" that would undoubtedly sound familiar to every student who has heard Bergson's speech. He defines intuition as "the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it" (IM: 161; Bergson's italics). If my reading reveals the obvious hermeneutic relevance of intuition, which takes for its point of departure our experience with truth, then it could be claimed that this is only a minor moment of its interpretative fate. The critical fortunes of "intuition" range from the most superficial interpretations – which Capek describes as representing (vulgar) "Bergsonism" and mostly arising from "the enthusiastic response to the emotional color of certain words, like `intuition', `creation', `élan vital' , without the slightest effort at critical analysis" („apek 1971: IX–X)[5] – to the most serious objections of both analytical philosophy and existential phenomenology. But no matter how discoursively concealed the notion of "intuition" might be, its relation with ethically purposeful speech unites the theme of the philosophical method with that of the overcoming of oneself. In addition, the introduction of the notion of "intuition" and intuitive truth in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* is opposed to the analytical (which to Bergson means the "scientific" or "intellectual") way of knowing things. In this case, too, the theme of intellectual effort constructs the difference between the two approaches: "if metaphysics is possible, it can only be *an effort* to re-ascend the slope natural to the work of thought, to place oneself immediately, through the dilation of the mind, in the thing one is

[5] In explaining this side of the interpretative fate of Bergson's philosophy, Soulez uses the opposition notoriety/popularity (Soulez 1997: 123).

studying" (IM: 183; my italics).

The usual, easy approach to knowing things consists in reducing them to preexisting forms, or: "Analyzing therefore consists in expressing a thing in terms of what is not it" (162). In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Bergson is not far from the idea that science does not think at all, a view which places him in the company of Heidegger, Gadamer, Rorty, Pareyson, and Vattimo (see Vattimo 1997: 16–17). As they all do, Bergson relates science to authentic truth only in those moments which, after Kuhn, are called "revolutionary" and are the exact opposite of the unitary model of ordinary science (recall the example of the drill, in I.9.).

All of these ideas are clarified at length in the essay on "Philosophical Intuition" (in Bergson 1988), where the notion is applied to the interpretative act. Bergson distinguishes and opposes two ways of reading of a philosophical text, which lead to two opposing ways of understanding. One way of reading is to reduce the philosopher's doctrine to ideas in circulation at the time (the example is Berkeley). Bergson ironically compares this to "a salad which, at a distance, will have a certain resemblance to what Berkeley accomplished" CM :115). This way of reading closely resembles what Gadamer calls "the immanent effort of a literary consciousness", which "is indifferent to the `truth' of its texts" (Gadamer 1979: 445). The other way of understanding is accomplished by "sudden enlightenment" and is oriented towards intuition, towards the philosopher's truth, which is "something simple, infinitely simple, so extraordinarily simple that the philosopher has never succeeded in saying it" (CM: 108–109; see also, Ricoeur 1979: 366 n102, who comments on the same idea, as it is presented by Heidegger 1968: 50).

With these observations, I temporarily conclude the topic of the ethics of intellectual effort. I shall approach it again in Part Two, and expand it with results gained from the exploration of the notion of "linguistic work"; there I shall compare it to the (post)modern discourse of linguistic being. Returning to the figure of the conquest of territory (I.8), we can note that the content of Bergson's four speeches orients it to a more theoretically grounded argumentation. Now we come to the difficulty of the foundation of discoursivity and its relatedness to tradition and prejudice. John Caputo tries to convince us of the opposite when blaming Gadamer (and Ricoeur) for taking the hermeneutic project away from its original radicalness, by basing his argumentation on a metaphysical element like tradition. Tradition is something like a facile substitute for thought, which seeks for the laboriousness of pure radicalness. But the concept of intellectual effort makes us think that a purely radical thought needs tradition as much as possible, so as to be able to question it. The truly

radical thinker opens a gap in the depths of being that breaks the crust of the self-confirming discourse of the time, in order to problematize and dethrone it, whereas the quasi-radical thinker simply skims the surface, making "outrageous" statements. Making tradition speak is not a one-dimensional interpretative act, but rather an archeological work, which brings to the surface something we have been living upon without realizing it. This very thing forces us to reconsider Being itself (and not the beautiful fireworks of heaven that make our heads spin). The same line of inquiry can be applied to the notion of creativity, although the stereotype always places the latter on the side of the fireworks.

When Rorty speaks of philosophy as being part of a conversation that always offers new, creative, and more interesting descriptions of the world, we witness a neglect of the relatedness of philosophy with tradition. This neglect, typical of American authors, makes everything easier (and Vattimo quite rightfully accuses Rorty of having a somewhat romanticized concept of hermeneutics; Vattimo 1985: 157). If hermeneutic discourse leads to very similar conclusions by most authors, it is far more difficult to arrive at those conclusions by keeping tradition in mind than by rejecting it.

II.2. The Practice of Intellectual Effort

II. 2. (a) Bergson, the Enemy of Language

In the previous chapter we examined the crucial ethical aspects of intellectual effort. Here we shall look at ways in which intellectual effort is practiced, as represented by Bergson in many brief passages scattered throughout his texts. Our focus is primarily on linguistically expressive manifestations of intellectual effort, the so-called "effort d'expression" (see I.6.).

Bergson is unsystematic in demonstrating the possible uses of creative language that transcends the expressive restrictions of everyday speech (the same restrictions which prompted Barthes to say that "language is a fascist"; Barthes 1978). This lack of system in the presentation of creative language-use has led to the general assumption that Bergson is an enemy of language. Indeed, it is hard to fault such a reading. For looking at the central themes of Bergsonism, one finds that only his negative views on language are systematically presented. Such a one-sided reading can, however, easily misconstrue Bergson's negative attitude towards the passive use of language as a negative attitude towards language as a whole. The task of our former study (Bankov 1995) was precisely to rehabilitate Bergson's complex and dynamic attitude towards language. For present purposes, we find in Gunther's

bibliography (1986: 79, 223) mention of a letter from Bergson to Raimundo Lida concerning the latter's essay, "Bergson: Filosofo del lenguaje" ["Bergson, Philosopher of Language"], which was published in an obscure Argentinean journal (see Lida 1933). Lida's essay itself is unavailable, but Murillo Zamora's (1965: 89) description of it suggests that the essay attempts to present systematically the positive aspects of Bergson's attitude towards language. The philosopher's highly affirmative response to Lida's essay indicates how important he considered this topic to be. Yet even without philological evidence to help us, we could not abandon this issue and leave the problem half-solved. Mathieu (1987: 107) describes the point of departure of the language problem very appropriately: "The need to animate simple intuition in a complex analytical form is present in Bergson, but is usually neglected at the expense of the need never to confound soul and body, analytic concepts and intuition". Thus, the practice of intellectual effort is a fundamental argument against the criticism of Bergson as being "anti-language". Criticism should be directed instead against the intellectual laziness to which the linguistic environment predisposes one. This is not a simple task, because some of the most typical expressions in Bergson's philosophy coincide with his criticism against the passive use of language; at the same time, the synthetic form of those expressions isolates them from his other theses. The model of this type of expression is the statement, "Metaphysics is therefore the science which claims to dispense with symbols" (CM: 162). This statement also can be summarized by that which is most easily remembered from *Time and Free Will*, the work in which many of his fundamental theses find their ultimate expression. The problem engaged in that book concerns the extent to which the language we inherit can inhibit us from perceiving the immediate data, endurance, and psychological depth of consciousness. "Our language is ill-suited to render the subtleties of psychological analysis" (13). And more insistently: "In short, the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word [...] overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness" (132).

The whole first chapter of *Time and Free Will* goes to clarifying the meaning of the word "intensit_". Common usage of that word clearly demonstrates how we tend to shift spatial forms of thinking, which are relevant to the manipulation of material surroundings, to the valuation of psychological conditions. Similarly, Bergson corrects terms like "unit" (80) and "several" (121). In the last chapter of his most well-known book, *Creative Evolution*, he makes another move against language. This time he attacks the practice of labeling – a practice whose harmful effect on the interpretative fate of Bergson's own philosophy we

have been accentuating. Bergson summarizes the history of philosophical systems, the common denominator of which is their inability to rid themselves of a conceptual tradition that imposes limits on what is thinkable. He discusses in great detail how the Aristotelian doctrine of language relies necessarily on the language in which Aristotle thinks (is there a modern thinker who would question this view?). He thus views the whole tradition in terms of its dependence on the language/intellect opposition. This reading, aimed at emphasizing the importance of the intuitive method, again makes Bergson out to be an opponent of language. Yet every time he speaks of the "ma"tres du philosophie", separately or together, Bergson stresses just the opposite – their profound intuitions and independence from the vocabulary they have inherited. Commenting on the saying that metaphysics can "dispense with symbols", Jeanne Hersch (1943: 220) notes that "Only one science can dispense with symbols – silence"; yet Bergsonian philosophy, to the extent that we have "heard" it, obviously does not belong to that science. On the contrary, in the *Creative Mind* Bergson himself tells us that, "Intuition will be communicated only by the intelligence" (42). This communication is the practice of intellectual effort.

II. 2. b) Expression and Effort

Bergson's anti-linguism is an interpretative key to any doctrine that discards the role of intellectual effort. Having noted his main points of departure, we can now look at the other side of the coin: how Bergson views the creative use of language. In II.1. we outlined a fundamental tenet of Bergsonian philosophy: intellectual effort must be made in order to transcend the limits imposed by existing sign systems. We have also seen that metaphysics is a laborious overcoming of the habits of practical thought. Bergson applies the same line of reasoning to the use of language:

> "But it [metaphysics] is strictly itself only when it goes beyond the concept, or at least when it frees itself of the *inflexible and ready-made concepts and creates others very different* from those we usually handle; I mean flexible, mobile, almost fluid representations, always ready to mold themselves on the fleeting forms of intuition" (168; my italics).

The belief that metaphysics should create new concepts hardly seems to fit with an anti-linguistic bias. And Bergson goes even further as he analyzes the role of effort in the creation of these "*concepts bien différents*":

> "Thought which is only thought, the work of art which is only conceived, the poem which is no more than a dream, as yet cost nothing in toil; it is the material realization of the poem in words, of the artistic conception in statue or picture, which

> demands effort. This effort is toilsome, but also it is precious, more precious even than the work it produces, because, thanks to it, one has drawn out from the self more than it already had; we are raised above ourselves." (ME: 28–29)

The effort to express something by signs is not restricted to metaphysics and art; it is also a way to overcome ourselves. Bergson goes on to say that only a creative effort of this kind can be a source of joy, as opposed to the pleasure of ordinary, material existence[6].

As we saw in I.4., Bergson represents the formulation of his own philosophy, from work to work, as such a creative effort of expression. Something new comes from each new work, and that something can hardly be deduced from what went before it.

A close look at Bergson's texts reveals that new terms are much scarcer than new ideas. This is another side of the creative effort of expression: the creation of new concepts need not require the creation of new terms. In fact, Bergson admires the capacity to express a new thought in ordinary words. Here again, effort makes the difference: "In fact, there is no philosophical idea, no matter how deep or subtle, which cannot be expressed in everyday language. The more common are the words we chose, the better they translate what we think, *if we are to take the pains of thinking*." (1913a: 999–1000; my italics.) Bergson draws a comparison with mathematics: simple words are like the infinitely short lines of which any curve can be composed, in contrast to complex philosophical terms that necessitate lengthiness. In the language of *prét-â-porter*, the same idea is expressed as follows: "what in the beginning seemed to be a comfortable garment, at the end turns into a straight jacket for thought" (ibid.).

In contrast to his summary reading of the philosophical tradition, Bergson gives copious and detailed examples of great French philosophers who, through the creative use of simple language, succeed in expressing highly original ideas. He quotes Descartes, Malebranche, Condillac, Rousseau, Pascal. The result of the effort of these thinkers is tangible. Though they do not introduce new terms, they conquer new territories. Their efforts are all the more valuable because they have "very much contributed to the power and flexibility of the French language" (1915: 1184). Their "efforts d'expression" brought notable semantic changes that directly transformed the *langue*, or system, of the French language. Although Saussure believes it is impossible for an individual speaker to change

[6] Bergson makes similar observations concerning the work of art: "Evidently, by the very effort it [the work of art] forces us to struggle against our predispositions in order to see sincerely. Sincerity is contagious. What the artist has seen we shall probably never see again, or at least never see in exactly the same way; but if he has actually seen it, the attempt he has made to lift the veil compels our imitation. His work is an example which we take as a lesson." (Bergson 1913b: 162)

the language system, whose nature is social, this is in fact what happens (in I.8. we explored an essay by Roudet, who explains semantic changes in the same way). It is enough to remember Dante and the system of the Italian language before him, or words like "unconscious" or "libido", which thanks to Freud (or Jung) are now in everyday use (though their original meanings have changed somewhat). In this sense, Bergson offers another strategy for transcending closed systems – namely, etymological competence. "One feels stronger and more self-confident if one can remount to the original signification of words [...] in fact, it is one thing to acquire a ready-made word, and quite another to assist in its generation" (1922: 1368). This kind of competence enables the thinker to gauge the degree of freedom he can afford in his effort of expression (ibid.). Modern hermeneutic discourse exhibits innumerable examples of the creative use of notions that are based on the etymological discharge of a single meaning.

II. 2. c) Overcoming Language: Images and Metaphors

One of the most consistent features of Bergson's philosophical style is his use of metaphors and comparisons (he calls the latter "images"). Analytical philosophers have often found fault with Bergson's use of figural language. Peirce's reaction to being compared to Bergson is one such case (see I.3., last paragraph). In contrast, most modern non-analytical and non-positivist philosophers of language approve of the use of figural language, and the Nobel Prize Bergson is awarded in 1928 is for literature. In his speech at the awards ceremony, Per Hallström describes *Creative Evolution* as "a poem of admirable greatness" (in Bergson 1965b: 20). It will be interesting to see to what extent Bergson consciously uses figures and metaphors as a means to transcend the limits of the philosophical language he has at his disposal. Again in a non-systematic form, we find numerous passages where the usage of figures is represented as one more strategy for the creative use of language. "And so, I have decided to bring my reader [of *Creative Evolution*] to a particular way of thinking, which goes beyond `concepts' and abstract ideas and cannot be expressed otherwise than with images: images that are not just an ornament, but the only means of expression, adapted to the thought" (Bergson 1972: 960). In *Laughter* (1913b), Bergson contrasts the use of "poetic metaphors" and "illuminating comparisons" with various types of word-play. The former two figures "always seem to reveal the close harmony that exists between language and nature, regarded as two parallel forms of life"; mere word-play, however, "make[s] us think somehow of a negligence on the part of language, which, for the time being, seems to have forgotten its real function and now claims to

accommodate things to itself instead of accommodating itself to things" (1913b: 121).

In his introduction to *The Creative Mind*, Bergson defends this view in a way that in 1922 probably sounded quite original: "there are cases in which it is imagery in language which knowingly expresses the literal meaning, and abstract language which unconsciously expresses itself figuratively" (43). As we have seen, and will see again, Bergson starts all his reflections on the use of language from the presumption that understanding is always based on an initial meaning, of which signs are the aspects of its fulfillment (see II. 3. e). Signs prompt a more and more precise foretelling of what has yet to be understood. The mechanism of image functioning, presented by Bergson in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, most comprehensively meets this hermeneutic concept:

> "No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on[....] By seeing that in spite of their difference in aspect they all [the images] demand of our mind the same kind of attention and, as it were, the same degree of tension, one will gradually accustom the consciousness to a particular and definitely determined disposition, precisely the one it will have to adopt in order to appear unveiled to itself." (166)

But meaning has still not been attained, since it too requires intellectual effort. Thus, the figures serve as a communicative strategy that artificially separates us from a statistically constant language-use based on clarity. The figures put us in a state of expecting new meanings, which require the effort of dynamic comparison. "But even then the consciousness must acquiesce in this effort; for we shall have shown it nothing. We shall simply have placed it in the attitude it must take to produce the desired effort and, by itself, to arrive at the intuition" (ibid.). Jeanne Hersch, author of one of the most profound studies of Bergson's use of images (Hersch 1932), explains their efficiency as follows: at first, they involve the reader on the basis of his personal experience, then transport him to the desired frame of mind. After that, the reader himself breaks through the conventional meaning of words and refocuses his imagination upon them and their relations with things (119).

Bergson also is not indifferent to formal techniques of overcoming the limitations of meaning that are imposed by the strict use of language. In *Time and Free Will*, where he generally gives language no quarter, Bergson provides the example of a "bold novelist" (*romancier hardi*), whose writing is so penetrating that he makes us feel that he knows us better than we know ourselves (133). Factors like "choreography of the discourse" (ME: 849) and "punctuation and rhythm" (CM: 86) contribute greatly to the flexibility of

meaning that is needed to achieve an authentic expressiveness. Bergson summarizes all this in the following phrase, which says the opposite, but means the same as the Jacobsonian poetic function (1960) of communication: "The truth is that the writer's art consists above everything in making us forget that he is using words" (ME: 57).

II. 2. d) "L'émotion créatrice"

Thus we come to one of the most significant points in Bergson's concept of language-use. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1986 [1932]) he speaks of the interdependence between emotion and creation, and again opposes two possible attitudes towards work:

> "Anyone engaged in writing has been in a position to feel the difference between an intelligence left to itself and that which burns with the fire of an original and unique emotion, born of the identification of the author with his subject, that is to say, of intuition. In the first case the mind cold-hammers the materials, combining ideas long since cast into words and which society supplies in a solid form. In the second, it would seem that the solid materials supplied by intelligence first melt and mix, then solidify again into fresh ideas now shaped by the creative mind itself. If these ideas find words already existing which can express them, for each of them this seems a piece of unexpected good luck; and, in truth, it has often been necessary to assist fortune, and strain the meaning of a word, to mould it to the thought. In that event the effort is painful and the result problematical. But it is in such a case only that the mind feels itself, or believes itself, to be creative." (46)

To get an idea of the domain to which the notion of creative emotions transfers us, we can relate this passage to the aesthetics that derive from the existential analytics of Heidegger and that argue for the ontological relevance of art. Vattimo devotes many essays to this kind of aesthetics; in one from the late 1960s (Vattimo 1967) he touches on two questions that can help us reconsider Bergson's terminology. On one hand, Vattimo grounds his argument in the evolution of the problem of affectivity in Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, this problem is related to the notion of *Befindlichkeit*. But this notion disappears in his later work in order to avoid misunderstandings that might arise due to any "emotionalist interpretations" (158), where it is replaced mainly by reflections on poetry and "its function of opening worlds" (ibid.).

On the other hand, Vattimo defends Heideggerian aesthetics from the charge that, "like most aestheticians of phenomenological origin, [his] attention is focused on the ready work and its fruition, and not on the act of becoming and producing" (163). According to Vattimo, however, it is easy to demonstrate that the same elements by which the work introduces its reader to existential dimensions (especially the element of shock, *Stoss*) are also characteristic of its

creator.

Bergson's "creative emotion" gives us reason to return to the comparison with Columbus and old maps. Following such maps, Bergson has reached a new continent. He cannot give up the concept of "emotion"; thus, he makes every effort to define it better. He simply specifies that psychology places things from various orders under the same notion, the only difference being in their extent (Bergson 1986: 46). Thus, Bergson speaks of two opposing types of emotion (43–47), which we can call the "psychological" and the "ontological".

The psychological kind refers to well-known emotions such as "surface agitation" and "stirring of sensibility" (43), with which psychologists usually deal (love, anger, melancholy, fear and so on). These emotions have particularity, and their representation lies completely within the individual's intellectual range. The subject knows them; they are "infra-intellectual" (44). By contrast, the ontological type of emotion is "supra-intellectual" (ibid.), and it is the reason for, and not the consequence of, states of mind. Ontological emotion is a "generator of ideas" and anterior in time, as compared to the intellectual image of the world we are in. The difference between this emotion and derivative states of mind, such as particular emotions, is the difference between "that which generates and that which is generated" (ibid.). In the final analysis, Bergson has no doubts about the ontological validity of this kind of emotion: "That a new emotion is the source of the great creations of art, of science and of civilization in general there seems to be no doubt" (43).

As for the second word in Bergson's expression, "cr_atrice", we can now consider it from a new perspective. Just as it is possible to set "emotion" free from a limited psychological meaning, it is possible to free "creativity" from its romantic burden. Though Bergson may be a phenomenological writer, when he describes "creative emotion" as the basis of new worlds, he is taking a constructive or affirmative position that is generally uncharacteristic of phenomenology's decon-structive aesthetics. If we have entitled this chapter "Phenomenology of Intellectual Effort", we may well classify these pages of Bergson's as a kind of "Phenomenology of Creative Effort". If the analysis of anguish or angst, which is the fear of Nothingness, best fits the typical passiveness of the phenomenological approach, then it should be possible to look for the same constitutive relationship between being and being-in-the-world (entity) in an analysis of creative emotion, as far as it is "the joy of All [Everything]". The creative emotion of shock (*Stoss*) prompts the author to make an effort that is painful because it questions the established language (*langue*, order of things). This painful effort endows the work with life. The work itself contains a fundamental tension, the source of which is

tradition. Thus, something we have always felt, but never known was a part of us, comes to the fore, now seen in a completely new light. This shock is not the mild excitement aroused by the roiling of ocean waves as seen from safely onshore – it is the terror of the moment, when we realize that this earth, our world, is just a raft, suddenly shaken by the rough sea and no longer secure against wrecking. Both reader and artist experience this shock from the work, but it is not always a moment of anguish and terror. The experience of this fundamental relationship between being and entity is also the hope that we can sail towards new worlds.

Hence, we come to the topic of the great Work of Art, and of human spirit, thought and civilization as a whole. They are the only means through which genuine being speaks as it picks its way among the obstacles of its time-bound state of being-in-a-world. To describe the trans-epochal ability of the authentic work of art to remind us of being, Bergson compares it, perhaps with silent irony, to money (which more than anything else draw many artistic practices away from authenticity):

> "But if he [who is engaged in literary composition] does succeed, he will have enriched humanity with a thought that can take on a fresh aspect for each generation, with a capital yielding ever-renewed dividends, and not just with a sum down to be spent at once" (op. cit.: 254).

II. 3. Theory of Intellectual Effort

"Theory of intellectual effort" refers to those parts of Bergson's philosophy in which he examines that effort most profoundly and systematically. This does not mean that his overall position on intellectual effort is unclear. On the contrary, what we here call "theory" is meaningful only in combination with "ethics" and "practice", together with which it outlines the main aspects of the same core problem. By "theoretical" we simply mean those places where Bergson talks technically and specifically about that which elsewhere he talks about only suggestively or emotively. In this sense, the theory of intellectual effort is represented primarily in *Matter and Memory* and in the essay on "Intellectual Effort", in which we come as close as possible to a phenomenology of the problem. Such an approach is one of the primary means by which living Bergsonism becomes fully integrated into modern philosophical discourse.

As mentioned in I.6., *Matter and Memory* is the principal source of the ideas that constitute "la portée lontaine" of Bergson's doctrine. Ronchi, paying special attention to this issue (1990: 197 n12), underlines the fact that Merleau-Ponty's rediscovery of Bergson is based entirely on a new reading of *Matter and*

Memory, which the former offers in his courses (Merleau-Ponty 1968). Although generally critical of Bergson's concept of time, Heidegger in turn notes that *Matter and Memory* contains "moments which are far from being exhausted" (cited in Ronchi 1990: ibid.). As already mentioned, Jankélévitch describes this work as Bergson's "most genial" one. Other important attempts to relate Bergson to existential phenomenology are also based on *Matter and Memory*; these include Hyppolite and Giroux (1971), Mathieu (1971), and Deleuze (1966). Interestingly enough, all these readings, explicitly or implicitly, refer to the same topic, namely, the differentiation that Bergson makes between the ontological valence of memory and the psychological interpretations of the endurance of consciousness as discussed in *Time and Free Will*. Our own study follows the same line of inquiry.

Using Ronchi's hermeneutic-pragmatic observations as our point of departure, we shall now try to develop further the concept of linguistic intellectual effort. This will prepare us to integrate Bergsonian theory with semiotic discourse (Part Two: Chapter II), and to compare it with the work of certain hermeneutic authors. (Ronchi himself made excellent preparations for such a comparison, but left the task to future studies such as the present one.) For this purpose, we shall first describe how Bergson represents intellectual effort in its dynamic relation with memory.

II. 3. a) *Matter and Memory*

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson primarily aims to formulate a radically new hypothesis of soul/body interrelatedness. This formulation should transcend the fundamental opposition between materialism and idealism as well as the extremes of "vulgar dualism". His strategy, as usual, consists in exposing the common and erroneous characteristics that are shared by seemingly opposing hypotheses. He does so by demonstrating that both are grounded in one and the same epistemological metaphysics. Using his well-known method, Bergson points out various combinations of elements, in both materialism and idealism, that differ in nature, whereas the ordinary view sees in them only a difference in degree. Conversely, he reveals in both of those doctrines the posing of false problems, where in fact there are only differences in quantity (an exhaustive description of Bergson's method is found in Deleuze 1966: 7–29). Bergson starts with a phenomenological analysis of the perceptual process, and comes to the conclusion that, in both materialism and idealism, "perception has a wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge" (MM: 28, 179). In place of this purely cognitive view of perception, Bergson substitutes a principle that returns man to

nature and places him on the level of other living creatures. Long before – and this "before" is not chronological but ontological in nature (Ronchi 1990:167) – "perception" is identified with "knowledge", it is based on the purely pragmatic principle of *Primum vivere* (CM: 53), a term that refers to the living organism and its interaction with the environment. "Memory, imagination, conception and perception, generalization in short, are not there `for nothing, for pleasure'[....] one must refer to the fundamental exigencies of life to explain their presence" (CM: 53). This pragmatic first-principle calls forth the images (pure perceptions) by which the body, to the extent that it is matter, connects at every moment with other bodies. This principle outlines the potential influence upon those bodies that one's own body needs and exercises. The specific and practical act of *Primum vivere*, whose potential is far greater in man than in any other living organism, receives assistance from the memory, which is the sum total of all recollections, i.e., from the entire past of the subject. The drama of the spirit/body relation unfolds between the two essentially different elements of pure memory and pure perception. Bergson dedicates a substantial part of *Matter and Memory* to the defense of this fundamental difference. This difference has been obliterated by a jumbled mode of perception that has led to all the speculative hypotheses of epistemological metaphysics, against which the philosophy of *durée* represents a "return to things". Having thus posed the ontological problem, Bergson devotes the second and third chapters to theorizing the complex mechanism by which the pragmatic *Primum vivere* principle is realized at the levels of complexity and articulation that are typical of a mature, reflexive consciousness. Bergson focuses on the processes of perception and understanding, thus downplaying intellectual approaches that are concerned only with results. In this way, the theme of intellectual effort comes to the center of his discourse. It is the driving force of the dynamic processes of perception and understanding, and it calls for the *attention à la vie* that balances opposing tendencies and makes the subject adequate to the situation. These chapters and the essay on "Intellectual Effort" combine to give us most of the ideas by which every interpretation of Bergson distinguishes ontological inferences from their psychological frame. Fortuitously or not, Bergson casts most of his examples in terms of the functioning of language, which plays into our own study of the effort of expression and interpretation.

II. 3. b) "The Debut of the Spirit"

A principal strategy with which Bergson defends his thesis of the substantial difference between memory and matter, is to demonstrate that recollections

cannot be housed in the brain. He criticizes this view of suffering from the same kind of inertia that forces reason to "spatialize" every object that it takes an interest in. Recollections are not located "somewhere" in the brain; they are not stored in a "place" from which an associative mechanism picks out those memories that resemble previous ones. Rather, recollection is the instance that guarantees the endurance of consciousness and that separates it from dead matter. Dead matter is repeated in every single moment; i.e., the same conditions of interaction lead always to the same result. Every moment is predetermined by the previous one; thus, there is no need for an instance in which to remember anything. Or, if we agree that identity of response is a form of recollection, then this recollection is always repeated. The opposite relation obtains with a consciousness based on continuity in time. There is no repetition here, but the continual generation of unpredictable novelties. There is consciousness whenever things that have already taken place accumulate so as to enrich the present with increased potential for what will occur in the future. This accumulation is not some kind of log or data bank, recorded on a material carrier (for example, the spinal cord and cerebrum as "records" of an ever-increasing number of habits). Rather, this accumulation is a principle that introduces indeterminacy (creativity) into the process of material repetition, questioning the latter's monotonous responsiveness by inserting into it specific moments from the past of the conscious being. Such "insertions" guarantee the novelty that is produced, inasmuch as the personal past grows richer with every moment. In a sense, even the personal past becomes "new" (something we shall discuss later).

This, more or less, is the metaphysical background of the theory of intellectual effort, the validity of which is further supported by Bergson's acute observations of the immediate data of consciousness. (Almost all of the authors we have cited offer original interpretations and reevaluations of this fundamental metaphysical issue, the most pertinent being the ones of a phenomenological-existential nature: Hyppolite, Giroux, Lisciani-Petrini, Ronchi). In arguing his main thesis, Bergson adduces the interpretation of a huge corpus of experimental data from neurology and psychopathology (especial concerning aphasia, apraxia and amnesia). He then combines that interpretation with the analysis of particular intellectual and perceptive practices, the dominant one being the use of language.

> "Such was the conclusion to which I was led by the especially detailed study of normal and pathological facts, more generally through external observation. But only then did I become aware of the fact that inward experience in the pure state, in giving us a `substance' whose very essence is to endure and thus continually to

> prolong into the present an indestructible past, would have relieved me from seeking, and would even have forbidden me to seek, where memories are preserved. They preserve themselves, as we admit; for example, when we pronounce a word. In order to pronounce it we have to remember the first half of it while we are articulating the second. But no one will think that the first [half of the word] has been immediately deposited in a drawer, cerebral or otherwise, so that consciousness may come for it a moment later. But if that is the case for the first half of the word, it will be the same for the preceding word, which is an integral part of it as far as sound and meaning are concerned; it will be the same from the beginning of the sentence, and the preceding sentence, and the whole discourse that we could have made very long, indefinitely long had we wished. Now, our whole life, from the time of our first awakening to consciousness, is something like this indefinitely prolonged discourse." (CM: 74–75)

The passage above unites the main elements of the problem. There is the temporal dimension linking past, present and future in a single dynamic structure; there is memory as the ontological (not psychological) basis of this structure; there is a primal sense enabling further interaction with the world; and finally, there is language, which puts those elements in circulation within a discourse. The above passage calls to mind the words of Gadamer. At the beginning of *Truth and Method*, in trying to outline the hermeneutic project Gadamer makes a comment that resonates strongly with our own view: "It is time to rescue the phenomenon of memory from being regarded merely as a psychological faculty and to see it as an essential element of the finite historical being of man" (1979: 16). Gadamer himself leaves that task undone, which opens a space for our own exploration of the issue.

Relieved of psychological connotations, intellectual effort introduces memory to the hermeneutic problem – not as a faculty but as a constitutive principle of understanding, as we shall see. For this purpose, it is good to examine closely the two types of memory which Bergson reveals. These two ways in which memory functions derive from the fundamental matter/consciousness opposition, but regarded in terms of immediate experience. According to Bergson,

> the past survives in two distinct forms: first, in motor mechanisms; secondly, in independent recollections. But the practical, and, consequently, the usual function of memory, the utilizing of past experience for present action – recognition, in short – must take place in two different ways. Sometimes it lies in the action itself and in the automatic setting in motion of a mechanism adapted to the circumstances; at other times it implies *an effort of the mind* which seeks in the past, in order to apply them to the present, those representations which are best able to enter into the present situation" (MM: 78; my italics).

The first type of memory, *motor mechanisms*, is the sum total of a person's experience that enables him to respond appropriately to changes in his

surroundings, of which, however, he should not think. Those mechanisms act, so to speak, "automatically" (160). This type of memory belongs to the body, where, according to all observations, it is registered in the brain and the spinal column. Motor memory has nothing to do with temporality. It has no transitional moment between stimulus and response; the past is simply integrated into a unifying habit that does not contain the past as history. This is a past-in-itself ("en-soi", as Ronchi puts it, using Sartre's famous phrase), in which the effort is purely motoric.

In contrast, "the existence of this past-for-itself (*pour-soi*) signals the debut of the spirit" (Ronchi 1990: 171). This is *pure memory*, in which every moment exists in itself and in the historical succession of its happening. These recollections are dated, although not always present and updated. This type of memory also serves the *Primum vivere* principle; i.e., it helps the subject to interact with the present situation. Here, however, a new dimension of consciousness is revealed: memory realizes itself, represents itself, instead of acting automatically. In order to meet the needs of the moment, such memory selects from an enormous virtual inventory of possibilities, which is the preserved string of representations through which it has passed on its way to the present. The memory's act of selection is not a matter of adequate response or of the association of ideas, but of actual representation, understanding, and interpretation. "We touch the present reality of the self-realized spirit at that point [...] where a hesitation in the motor reaction tears some being away from the necessary plan in order to throw it into the *circle of interpretation*" (op. cit.: 177; author's italics).

The ability to tear ourselves away from the necessary plan is purely human. The other species do not have anything like pure memory to assist them in unexpected situations. We resort to imagination, and to do so more or less suggests a *prior hesitation* in reaction. That hesitation keeps us in the realm of the human spirit; no adaptive default-mechanism of our motor-memory switches us there automatically.

> "This is a view of the very way that consciousness exists, as far as it is an *incarnated consciousness*. But what is the meaning of this hesitation, which calls the past to exist for-itself, awakening it from the sleep of matter? It is hesitation and research, indecisiveness and choice, reflection and effort." (Ibid.; author's italics)

Thus, intellectual effort – the effort to understand and interpret, to represent and express – turns out to be the point of differentiation between the two types of memory. And this differentiation, more than any other, brings Bergson face to face with his "historical enemy" – experimental (positivist) psychology. The reality into which intellectual effort places the living individual stands in

contradiction to that of the quantifiable subject of positivist psychology. When pure memory, with all its unpredictability, takes control of the individual, here comes the need to postulate a "black box" that isolates the debuting spirit, along with the promise of a scientific explanation of his mystery as soon as possible.

II. 3. c) The Two Types of Memory and Language: General Ideas as Habitat and World

Let us now examine the discoursive part of Bergson's model. As we saw above, in the long quotation from *The Creative Mind*, the dynamic of memories and their relations with the world is enacted by language. In the previous chapter we outlined the need to reconsider Bergson's position on language, which has traditionally been regarded as negative. Now it is time to end this prejudice once and forever. And this is not only our goal. For example, Deleuze, one of the most authoritative interpreters of Bergson, even speaks of "an ontological foundation of language", which, together with the "transcendence of sense" is "so very important for an author who [...] is blamed for making a rather general criticism of language" (Deleuze 1966: 51). The type of reading of Bergson that Deleuze is engaged in prevents him from taking this theme further, despite the unquestionable significance of the passage quoted; we, on the other hand, have no such restriction.

This ontology of language can be discovered on many levels in Bergson (and we shall examine the most important ones). In general, however, his view is that only language can make possible the "debut of spirit". And a philosophical problem can hardly be more "honored" in the context of Bergson's thought. According to the principle of *Primum vivere* (as represented most profoundly in *Creative Evolution*), in the pre-linguistic phase man differs from the other species in his ability to manipulate his material environment in a non-immediate way. This ability gives him extraordinary advantages but, considered in itself, does not raise him above the material existence of the other species. This rudimentary form of intelligence nevertheless contributes to man's winning in the competition for survival with the other species, and this victory opens the way for the linguistic stage. If the material conditions won are enough to afford individuals some respite from their fight for survival, then they can afford "a surplus of energy to spend" (CE: 159), and this rudimentary intelligence start to reflect upon itself in verbal form. Here the intelligence's innate ability to suspend the immediacy of the subject, its capacity to operate with "mobile" and not "adherent" (ibid.) signs, finds beneficial ground for development. "Without language, intelligence would probably have remained riveted to the material

objects which it was interested in considering. It would have lived in a state of somnambulism, outside itself, hypnotized by its own work" (ibid.).

This is no lucky coincidence: humans are predisposed to speaking; speech is not some superficial by-product of existence. "Even though each word of our speech is conventional, language is not therefore a convention, and it is as natural for man to speak as to walk" (CM: 80). Thus, the crucial transition to this stage comes when intelligence leaves the logic of necessity in order to become subjected to its own manipulative acts. This is how intelligence is self-realized for the first time and begins to understand how it conceives of itself. "Thus is revealed to the intelligence, hitherto always turned outwards, *a whole internal world* – the spectacle of its own workings" (CE: 159; my italics). This internal world makes the human being enter a temporal existence. For the world, which is based on the mobility of signs, on the conscious simulation of what might be but not necessarily what will be, is already ontologically bound to historicity and thus requires pure memory (the integral preservation of experience) for its accomplishment. Therefore this stage, which is more important for the ontological distinctions introduced by Bergson than for its prehistoric reliability, also draws us theoretically closer to the hermeneutic problem. In one of the most significant sections of *Truth and Method*, in the part called "Language as Experience of the World", Gadamer compares the same two modes of being: "Thus the concept of `world' or `environment' (*Welt*) is in opposition to the concept of the `surrounding world' or `habitat' (*Umwelt*), as possessed by every living thing [...] This does not mean that he [man] leaves his habitat, but that he has another attitude towards it, *a free, distanced attitude*, which is always realised in language" (Gadamer 1979: 402–403; my italics).

We thus come to another one of Bergson's chief concerns: the genesis of articulated speech, and the relation of that speech to the material interaction between the individual and its *Umwelt*, as well as the introduction of the two types of memory into this relationship. All these issues are incorporated in the notion of "General Ideas". The great contribution of Bergson to this discourse, is the problematization of the *Welt/Umwelt* relationship, and the replacement of that static opposition with a dynamic image, whose crucial condition is intellectual effort. Bergson begins the discussion of general ideas in a way we have already described (in I.7.). He criticizes two opposing hypotheses of the genesis of general ideas, Nominalism and Conceptualism, in order to draw out a concept that meshes with the rest of his doctrine. According to Bergson, both Nominalism and Conceptualism suffer from one and the same metaphysical formulation, which "forgets" to problematize its own material origin: "Now when we get to the bottom of these two opposite theories, we find in them a

common postulate; each will have it that we start from the perception of individual objects" (MM: 157). Bergson accuses this common postulate of the unsound "luxury of perception" (158) that is characteristic of a refined reflexive consciousness. But the origin of general ideas is much more humble and primal than that. It is of no psychological nature at all. "It would seem, then, that we start neither from the perception of the individual nor from the conception of the genus, but from an intermediate knowledge, from a confused sense of the *striking quality* (*qualité marquante*) or resemblance: this sense, equally remote from generality fully conceived and from individuality fully perceived, begets both of them by a process of dissociation" (ibid.; author's italics). Bergson now takes this logic beyond the *Primum vivere* principle, asserting that the way in which a plant takes mineral salts from the soil is not essentially different from the way in which "hydrochloric acid always acts in the same way upon carbonate of lime whether in the form of marble or of chalk" (ibid.). (Commenting on this passage, Ronchi reveals many similarities between Bergson and Pierce, but again leaves them undeveloped; we discuss them below, in the chapter on Eco.) Can we talk of "perception" here? Even if we use that term, it would designate merely a "hardware" perception that ontologically precedes any other. If we consider the purpose of the nervous system in animals and man, we see that their evolution is a translation of the primal generalization into a habitat, understood as a set of habits that regulate life in a given environment. This is a gradual transition that takes many thousands of years to go from a "hardware" to a "software" condition. The network of habits of response is rather complex in man, but it is of a psychological order and has nothing to do with the spiritual realm: "This similarity of reaction following actions superficially different is the germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas" (160).

The appearance of "the general idea of genus" is a crucial moment in the development of the system of habits – an idea that is typical of man and his social-communicative nature. Although it parallels the "debut of sprit", the logic of generalization always remains in the order of the psychological, of the habit. Consciousness precipitates the generalization of the practical success of generalized habits from a relatively primary level into a more abstract one. And this process, which gives birth to language, goes on for thousands of years. "It is enough to say that the understanding, imitating the effort of nature, has also set motor apparatuses, artificial in this case, to make a limited number of them answer to an unlimited number of individual objects: the assemblage of these mechanisms is articulate speech" (161). The term "understanding" (*entendement*) here should not mislead us (as "knowledge" threatened to do in a previous case),

for Bergson does not use it in the same sense in which we use it in hermeneutic discourse. As we shall see, Bergson uses "sens", "intellection" and "interpretation" as stand-ins for "understanding". It is important to note how, together with ontological language (*spectacle, a whole internal world*), Bergson also reveals a motoric, functional and conventional language. This mechanized language marks the end of the tendency for generalization that links us closely with the rest of nature, a part of which is our social organization. "What is essentially human is, in fact, the labor of an individual thought which accepts, just as it is, its insertion into social thought and which utilizes preexisting ideas as it utilizes any other tool furnished by the community" (CM: 61). In many ways these two languages are one, but their difference refers to the attitude towards being. The language we acquire ready-made from the community, which is the "record" of the millennia-long know-how of being, has accumulated the synchronous configuration of statistically established habits of response. Such received language is a habitat (*Umwelt*), though rather a complex one, which is of the nature of the natural habitat of the rest of the species. The other language, the language-World (*Welt*), speaks to us when the habitat we have found becomes too constricted to contain our soul; when *das Man* takes the road to authentic being; when interpretation replaces identification as a form of understanding; when the realized consciousness is expanded in a time that proceeds from pure memory (the past-in-itself). These two languages are mutually sustaining: the language-World is impossible without the language-Habitat, and the language-Habitat is the environment where the language-World is possible. It is the always already given sense which makes the language-World ask itself about the sense of its own being. We cannot speak only the language-World because it is always immersed in the ocean of the language-Habitat. And this language-Habitat is none other than tradition. We can always cover it in new interpretations and seek to mine its depths, but we can never reach the bottom. The bottom is out there, in the transition from "hardware" to "software", in a space that it is impossible to think.

We can say, however, that to Bergson intellectual effort is the requirement, as well as the essentially human feature, for becoming "syntonized" from one linguistic order to the other. This "syntonization", as seen in II.1., is the foundation of the ethical approach to intellectual effort, and also the condition for the overcoming of closed linguistic systems (II.2.). In order to explicate the dynamics of "syntonization", Bergson develops the theory of general ideas further. "The essence of the general idea, in fact, is to be unceasingly going backwards and forwards between the plan of action and that of pure memory" (MM: 161).

II. 3. d) "Langue" and "Parole" in Bergson

In the spirit of Bergson, we shall divide linguistic experience into two distinct tendencies and then examine their interaction in immediate experience. Bergson's analysis of the functioning of linguistic communication is one of the most complex passages of *Matter and Memory*. To help clarify that text, it is useful to draw comparisons between it and another methodological division of language, already classical in the history of modern thought – namely, the Saussurean distinction between *langue* and *parole*. As noted in I.6., the similarities between the two thinkers should not be ignored, and the deeper those similarities go, the more new ones come to the fore, as if to challenge a way of thinking that forces Saussure and Bergson into incommensurable traditions of thought. Parenthetically, we add that the same is true of the relation between Bergson and Peirce. Such "synchronic" comparison of Bergson with the fathers of semiotics, his contemporaries, will clear the way for Chapter II of Part Two. There we shall undertake a "diachronic" interpretation of the corresponding perspectives in semiotics from the standpoint of intellectual effort and linguistic work.

Bergson and Saussure pursue very different goals with their division of language. Nevertheless, the division itself and the scientific tradition they both oppose are quite similar. Saussure seeks a methodologically pure science of language, as against a comparative, philological tradition that regards language as nomenclature. Bergson, in turn, seeks a metaphysics of the pure endurance of consciousness, as opposed to the positivist tradition in psychology, which views words and other recollections as separate elements preserved in specific places in the brain. What Saussure distinguishes as a synchronic system, *la langue*, which depends not on external objects but only on formal internal relations, is present in Bergson when he analyses motor recognition in speech perception. Similarly to Saussure, Bergson asks how we manage to identify signs correctly, even when they are cloaked in quite different acoustic substances and appear in various situations. To him, this ability is not a matter of recollection but of motor response. The heard sign does not call to mind its own memorized reflection but is rather identified by means of a general *schème moteur*, or "motor diagram" (MM: 111)[7], preserves a separate image for each separately perceived utterance of a word. "This is because the diagram, by means of which we divide the speech we hear, indicates only its [the word's] *salient outlines* [...] To understand it, we need only to realize in it what is essential, just enough to

[7] In different translations the terms "scheme" and "diagram" are used for the French *schème*. I shall also use the both terms.

distinguish it from all other possible movements" (112; my italics). Bergson even uses an expression like "internal structure" (ibid.) to explain the motor-habit that permits the functioning of this immanent linguistic system, which, like *langue*, is based on the differences between its elements. The definition of the immanence of the linguistic system leads Saussure to the modern concept of the sign as a value based on its formal distinction from the other signs. Bergson, in contrast, isolates the whole system as a separate facet of consciousness, whose functioning does not demand intellectual effort. To him, this is immanence.

He gives various examples that, taken in the Saussurean sense, seem paradoxical. These are examples of speech without "parole"; instances where language is exercised without going beyond the strict immanence of "langue" in itself. These are mainly pathological cases of persons whose relationship with real life is broken, and yet who manage to converse "sensibly". "In the case of dementia, we sometimes find that intelligent answers are given to a succession of questions which are not understood: language here works after the manner of a reflex" (MM: 86). Referring to an article by Robertson on "Reflex Speech" that appeared in the April 1888 issue of *Journal of Mental Science*, Bergson says the following:

> "Current conversation is composed in great part of ready-made responses to conventional questions, the response succeeding the question without intelligence being interested in the meaning of either. Thus, patients in a state of *dementia* can keep up an almost coherent conversation on a simple subject, although they hardly know what they are saying." (IE: 204: author's italics)

Bergson gives examples of "normal" individuals, too, for whom the preservation of the immanence of the linguistic system is intentional. For instance, in the first stage of Prendergast's system for learning language (*Handbook in the Mastery Series*, London, 1868), the student learns to say ready-made phrases (articulated sounds) without knowing what they mean. The goal at this stage is to get the motor part of language to combine these phrases, under the teacher's direction, into grammatically correct forms, "without understanding being mixed with it" (192). (This system would no doubt appeal to those post-structuralisms that focus on the play of the "signifier".) We also can easily follow the solution of a mathematical problem, identifying every sign we see without even minimal assurance that we understand it: "The sentences that we read or hear have a complete meaning only when we are able to make them up ourselves, to create them anew, so to speak, by drawing from ourselves the expression of the mathematical truth which they teach" (205). Similarly, we can recite verses that we learned at school without necessarily being guided by the sense of poetry. We identify the signs – we well recognize the language in

which we recite – but we remain immanent to the system, without being forced to understand (193). Intellectual effort is such understanding. It is a reconstruction of sense based on the meaning of signs, but it is also the transcendence of sense.

Completely absorbed in the abstract, immanent system of language, Saussure often gives examples with the game of chess, but to do so he needs to make a very important specification: "In order to make the game of chess seem at every point like the functioning of language (*langue*), we would have to imagine an unconscious or unintelligent player" (Saussure 1974: 89).

Completely absorbed in the phenomenology of intellectual effort, Bergson also gives an example with the game of chess, but the player he imagines is just the opposite of the Saussurean one. He refers to those extraordinary chess-players who can play simultaneously on many boards, even without looking at them (IE: 196–197). This difference in chess-playing examples is particularly indicative of the reading of semiotics we intend to make. In Saussure, the division of language into *langue* and *parole* is a methodological move, and the foolish chess-player is only a metaphor. But the whole tradition that stems from Saussure forgets the origin of this division and ontologizes the method itself (one member of this tradition is Eco, in *La struttura assente*, 1968). Indeed, the subject of structural semiotics resembles the foolish chess-player, inasmuch as it is immanent to semiotic systems. By contrast, interpretative semiotics offers its subject some freedom. Yet with the model of the encyclopaedia it pushes him towards an environment that should be World, but whose ideal state is statistical constancy in the use of signs. Thus what should be the World is constantly reduced to a Habitat.

Postmodern thought, or what Smith (1997) calls "weak hermeneutics" (15–17), was established more or less as a reaction to "structural fundamentalism". Yet it, too, deprives the subject of any ontological commitment. By contrast, "strong hermeneutics", to which Smith's book is dedicated and which is represented by authors like Gadamer and Ricoeur, seems open to the philosophy of intellectual effort. We have already noted several substantial points of intersection between Bergson and Gadamer. As for structuralism and the hermeneutic project, there is no author as relevant as Ricoeur, in whom we can seek the continuation of the comparison we are making. In contrast to his semiotized postmodern colleague, the subject of strong hermeneutics thinks with his own head and exercises intellectual effort. This, it seems, is his most significant feature.

We have already seen that for Bergson the immanence of the linguistic system constitutes an area of consciousness in which one can operate without

effort. "To work intellectually is to take one and the same idea and lead it through different planes of consciousness, in a direction which goes from the abstract to the concrete" (IE: 214). Arguing against the structural approach, Ricoeur defines the hermeneutic problem as the need to situate the understanding of the text beyond the immanence of language. In his opinion, the structural analysis of a text explains it, but does not interpret it (Ricoeur 1970). He grounds his polemic on a theoretical division that reveals the difference between sign and sentence, a difference which the structural view considers as only "quantitative". Ricoeur, who refers to Benveniste and Frege, not only uses the same method as that of Bergson, but he and Bergson also reach similar conclusions. Bergson undertakes an analysis of language in *Matter and Memory* after noting that "to hear some theorists discourse on sensory aphasia, we might imagine that they had never considered with any care the structure of a sentence" (124). Ricoeur explains the matter as follows:

> "There is no reference problem in language: signs refer to other signs *within* the same system. In the phenomenon of the sentence, language passes outside itself; reference is the mark of the self-transcendence of language." (1979: 74; Ricoeur's italics)

Benveniste calls "semiotics" the linguistics of the sign, and "semantics", the linguistics of the phrase. Ricoeur introduces the hermeneutic project in analogy to this distinction: "At the first level, it [hermeneutics] deals only with entities belonging to the order of sentences. At the second level, it addresses that are larger than the sentence. It is at this level that the problem reaches its full amplitude." (216). Thus, finally, that which is the referent of the phrase in the text (work) is the World, and "hermeneutics then is simply the theory that regulates the transition from structure of the work to world of the work" (220). To throw further light on this process, we have to see how Bergson's theory of interpretation and understanding fits into the framework of the hermeneutic project as it is outlined by Ricoeur.

II. 3. e) The Circle of Sense and the Effort of Interpretation

In our interpretation of Bergson's theory of intellectual effort we have gradually revealed how, starting from a general issue in metaphysics – the doctrine of the body/soul relationship, which is equally remote from materialism, idealism and vulgar dualism – one arrives at the problems of sense, interpretation, and language. In this transition we have constantly differentiated between two tendencies, which have taken various forms at different stages of this study: matter and memory, pure memory and motor memory, language-World and

language-Habitat, and so on. Although we have implied it here and there, we shall repeat it once more: the overall formulation of the problem sets this differentiation under the common denominator of *Primum vivere*, which is the pragmatically vital basis of the existence of consciousness. That is why we have focused on existential-phenomenological, Bergsonian interpretations of the status of memory, which preserve the ontological function of past-for-itself. After overcoming certain impediments to such an interpretation – mainly the concept of *durée pure* as presented in *Time and Free Will,* as well as some misleading uses of terms in *Matter and Memory* – the philosophy of Bergson opens up rich theoretical perspectives. For example, Ronchi notes that, after Bergson, Husserl makes an equally radical break with the traditionally metaphysical concept of time as a sequence of present moments, but the French philosopher goes even further (Ronchi 1990: 178–179). Husserl is still bound to a contemplative tradition of thinking that considers the forth-coming given as the "spectacle of a disinterested perception" (MM: 158). For Bergson such disinterestedness is a "luxury of perception", and in its enduring time the present moment owes its *cognitive density* (*thickness*) to the projection of a pragmatic intention, which grounds the that which is forthcoming in a purposeful projection of the past. "In fact, in the endless analysis of temporality that Husserl performs, he leaves as marginal the equally fundamental dimension of the experienced present, which is the future" (ibid.). As we know, one of the main perspectives in which the existential analysis of *Being and Time* develops the phenomenological doctrine, is exactly the insistence on the future, and Bergson's anticipation of it several decades earlier can also be regarded from this standpoint. Central to the theory of intellectual effort is the perspective of the future that makes the present moment endure as it reveals to us many pragmatic possibilities synthesized by the past, thus diverting the present from resorting to fixed habits of response. As hesitation creeps into response, the present moment begins to take on cognitive density; it "thickens" because of the ec-static coexistence of two new dimensions: the past and the future. "Time is this very hesitation, or it is nothing" (CM: 93). The ontological role of pure memory is to enable this "thickening" of the present, through which the object of perception is wrested from the logic of immediate identification within an immanent system of habits of response (Habitat), and is transferred into the circle of interpretation and, thus, of sense. "The fact is that it is memory which make us see and hear" (IE: 207). Thus, disclosing the deepest aspects of the affinity between Bergson and Heidegger, Ronchi concludes that, "In Bergsonian metaphysics memory is intended as the initial openness to sense, the *aletheia* or interpretant that enables the realization of being in the present, so that it begins

to be present in its own as such" (Ronchi 1990: 183). To Bergson the future itself is the "sense" of enduring time, as both direction and meaning (180; cf. also, MM: 280, 291; ME 7–8, 20–21). This future-sense has variable thickness, depending on the impulse of endurance in which the consciousness has placed itself, within the interpretative circle that encompasses the objects of perception. As already said, this impulse can be close to zero if for some reason consciousness subsists on a single level, i.e., in an immanent, reflexive system. This system need not be not only verbal language but may include all other systems with which we interact. The above examples refer mainly to pathological or extreme situations of language-use, and Bergson prefers them for their explicative clarity. But in fact, his philosophical system supports a similar view of culture as a whole. He gives an example with everyday objects, which constitute a system-habitat that provides consciousness with freedom for different purposes. "In fact, we commonly *act* our recognition *before we think* it. Our daily life is spent among objects whose very presence invites us *to play a part*: in this the familiarity of their aspect consists" (MM: 95; my italics). In this case, the general purpose of daily environment is to be assimilated on a reflexive level, i.e., to be maximally immanent to itself. This means that we can move freely in it, without being forced to "understand", but only to respond. Bergson's whole ethics of intellectual effort (II.1.) begins to make sense when this relation of immanence (lack of effort) is preserved in the interaction with other sign systems. In contrast to the daily environment, which is characterized by an artificially achieved invariability in time and space, in Bergsonian metaphysics reality is "the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty" (CM: 91). Science would have ceased to develop if it were satisfied with an accomplished image to inhabit as a "home environment". Onto our relations with other people we can project a stereotypical and familiar classification to solve communication problems. We can even take ourselves to be the sum total of all systems that motivate us in our social environment and that make it familiar. But true science, true politeness, and true metaphysics are quite another thing in Bergson's view. The artificially attained habitat may well provide living conditions, but it also dulls consciousness to *ontological commitment*. This commitment is a prior agreement between consciousness and ever-changing reality. It involves the risks we take and efforts we make to reject the ready-made answer and to accept the tasks of studying, understanding, and interpreting. Intellectual effort is the need to be constantly attuned to reality, to plunge the drill as often as possible beneath the symbolically represented surface of reality. It is our participation in the sense of time, as far as it is the acceptance and defense of our finitude. To the extent that it is a condition for

persisting in the ontological commitment to reality, intellectual effort gives us the time in which consciousness exists. It is the impulse that commits us to both that which is forthcoming and to the committed past. Intellectual effort and the commitment to reality – both determine the temporal horizons of the conscious being, in the "small time" and in the "large".

As we have already said, spirit makes its debut when a hesitation in our reflexive interaction with the environment (material, social, or linguistic) takes us out of the regime of time-repetition in order to draw us into enduring (ec-static) time. Let us now examine, against the background of the ethical consideration just made, the steps by which the debuting spirit is realized. According to Bergson, the mechanism by which consciousness is made to harmonize with reality is not linear but concentric; it is not centripetal but centrifugal. This is true of all mechanisms of perception, although the may involve different types of memory. "Our mind notes here and there a few characteristic lines and fills all the intervals with memory-images which, projected onto the paper, take the place of the real printed characters and may be mistaken for them. Thus we are constantly creating and reconstructing" (MM: 103). These observations lead to a more central issue: "The question is, how can the knowledge of a language, which is only memory, modify the material content of a present perception" (109). In answering this, Bergson introduces one of the two geometric schemes by which all the problems of *Matter and Memory* are represented (105). This scheme depicts the circle of interpretation and provides a clear explanation of the summary statement that Bergson makes a few years later: "The fact is that it is the memory which make us see and hear" (IE: 207). The object O (in the center of the scheme) is always represented with a corresponding semicircle in the area of consciousness, marking latter's permanent need for memory, which is crucial for the perception of the object (in his essay "Memory of the Present and False Recognition", in Bergson 1975, he develops further the recollection/present relation and demonstrates their simultaneity and codependency). There is no perception without memory, even in the simplest instances. This memory, as we have said, is the very intentionality of consciousness, which places the object in a pragmatic perspective that is always already given by the *Primum vivere* principle. Having this intentional beginning, intellectual work is characterized by a symmetrical expansion of the memory and of the reality in question. Bergson illustrates this process with a series of increasing semicircles, their common center being the same object O: "Behind it [O], the larger and larger circles B, C, D correspond to growing efforts at intellectual expansion" (104). The other side of the diagram represents circles B', C', D', "so that in the measure in which the

circles B, C, D represent a higher expansion of memory, their reflection attains, in B', C', D', deeper strata of reality" (105). Having postulated this circular principle of perception, Bergson faces the theoretical challenge of combining his own concept of the integral preservation of recollection with the fact that attention usually employs only particular images. To put it in the terms of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson must account for how memory is actualized from its state of virtuality. In trying to solve this problem, Bergson encounters some difficulties. There is no problem at all in the first edition of *Matter and Memory*, Chapter Two, where the scheme is unveiled for the first time. (The passages in question were published in separate essays in *Revue philosophique*; see Bergson 1959: 1489; and Ronchi 1990: 186–187, 203.) Non-motor memory is represented there simply as "independent recollections". It is only when Bergson starts working on Chapter Three that he faces the severe need for a concept that can distinguish the general presence of memory in its virtuality from the realization of specific images that give sense to perception and action. This new concept is "pure memory", and in introducing it, Bergson has to make substantial corrections to Chapter Two of *Matter and Memory*, mainly to replace many times the term "image" with "souvenir" (recollection). The second scheme Bergson proposes, in Chapter Three, represents the functioning of pure memory. Yet this scheme, too, was obviously not sufficient. Perhaps unsatisfied with the way his book is received and interpreted, Bergson further elaborates his theory in the essay "Intellectual Effort". There the distinction is emphasized even more, and "pure memory" is reduced to a "dynamic diagram". This change opens space for an interpretation that has not been considered by other interpreters of Bergson. It is based on the relationship between "motor diagram" and "dynamic diagram". And it suggests how, for Bergson, one and the same principle, concerning a structural concept for the functioning of sense, moves perception at all levels, from the identification of signs to complex communicative interactions. Thus, as we anticipated above, intellectual effort appears at the core of the hermeneutic problem: "hermeneutics, then, is simply the theory that regulates the transition from the structure of the work to the world of the work" (Ricoeur 1979: 220).

Let us see how Bergson comes to the theory of the dynamic diagram. The second scheme he introduces in Chapter Three of *Matter and Memory* is three-dimensional and deals mainly with the operating of consciousness. It is represented as a cone with AB at the base, where Bergson places "my recollections in their totality" (MM: 161); on the top S is "the present perception which I have of my body" (ibid.). Reality is represented as the plane P, which runs parallel to the base of the cone and intersects its top S. Bergson forcefully

demonstrates that the particular life of consciousness passes between the two poles AB and S, without necessarily corresponding to any of them (163). At the same time, however, this scheme illustrates how pure memory, at every level of concentration on the relevant perception, even infinitely close to point S, is integrally present – every section of the cone is a circle representing the AB base. Each level of the presence of pure memory offers a different degree of virtuality. At the same time, this memory, in its wholeness, is constitutive of any possible experience. Bergson makes great efforts to describe this process with the terminology he has adopted, and this results in a text that is far from easy to comprehend. Even at the end of the chapter, in his summary explanation, terminological difficulties are still evident: "In other words, memory, laden with the whole of the past, responds to the appeal of the present state by two simultaneous movements, one of translation, by which it moves in its entirety to meet experience, thus contracting more or less, though without dividing, with a view to action; and the other of rotation upon itself, by which it turns toward the situation of the present moment, presenting to it that side of itself which may prove to be the most useful" (168–169). From the same perspective, Bergson explains that a higher degree of virtuality of the pure memory involved means more personality in the act, whereas a decrease in virtuality not only facilitates but also banalizes it (169). Deleuze comments as follows on the part of *Matter and Memory* that deals with this scheme: "We more and more insist on the fact that this analysis, which at first glance is characterized by a remarkable psychological subtlety, in fact has an entirely different meaning. It plays to our affinity towards being, to our terms with Being and to the variability of this attitude. Psychological consciousness is yet unborn. It comes to the world and finds its ontological conditions here" (Deleuze 1966: 56).

In "Intellectual Effort" Bergson gives a clearer terminological description, which remains within the framework of ontological discourse. Even in *Matter and Memory*, when he "analyzes psychologically" the overall ("without dividing", 169) functioning of pure memory, we come across expressions like "transformation of the whole system" (104) (*transformation du système*), "different systematizations" (169), and "ever-widening systems" (104), and yet, to explain them he still uses terms like "translation", "contracting", "rotation" and so on. In "Intellectual Effort" Bergson sets out to explore several types of memory-use, whose common feature is that they suggest a real generative transition (IE: 210) "from the abstract to the concrete" (214), "from the intensive to the extensive" (230), where "the idea of meaning [Fr: *signification*] has a large place in it" (196). Of course, these terminological uses are closer to modern semiotic discourse than to the overall contents of the essay. But on the

other hand, they unambiguously show that behind them there is a searching thought that demands interpretation. The "motor diagram" demonstrates how consciousness anticipates perception of the acoustic continuum by means of an abstract pattern that helps to articulate that continuum on the basis of the internal differences of a system (see II. 3. d) Here, Bergson introduces the "dynamic diagram", which has the same function, but which articulates larger portions of reality. The first case involves the motor memory, whereas the second case involves memory composed of independent recollections. To Bergson, perception is always bound with memory, in the sense of what it is still-not, and this anticipation arises through the projection of some kind of ideality, of something abstract that is essentially different from specific images (similar to the whole of Kant's discourse on schematism). And this is the way it should be. Following the logic of Bergsonian analysis, we cannot imagine "recognition" in a different way. Reality is in constant transformation, and consciousness can never experience two identical moments (see *Essai*: 121–126). This means that the inventory of consciousness never contains an image independently identifiable with the one coming from perception (in the simplest case, the acoustic image of a word twice uttered identically). The pragmatic principle of *Primum vivere* prods consciousness always to reduce that which is new to a system of interests connecting us with reality. This projection of ideality upon perception is a form of *ad hoc* generalization. In the case of the phonological system of words, which involves the motor responses of the body, the operation of the principle is characterized by a high degree of objectivity (this is why phonology is the most rigorous field of structuralism). When consciousness operates in a regime of endurance, when the hesitation in the motor response ec-statically summons its past in order to solve the new indeterminacy of the forth-coming, the horizon of anticipation is expanded. The dynamic diagram is the instance that bounds the ecstatic coexistence of past and present. Through semicircles B, C, D on the one hand, and B', C', D' on the other, the dynamic diagram includes the object perceived in the "ever-widening systems". It is a kind of pragmatic structure of memory, which *ad hoc* sorts out the virtual inventory of recollections according to their iconic (schematic) affinity to the object perceived.

All this can be observed in the three types of memory-use Bergson considers in "Intellectual Effort": recollection, understanding and interpretation, and invention. In all three cases consciousness aims at reaching some image, some specific result, a memory that is provided at the moment of hesitation, as an integral whole and in its virtuality. Depending on the degree of complexity of the hesitation and on the pragmatic discourse, intellectual effort, through the

dynamic diagram, attempts to find images that can satisfy the pragmatic intention (no matter whether we are remembering something, understanding a text, or thinking of something new).

The simplest case is recollection. It demands intellectual effort when the images we need are not immediately related to a habit of response. The recollection of poems often takes no effort since the lines "call out" for each other automatically, as it were (IE: 193). In most cases of recollection, however, the ec-static experience of the present moment is marked by a forth-coming that needs a specific image and by the whole past in its virtuality. What we know we have to recall – the need for an image – is also represented in its virtuality, but by the dynamic diagram which is the appeal of the present to the memory. The examples Bergson cites are mainly from studies of mnemonic techniques, which intentionally reduce images to schemes that can easily be developed back into images. In that way, these schemes/structures reduce entire texts to "a single, simple and undivided idea (Fr: *représentation*; in the original, p. 194)[8]". This is the case with the preacher described by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1950, vol. I, p. 667 n 1), who needs only a single analytical reading of the sermon in order to reduce the entire text to a unique scheme from which he can then reconstruct it (ibid.).

In Bergson's view, understanding and interpretation operate according to the same principle, but with one additional element: the perception of the surrounding reality. Here the scheme is dynamic in the fullest sense of the word, for it involves the interaction of two mobile instances. Jankélévitch best expresses the core of the process of understanding in Bergson: "In fact, *we move not from sign to sense but from sense to sense through the sign*" (Jankélévitch 1959: 111; author's italics). The sense from which we start is given, as we have seen, by the hermeneutical-pragmatic constitution of consciousness that enables its endurance in time. This endurance, which follows from a hesitation (lack of automatic response), characterizes the human spirit in certain situations. It is, so to speak, *a priori* – man is intended to live remote from immediate relatedness with the situation. This remoteness concerns time and, more precisely, keeps the individual within temporality. Thus, remoteness expands the horizon of the forth-coming, while the pragmatic intention strives to involve those parts of the memory that should guarantee the relevance of the ec-static present. "The meaning", says Bergson, "which is less a thing thought than a movement of thought, less a movement than a direction" (CM: 121). This direction/sense is

[8] This aspect of interpretative work will be developed further in Chapter II of Part II, below, where the structure of the text will be seen as an icon.

the future, and the process of understanding is "a certain ec-centric projection of images which descend towards perception" (IE: 209–210). The successfulness of the hermeneutic process (its pragmatic efficiency) depends to a great extent on the selection of images that should give sense to the present ("the fact is that it is the memory which make us see and hear"; IE: 207). It is by intellectual effort that the dynamic scheme establishes the relation between the two image-orders. Bergson compares this process to adjusting the focus of a camera and gives an example with verbal speech:

> "[...] it must be the *meaning* (*sens*), before everything, which guides us in the reconstruction of forms and sounds.[...] Then, setting out from ideas, – that is to say, from abstract relations,– we materialize them imaginatively in hypothetical words which try, whether or not they can cover exactly what we see and hear." (Ibid.; author's italics)

One of the most important things to note in Bergson's model is the fallibility of this process, which, except for being based on an always already given sense (memory as intention), is also characterized by the need to be continuously exercised. "It is a *continuous* transformation of abstract relations, suggested by the objects perceived, into concrete images capable of recovering those objects" (210; my italics). This is also the nature of our ontological commitment to reality, which becomes more intensive as we move farther from an immediate identification of percept and concept, as more unexpected combinations of perceived and recalled images appear.

All that is most clearly demonstrated in the analysis of the effort of invention. There Bergson emphasizes particular moments in order to infer that they are characteristic of every type of intellectual effort. These moments are the competition among many images that satisfy a given scheme, and the reverse influence with which certain images can change the scheme. Bergson, referring to works like Ribot's *L'imagination créatrice* and Paulhan's *Psychologie de l'invention*, argues that invention means to imagine schematically the final solution, the "complete result", and then turn it into particular images (211). The effort is in the transition, and it appears as the synchronization, or "syntonization", with reality. This process is extremely problematic for it lacks even the illusion of something firm to serve as a point of departure (such as "scheme" for recollection, and "external image" for perception). Images and schemes move hand in hand towards a representation, which, however, is never certain to be where it is expected to be.

> "We must not believe, however, that the scheme remains unchanged throughout the operation. It is modified by the very images by which it endeavors to be filled in. Sometimes there remains nothing of the primitive scheme in the final image."

(212–213)

Bergson lays great importance on "the part of the unforeseen" (ibid.), which this exchange of leadership between scheme and image introduces into the whole process of invention. Sometimes only a certain part of the machine attracts all the attention of the inventor, and he gives up the rest of the initial project in order to invent a new machine. Or, in a novel, a certain character "unexpectedly" begins to influence the original idea and, in doing so, changes it. (We could also mention the contemporary case of a heart medicine that, thanks to a side-effect observed in the experimental stage, has been commercialized in a quite different way from its initial purpose: Viagra). In addition to the instability of the process of invention, the accompanying effort is characterized by the necessity of choosing among possible solutions; or, more precisely,

> "In general, when several different images are competitors, it means that none of them entirely fulfils the conditions laid down by the scheme. And that is why, in such a case, the scheme may have to modify itself in order to obtain development into images." (219–220)

The more Bergson discusses this process, which he variously calls "competition" (221), "a struggle", and "an interference of ideas (representations) with one another" (222), the more obvious becomes its significance for intellectual effort and, correspondingly, the more it draws attention to the issue of the fundamental metaphoricalness (figurativeness or iconicity) of our experience with the world. In II. 2. c) we saw the meaning which, to Bergson, places figurative expression within that framework of expressive effort that is mostly referred to as philosophical and artistic discourse. In "Intellectual Effort" the same principle marks only intellectual effort, which is the ontological relationship with reality.

> "But, in the case of intellectual effort, the images which follow one another might just have no real external likeness among themselves. Their resemblance may be wholly internal; it is an identity of meaning (Fr: *signification*), an equal capacity of solving a problem towards which they occupy analogous or complementary positions, despite their differences of concrete form." (228–229)

* * *

This ontological relation to reality is linguistic in nature. In II. 2. c) we saw that, on the basis of the fundamental principle of *Primum vivere*, an inhabitable environment comes into being, for humans as for the other species. And that environment is defined by elements that make up the natural affinity of materiality among organisms. This, according to Bergson, is the origin of

general ideas and of the articulation of the surrounding world as a whole, be it pre-reflexive, pre-psychological, or pre-spiritual. But *Primum vivere* is also the origin of articulated speech, which may be elaborated infinitely thanks to the ability of humans to use mobile signs as well as their social mode of being. In this way, the psychological dimension takes precedence over our initial predisposition. We have called this type of articulated environment "Habitat", which is the environment or culture that one encounters, and it opens to him in the objective and social way in which it opens to the rest of the social group. It is of a psychological, reflexive nature. In II. 3. d) we discussed the example in which Bergson compares the perception of a language that we don't know to the perception of one that we do know. In the first case, we remain passive to an unintelligible stream of sounds that is hardly distinguishable from ordinary noise. In the second case, a complex scheme of "motor diagrams" intercepts the stream of sounds and articulates it into separate units. Similarly, in Bergson's system the language-Habitat parses all of the surrounding reality into meaningful units. The natural principle of generalization develops into the "language" in which reality speaks to us. This language does not exhaust reality, just as a natural language does not exhaust the acoustical spectrum. Each case represents only one of all possible articulations. These are, however, systems immanent to themselves. They are closed and tend to retain their form in time. When there is no intellectual effort, these systems "speak" the subject that inhabits them, instead of him speaking through them. They are like verses of poetry we can reproduce reflexively, without referring to the sense of the words. In the case of the language/world relationship, this is a way of being that reproduces sign systems in various communicative situations just as statistical invariability has entered it as (a) norm(al) in the culture-encyclopaedia. Bergson mounts an ethical argument against this mode of being, which keeps the individual safe from the risks and efforts of taking a personal position, whether that mode be excessive scientific specialization, learned etiquette, or a philosophical puzzle of ready-made concepts. We have qualified this (non)position as a lack of ontological commitment to reality. It is particularly obvious against the background of a philosophical system like Bergson's, where reality is regarded as a constant reproduction of untranslatable novelties. The ontological commitment to reality is above all a subscription to the condition that demands an ever-new interpretative effort. It is a dialogue with the language-Habitat in which we have something to say, although our saying is mostly a blind feeling of something that moves and that we are aware of – blind, for we are always submerged in the language-Habitat, and it reveals all possible horizons to us. But still we have something to say, since we are free to move

and stir that habitat *similarly* to the movement we feel, which is that of an extra-linguistic reality. In doing so we transcend the limits of language, by moving metaphorically in the realm of sense; and the moves we make are creative, iconically and metaphorically schematic, abductive, and unsure. These efforts are also the means of conquering new territory (see I.8.). Language-World, intellectual effort, ontological commitment – all these are the elements of a questioning of the language-Habitat-Tradition on the basis of the stirring of its own texture in an iconic similarity to some movement felt in reality. The subject who exists in enduring time is like the swimmer who refuses to succumb to the life-threatening currents, but instead pushes himself up with great effort in order to see the horizon and make his way to safety. And the more his pushes displace the water, the higher his efforts raise him.

PART TWO

LINGUISTIC WORK AND INTERPRETATION

I. Interpretation as Linguistic Work: from Rossi-Landi's Theory towards Hermeneutics

Part One of this study was dedicated to the revaluation of Intellectual Effort, a highly significant concept in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. There we observed that the challenge and difficulty of this endeavor lay in the obvious mismatch between this notion and most tendencies in contemporary (post)philosophical thought. Playing the role of advocate, we tried to excavate from under this apparent mismatch a plethora of affinities that show Bergson's philosophy to be highly relevant to contemporary thought, and especially to the discourse generally known as philosophical hermeneutics. We took considerable care not to make any pretense at "truth-finding", and we did so by replacing such a positivistic criterion with the requirement for interpretative plausibility, by which we could justify the present study.

Put another way, our aim in Part One was to argue in a plausible way for the pertinence of certain aspects of Bergson's thought to any language-centered, contemporary mode of philosophy. In brief, we argued that Bergson has more to tell us. In Part Two we shall focus on particular hermeneutic and semiotic authors whose work can be better understood, we believe, from the point of view of Intellectual Effort. We anticipate that the dialogue between Bergson and these authors will further elucidate what Part One outlined as the Theory of Intellectual Effort.

I.1. The Rossi-Landi Case

The unique philosophical and semiotic theory of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, which is based on the homology between material and linguistic production, has an extremely important place in this study. The very fact that such a theory exists, that a philosopher of such note has devoted almost all of his works to the hypothesis that linguistic activity is also a form of labor, is itself enough to legitimize the need to consider intellectual effort as a requirement for the existence of speech – as far as it is a disposition toward living in a world (*Welt*) and not in an environment (*Umwelt*). Our reading follows the axis of effort /

labor, which should be compared to that of individual / social. In the latter case, we find our own position to be opposed to that of Rossi-Landi. This is the reason why "the Rossi-Landi case" has a peculiar relation to the general tendency of Part Two. First we take advantage of the solid theoretical grounds of his conception of language as labor. Then, however, we develop our findings into an argument for the individualized aspect of speech activity. In so doing, we find ourselves at odds with the fundamental ideology of the Italian philosopher.

I.1. a) The Starting Considerations of Rossi-Landi

Rossi-Landi's starting point is remarkably simple and convincing. It is based on the classical view of Hegel and Marx concerning what is "human" in a human being. A human being is formed as such only after it has overcome the quest to satisfy only its immediate needs. That which is human appears in the moment when this overcoming becomes systematic, when we start producing behavior instead of just responding. At this stage, labor enters into our existence. Labor is the process by which we increase our potential impact on the environment, and this potential is proportional to our rejection of immediacy. Labor is purposefulness that is opposed to the natural disposition to act. This places us in the unique position, as compared to other life-forms, of self-producing beings. According to Rossi-Landi (Marx and Hegel), anything human results from the labor of man himself (Rossi-Landi 1983: 35–37; 1975: 31–69).

The human world is an artifact produced by man. In this statement, which is not particularly original in itself, Rossi-Landi reveals a neglected perspective that holds huge theoretical potential. When we talk of a "world-artifact" we usually mean the "artificially" produced, material environment of man. But what can we say about language? Did language exist in nature before man's arrival? Are there articulated sounds and meanings without man? Obviously not; and there is no other possibility than to consider language an artifact and, consequently, a result of human labor (1983: 35). The importance of this perspective is revealed by semiotics, that discourse of which focuses on the priority of sign systems in the construction of the world we live in. Although many similar attempts have been made (especially in the 1960s in France) to combine Marxism and semiotics into a single paradigm (structuralism), no one has concentrated on labor, as Rossi-Landi does, which is implied by all sign systems. Rossi-Landi develops his arguments along two main lines. The first one deals with the homology between material and linguistic production. The second one engages the problems of ideology and alienation.

I. 1. b) The Homology between Physical and Linguistic Work

Rossi-Landi discusses the relation between physical and linguistic work mainly in his essays from the 1960s (1965, 1969, 1983 [1968]: 118–152), although this issue is implicitly present in all of his later studies. His goal is to define the field of the linguistic world, and to apply to that field the analytical and critical apparatus of Marxism as related to physical work. On the whole, the attempt is quite successful, thanks largely to his "argumentative ability" (in the sense in which we presented this term in the introduction to this study). Rossi-Landi also reviews all of the existing studies in this area, which further strengthens the theoretical base of his discourse. Together with the notion of labor, he identifies in language such typically Marxist concepts as "goods", "market", "capital", "exchange value", "user value", "private property", and so on. Sometimes he has difficulty in tracing the homology to smaller details; for example, in the complex pages devoted to the dialectics between exchange and user value in message exchange (1983: 54–61), and in defining private property (168–169). A close examination of these moments would lead us astray from our present task, however, and so we shall consider only the most important ones.

As is evident from the title of the chapter, of most significance are those moments in Rossi-Landi's theory that refer to philosophical hermeneutics and to interpreting the latter from the standpoint of intellectual effort. Such a moment is not long in coming. Rossi-Landi considers the approach of Analytical Philosophy to the functioning of language as fundamentally wrong, since it is based on the analogy between word and tool (128–130). According to the Italian philosopher, this analogy (and even homology) is possible only if we compare the use of an instrument with that of a message instead of a word. "We use a tool as a totality made up of parts which are of no interest to us; and in the same way, we use a sentence as a totality expressing a complete thought, without giving heed to the parts that make it up" (129).

In II. 3. d) we saw that the same distinction helps Ricoeur to define the hermeneutic project in relation to the field of semiotics. This distinction also enables Bergson's interpretation of immanent systems and of intellectual effort as the condition for their transcendence, in the name of a more relevant (ontological) commitment to dynamic reality. Rossi-Landi's introduction of dialectics into the mix complements our own formulation of the problem. In his view, the dialectical dimension of language (*langage*) mediates between language-system (*langue*) and speech (*parole*), and only it can reveal the dynamic essence of this phenomenon. Dialectics involves the linguistic system in an activity that is far from a static instance or once-and-for-all social

objectification, as it appears in Saussurean *langue*. Dialectics underlines the process of making and of an always-new becoming. Just as hermeneutics calls for always-renewed interpretations, in Rossi-Landi's theory, purposeful activities (labor) take center stage. Although he does not say so directly, it seems that the dialectical nature of language is adduced in order to demonstrate the unsoundness of the common view, which states that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. Hence the need for both dialectics and hermeneutics, in order to distinguish a purely semiotic logic of immanence: one to account for the operation of signs within the system (or "encyclopaedia"), and the other to determine how messages function in concrete linguistic practice.

Before we continue, a terminological specification is needed, lest I be blamed for misunderstanding Rossi-Landi. On many occasions (e.g., 39, 132, 152) he pays special attention to the distinction between his own concept of linguistic activity and that of Saussurean *parole*. Rossi-Landi uses the term "common speech" (*parlare comune*) so as not to focus on the individual instance or user of language. To him, any reference to individual perspective constitutes a form of "idealism", which is the ideological antipode of his discourse, just as the anti-hero in hermeneutics is Metaphysics. Furthermore, in Rossi-Landi's system, "ideology" serves the same function as that phenomenological dictum in hermeneutics which states that, no matter how a discourse is constructed, it is condemned always to be read against the horizon of meaning of the particular epoch. In this sense, he is fully aware that his own discourse is laden with "ideology", but he avoids nihilistic implications that refer to a future revolutionary practice that would erase the disjunction between consciousness and activity (see 104–105). It is crucial to point out several problems with this anti-individualistic "ideology", for these allow us to take advantage of the richness of the Theory of Linguistic Work in our outlining of the Theory of Intellectual Effort.

In his essay on "Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity" (1973), Rossi-Landi criticizes that contemporary view which identifies the limits of the world with the limits of language. According to him, the ideology of such a view consists in the way it attributes to language alone the capacity to exhaust all aspects of being. The plan of his criticism is two-fold: 1) to demonstrate the independence of thought from language and 2) to point out the alienation caused by the ideology of linguistic relativity. For both tasks, Rossi-Landi quotes Bergson to support his own ideas. In the first case, he refers to the theoretical work of the French philosopher: "Bergson introduced intuition as against the intellect, and duration as against mechanistic time, in spite of the spatio-temporal structure and substantive-adjectival character of the French language, through the meshes

of one of the most rigid syntaxes of Europe" (57). Bergson belongs in the company of Kierkegaard, Hegel, and Einstein, who constructed similar discourses, despite the resistance they met in preexisting structures of languages (ibid.). To me, the dependence of thought on language is most easily confuted by examples of individual use, similar to the ones we adduced in I.9. as "founders of discursivity". This is a fundamental point in understanding linguistic activity as effort and labor, and it should in no way be reduced to any form of common speech.

Concerning alienation, Rossi-Landi again appeals to Bergson, now emphasizing the content of his thought: "[in Bergson's philosophy] one denounces a disturbing lack of identification between the speaker and his language" (73). Alienation, which spreads in tandem with the ideology of linguistic relativity, presumes that speakers are "spoken" by language, instead of speaking it. Rossi-Landi calls such an attitude "idealistic" and again stresses that such a view conceals the dialectical dimension, i.e., the practice of language, the linguistic work. Here we must take issue with his critique of Bergson. For we have already seen in Part One that Bergson's entire doctrine of non-identification between language and meaning, as based on the notion of intellectual effort, is developed in purely individualistic terms. It is the effort of the individual to overcome the linguistic systems (and not only verbal ones) in which he is originally situated, in order to have a more intense relationship with the dynamic reality.

The second crack in Rossi-Landi's anti-individualistic edifice appears in his examples of exchange and user value in language. As long as he takes the everyday use of language as his example, his argument holds up. But when he turns to Dante and Benedetto Croce as his examples, he makes rather disputable statements. In the works of Dante, for instance, the creative and unusual use of a word like "water" (1983: 60) is reduced to a mode of production in which the entire value of the tool is invested in the product (even in daily uses, such as "the water is clean" and "give me some water", the tool "water" produces countless similar messages). However, Rossi-Landi does not mention that, thanks precisely to Dante's creative effort, the word "acqua" increases in value, so that after him the whole linguistic community acquires a potentially improved tool for message-production. It is safe to say that Rossi-Landi would never question Dante's individual (subjective) contribution to the development of the contemporary Italian language, with all the possible values that inhabit it. But his system has no place for "individual innovations". To Rossi-Landi, strangely enough, the latter are identified with a private language. He argues, however, that these "private" innovations and products are comprehensible

precisely and only because understanding already exists among the speakers as a group, and this in turn depends on the fact that language (*langage*) is the dialectical co-presence of language (*langue*) and speech, both of which are collective in nature:

> "[...] the notion of a `collective' language spoken only `individually' that – even in its verbal formulation, here exaggerated, but no less real, declares incomprehensible the linguistic innovations and personal creations of individuals. *Scienza borghese*, amen" (1983: 152; last sentence appears only in the Italian edition [1968: 228]).

In Part One, our analysis of the use of language, in Chapter in II.1. *) and all of II.3, showed that the capacity for creative linguistic activity is based completely on the individual's belonging to a given tradition (linguistic environment or *Umwelt*). Those creative linguistic acts presented as deserving respect were likened to a drilling (following Bergson's metaphor) into the depths of this tradition, and bringing to the surface those elements that are determinative for, but not obvious to, our being. Rossi-Landi gives the example of Benedetto Croce's definition of art in order to demonstrate (ironically) how exchange value is created through a "known term in a series of definitions" (61), in a process similar to the stage in market development when, before the appearance of money, a particular good serves as the unit of measure for all other goods. He completely ignores the aspect of effort, with which Croce opens horizons for discursivity that are later used by a number of "linguistic workers". We should never forget that it is precisely thanks to brilliant minds like Croce – and those whom Eco calls the giants on whose shoulders we stand (1979: 49; 1977: 26) – that there are always fresh ideas and new horizons to stimulate the linguistic work of those, whom Kant refers to as "mechanical minds"[9] and "shallow-pates"[10], and who, if left to themselves, would spend their time discussing trifling matters.

It seems, however, that in Rossi-Landi's theory the homology between linguistic and physical work preserves the blindness of the Marxist view that

[9] Does the world benefit more, on the whole, from the great geniuses, who often take new paths and open new prospects? Or have *mechanical minds*, with their commonplace understanding that advances slowly on the rod and staff of experience, contributed most to the growth of the arts and sciences, even if they make no epochs (for it such a mind arouses no admiration, it causes also no disorder)? (Kant 1974, $58, my italics)

[10] […] one, who goes by the name of *shallow-pate*, because he can never do more than merely learn and follow a lead (Kant 1987, $ 47, Kant's italics)

does not consider as "labor" the effort of those who create work for the others[11]. We may well ask, How does Marx himself stand in relation to the countless Marxists that came after him? Are they not "workers" in the discursive field that he opened? Since we cannot imagine them without him, it turns out either that he, by his individual philosophical effort, has offered a system of values to "open their eyes", or that he simply exploits them!

Influential intellectual efforts made by individuals are not limited to philosophy and art. All social strata display examples of individual ontological commitment to dynamic reality; these individuals serve as a source of discursivity (linguistic work) for other members of the linguistic community. Some of the most influential studies of media impact on public opinion long ago adopted the so-called "two-step flow of communication model" (Lazarsfeld & Katz 1955). The essence of this model is that the media flow of information does not directly influence everyone who comes in contact with it. Initially, this flow is understood and interpreted by the more active community members and opinion leaders, who then "translate" it to the rest of the group. This translation does not refer to the formal language in which the information is submitted, but is rather a means of mediating between two value systems: that of the media and the local one. Opinion leaders are those who spontaneously take on the burden of evaluating media facts and then, in informal conversation – at work, at the barber shop, while shopping – "discursivize" them through common language. Opinion leaders are individuals who talk all the time. Studies indicate that exactly this type of dialogue forms the most influential public opinion. (People usually say that their opinions of media information, such as pre-election propaganda, are influenced by the opinions of others.) Though implied, the dynamics of intellectual effort is present here as well, and it constitutes a way of overcoming the closedness of a given local system (encyclopaedia) through personal interpretative initiative.

I. 1. c) Alienation, Behaviorism, and Transcendence

In transferring the issue of intellectual effort to mass culture or, more precisely, to the environment of so-called common speech, we come to the main focus of Rossi-Landi's theory: the problem of alienation. The following passage epitomizes the sweeping denunciative power of this theory, which derives from the homological model of production:

[11] During my studies at the University of Bologna I had to read every day the following writing, written with red letters on a wall in the Lettere e Filosofia Faculty by some militant during one of his numerous occupations: 'PROFIT IS UNPAID LABOR!'.

> "In this way, we lose contact with the human and historical reality that brings into being *these* words and messages as *these* words and these messages. Then the consequences of what we may well call *the fetish character of words and messages* unfolds before us, incomprehensible to our eyes. This fetish character lies in the fact that the production and exchange of words and messages at a certain point becomes so regular and systematic that it seems to be something that no longer requires a work felt to be particular and personal. Then the words and messages, which are, in reality, the products of sign-work, take on the appearance of autonomous existence. What is more, [this occurs with] language, together with all the verbal messages actually articulated, and the totality of the channels through which they are articulated, as well as the non-verbal sign system in its immediate and institutionalized reality (commodities and Levi-Strauss's women) – that is to say, the system of the relationship into which, by speaking and communicating, men (actually) enter.
>
> If we want to get behind this mask, to reveal the fetishism of words and messages and to begin demolishing the wall of linguistic and communicative alienation, we must start from the general determining factors of language (verbal and non-verbal), from the conditions that must be satisfied for man to use signs, speak, communicate verbally or not, and be understood: we must begin, in the first place and fundamentally, from language and communication *as work*. (77–78; Rossi-Landi's italics)

The hermeneutic dimension of the above quote stands out clearly. Alienation is a matter of *understanding*. The fetishization of language and communication makes linguistic activity almost automatic – it no longer requires a work felt to be particular and personal – at the expense of interpretation and effort. Rossi-Landi speaks of the loss of "contact with the human and historical reality" that brings "the linguistic work" to "a situation where he [the speaker] does not know *what he is doing* when he speaks, why he speaks as *he does speak*" (64; Rossi-Landi's italics). We have described this situation as a lack of ontological commitment to reality, and saw that the way out of it lies precisely in interpretative effort, which in turn is understanding.

Rossi-Landi considers the same solution: "get behind this mask, to reveal the fetishism". To denounce is to explain something hidden, to reduce it to an object that is comprehensible to consciousness. Alienation is a system of automatisms that are passively reproduced by the one who is alienated before he has even begun to understand. To understand, to grasp the essence of processes in which one takes part without knowing, enables the individual to start deconstructing or "demolishing the wall" ("lavorar di piccone aulla muraglia"; It. ed.: 104) – the wall being the sign systems that determine one's being.

At this moment Rossi-Landi's program converges with our recognition of language and communication as labor. From our hermeneutic perspective, this function belongs to the recognition of intellectual effort, and the need for an always-new interpretation for every new situation as a condition for ontological

commitment to the dynamic reality. However, a fundamental difference exists between Rossi-Landi's view and our own. In the theory of intellectual effort, the future is characterized by the idea of a fundamental Otherness, which allows for unpredictable interpretations "on the spot". For Rossi-Landi, in contrast, the utopian dimension of the future is the leading one. As already mentioned, he does not deny the "ideologicalness" of his own discourse. Nevertheless, it aids the good cause of achieving a future in which the very conditions for ideological discourse will not exist. The future social modification involves "the entire reality that makes all discourses ideological" (105).

But who is Rossi-Landi addressing? And what can bring about this change? Obviously, his addressee is the community of "linguistic workers" who are subjected to alienation. But such an ideology-free utopia is doomed to failure, and the reason why is purely hermeneutical: most of the people potentially concerned with this theory are unable to understand it. Rossi-Landi's appeals to reconsider linguistic activities and communication as a form of labor are made from high atop a philosophical platform that only professional philosophers can reach. In order to define the problem comprehensively, Rossi-Landi uses all the resources of his erudition. But his language is absolutely opaque to the average consumer of media products, the one who should be directly involved. The average consumer can hardly bear 30 minutes of news when nothing sensational has happened. How can he be expected to grasp complex theoretical abstractions of ever-elusive social structure? This question is not rhetorical, for the author of this study has lived for some time within a far broader utopian project that was tested in a score of countries. The utopia of "Marxism-Leninism" failed mainly because of the inability of those responsible for its implementation to understand the philosophy on which it was based, although much more comprehensive issues than linguistic work were involved. Disregard for the hermeneutic view, that social development demands an always-new interpretative effort from individuals, strikes the death-blow to any lasting revolutionary plan that relies on the masses for its success.

The behaviorist basis of Rossi-Landi's semiotics erects an insurmountable wall between the theory of linguistic work and the hermeneutic view, regardless of their obvious affinity. Rossi-Landi starts as a researcher and proponent of Charles Morris and never loses contact with the behaviorist semiotics of the American scholar (1953, 1955, 1961, 1992: 17–82). An ideology of behaviorism can be traced throughout the course of modern semiotics, mostly in the powerful school founded by Peirce (in the next chapter we shall examine possible alternative interpretations of Pierce). This ideology involves the requirement for methodological "purity", and both in experimental psychology, which is its

original field, and semiotics, behaviorism shifts our gaze away from the so-called "black box", a metaphor for the internal subjectivity of the individual (*The Spirit as a Behavior* is the title of one of his books). Behaviorism, not by chance called Stimulus-Response (S-R) Psychology, is interested in observable processes that exhibit statistical constancy.

In II. 3. ß) we saw that, from the perspective of intellectual effort as a hermeneutic approach, the interesting part starts at the moment when S-R logic is disrupted and a founding hesitation challenges the individual to interpret and to understand. This seems to be what Rossi-Landi means in his long quotation, and yet his behaviorist concept of linguistic activity holds the constant potential for contradiction.

Such a potential contradiction is easily seen in the work of another contemporary revolutionary thinker, Herbert Marcuse, whose Marxist criticism is as ardent as that of Rossi-Landi. In his book, *One-Dimensional Man* (1997 [1964]), Marcuse writes some very powerful lines on the possibility of revolutionary thought in the contemporary situation. Just like Rossi-Landi, the German philosopher sees the revolutionary act as the only way out of the oppressive system of capitalism, but his remarkable way of understanding the situation only confirms the impossibility of revolution (a fact that is more and more convincingly argued by history itself). He studies all the fundamental factors of society, such as the industrial system and the resulting consumer culture, the political system and the closing of discursiveness, the one-dimensionality of positivist philosophy and the desublimation of art. Marcuse shows how the iron fist of technological regulation takes possession of all these, imposing a mass behaviorism that is antithetical to "habits of thought" (1997: 34–35). This system produces the one-dimensional man, who is constantly reduced to the logic of stimulus and response, and whose excessive consumption leaves him no time for mental "escapes" from the system. This is the "capitulation of thought" (10). Marcuse maintains a constantly individualistic dimension in his criticism, and keeps an eye on the relevance of his own discourse:

> "Similarly, intellectual freedom would mean the restoration of *individual thought*, which today is engulfed by mass communication and indoctrination, [and] by the destruction caused by `public opinion' and its creators. The unrealistic sound of these statements is indicative not of their utopian nature but of the might of those powers that obstruct their implementation." (1997: 21; my italics)

Marcuse uses the term "transcendence" (77, 98, 294) to designate the thought-liberating act that overcomes the behaviorist attitude. His use of that term is well summarized by the editor of the Bulgarian translation of *One-Dimensional Man*:

> "Marcuse psychologizes the Kantian term with regard to the new tasks of reason in the world of technological rationality: here transcendence is the individual protest against unification and depersonalization, against the limitation of the spiritual world of the modern man" (323).

Marcuse's "transcendence" closely corresponds to the notion of intellectual effort, and with this common denominator between him and Bergson we temporarily end our exploration into Marxist-oriented social criticism. We return to this issue again in the conclusion to this study, when I discuss the decline of effort in consumer society. There I shall counter the Marxist view of mass society with the one proposed by the Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset.

II. The Semiotic Relevance of Intellectual Effort

In this chapter we shall try to integrate the theory of intellectual effort with semiotic discourse. Part One offered some preparatory attempts in this respect, by pointing out certain convergences of thought between Bergson and Saussure. I continue here by drawing even stronger parallels between Bergson and Peirce.

To establish the relevance of the theory of intellectual effort to semiotic discourse, my argument unfolds in two stages. First I analyze the affinities between contemporaries of Bergson, such as Peirce and Saussure, who occupy various positions against the epistemological backdrop of the epoch. Using information from that analysis I then draw parallels between fundamental concepts in modern semiotic discourse and our interpretation of Bergson's theory. If we take Peirce and Saussure to be the founders of interpretative and structural semiotics, respectively, then I attempt to advance here a semiotics of intellectual effort. Though more limited in scope than the other two, our own semiotics argues for the constitutive role of indeterminacy and creativity in sign processes.

II.1. Peirce and Bergson

As mentioned in our methodological introduction, the identification and investigation of similarities between apparently dissimilar thinkers is one of the few underexplored areas remaining to current philosophical inquiry. In this sense, our comparison of Peirce and Bergson is particularly emblematic, and the so-called incompatibility of those two thinkers is reinforced by the Frenchman's total disregard of the work of his American colleague, as well as by Peirce's hostility towards Bergson, as we saw in the letter quoted above (Part One: I.3). This seeming incompatibility is further evidenced by the extremely short list of publications that deal with the relationship between the two philosophers: Gunter's detailed bibliographical monograph (1986), includes 6000 titles, yet only four articles mention the names of both philosophers, and none are dedicated entirely to exploring the parallels between the two thinkers. In this respect, the most significant work we have found is a monograph on pragmatism written by a Bulgarian philosopher and student of Bergson at the Collège de

France, Ivan Saraïlieff (1938). In turn, Bergson's semiotics is outlined only in general terms by Ronchi, in his monograph *Bergson: Philosopher of Interpretation*, which has nevertheless proved invaluable for our study. I was also extremely fortunate to attend a presentation of Prof. Kalaga, which was dedicated to the same topic. In sum, within what Kuhn would call the "scientific community", Bergson and Peirce have remained strangers to each other. I join the few who have tried to reveal the affinities between them, which are generally present between great philosophers of all times.

II.1. a) "Bergsonism" vs. "Peircism"

We begin with the general conditions on which the presumed differences between the two philosophers are based. These conditions would indeed discourage anyone who limits himself to what is generally known about the two philosophers. This is the kind of superficial knowledge of Bergson that in Part One we described with Merleau-Ponty's term "Bergsonism". The latter, combined with similar banalization of Peirce ("Peircism") leaves us with two, mutually exclusive philosophical discourses.

Peirce is most famous for his anti-Cartesian polemic, which later grows into his comprehensive doctrine of signs. A key notion of his polemic is that of intuition. According to Peirce, no intuition is capable of immediately bringing things to consciousness. Things are always mediated by signs and always involved in semiosis, which reveals what we know about them in an interpretative way. We can never be sure that we have arrived at the thing itself. Bergson is of course famous for his own concept of intuition. His philosophical method, known as intuitionism, refers to the "the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it" (IM: 161). Peirce is renowned for his view that thinking is purely a sign process. The father of semiotics often states that "man can think only by means of words or other external symbols" (EP: 54). It seems that Bergson's method is based on exactly the opposite view: "Metaphysics is therefore the science which claims to dispense with the symbols" (IM: 162).

Another obstacle in finding similarities between the two thinkers lies in their respective attitudes toward philosophical language. Peirce favors specialized terminology and devotes his essay "The Ethics of Terminology" (CP 2.219–26) to this problem. Bergson, as we saw in Part One: II. 2. b) takes the opposite view: a true philosopher can state even the most complicated idea in everyday language. Peirce's strongly negative attitude towards Bergson is due precisely

to what he views as the Frenchman's sloppy usage of terms:

> "[...] that philosophy is either a science or is balderdash, and that a man who seeks to further science can hardly commit a greater sin than *to use the terms* of his science without anxious care to use them with strict accuracy, it is not very grateful to my feelings to be classed along with a Bergson who seems to be doing his prettiest to muddle all distinctions" (in Gunter 1986: 101; my italics).

Their conflicting ethics of philosophical discourse have an obvious effect on the reception history of the two philosophers. Peirce was hard to read, his lectures were scantily attended, and his standing in the institutions to which he belonged was usually tenuous at best. In contrast, Bergson enjoyed crowded auditoriums and world-wide readership, and during his lifetime attained the highest possible honors, including membership in the French Academy and the Nobel Prize for Literature (see Part One: Chapter I.2.).

II. 1. b) Peirce the "Universe"

In the course of time – that sure arbiter of all philosophical doctrines – their fortunes are reversed. The more Bergson is forgotten and ignored, the more popular Pierce becomes, and thanks to him semiotics continues to live and develop even after the decline of structuralism.

The rediscovery of Peirce brings to semiotic discourse the dimension of interpretability. This dimension is not limited to speculations concerning the interpretative nature of semiosis, but represents a general approach to semiotic theory. The form and content of Peirce's immense and diverse body of work does not lend itself to systematization as one particular semiotics. It is enough to attend a single semiotic congress in order to learn of the theoretical richness and variety not only in the American pragmatist's major works, but even in his letters and fragments that are scattered among the tens of thousands of pages he left behind. This situation calls to mind a remark we quoted in Part One: I.4., which Eco makes in reference to the manifold possibilities for interpreting Peirce: "But it is known, one can make Peirce say everything, depending on which side one turns him" (Eco 1997: 394 n28). For that reason, Peirce's work constitutes a "universe", an open system of interpretations that is constrained only by the authority of those who reside in it, rather than by the "interpretive" resistance of the texts of this "founder of discoursivity". This is the proper background against which an analogy with Bergson can be elaborated. This analogy has its place in the "universe" of Peirce as well, although it is situated in its scantily inhabited outskirts, which most semioticians avoid.

II. 1. c) The General Course of Thought

Though difficult to find, a common denominator links all the philosophical works of Peirce. It is his desire to outline "the general course of thought" (CP 4.530), with all its epistemological, psychological, and metaphysical implications. The thought process, which for Peirce follows the scientific method, transforms phenomenological experience with reality into knowledge. The general course of thought brings about an increase of objective and valid knowledge, which, though confirmed through experimentation, is always fallible and open to new interpretations. Each relatively stable position in the course of thought serves as a starting point for new cognitive-experimental contacts with the realities constructed by immediate and dynamic objects, which realities, however, never reveal themselves entirely. Peirce's thoroughgoing modernity is revealed in the way he focuses on how reality looks and appears, rather than trying to postulate the actual state of things. Pragmatic semiotics sets out to explain the appearances of reality, and the doctrine of signs enables this inquiry.

Unfortunately, too much attention has been paid to Peirce's comprehensive classifications of signs and their interactions, at the expense of the role of living thought, which is the very engine of sign processes. It is not my intent to devalue his doctrine of signs, but rather to conceptualize the general course of thought, in its constitutive sign-ness, from the point of view of intellectual effort. This brings us to our Bergsonian reading of Peirce. In *Matter and Memory* Bergson traces the course of thought in a way that is amazingly similar to Peirce's, though without sign processes as a background. To borrow a metaphor from information science: both philosophers deal with the same phenomenon, but Peirce describes it discretely, while Bergson describes it analogously. This comparison is suitable, however, only if we recognize that living thought holds some importance for Peirce, and that his entire doctrine is not reducible to the general statement that "man is a sign".

Bergson speaks of the interpretive nature of the course of knowledge, but instead of representing it as a chain of sign transformations, he concentrates on the interaction of memory and perception. Bergson does not accidentally ignore the central mediating role of signs. To him, however, signs are merely points along the way, which help us to reproduce a thought while thinking of it. Thus, he warns: "[...] analyzing this endless series of transformations and yielding to more than one irresistible need for symbolic representation, scientific thought interrupts the major stages of this evolution and makes them freeze into ultimate forms" (MM: 135). This warning reveals the ultimate tragedy of Peirce's theory

of signs: he never manages to trace precisely the course of thought, despite his brilliant typologies of signs. Still, his attempts to do so have laid the firm foundations of a semiotic discourse, thanks to the scientific rigor of his methods. Although devoted more than any other thinker to the "psychological realism" of the thought process, Bergson, in turn, remains misunderstood and without faithful followers. That is why, inspired by Bergson's warning, I now offer some clarifications of Peirce's concept of signs.

II. 1. d) The Omnipresence of the Icon

There is a widely held view that sees iconism as both the most important and the most obscure part of Peirce's theory of signs. I share this view, and further think that the icon, which appears on all levels of semiosis, incorporates the preconditions for revealing the significance of living thought to the cognitive process. Bonfantini, from whom the title of this chapter is borrowed, outlines the problem as follows:

> "All meanings are essentially – by nature, so to speak – icons. Of course, all signs participate both in symbolism and indexicality. But these functions do not refer to the signifying quality of the sign: the symbol establishes a conventional relationship between the *representamen* and the immediate object, and, correspondingly, seeks to keep the frame of this object within the socially imposed standards; the index transfers the meaning to the referent. However, the signifying content – the immediate object – does not change its nature for this purpose. It remains forever an idea, an image, a more or less structured icon." (Bonfantini 1980: XXXVII)

Peirce, as we have mentioned, is interested in the conditions for the growth of objective knowledge, the model of which is the scientific method. This growth can be achieved only within the logic of iconicity (ibid.). When outlining intellectual effort within the framework of linguistic (sign) practice, we employed a metaphor used by Bergson, in which the central element was the conquest of new territories (Part One: I.8.). Peirce's agenda fits perfectly into this model (see, especially, his essay "The Law of Mind", CP 6.102–163); and in Peirce, the iconic nature of sign innovation plays the same role of establishing the ontological relationship to reality as intellectual effort (and, consequently, intuition) does in Bergson. Although an icon is seemingly a sign, and intellectual effort a mode of thinking and being, both participate in the same dialectic. In his essay on intellectual effort Bergson introduces the notion of Dynamic Scheme, which is a synonym for icon. And yet, the dynamic scheme is as much a sign as it is an act (see Part One: II. 3. ,).

It is a thought in action that has all the potential for resulting in the synthesis of something new. To Peirce, this ambivalent cognitive act rides a

merry-go-round of synonymous terms – icon, abduction, hypothesis, interpretation (XXVII) – and no interpreter can decide which is which in the absence of the rest. What strikes us is that two of these terms – abduction and interpretation – are not mere substantives but processes of thought. In this way, the merry-go-round of synonymous terms represents, much better than the dynamic scheme does, the fundamental existential moment in which sign and act are mutually constitutive yet not reducible to the same thing. Peirce seems to ignore this obvious irreducibility; or at the least, he stimulates readers who might be biased in this respect to do so, though he himself is not quite so categorical about it. In what is perhaps his most famous text, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" (CP 5.264–317), Peirce reduces his entire argument to the following two mottoes:

> "[...] the word or sign which man uses is the man himself. For, as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign. [...] Thus my language is the sum total of myself; for the man is the thought". (CP 5.314)

Despite the fact that on the same page he says he would not fatigue "the reader by stretching this parallelism too far", and that between man and thought "There is a distinction doubtless", with this text Peirce clears the semiotic terrain of embarrassing problems related to the "black box" of Mind. Eco's reading of Peirce, by which he lays the foundations of his own interpretative semiotics, is based exactly on these inferences. A major outcome of a reading like Eco's is that creative acts come to be viewed as unusual or superfluous. To the dominant, scientific version of semiotics they appear as mere ornaments to rigorous sign theories based on statistical invariance.

In my view, however, creativity and indeterminacy are constitutive of the sign functioning of thought, and this is true not only in sublime moments, but on every level of thinking. More precisely, from the point of view of intellectual effort, great theoretical importance attaches to linguistic practices that are irreducible to a logic of behavioral response. And this is where the identification of sign with the action of living thought has brought the most distinguished interpreters of Peirce, with Morris and Eco among them. The statistical constancy of interaction with the sign, which results in habit-formation, would relieve thought of its commitment to reality and put the personality on "automatic pilot", as it were. This mental state is the rejection of ontological commitment and of openness to the fundamental Otherness of reality, of creativity, and of abduction.

II. 1. e) Abduction and Intuition

Peirce explains the complexities of iconicity mainly in terms of the sign. This bias permits a metaphysics-free semiotics, but it overlooks the role of living thought, i.e., the act that co-constructs the iconic experience of reality. We are led to this statement from a comparison of Peirce's sign model to the analogous one in Bergson. In Part One of this study considerable efforts were made to restore the sign dimension of Bergsonian thought, a dimension which conventional readings ignore completely. It is now time to take the "offensive" and start fleshing out implications that the theory of intellectual effort holds for some classical semiotic achievements.

We have already said that "intuition" is a key notion on which the assumed incompatibility between Peirce and Bergson is based. A close look at iconicity, however, shows the error of such a view. To explain Bergson's concept of intuition in Peircean terms: the Frenchman's negative critique of language and signs is directed against the reduction of thought to the logic of the symbol. Bergson contrasts symbolic thinking with iconic thinking and, thus, with memory. Based on enduring consciousness, memory is comprised of images, i.e., icons. Iconic memory participates in perception and reasoning (the process by which memory enables perception) by the mediation of the dynamic scheme, which is an icon as well. Bergson's famous "immediate data of consciousness" are in fact iconic data of consciousness, which reflect the latter's duration and pure temporality. For Bergson, without memory there can be no perception, in the sense of a projection of a hypothetical meaning which facts either reject or confirm. Bergsonian intuition is not that of Descartes, no matter how surprising this might seem (the most serious attempt to rehabilitate Bergsonian intuition is that of Husson 1947). Bergson's entire *Introduction to Metaphysics* is devoted to the opposition between two modes of thinking: intuition and analysis. In Peirce, intuition plays the role of abduction, and analysis is equated with deduction. Fundamental intuitions lay the foundations of great scientific discoveries and important philosophical theories, whereas analysis – which Bergson calls "logical perfecting" (IM 192) and which is reducible to the unproblematic use of language – locks consciousness into a system of pre-given conditions. To Peirce, on the other hand, great scientific discoveries are based on abductions (Kepler being their emblem). Abduction is "the only kind of argument which starts a new idea", and deduction is "the only kind of argument which is compulsive" (CP: 2.96). In Bergsonian terms, abduction is of the order of authentic intellectual effort, whereas deduction is more open to verbal speculation. Peirce is no stranger to the concept of intellectual effort, and he

even uses that term to describe iconic sign transformations from perception to interpretation (CP 2.141). Moreover, the essay in which he promotes the advantages of the scientific method over other cognitive practices, "The Fixation of Belief" (CP 5.358–87), is a brilliant denouncement of the tricks that consciousness uses to avoid the ever-new efforts demanded by reality in its capacity as a dynamic object. Finally, for both Peirce and Bergson the common element in the authentic cognitive act is that of creative, innovative effort. Bergson, who is interested in philosophical discourse, calls this act intuition. Peirce, concerned with scientific discourse, considers abduction the only way to improve knowledge.

II. 1. f) Semiosis and Duration

The more we develop our comparison between the philosophy of intellectual effort and cognitive semiotics, the more pressing it becomes to ask whether semiosis is the same with Mind as it is without. I consider this distinction to be much more radical than a pansemiotic view would admit. Before we discuss Peirce's most explicit attempt "to clear the sign of its mental associations" (5.492), we shall introduce this issue through the problems, though later his discoveries might reveal some insufficiency and require revision. Like Maine de Biran in his *Mémoires sur l'habitude*, in *Matière et mémoire* Bergson, according to the happy simile of Gouhier, becomes the Christopher Columbus of the temporal dimension. I have tried to interpret the entire sign problem within this dimension (Part One: II. 3. ,), and when Peirce engages with temporality, he offers a highly relevant version of his fundamental trichotomy. As we know, the latter refers to the logical stages of any experience: Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. We shall not present a full description of these stages, which with all their variations and theoretical refinements occupy a considerable part of "Peirce the Universe"; they are introduced in 1867 in the essay, "On a New List of Categories" (CP 1.545–59) and are discussed in almost all of his later works. For our purposes, we need only concentrate on his hierarchy of present, past, and future.

The doctrine of the three categories is the major theory that Peirce opposes to intuitionism and idealism. Through these categories he determines the fundamental sign qualities and actions of any possible cognitive interaction with reality, as well as the derivative phenomenological aspects for the subjects of knowledge. The three categories have epistemological valence, and, combined with the resulting classifications of signs, they constitute a static model that excludes from semiosis the role of living thought. The projection of the three

categories in time, however, leads Peirce to inferences that are quite similar to Bergson's concept of duration as constitutive of consciousness.

According to Peirce, Firstness is given in the pure present, "being such as it is while utterly ignoring everything else, is *positively* such as it is" (5.44; Peirce's italics). Secondness is projected into the past, as "the previous being determinate and fixed for the subsequent" (8.330). This is also the case with response (ibid.), which does not participate in the drama of chance and unpredictability. Only Thirdness can attach meaning to the former two categories, for it completes the logical cycle of any experience, here as perceived from the perspective of time. Thirdness introduces the future. Even more, it introduces consciousness into experience and into the course of things in general, since, on the one hand, "the subsequent [is] indeterminate for the previous" (ibid.), and on the other, this indeterminacy can refer only to ideas, for it is obvious that the world of objects follows laws that are independent of thought. Thus, Thirdness, or the world of ideas, is an inseparable part of the logical cycle that provides the conditions for any experience. In our analysis of Bergson's theory of intellectual effort (II. 3. $). we called this moment of Thirdness the "debut of spirit" (Ronchi's expression). For Bergson, this debut comes with the appearance of a hesitation that takes consciousness away from the logic of habitual response, and imports memory – as far as it bears the past – into a projection that constitutes the present as a potentially mediated act or, simply, as understanding. The present is endowed with the "thickness" of duration. On Peirce's view, Thirdness, as the future dimension, constitutes the sign function in general. For him, "Thirdness is the triadic relation existing between a sign, its object, and the interpreting thought, itself a sign, considered as constituting the mode of being as a sign" (8.332). Although here Peirce equates the act of interpretation with its result, i.e., with some kind of sign, on the immediately preceding page he says the following: "If you take any ordinary triadic relation, you will always find a *mental* element in it" (8.331: Peirce's italics). For Peirce, experience, as the perception of objects, acquires thickness of duration to the mind only if it is involved in semiosis, i.e., only if there is an instance that removes things from their involvement in Secondness and introduces them into reasoning, into a theory, a World – which is precisely the aim of intellectual effort. It is crucial for our reading of Peirce, to understand that this instance of removal is constitutive of the triadic process of semiosis, in contrast to those readings which regard the semiotic triad as constitutive of the instance in question. It is crucial for our reading of Peirce, to understand that this instance of removal is constitutive of the triadic process of semiosis, in contrast to those readings which regard the semiotic triad as constitutive of the

instance in question. This last attitude seems as misplaced as the view that language "speaking" the mind instead of mind speaking the language.

II. 1. g) The Role of Mind

Thus, Mind comes to be the interpretive key to our reading of Peirce, for it drives any semiotics to metaphysics, and any psychology to rummaging in the "black box". That is why any self-respecting, scientific semiotics excludes the mind from its field of interest. Semiotics either disregards a particular discursive practice, and satisfies itself with only a theory of the formal conditions by which meaning would obtain, or it leans toward socially regulated interpretation and behaviorism. The latter, recently become sophisticated through cognitive research, equates the spirit with objectified and observable behavior – the sign. A typical Peircean contradiction is based on this situation.

One of Peirce's most constant claims is that mind has no power over the world of objects; the cognitive process is merely a form of guessing or hypothesis, not the creation of reality. Our cognitive will cannot create anything that is not already present in the dynamic object. It can only discover and objectify, theoretically and experimentally, that which is already there. This view, which even a Bergsonist would hardly question, results in at least two methodological maneuvers. Peirce's first and most comprehensive way of disregarding the role of mind is to identify thought with sign, as noted above. In that way, he arrives at the essence of the cognitive process by accounting for it in stages, i.e., the moment to moment results of thought. Yet to decompose thought into the signs through which it passes in order to objectify it, is the same as analyzing the motion of a body by reference to the points along its trajectory. It is known that this approach results in paradoxes (an arrow that could not fly, a turtle that could outrun Achilles, and so on). The other way to downplay the role of mind is simply to reject it, as Peirce does most forcefully in his essay "A Survey of Pragmatism" (CP 5.464–5.494).

In our view, neither of these two maneuvers is necessary. For Peirce's major cognitive and epistemological point is in fact totally compatible with the centrality of mind to semiosis. *Thirdness, as authentic sign-ness, belongs to the order of ideas and happens only inside the instance of the human mind.* Most of Peirce's works allow for such an interpretation.

Peirce decides "to clear the sign of its mental associations" (5.492) when discussing habit (or, the utter logical interpretant; see Eco 1979: 42–44), which is a prime concern of all semioticians. (Bonafantini, for one, argues that this move is totally unsound; 1980: 307–308 n18.) Peirce draws an analogy between

habits in nature and habits of consciousness. He postulates that the unconscious side of habits of consciousness follows the model of the unconsciousness of the habits of plants, and even of the bed a mountain stream digs in making its course. Thus, the objective idealism of Peirce relates to the theory of signs, in that, through the principle of habit, he considers matter and mind as one and the same thing – 'if a habit be a primary property of mind, it must be equally so of matter, as a kind of mind' (EP 350). In Part One: II. 3. c) we saw that Bergson introduces his theory of general ideas through similar reasoning, and a common spiritualist background is observable for both philosophers. If, however, Bergson's prerequisite for all interactions of interest is the idea that matter is neutralized consciousness, then the idea of matter being "effete mind" brings Peirce to the reverse conclusion.

It seems to me, though, that it is precisely the mind that produces habits. Habits follow closely the logic of stimulus and response. The mind, as we know, seeks steady states, which are nothing but habits or utterly logical interpretants in the sphere of knowledge. When mental habits suffer a crisis, that is, when the dynamic object is revealed in new aspects, then hesitation and uncertainty disrupt the logic of stimulus and response (or, the logic of identification, as discussed in Part One: II. 3. c). It is of no importance whether the word concerns the orbits of planets or smoke in the kitchen. Habit fails, and we are forced into new research, i.e., hypothesis, abduction, intellectual effort, Thirdness and so forth. All these intellectual activities go to forming a new habit that provides stability and orientation. Although they exist in the logic of habit, the plant and the stream are unable to strive consciously for a new habit. The mind follows the process of habit-research-habit', or, secondness-thirdness-secondness'. The plant and the stream, however, follow the dyadic pattern of habit-response-habit'. If, however, we compare the outcomes of these two types of processes, as Peirce often does, there is no difference between these two situations; there is no such process as habit-habit'. A man resembles a tree or an animal when he responds through habits, but if his system of habits fails, then he must again become a man for a while, in order to produce a new set of habits that return him to the state of a tree or an animal!

Eco is guided by a similar conviction in his attempts to build a cognitive model of the world (Eco 1997: 24–30). He admits that such a model cannot be presented without reference to a descriptive instance, that is, to mind (26). Yet he claims that the latter need not be a human mind. To him, the world is capable of self-interpretation "through animal or, eventually, plant organisms, or even (and why not?) through minerals, in their silica epiphany in computers" (ibid.). But is it appropriate to speak of interpretative processes in animals, plants, and

computers? In order to simplify his model and to rid it of metaphysical implications, Eco reduces the process of interpretation to "a mind which, facing a set of 10 small lamps, would like to explain all possible combinations between them" (ibid).

Here we must make an extremely important distinction between interpretation and identification. Is not interpretation everything that is not identification? Do we not have to interpret something when we fail to identify it automatically? If I hear a word, I will first identify it logically, on the basis of its difference from all other words within the system, and only then (in logical, not chronological terms) will I understand it in context or interpret it. What interpretive abilities can a computer have, whose function is to identify digits reduced to "0 or 1"? When I shake hands with 50 or 60 people one after the other, one might say that we communicate and that the corresponding processes of semiosis and interpretation are involved in our interaction. But in fact, handshaking is a subconscious response within a preexisting social convention. I do not interpret, but subconsciously identify the normality of the behavioral model which I am programmed to follow. If someone gives me something other than his hand to shake, the model will fail, identification will cease, and I shall have to start interpreting the new gesture. At that moment I stop being a tree or a robot, and the intellectual processes of abduction, effort, and interpretation come into play. If, as a consequence of interpretation and investigation, I find out that people now shake feet instead of hands, the repetition of this new gesture will eventually form a new habit in me, and I will again shift to the automatic identification mode that fits such cases.

In II.3.c) of Part One we saw that the entire linguistic issue can be regarded from this standpoint. We also saw that language as a system (Saussure's *langue*) operates on a reflexive, dyadic level of identification. This is the only level on which we have an accomplished objectivity, a place where the shadow of interpretation does not obscure the signs. Interpretation comes when, on the basis of established signs, we produce speech that refers to new states of the world. The identification of a cliché is of the same order as the identification of a word, whereas to interpret is to accomplish something new. In order to start interpreting, we must be situated in a linguistic environment, or *Umwelt*. But, as we have said, only a hesitation in reproducing the established articulation of an environment, only an interpretative distance from the automatic logic of identification – in a word, only intellectual effort takes man out of *Umwelt* and gives him access to *Welt*.

Paradoxically, the scientific objectivity of which Peirce dreams was more nearly attained by Saussure, though he never set out to do that. Only when the

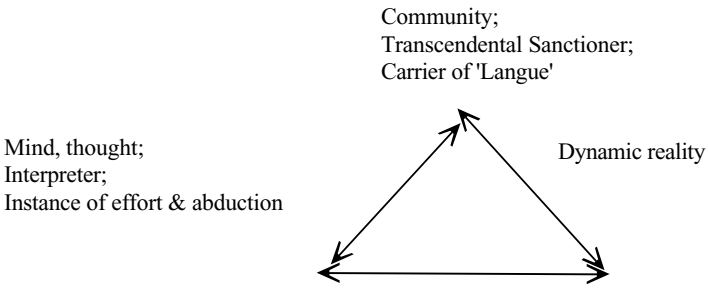
sign / theory has acquired the status of a Saussurean sign, a part of *langue*, can we say that objectivity is achieved. To make scholars recognize a theory is merely an initial stage of objectivity. Full objectivity occurs when the sign / theory becomes part of the vocabulary, a pure reflex that automatically furthers the investigation of the dynamic object. Such objectivity was achieved, for example, at a certain stage in the development of science, by the sign / theory of the atom. Used by all scientists, this theory passed entirely into the logic of identification, i.e., of *langue*. It was not until the splitting of the atom took place that changes occurred in this habit of usage and an element of hypothesis and interpretability crept into the scientific community's subsequent uses of the sign / theory of the "atom". Only the human mind can deal with a sign system that is not completely determined by units of identification (habits, reflexes) but that demands the constitutive interpretability of Thirdness in order to represent the sense of those units as well. The world can be portrayed and responded to, and it can even be digitally mimicked in the habits of animals, plants, and computers, but only the human mind can interpret it.

II.2. Lazy Machines and a New Triangle

To conceptualize a semiotics of intellectual effort, we need a semiotic triad that includes the role of living thought more explicitly than Peirce's does. For this purpose, it is appropriate to recall Eco's metaphor of a work of art. He calls a work of art a lazy machine, which needs a reader to make it produce meaning. We could say that the world as a whole is a lazy machine of the same kind, and we could hardly imagine it if we were to ignore the linguistic work of the community of its interpreters (the human race). Rorty sums up this situation concisely: "The world does not speak, only we do [...] Only other human beings can do that" (Rorty 1989: 6).

Western culture has the perennial tendency to try to settle the matter of the speaking of being, which is the World itself. There has always existed an interpretation that purports to be the final one and that at last gives people the interpretive peace they yearn for. Of course, certain positivists still argue that what we call "world" does not depend on speaking. But even some views that grant speaking the central role it deserves leave creative intellectual effort out of consideration. Even if we agree that being is that which is said in various ways, we often still defer to the community as being ultimately responsible for a certain state of affairs. The sign thus acquires its most important function as an inter-subjective mediator between people and things. Eco calls this situation "contractual realism" (1997: XII).

A semiotics of intellectual effort would emphasize the inseparability of the sign from the instances of speaking that use it in an interpretive way. Such a semiotics would not reduce the world to a set of signs and rules that are statistically confirmed to the point of requiring no interpretation. Rather, a semiotics of intellectual effort takes culture as an established, already articulated environment, which is the condition for possible realization of the interpretative nature of being. The constitutive principle here is that of indeterminacy, which every mind should "bear" as an *a priori* form of hypotheticalness that transforms the environment (*Umwelt*) into a World (*Welt*). The chief actor in this semiotic triad is the individual mind, and only it can initiate communication. No collective instance can initiate communication or renew discourse. It is hard to imagine a community that would spontaneously and unanimously produce reasoning or a creative act for which no one person could take individual responsibility. Even in a crowd that rushes in the same direction, it is still possible to distinguish individual initiatives. The group (community) performs a purely sanctioning function. And the latter is unthinkable without the subject of this sanction, which is individual signifying activity. If there is no creative individuality, then there is no need of a sanctioning community. The minds that reproduce what is already acknowledged go unnoticed and are not subjected to sanctions. The disciplined scientific mind, so favored by Peirce, does not need the sanction of the scientific community, precisely because it embarks on the adventures of abduction, hypothesis, and creativity. If we take reality to be a pragmatic consensus that is culturally based on what the community has contractually agreed upon, then we cannot deny that the relationship between social sanction and the dynamic object depends on individual research initiatives and on the activities of mind. Without such initiatives, there would be nothing to sanction. Mind itself has no power over the object. Mind can guess at and reveal the object, but it cannot exercise its will on it. The mind is also dependent on the scientific community by virtue of the fact that, in order to guess the secrets of the object, it needs a linguistic environment, a science, a starting place that is a socially-accepted convention, which will help it not only to see the object, but also to place itself within a world of which the inquiry itself is a part. Thus, in the following triangle the dynamic reality is given to the mind as an immediate reality, as a function of community:



Like Peirce's, the semiotic triangle above is based on the interdependency of its elements. Neither mind, nor community, nor the dynamic reality make any sense when considered separately. If we disregard the role of mind in this process, then we are left with the model of a mechanical reality that is set in motion by regular and ever-identical principles that are reflected in a closed system of habits which enables its inhabitants to respond in an established manner. This would almost correspond to a perfectly complete encyclopaedia of the behaviorist type. But as soon as we define the encyclopaedia as a process of never-ending interpretation, and not as an established totality, we automatically bring the minds that inhabit it into play, for they are the only ones capable of self-improvement and innovation. In that case, the world we live in starts to appear as a dynamic dialogue that operates by means of the continuously interpretative, abductive, and creative actions on all levels of the social life of the minds that comprise it. Intellectual effort is the engine that powers the lazy machine and turns it into a World. To embrace this model of triadic semiosis allows us to think about the boundaries of the world we inhabit. Obviously, they do not coincide completely with the boundaries of the language through which we started uttering the world. The issue of the "resistance of being" against random discursivation is a bit more complex than Eco presents it (op. cit.: 37–41). According to him, being, as it is, resists the attempts of people to utter it as they like. However, interpreting minds and the community together form a common instance: that of human discourse. Following the above model, we can pose the problem from a different point of view, and contrast it with the interpretive mind and the general sanction of its efforts. This sanction is imposed by both the distrustful community and the "disobedient" dynamic object. From this standpoint, and assuming that the community has achieved or is in the process of achieving satisfactory interaction with its environment thanks to the interpretive initiative of minds, it can be said that to identify some things as absolutely unspeakable by being, means to be certain about the limits

of the abilities of all future minds. The examples given by Eco refer mainly to the "objective existence of species" and to acts of nature, such as the rising and setting of the sun (38). All of these are so deeply encoded in our world-views that common sense would not dare question them. But even if it is beyond my own powers, I insist on the right of some uncommon, extraordinary mind to question these things in the future, to fight on its own behalf with both the dynamic object and the transcendental sanctioner. That is to say, on the one hand I do not question the resistant nature of being, which does not leave itself at the mercy of just any discourse. But on the other hand, I cannot imagine that this resistance constrains reality in such a way as to keep me from dealing with things that have nothing to do with my actuality in the here and now. If that is the case, then I must deny the possibility of future Copernican revolutions (for example, someone discovers that the human race is an experiment produced by alien civilizations). In fact, I could not admit that anything happens beyond my own powers of imagination. All this should lead us to adopt a world-view according to which intellectual effort is a constitutive part of the world, as the result of three inseparable elements – one of them being the interpretive initiative of mind – and as an individual attitude. Such a world-view both accords with the ever-unpredictable nature of being and requires a continuous ontological commitment to it.

III. Hermeneutics of Intellectual Effort and Linguistic Work

It is now time to outline the basic features of a hermeneutics of intellectual effort. We shall do this by placing what was earlier presented as "a theory of intellectual effort" in the context of various attempts to systematize the philosophies of authors that are representative of hermeneutics. The conclusions we reached at the end of the previous chapter, derived from our interpretation of Peirce and synthesized in the figure of the triangle, provide the basis on which to outline a hermeneutics of intellectual effort, in as much as those conclusions combine the view of the interpretative nature of being with realism and human subjectivity. In our discussion of linguistic work (Part Two: Chapter I), we situated the main topic of our research within a theoretical context that is unusually rich in implications. That context further determines the possibilities for the hermeneutics to follow.

III.1. Intellectual Effort and Strong Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation, is noted for being very watchful over the status of its own discourse. As one of the most powerful critical approaches of modernity, hermeneutics casts suspicion on all existing discourses, and hermeneutic authors pay much attention to mutual criticism. Two large groups are distinguishable among hermeneutic philosophers. One group take it as their main task to outline a hermeneutic ontology; consequently, their criticism of other authors derives from this undertaking. Gadamer, Ricoeur, Taylor and Habermas (as far as he can be considered a hermeneuticist) all belong to this type. The second large group of hermeneutic writers attempt to delegitimize important authors and discourses, and eventually what in the eyes of their followers could seem as a hermeneutic ontology is just derivative of their initial care. To this group belong Rorty, Derrida, Vattimo, Lyotard, and John Caputo, among others. It should be clear that the present study has more affinity with the first group of authors, whose philosophical effort is constructive, as contrasted to the second group, where the accent is on deconstruction.

Another attempt at classification appears in Nicholas Smith's book, *Strong Hermeneutics* (1997), though Smith takes "self-identity" as the main notion by which to classify hermeneutic authors. More important for our theory of intellectual effort is the distinction Smith makes between Strong and Weak hermeneutics. This distinction addresses the constitutive role of the culturally determined identity for the cognitive process and introduces us to a particular view of subjectivity. This view risks dissolving subjectivity into a set of pure contingencies, if we ignore the obligatory interpretative coherence of the self and intellectual effort as a condition for World (II. 3. c)**.** Let us see how the two types of hermeneutics are opposed.

The starting point and common denominator of Strong and Weak hermeneutics is their mutual opposition to the powerful philosophical movement that Smith calls, borrowing an expression from Gelner, "Enlightenment fundamentalism". As we know, this disposition of thought originates in a remarkably optimistic epoch of Western culture, when Reason is credited with the emancipation of man, the consolidation of the scientific method, and determining the nature (or essence) of the human being. The Enlightenment insists on purity of knowledge, and it opposes "culture dependent, reason deficient, subjective identity to culture transcendent, rationally replete, objective cognition" (Smith 1997: 15). Such objectives are interpreted by hermeneutic and post-modern authors as attempts to hyper-legitimize Enlightenment discourse. The latter, infinitely strengthened by the scientific-technological aspect of the contemporary world, firmly holds the monopoly on Truth, thus stifling the possibility of many other alternative discourses.

Hence, the delegitimization of Enlightenment fundamentalism becomes the common task of many philosophical undertakings of our century, and especially those of hermeneutics. Strong and Weak hermeneutics, according to Smith, represent two different degrees of radicalness in this general process of delegitimization. A common goal for both is to rehabilitate the cognitive functions of interpretation, which Enlightenment thinkers long considered a faulty means of attaining real, objective knowledge (16). In contemporary discourse, however, interpretation is the only way to gain knowledge, and after the phenomenological turn in hermeneutics, it is the main means of demonstrating the impossibility of a culturally transcendent discourse (17). In this way, interpretation comes into direct confrontation with the most significant product of Enlightenment fundamentalism: scientific knowledge. Weak hermeneutics gives no priority to this kind of knowledge, but considers it one of many possibilities for describing the world. Because it is based on the idea of radical contingency (15), Weak hermeneutics cannot privilege any particular

discourse, including its own. The vocabularies that we find in the world and with which we are "condemned" to interact are contingent, as are the forces that constitute the identity of the self. Weak hermeneutics extends Nietzschean perspectivism to the point of reducing existence to an endless and goal-less process of self-creation and self-transformation (15). Smith, adapting an expression of Derrida, describes this process as an "intensification of the play of difference" (18). Gianni Vattimo sees it as the nihilistic fate of post-modernity.

Smith stresses two other aspects of Weak hermeneutics, which he in turn uses to define the "strong" branch of this discipline. To stake one's position on radical contingency undermines the possibility of anything being considered real, because to do so would "privilege the claimant's own perspective and exclude others" (16). According to Weak hermeneutics, this is how the metaphysics of Truth takes possession of discourse and gives it an extra-discursive foundation. Smith's other observation derives from this point: "Weak hermeneutics is `weak' in virtue of its radical withdrawal from *ontological commitment*" (15; my italics). Contingency, which characterizes all of our interactions with the world, excludes the possibility of any predetermined responsibility and of engagement with reality. Strong hermeneutics, by contrast, is based on the ontological commitment of subjectivity to reality. Smith uses Ricoeur's expression "ontological vehemence" to describe the quality of this commitment. This view of the human condition represents the central distinction between the two types of hermeneutics, which, as we have said, are almost identical in other aspects. This difference is central to our study, as should be obvious from my earlier use of Ricoeur's expression in defining intellectual effort (Part One: I.8 and II. 3. e).

Smith adds another way of distinguishing between the two types of hermeneutics. From the point of view of Strong hermeneutics, "human beings are inescapably beings for whom things matter" (24). This view, which Weak hermeneutics would not accept, means that despite the contingency of the world into which we are thrown, of the community we belong to, and of the language we speak, our subjectivity is possible by virtue of our non-contingent position among all those contingencies. This position is not based on culture-transcendent suppositions but, rather, results from ceaseless activities of understanding and effort. This unceasing activity is the source of the historicity of human persistence in the world. From such a standpoint, contingency not only not denies but even predetermines the necessity of this perpetually renewed interpretative effort, because, as we have seen in Part One: II.3. b), our persistence in time is characterized by a pragmatic projection that is not contingent for the subject, a position which melts future and past in the duration of consciousness. As Smith puts it, "for strong hermeneutics, interpretation is the living house of reason, not

its tomb" (19). In other words, although we cannot appeal to extra-discursive grounds for truth in our unceasing interpretative interaction with the world, we cannot ignore the ground of our interpretative activity, which is always searching for consensus. Our involvement in this form of describing the world constitutes our self-identity, and that identity is not an expression of contingency, although the circumstances that make it necessary for us to cope with them could well be contingent. "Strong hermeneutics takes its points of departure not *from the epistemological fragility of foundational truth claims*, but from the *conditions of possibility of actual interpretative practices*" (22; author's italics).

In this same line of thought, Smith outlines the attitude of Strong hermeneutics towards reality and science. This attitude coincides more or less with the Peircian model, which we saw in the previous chapter. The basic notion is that of the resistance which reality shows to our cognitive intentions. According to Strong hermeneutics, there is a criterion for progress in the dialectic of scientific hypotheses, although it is incompatible with the idea of discovered truth. Strong hermeneutics "encourages us to think of truth as the disclosure made manifest by a perspicuous articulation, rather than as a relation of correspondence between an object and some external means of representation" (ibid.). Here, as in Peirce, the relation between nature and the interpreting mind is dynamic and requires engagement.

As we mentioned before, much of Smith's book is dedicated to defending the centrality of identity for the cognitive processes, which are reduced to the logic of contingency by "weak" authors. He makes his defense by examining topics like self-identity, moral and practical reason, discursive ethics, emancipation, and ecological politics. To Smith's efforts, we can add the theory of intellectual effort, which also opens a problematic that further confirms the inconsistency of radicalizing the contingency of being. The best way to clarify this inconsistency is to examine the position of Rorty – the paragon of weak hermeneutics, according to Smith -regarding the contingency of those aspects of interaction with reality that concern our own study.

III. 2. Intelligence and Contingency

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Rorty offers an argument that spares philosophy from having to discover any kind of truth, i.e., from reflecting the nature of things. In that book he deals mostly with analytical and positivist philosophy, as well as with science itself. In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), Rorty continues the same line of thought, but now used to critique "discovery" intentions concerning the inner nature of man. Rorty shows that

moral conceptions are both historically naive and useless, when understood as human essences of the deepest level (e.g., Plato's Good, Kant's "categorical imperative"). Rorty does not offer alternative moral conceptions, because doing so would force him to commit the same error. He instead offers a new thesis on the inconsistency involved in making moral prescriptions to mankind. This inconsistency arises from the fundamental contingency of the human condition and from the inability of anyone to overcome it. Rorty applies his thesis on contingency to three different, yet interrelated, domains: language, the self, and the community. His descriptions of the problems of language agree completely with our own. When, however, Rorty applies his conclusions to descriptions of the self and of the community, some conspicuous discrepancies appear which I intend to focus on.

In discussing the contingency of language, Rorty rehearses the contemporary conception of the centrality of linguistic experience for human persistence in world, opposing it to those views which appeal to extra-linguistic substances. He accentuates the fact that truth is a matter of sentences, not of the things themselves (6). In contrast to Galileo, Rorty thinks that nature speaks no language, not even the language of mathematics. Languages are an entirely human affair and are therefore subject to historicity and to the finitude of man. Thus, Rorty concentrates on the dynamics of the vocabularies with which we describe the world. He attributes a central role to the ability of language to function in a metaphorical way, and thus to be always renewing itself and overcoming the limits of its own system. This characteristic of Language, in the large, is not determined by any goal towards which each new particular language brings us closer. Rather, it is the ideal environment in which "conversation goes on". And that conversation is guided by the interests and exigencies of the community, which exercises its choice in a strictly pragmatic way.

On that basis Rorty considers the fate of the self, which to him is as contingent as our "choice" of the moment and the linguistic community in which we are born. According to Rorty, fundamental contingency motivates the individual authors of redescriptions, for which language is the necessary condition. In his utopian liberal community, the "hero" is the "strong" poet (54). The latter is that ironic individual who understands the contingency of being and is able to re-create himself through metaphors, yet without being able to envision the result of his efforts. According to Rorty,

> "[...] the person who uses words as they have never before been used, is best able to appreciate her own contingency. For she can see, more clearly than the continuity-seeking historian, critic or philosopher, that her *language* is as contingent as her parents or as her historical epoch. She can appreciate the force of the claim that

> `truth is a mobile army of metaphors' because, by her own sheer strength, she has broken out of one perspective, one metaphoric into another." (28; author's italics)

The same human beings of which Rorty speaks are also the heroes of intellectual effort, whom I called at the beginning of this study (Part One: I.9.), using Foucault's expression, "founders of discoursivity". I also placed the metaphorical faculty at the base of the problem, but where Rorty sees contingency, I see intellectual effort. In terms of Niels Bohr's famous aphorism, I should preserve the proportion that genius is 99% labor and 1% fortune, whereas the Rorty of *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* would not hesitate to give 100% to fortune (contingency) and 0% to labor. By mediating the difference of opinion between Rorty and Bohr, the theory of intellectual effort can contribute to the cause of Strong hermeneutics.

I chose Rorty, and not some other authority of Weak hermeneutics, because, unlike the others, the American pragmatist speaks directly about the individual faculty for metaphor, and even gives some explanations of it. For most authors of Weak hermeneutics, conclusions about the character of language are vaguely identified with the constitution of the self through the formula "the limits of the language are the limits of the world". In contrast, Rorty makes the analogy very explicit. He compares the natural and contingent way in which different forms of life appear with the birth of metaphors:

> "Analogously, for all we know, or should care, Aristotle's metaphorical use of *ousia*, Saint Paul's metaphorical use of *agape*, and Newton's metaphorical use of *gravitas*, were the results of cosmic rays scrambling the fine structure of some crucial neurons in their respective brains. Or, more plausibly, they were the result of some odd episodes in infancy – some obsessional kinks, left in these brains by idiosyncratic traumata. It hardly matters how the trick was done. The results were marvelous. There had never been such a thing before." (17; author's italics)

This is the worst passage of the whole book. Its naïveté – which is not dispelled by the author's declaration of irony – reveals one of the unsolved problems of Weak hermeneutics. A thorough redescription of the order of things was needed in order to reveal the horizons of post-modern thought, and it was done by exceptionally penetrating authors like Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty, Lyotard, Deleuze, Vattimo and others, all of whom exercised extraordinary argumentative ability. All of them have contributed to the overturn of the Western metaphysical tradition by means of their important and profound discourses, which, however, aim to delegitimize the importance and profundity of any discourse. This contradiction in Rorty is expressed by the naïve move to reduce the whole contribution of an author to the metaphorical use of a single word, or a single metaphor at most! This seems a little strange, to say the least,

because a few pages earlier Rorty is in a similar situation, but there he finds the opposite solution. When he needs to defend the constructed character of truth, he states that, on the level of a single sentence, this is hard to demonstrate, but if we take a look at the "vocabularies as wholes" (5) then it is easy to see that we can hardly attribute more truthfulness to one epoch than to another. It seems to me that the contributions of Aristotle, St. Paul, and Newton cannot be captured by a single metaphor, but rather concern entirely new worlds and new forms of discursivity. To realize these worlds a permanent effort is necessary, as was the research, struggle, preaching, and sacrifice of the authors. Contingency might have thrown them into their respective life-situations, but contingency ends there. Then comes the 99% work required to create and "maintain" the worlds which they have opened up and which millions of other people have entered. The ontological commitment of those founders of discoursivity demands similar commitment from their followers. In the same way, contemporary post-modern authors spark in their followers an ontological commitment to the current situation, no matter how much they deny ontologies!

To summarize: human interaction with the world is not mediated exclusively by language, which is utterly contingent. Our actions are determined as well by the linguistic practice of people who set the example of persisting in a linguistic world. This state of affairs is not a result of contingency, but of the purposefulness and burden of the unending necessity to cope with and understand whatever situation in which we find ourselves.

III.3. Ontological Commitment as Intelligence

Until now we have spoken mostly about geniuses and founders of discursivity, but intellectual effort concerns all levels of society. In Rorty's utopian liberal community the hero is the revolutionary poet who understands better than others do the contingency of being. I should say that this very hero is invested with ontological commitment to reality, and that his/her comprehension of the contingency "by her own sheer strength" (28) derives from that intense ontological commitment, and not vice versa. What triggers this process is the ontological vehemence to say the world in new ways, and not the intuitions of a few after that new world has been realized. Thus ontological vehemence is a regime of intellectual effort that involves a variety of people. It is not clear why ontological vehemence is more contingent in certain people than in others, but we can say definitely that, as a result, some people gather more followers than others do. These people can be great thinkers and statesmen, but they can also be creators of fashion or local opinion leaders. In one way or another, the

communicative worlds such leaders open both welcome and shelter their followers. And what maintains these worlds is effort and creation, not contingency. This is the exact opposite of what Rorty thinks; for him, our choice of hero is merely contingent (81).

Our thesis on ontological commitment runs the great risk of being interpreted as a way of ranking people according to their "good" traits. At first glance we seem to repeat the gesture of proponents of the IQ test (see Bankov 1999), which, as we know, is one of the most controversial themes in psychology and philosophy. IQ tests have provided "scientific" grounds for the logo- and egocentrism of Western culture in such a degree that, with good reason, all significant contemporary currents of thought are infinitely suspicious of them. This is especially true of all hermeneutics that, by pointing to negative consequences, critically denounce the naturalization and universalization of Western metaphysics. The history of the so-called Intelligence Quotient, for its part, is the history of the discovery of irrefutable "scientific" proofs that support probably the most daring pretension of Western man – that he is superior to the other races.

Given these circumstances, in the remaining pages I shall try to outline the hermeneutic valence of ontological commitment to reality in a way that will distinguish it completely from the IQ controversy. At the same time, we shall not do so by accepting the radical contingency of the self. In fact, Rorty's chapter on the contingency of the self could be interpreted precisely as a delegitimization of the claim that there are substantial differences between human beings. Rorty's main ally for that purpose is Freud. Rorty sides with Philip Rieff, who claims that Freud "democratized genius by giving everyone the creative unconscious" (36). In the quoted passage by Rorty, on the metaphorical use of words, we saw one version of this statement. It is completed by the generalization which Rorty makes about the whole metaphysical disposition towards the Other:

> "To abjure the notion of the `truly human' is to abjure the attempt to divinize the self as a replacement for a divinized world [...] It is to get rid of the last citadel of necessity, the last attempt to see us as all confronting the same imperatives, the same unconditional claims" (35).

The democratization of genius, and of the human faculties in general, which Rorty accomplishes with the introduction of contingency, could be seen more realistically from the point of view of effort and labor. (Bohr's aphorism is a perfect example of such democratization, though at first glance it might seem laden with Western values.) In other words, if we must explain the obvious fact that there are always persons whose example we want to follow, be they philosophers, moralists, or plain professionals, i.e., people whose world is rich

and large enough to open existential horizons for us which we could never reach on our own, and if we avoid expressions such as "God's elect", then we have two possibilities: either we imagine them as people who dedicate their life to maintaining their world, or as fortuitous combinations of metaphors that win us as followers in a purely contingent way.

To avoid contingency, and at the same time not label people as "more real" and "less real" human beings, we need to accept that ontological commitment is not something which one possesses, for instance, somewhere in his brain. This mistake is as evident in those who explain intelligence by genetic predisposition (the basis of scientific racism) as it is in those with exactly the opposite intention, but who, like Rorty, reduce the problem to convolutions (17) that appear contingently.

Stephen Jay Gould's book, *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981), provides great support for our defense of ontological commitment. It is an exhaustive account of attempts in the last two centuries to measure human intelligence. The very title signals Gould's intent. If Rorty's polemic for the "democratization of the human faculties" is directed against Plato and Kant, who did nothing bad in their lives, Gould polemicizes against the reification of the worst of that tradition of thought to whom both thinkers belong. *The Mismeasure of Man* gives an account of the very deep prejudice that propounds a natural hierarchy among human races. Such prejudice has predetermined the results of scientific attempts to create an objective system for measuring human faculties, and, bolstered by Enlightenment fundamentalism, it has become a part of contemporary thought. Without being explicitly philosophical, Gould's inquiry resembles phenomenological investigation, not of someone's abstract thoughts, but of theories that have influenced such important institutions as the US Congress, Army, and Supreme Court. The earnestness, scientific rigor, and moral charge of Gould's investigation of prejudice make his work *anathema* to all those views which we called Weak hermeneutics.

For present purposes, the most important part of the book is where Gould argues his conception of human intelligence and its dialectic with external reality. The whole book is based on the idea that there is a dimension of man which can be called intelligence. This dimension is the most distinctive feature of the human species. As an evolutionist, Gould connects this feature with the necessity of living organisms, like us, to adapt themselves to the environment (Bergson calls this principle *Primum vivere*). But his thesis differs from that of orthodox Darwinists, and even more from that of the Lamarkians, because of the role he attributes to genetic heritage. Without resorting to the concept of contingency, Gould opposes the idea that man is completely predetermined biologically. For

Gould, intelligence encompasses such a large range of elements of existence that any attempt to measure and reduce it to a simple number is a doomed exercise in oversimplification. He casts the matter in a different light: "The quest for underlying generating rules expresses a concept of biological potentiality" (1981: 330). This potentiality is something which can be assumed by, but cannot be separated from, the elements that accomplish it. Hence, it is more important to accomplish this potential than to assume it. And the accomplishment has something to do with learning. "Humans are learning animals" (333). The learning aspect of intelligence shows it to be a product of effort and work. Indeed, IQ tests were initially conceived by their inventor Binet to help identify children with learning-difficulties. Paradoxically, the people responsible for implementing the tests on a broad scale, especially in the United States, have interpreted and imposed those tests as a system of labeling and, consequently, of limiting the opportunities of the children and adults who take them (152). For Binet, intelligence is what the individual achieves when he is placed in an equal starting position with the others. It is a function of education and work, and the tests serve only to detect those cases where help is needed in order for this process to begin normally. As we have seen, ontological commitment and linguistic work are part of the learning process and of the growth of the world we live in.

Gould introduces creativity into the picture of intelligence, a move which brings him closer to the purposes of this study: "What is intelligence, if not the ability to face problems in an unprogrammed (or, as we often say, creative) manner?" (331). The whole conception of Gould about evolution is in this sense: "in neoteny, rates of development slow down and juvenile stages of ancestors become the adult features of descendants.... We retain not only the anatomical stamp of childhood, but its mental flexibility as well" (333). In Part One, II. 3. c) we took mental flexibility to make the difference between inhabiting a World (*Welt*) and living in an Environment (*Umwelt*).

Now I can more clearly define my version of ontological commitment. Like intelligence, as defined by Gould, it is the prerequisite for a World. At the same time, ontological commitment requires us to throw ourselves into and try to carry out some vital project, and not just react mechanistically to stimuli.

Autonomy, understanding, care, interpretative effort, education, memory – all these characteristics of human existence are at the same time the World in which we live and the purposeful work of enriching it by the disclosure and adoption of new horizons. This dynamic process, which constitutes the ontological commitment to reality, contains much more than pure contingency.

IV. Conclusions

IV. 1. Intellectual Effort and Truth

To conclude this study I would like to make some remarks on the limits of my interpretation of the Bergsonian idea of intellectual effort. We have to consider the hermeneutic circle in which anyone is caught who wants to build a theory of interpretation. On the one hand, we identified intellectual effort with "the debut of the human spirit" as an escape from the permanent present, into time and the duration of consciousness. On the other hand, many precautions were taken to stress the partiality of our discourse, that it belongs to a private perspective only. From a logical-deductive point of view this contradiction renders the whole study completely senseless. Yet I would like to defend the idea that the hermeneutic circle is not a "vicious" one; it is useful to those who travel it, though it may not bring them to any particular destination. In contrast to Weak hermeneutics (Part Two: III.1.) and to any form of nihilism and relativism, in the theory of intellectual effort man's search for truth starts when he begins to think, i.e., when he interrupts his mechanical reproduction of socially coded forms of behavior and communication. Man always journies toward somewhere, although in the last century he has realized that he cannot reach the "Promised Land". In my view, every specific truth exists until the contrary is proved, in the same way in which "things matter" (Smith 1997: 24) for the man of Strong hermeneutics. For the theory of intellectual effort this "proof of the contrary" is of greater interest than is the defense of the reigning truth. In this balance lies the core of the question: in my view, disagreement with an accepted truth is not a reason to deny truth at all, but is a stimulus for producing (inventing) something more adequate. In this way the value of truth is increased and not decreased. Contemporary hermeneutic discourse concerns the underlying difficulty of dealing with truth; it does not proclaim that it is senseless to presuppose truth. With Gadamer, I say that truth does not endure in time, but that it has to be produced again and again, although always from the same "material", which he calls tradition. Truth perishes as snowballs do: they melt, but only after they have hit the target. Something like that takes place in the movement around the hermeneutic circle: if only in passing, something "makes

sense".

Truth, says Rorty, is inherent to sentences, not to things themselves. There is no truth in things; truth is a matter of language. I should add that truth is also inherent to speech, to interpretative effort, to language in action, and these require a mind. Truth is made up of language, but language alone is not enough. Someone must make an effort to make language speak. Moreover, this act of speech is not a single case. Temporality does not permit identical speech acts. The mechanical repetition of a speech act produces different results each time because the hermeneutic (dialogic) situation never repeats itself exactly. Given these circumstances, the function of mind is to produce identical results, which guarantee language-use adequate to the occasion.

Although borne by language, mind is something more. It is Language(s) + Rules for its use + Adequacy. If we take for granted that time is always change, and that its course leaves a trace, then the component of adequacy takes on a decisive role. In order to produce sensible communication, in order to understand, the mind needs, besides language and the rules for its use, the certainty that in the just-born, unique situation the chosen signs and their use are optimal. There are no rules for determining the certainty of this choice. If it were possible to establish new rules for the proper use of existing rules, then the problem would arise again with the lack of certainty for the choice of new rules. Even Kant knew this (1881: 245).

The faculty to struggle with time, to respond adequately to its constitutive novelty, I have called *ontological commitment to reality*. This ontological commitment constrains man to exist in a regime of intellectual effort. Ontological commitment calls for the permanent doubt that maybe things are not what inertia and routine have conditioned us to identify as always the same. Ontological commitment is the ongoing intellectual work by which we apply our world – as sense and meaning – to our determined social functions, to which we are all condemned in one way or another.

Social functions, as interactions between people, call for a transfer of our ontological commitment to reality. From the point of view of the theory of intellectual effort, social communications cannot be reduced to the exchange of signs and knowledge. Rather, we are looking for authorities, from whom we get not so much knowledge or know-how, but the discursive horizons on which to focus our interpretative existence. Authority gives us a world to dispose of and relieves us partially from ontological commitment. It is something more than the author of a definite number of ready-made truths. This authority gives meaning to being and discloses the horizons within which our interpretative effort and understanding achieve truth.

This kind of interaction is evident in the case of moral and religious authorities. In these cases the follower is limited to a single leader. But my view is that this kind of transfer of ontological commitment concerns all levels of society. In philosophy, in science, in arts and in crafts, intellectual growth always goes hand in hand with the *use* of authority. This authority is more than one, and it continuously changes in composition. Nevertheless it is authority and not simply encyclopaedic knowledge. The following anecdote about Hegel is instructive here: after some hours of listening to the philosopher explain truth, one student got up and asked: "And yet, what is truth?" To which Hegel replied, "I am the truth!" (Denkov et al. 1991: 277). Truth, according to my version of Strong hermeneutics, is given to us by those whom we choose for authorities, but with the condition that we make the effort to reproduce it every time. The difference between us and Hegel is that it barely crossed his mind that his truth was worthy only for those who had chosen him as an authority, and not for all human beings.

IV. 2. Intellectual Effort and Otherness

The hermeneutics of intellectual effort directly relates to the ethics of Otherness. This ethics does not pertain to the egoistic ontological vehemence that searches for new existential horizons in authorities. Rather, this ethics concerns the permeability of our world, the readiness to accept the Other in it, with all the inconveniences this may bring us. As we saw in Part Two: Chapter I, our world is not just a verbally articulated picture of what surrounds us. Rather, our world is the result of considerable linguistic work to absorb the surrounding culture, and the effective and up-to-date use of that work constitutes our role in providing for needs of the community. The acceptance of Otherness stands in contradiction to all "economical" principles of thought. Otherness might question everything that linguistic work has achieved. The pragmatic efficiency of our cognitive picture of the world is based on the facility with which we are able to identify what we perceive as the "same". To accept Otherness is to renounce this pragmatic comfort. The acceptance of Otherness is a way of "administering" our personal world in a way that threatens our cognitive certainty. The acceptance of Otherness is openness and care; it is ontological commitment in action. *Otherness and the necessity of intellectual effort are one and the same thing.*

I have spoken about the Otherness of the future (Part One II. 3. b) and the Otherness of material reality (Part One II. 1. 0), II. 2.). In both cases, Otherness was the distinctive feature of two intellectual regimes. The first one is that of

identification, deduction, and stimulus-response, whose goal is the achievement of sameness. The second regime is that of interpretation, effort, and risk, whose ideal is openness towards the Other. We conceived the Otherness of the future in accordance with Bergson's concept of the duration of time as "the continuous creation of unforeseeable novelty" (CM 91). The Otherness of material reality was outlined on the basis of Peirce's concept of the dynamic object. It remains for us to say some words about Otherness *par excellence*: the Otherness of the other person.

The most important difference between this and the other two types of Otherness lies in the consequences of disregarding them. If man remains a stranger to the Otherness of the future, in the worst case his life will be uninteresting. The future will always be a repetition that confirms his conviction that things are the way they are. The consequences of ignoring the Otherness of the dynamic object are similar: man anchors himself to a single perspective, which guarantees him confidence and control at the expense of what Rorty calls irony and contingency. In both cases, the consequences are pragmatic. In contrast, when the Otherness of the other person is ignored, the consequences are ethical and moral. This means that when we identify the other person we project on him a type which either underestimates or overestimates him. In either case, effort, understanding, and interpretation are suspended. But this is also the biggest challenge. Though the Otherness of the other man may negate intellectual capacities, we owe it to him to make contact with the Otherness of his material-pragmatic interaction with the world. And we also should make contact with the Otherness of the enduring time in which his existence unfolds. The Otherness of the other person is something like the product of the other two types of Otherness; hence the great temptation to relieve ourselves from it through the use of labels and stereotypes. A particularly indicative example of man's necessity to label and catalogue others is the story of the IQ, which we saw in the previous chapter. Racism, xenophobia, chauvinism, and such are practices of stereotyping that absolve us from the effort we owe to the Other, and that spare us from the shock of confronting and accepting a world whose boundaries are infinite.

On the other hand, to care for everyone equally is obviously impossible. This is only an ideal. In reality, people accept being labeled and catalogued, and the impressive thing is that this is the norm of behavior when it opens possibilities instead of closing them. Sometimes being overestimated stimulates us to further effort, so as not to disappoint expectations.

IV. 3. The Society of Consumption

and the Twilight of Efforts

Self-identification follows the same strategy by which the identification of the Other as a predetermined type relieves us of effort. Self-identification is also aided by conventional typologies, when it becomes necessary to overcome an unfavorable situation for the self. Ready-made types, once chosen by the self, relieve it from the duty of constantly having to make choices – the duty which I call ontological commitment. A thorough investigation of the strategies which the self uses to escape risk and effort can be found in Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941). In the present context we might speak of an "escape from Otherness", which represents the same problem, but from the point of view of the ethics of intellectual effort.

Escape from Freedom was written in the context of the disastrous totalitarian regimes in Europe that brought on World War II. The proper context for the ethics of intellectual effort is that of advanced consumer societies. It seems to me that this latest phase of Western culture, or as Vattimo calls it, "realized metaphysics", is not so much characterized by the dominant role of positivist science and technology as it is by marketing and consumerism. If the great scientific discoveries of the last century found their outlet in industrialization, then we are definitely in a new phase now. Three different types of interaction may be observed between production and the market. In the earliest phases, the industrial product was so superior in quality and price to that of the craftsman, that the only problem was to manufacture those products in sufficient quantity. Scientific progress and the improvement of technologies soon solved this problem, and then the accent went to logistics and sales. Both of these phases were based on the efficiency of machines and the scale of production, although in the second case they resulted in new problems. Both phases sought to transform technologies into capital. But if positivist science is considered to be the prime accomplishment of Western metaphysics, and society based on mass use of technology as its final phase, then this picture leaves out the current role of market thinking. Of course, technology still engenders capital. But the difference today is in the logic by which technology reaches the consumer. If earlier the variables were efficiency of production and marketing logistics, now the unknown is the consumer and his needs. This is the current phase of marketing thought: the entire strategy of production is based on thorough research of consumer needs. In this phase, technology is "officially" subservient to the needs of the consumer. But what reveals the real scale of importance of that logic does not concern only the material production. Already, marketing orientation has become the winning model of the whole social space. The

corporate definition of marketing is quite revealing. As defined by the American Marketing Association in 1985, "Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchange that satisfy individual and organizational objectives". Many institutions that have nothing to do with the implementation of technology follow the logic of marketing. These are not only non-political and non-governmental organizations, but also entire state apparatuses and even some free-thinkers. Scientific institutes, which have become more and more autonomous in recent times, are also constrained to find funds in a purely marketing way, which, of course, influences the content of research. Nowadays even the myth of science has to advertise and promote itself if it wants to survive!

Marketing has been transformed into a kind of social sensibility, for which there are more and more formulae and theories today. Illustrative of my point is the so-called "dematerialization" of demand. This process makes the value of goods more symbolic and communicative and less aimed at satisfying the material needs. The consumer pays for the brand, the sign, not so much for the product itself. This situation is possible because of the new "culture of consumption", as it has been called in recent decades.

The metaphysics in force today is this very culture of consumption, more so than the technological web that surrounds us. From my "Western" point of view there is something truly universal in the logic of satisfying needs. It is as if the "universal" goal is to live without effort. And marketing promises to do away with the need for effort. Consumption not only resolves our pragmatic problems in everyday life, guaranteeing a kind of comfort in the face of the future, but its communicative code gives the self many possibilities, such as the use of the consumer portfolio to identify both the Other and ourselves. The move to do away with efforts is all-encompassing. The marketing of services has become so pervasive that now with enough money we can avoid the effort of performing many "existential" activities. Agencies find us husbands and wives. Companies create the identities of clients by developing their "images". Some businesses help their clients to graduate from academic programs without making any (intellectual) effort. Other companies provide wars to their clients, even wars of national liberation! The limits of the supply of services are the limits of the imagination of those who provide them.

In this model there is something truly universal. While we philosophers discuss how people in different cultures live in different worlds, even the most remote places on the planet are becoming markets for Western goods. Representatives of all the different cultures are seduced by the outward

attractiveness of this model. In the most literal sense, people of all ethnic origins are "selling their souls" and their dignity to gain access to the culture of consumption, which is the myth of a life without effort. The symbolic value of goods is universally understood better than any work of art or political idea. Yet for total commercial globalization to take place, the resistance of different cultures to perceived homogenization must be overcome. And what has more "universal" appeal to consumers everywhere than the guarantee of having to do nothing at all? We may well be witnessing the twilight of all efforts – intellectual ones included.

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