

# Transmission of Creativity: An Essay on the Aesthetics of Henri Bergson

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## Introduction

According to interviews given in the 1910s, Henri Bergson (1859-1941), after his third main work *Creative Evolution* (1907), was strongly concerned about art [1]. His last main work *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), published twenty-five years after *Evolution*, is not a book on aesthetics, indeed; but even in his last years Bergson still showed his interest in art [2]. The aim of this paper is to clarify why he was concerned about art in the early twentieth century [3]. To achieve this purpose, we will have to be attentive to Bergson's inclination towards the problem of God after *Evolution*, and how it affected his philosophy, especially his concept of <intuition>.

## 1. Survey of *Creative Evolution*

First of all, we are going to take a glance at the principal points of *Evolution* and its fragmentary passages on art.

### 1-1. <élan de vie>

In order to elucidate the philosophical significance of evolution, Bergson resorts to his own concept of personality. For Bergson, personality is nothing but "duration," which means "prolongation of the past into the actual," or "continuous progress of the past which gnaws the future and which swells while moving forward" (E.C., 498); so he regards personality, constantly growing through <duration>, as "creation of oneself by oneself" (E.C., 500). In a similar fashion, he approaches the problem of evolution in the light of <duration>.

Taking evolution to be a continuous process in which life in general becomes increasingly "indeterminate" and "free" (E.C., 602), Bergson suggests that it is driven by "an internal pushing power" (E.C., 581). He names this power "élan de vie [impulse of life]," and defines it in terms of "demand for creation," that is, the demand for more and more "indetermination" or "liberty," whereas what goes against such a "movement" he calls it "matter," that is "necessity itself" (E.C., 708). In this way, evolution is a single duration driven by the <élan de vie>, the demand for creation. Furthermore, Bergson says that "humankind continues [...] indefinitely the vital movement" (E.C., 720-721); thus, he conceives personality as the "end" or "goal" of evolution (E.C., 720).

### 1-2. Artistic Creation and Artistic Cognition

In *Evolution*, art is related to the points just mentioned in two ways.

Firstly, when he deals with personality and life in the light of <duration>, Bergson refers to art. In his opinion, the process by which an artist creates “an image by pulling it from the bottom of his soul” is “the progress of a thought which changes as it is embodied”; in short, it is nothing but “duration” that “creates itself” (E.C., 783). He compares art, therefore, not only to personality but also to being in general (E.C., 499-500, 783).

Secondly, he refers to a kind of cognition that is peculiar to artists. Bergson considers <intuition>, i.e. cognition from inside, to be indispensable for the study of life, and mentions, to illustrate his point, the way artists perceive. While most people’s “normal perception” grasps “traits of living things” (E.C., 645) only “from outside” (E.C., 642), artists with an “aesthetic faculty” “seat themselves inside the object by a kind of sympathy,” and grasp the “simple movement” which organically “binds up” various traits; so, artistic perception is for sure <intuition> (E.C., 645). Indeed, Bergson admits that “like external perception, this aesthetic intuition [...] only reaches the individual.” At the same time, however, he insists that philosophy, “oriented in the same direction as art,” can “take for object life in general,” “just as physical science, in following to the end the direction pointed out by external perception, prolongs into general laws the individual facts” (E.C., 645) [4].

Thus in *Evolution*, Bergson refers to two aspects of art, which he both relates to the principal points of his philosophy [5].

## 2. Bergson’s Thought after *Creative Evolution*

### 2-1. Problem of God

What kind of problem attracted Bergson after *Evolution*? According to the *Interviews with Bergson* [6] compiled together by Chevalier, although the French philosopher took the notion of <élan de vie> as an important achievement of *Evolution*, he expressed regrets, on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1926, that in *Evolution* he had not discussed the problem of God [7], i.e. the origin of the “élan.” He declared that to be able to inquire into this subject it is necessary to “dig into the moral problem [8]”. Earlier on, he also told Chevalier on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1911 that he tried to “dig into the fundamental notion of *Creative Evolution*” “from a moral viewpoint [9].” On top of that, in a letter dated February 20<sup>th</sup> 1912 addressed to De Tonquédec, he wrote that “it is necessary to set about [...] the moral problems” with a view to grappling with the problem of God (M., 964). In a word, as early as the beginning of the 1910s, in order to face the problem of God, not fully discussed in *Evolution*, Bergson begins to deepen his own philosophy from a moral standpoint [10].

But why morality? We can guess why from the article “Consciousness and Life” (1919)[11]. Just like in *Evolution*, Bergson sees in human beings “the creation of oneself by oneself, the enlargement of the personality by an effort which draws out much from little, something from nothing, and adds incessantly to the richness in the world,” and says “the vital movement is continued” by them (E.S., 833). In addition, however, in this article he mentions moral innovators who, themselves “generous,” make other people also generous through the “inventive heroism,” and asserts that attention paid to those innovators, who are nothing but “creator[s] of excellence,” will certainly lead to the origin of life, or God (E.S., 834). Thus, when he

chooses the moral viewpoint, Bergson bears such moral innovators in mind.

## 2-2. Kinship between Morality and Art

Interestingly, it is precisely in the early 1910s that Bergson eagerly talks about art, as stated above. When he begins to pay attention to moral innovators, he confesses that he is strongly attracted to art, pointing out the “kinship” between the aesthetic and the moral [12]. In spite of what he says in interviews, he doesn’t express his concern about art in philosophical writings. But it is all the same undeniable that he focuses on morality bearing moral innovators in mind, and that he actually highlights the kinship between morality and art; then isn’t it reasonable to suppose that his interest in art is closely related to his concerns with moral innovators?

To answer this question, we have to refer to *The Two Sources*, his only main work after *Evolution* [13].

In *The Two Sources*, Bergson refers to a “work of genius,” which is capable of reforming the “conception of art” and transforming “the public taste” “through its mere presence,” even though “disconcert[ing] at first.” According to him, this “force” comes from the fact that the work “has imprinted” upon the public the “élan” which was “communicated to it by the artist,” or rather which is “the very [élan] of the artist, invisible and present in it” (D.S., 1038). In short, a work of genius is powerful when it mediates the transmission of the élan from the artist to the public.

Bergson here refers to a work of genius for the purpose of turning readers’ attention to the analogy between artistic creation and moral innovation. In other pages, he talks about mystics, considered to be superior moral innovators (D.S., 1203), as follows: “[the] direction [of mystic love] is the very one of the élan de vie; [...] [mystic love] is that élan itself, communicated integrally to the privileged people who in their turns would imprint it upon the entire humanity” (D.S., 1174). We can see a remarkable similarity between a work of genius and a mystic, of which we shall give a closer observation later; while the former imprints the artist’s élan upon the public, the latter imprints the <élan de vie> upon the whole humankind. Both of them mediate the transmission of the élan.

Judging from above, it is fairly certain that we can hear from *The Two Sources* the echoes of Bergson’s concern about art in the 1910s in parallel to morality. So we shall investigate *The Two Sources*, taking notice of the similarity between a work of genius and a mystic, or rather between the two relationships respectively formed through each of them.

## 3. Work of Genius in *Laughter*

Before investigating *The Two Sources*, we should look at earlier works to examine the passages where Bergson talks about the work of genius and the relationship formed through it. We shall here only focus on *Laughter* (1900) because of space limitation [14].

In *Laughter*, Bergson discusses the cognitive aspect of art solely, not its creative dimension. That is, he discusses the “purity of perception” which “includes a rupture with the useful convention, a natural disinterest [...] of the sense or the consciousness, in the end [...] a certain

immateriality” (R., 462). Ordinary people see only the “useful” side of things and miss “reality” itself, because they “have to live” anyway (R., 459). According to Bergson, however, artists are “detached from the life” by nature, so they “see all the things in their original purity” (R., 461). Only artists, free from concerns about utility, grasp reality itself.

As for the works made by these artists, Bergson discusses them from a similar standpoint to that of *The Two Sources*. However “singular” it may be, a work of art will sooner or later be admitted to be “true,” “if it bears the mark of genius”; for, according to Bergson, such a work has “a power [...] of conversion,” so this “example” “forces us to imitate” the artist’s “effort [...] to see sincerely” (R., 465). Thus, as early as in *Laughter*, Bergson mentions the work of genius, and maintains that through this example a certain immaterial way of life, that is, a mode of perception by which reality itself is attained, is “communicated” (R., 465).

#### 4. Change in his conception of <Intuition> after *Creative Evolution*

Now let us turn to the change in his conception of <intuition> after *Evolution*. In *Laughter*, when he refers to the way artists percept, Bergson just briefly compares it to philosophical cognition [15]. Then in the article “Introduction to Metaphysics”(1903), he suggests <intuition> as a philosophical method for the first time. In *Evolution*, Bergson still sticks to the definition he gives in the “Introduction.” However, we find that his conception of <intuition> changes as he digs into the problem of God.

##### 4-1. Two Aspects of <Intuition>

Let us first compare two articles; “Introduction to Metaphysics,” where, as noted above, Bergson refers to <intuition> for the first time, and “Philosophical Intuition” (1911), where he talks again about the subject of <intuition>, which corresponds to the time (i.e. the 1910s) when he begins to show a real interest in the idea of God.

In his “Introduction,” Bergson defines <intuition> in terms of the cognition to grasp an object through “the sympathy by which we transport ourselves inside an object” (P.M., 1395). And he asserts that <intuition> can be applied to any object, whether internal or external; for he believes it possible to “imagine” even “an external reality” as if in “mobility”(P.M., 1420), on the model of “reality” which we surely capture “from inside,” that is, “our own person in its flow through time” (P.M., 1396). We can see that the “Introduction” is on the one hand the extension of *Laughter*, and the forerunner of *Evolution* on the other hand.

In the last pages of the article, however, Bergson abruptly broaches a certain analogy between philosophy and literature. He compares the philosophical intuition to an “impulse,” received when “seated with a single stroke at the very heart of the subject” during “literary composition”; according to him, this impulse, i.e. “simplicity itself,” shows us “a direction of movement [16].” Thus, in composing, “we have only to let [it] go” after receiving it (P.M., 1431). In the earlier pages where <intuition> is defined as cognition from inside, Bergson never pointed out such an impulsive element. We can therefore acknowledge that he suddenly introduced at this stage a new element [17].

In “Philosophical Intuition,” eight years after his “Introduction,” Bergson argues that even

a highly complicated philosophy just attempts to express “the simplicity of its original intuition” (P.M., 1347), and he regards <intuition>, which is “a contact rather than a vision,” as an “impulse” that urges philosophers’ writing (P.M., 1350). Moreover, whereas <intuition> is defined in terms of its impulsive element (P.M., 1361) [18], the idea of cognition from inside is only touched upon a little in the last pages (P.M., 1363-1365).

Thus, the impulsive element of <intuition>, which is hardly mentioned in his “Introduction” where Bergson attaches greater importance to the idea of cognition from inside, becomes later central in “Philosophical Intuition.” Since both elements are referred to in each article, we cannot argue that there was a radical change in his conception of <intuition >. But it seems reasonable to highlight that there was at least a shift of emphasis. Having said this, “Philosophical Intuition” was published in the early 1910s, when Bergson began to focus on the problem of God, as stated above. Was then the shift of emphasis influenced by his tackling the problem of God?

#### 4-2. <Intuition> and the Problem of God

In fact, Bergson tried in the early 20th century to redesign his conceptions of <intuition> in relation to God in a systematic way. We can see this by comparing [19] his “Introduction to Metaphysics” with the “Introduction” of the *The Creative Mind* (1934), already completed in January 1922 [20].

In “Introduction to Metaphysics,” making reference to the “tension” in <duration> (P.M., 1417), Bergson likens the range of different durations characterized by their particular degree of tension to the “spectrum” of colors. He lists various kinds of durations from “eternity,” made of maximum tension, to “pure repetition,” a duration with minimum tension (P.M., 1419). Thus, depending on the degree of <tension>, Bergson identifies various durations, which are nothing but the objects of philosophical intuition.

In the “Introduction” of *The Creative Mind*, Bergson says that “the pure change, the real duration, is a spiritual thing or impregnated with spirituality,” and maintains that <intuition> aims at “the participation in spirituality” with regard to any object (P.M., 1274). In brief, he systemizes the range of <intuition> according to the degrees of participation in spirituality. The point to notice here is that in the same context he states that “we would rather talk about divinity, if we didn’t know that something human is still mixed in our consciousness, even purified and spiritualized” (*ibid.*). When he resorts to spirituality, Bergson actually thinks of divinity. Of course, already in the “Introduction to Metaphysics,” where he identifies <intuitions> according to their degree of <tension> and where he puts eternity, which is obviously associated with God, at the extremity of the spectrum of <tensions>, Bergson is in fact invoking divinity. Generally speaking, however, the choice of expressions vividly reflects the interest of a writer.

It follows from what has been said that Bergson, while tackling the problem of God, comes to redesign his conceptions of <intuition> accordingly. But is this rearrangement really tied up with the shift of emphasis mentioned above? The article “The Possible and the Real” (1930), based on the 1920 lecture [21], offers the key to answering this question. According to the last pages of this article, whoever witnesses the “real gush of unpredictable novelty”

through time feels “stronger,” for, as a result of the contact with the “moving” reality “invented before [his or her] eyes,” he or she becomes aware of the “Master” behind it, i.e., God; then he or she is willing to get free from the subjection to “natural necessities,” and as a “creator of [himself or herself],” which probably means the person who enlarges his or her personality through <duration>, he or she is willing to “participate” “in the great work of creation which is at the origin and which is continued before our eyes” (P.M., 1344-1345). We can consider that as far as recognizing the gush of novelty through <duration> is concerned, Bergson certainly deals with <intuition> in these pages albeit outside the philosophical context. If that is the case, by relating <intuition> to awareness of God Bergson invokes the power that such an <intuition> has to induce one’s involvement in the divine creation.

According to this passage, <intuition> does not induce a philosophical activity so to speak, but rather an involvement in a kind of self-creation, that is, the enlargement of one’s personality. It seems quite reasonable, however, to suppose that the shift of emphasis in the philosophical context, mentioned above, is under the influence of the idea glimpsed here. From this follows the conclusion; Bergson in the “Introduction to Metaphysics” defines <intuition> basically as cognition from inside, following *Laughter*, where he discusses artistic perception; but at the same time, he briefly mentions how it can also impulsively generate certain movements; and later in the 1910s, the time he tries to redesign his conceptions of <intuition> while dedicating himself to the problem of God, Bergson comes to regard <intuition> as the chance to become involved in the divine creation, stressing the impulsive element that was hidden behind his former definition in terms of cognition from inside.

## 5. Two Relationships in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*

Based on what we have seen above, let us start to investigate *The Two Sources*.

### 5-1. Transmission of <élan de vie>

Firstly, we examine the transmission of the <élan de vie> through the mystics.

#### 5-1-1. God

After spending some twenty years to try to solve the problem of God, i.e. the origin of the notion of <élan de vie>, Bergson reaches in *The Two Sources* some conclusion by listening carefully to the mystics (D.S., 1189, 1192), who are considered to be superior moral innovators. According to him, God is the “creative energy” itself, named “love”; that is why He created as His lovers the beings “destined to love and be loved” amongst themselves, and then “the universe” for them to live in (D.S., 1194). God-Love is thus the “creative emotion” that calls his own objects into being (D.S., 1056, 1192).

Naturally enough, a slight change in his conception of the <élan de vie> accompanies the clarification of its origin. In *The Two Sources*, to be sure, referring to *Evolution* on occasions (D.S., 1069-1073, 1186-1187), Bergson basically sticks to the initial definition. But in *The Two Sources*, he says that “the creative effort which the life manifests” “belongs to God” (D.S., 1162), and furthermore, he considers “the very essence of the creative effort” to be “love” (D.S., 1056). Therefore, the <élan de vie>, formerly said to be the demand for creation, that is, the demand

for indetermination or liberty against matter, can be here interpreted as the demand of God Himself for His lovers, or as the divine love which is nothing but the creative energy. We are now able to see why the <élan de vie> and love are associated with each other in the passage cited above [22].

### 5-1-2. Mystics

Although human beings do carry on with the vital movement, they still remain inadequate to be loved by God. Under these circumstances, Bergson makes the mystics play an important role to overcome the resistance of “matter” and to “prolon[g] thus the divine action” (D.S., 1162). Let us look at this argument more closely.

For Bergson mystics are, above all, privileged people endowed with such a “superior” intuition that they are able to capture “the very principle of life in general” (D.S., 1187). That is why he listens to mystics for the purpose of solving the problem of God, not fully dealt with in *Evolution* (D.S., 1188, 1193), where he intends to clarify the nature of life by means of the philosophical intuition alone. In addition, however, holding that the superior intuition of mystics develops into “action” instead of remaining “pure vision,” Bergson emphasizes the active side of mysticism in *The Two Sources* (D.S., 1155).

According to Bergson, mystics are “supplied” with an “élan” by “the very [source] of life” at the final stage of their mystical experiences (D.S., 1172); it is God Himself who communicates the élan to the mystics. And Bergson says that the mystics, to whom the élan is once communicated, are powerfully going to set about the “vastest enterprises” (*ibid.*), whose goal is to “complete the creation of human species” (D.S., 1174). As stated above, humankind doesn’t deserve the divine love yet. So the mystics who accept the <élan de vie>, i.e. the demand of God for His lovers, take over the divine creation which is still incomplete ; they are “*adjutores Dei*” (D.S., 1173), or “instrument[s] [23]” of God (D.S., 1172, 1176, 1240), so to speak.

How do they accomplish their enterprises to “radically transform humanity”? As for this, Bergson maintains that the mystics choose themselves the way of “set[ting] good example[s]” (D.S., 1178) [24]. As seen above, it is the people loving each other who are worthy of being loved by God. The mystics, with their souls filled with the divine love, therefore spread love by offering themselves as examples.

Endowed with such a superior intuition as to lead to God, the mystics thus incarnate the <élan de vie>, or the demand of God for His lovers. Then, as instruments of God, they try to make human beings love each other by setting good examples, overcoming the resistance of the world of matter. We can see that this idea originates from Bergson’s concerns with moral innovators since the 1910s, reflecting the change of his conception of <intuition> after *Evolution*, as more emphasis is put on the importance of the impulsive element.

### 5-1-3. Humankind

What will happen to human beings when the élan is imprinted upon them? We can see from what has been said, of course, that they will learn to love each other and become worthy of being loved by God. However, we need to examine this transfiguration more carefully, since they are said to imitate the mystics who take over the divine love (D.S., 1003, 1057, 1060).

In his opinion, “when [a mystic] talks, there is, in the innermost being of most people, something which echoes it imperceptibly” (D.S., 1157); so Bergson wonders whether it is

possible that “there is inside of ourselves a mystic who sleeps and who only waits for an opportunity to wake up” (D.S., 1060). Besides, speaking of the great mystics, he says “they are original imitators and continuators, though incomplete, of what the Christ of the Gospel was completely” (D.S., 1179). In this way, humankind in general has mystical tendencies on the one hand, and on the other hand even the great mystics are imitators of the Christ. Then we can see that any mystic owes what he or she is to another mystic who precedes him or her. In short, by following the examples of the mystics, humankind is able to be transformed into mystics, or *adjutores Dei*. Those who imitate mystics are themselves filled with the divine love; it is by means of the divine love that they love each other.

Things don’t always go well, of course, since Bergson says that “[i]f the effort [to return to the <élan de vie> itself] could have been generalized, the élan would not have stopped short at the human species” (D.S., 1208). Nevertheless, being aware of what mysticism is about, people will somehow accept love and at least modify their religious consciousness; “they would modify [their religious beliefs] [...] : the elements would subsist, but be magnetized and turned in another direction by this magnetic force,” says Bergson (D.S., 1158).

In view of what has been said, we can take the transmission of the <élan de vie> as a kind of relay, a relay of the divine demand; through this relay a mystic gives birth to another, and the mission to accomplish the divine creation is passed on from one to the other.

## 5-2. Transmission of the Artist’s Élan

Secondly, we examine the transmission of artist’s élan through the works of genius. Bergson himself doesn’t discuss this matter in detail, so we have to scrutinize fragmentary passages with our eyes wide opened.

### 5-2-1. Artist’s Élan

“The work of genius often came out of an emotion, unique of its kind” (D.S., 1013). But we have to be careful with the word “emotion,” since, for example, Bergson says that “[a]n emotion of this kind probably resembles, even though from a long distance, the sublime love which is [...] the very essence of God” (D.S., 1190). Bergson distinguishes two kinds of emotions; the first is caused by an “idea” or “image” preceding it, and the second, on the contrary, pregnant with potential ideas and images, “draws out or can draw out” them “from its substance by an organic development” (D.S., 1011-1012). Needless to say, Bergson thinks highly of the latter kind on the subject of art (D.S., 1013-1014, 1189-1191). From this and the quotation of the beginning of the paragraph ensues that a work of genius often develops organically out of a unique emotion, which is its seed, so to speak.

As a matter of fact, on the topic of writing books, Bergson again mentions such an emotion as a seed of masterpiece. As for these pages, where he advises to “work back [...] to the point of the soul” that “a unique emotion” occupies (D.S., 1191), we have two important points to notice. Firstly, he also uses the word “demand for creation” or “élan” in paraphrasing this emotion (*ibid.*). From this it follows that the emotion in question is nothing but the demand for creation, synonymous with the artist’s élan.

Secondly, according to Bergson, the élan, or an emotion which is the demand for creation itself, is “received from the very bottom of things” by the author (*ibid.*). To make this point

clear, it is useful to read another passage, which reminds us of the last pages of the “Introduction to Metaphysics”; in this passage Bergson says that “[w]hoever practices the literary composition could notice the difference between the intelligence left alone and the one which is consumed by the fire of the original and unique emotion, born out of a coincidence of the author with his or her subject, that is to say, out of an intuition” (D.S., 1013-1014). We reach a certain conclusion by comparing two passages, the one where Bergson states that an author receives the *élan* from the bottom of things, and the other where an emotion is said to be born out of <intuition>. After all, it is through his intuition that an artist receives the *élan*, or an emotion which is nothing but the demand for creation; then he produces a work of genius by developing it organically. We can see how Bergson unifies the two points discussed separately in *Evolution*, that is, artistic cognition and artistic creation, thus reflecting the change of his conception of <intuition> after *Evolution*.

### 5-2-2. Transmission of the Artist’s *Élan*

With what has been mentioned above in mind, we actually find a close kinship between a mystic and a work of genius, or between the two relationships formed through each of them respectively. On the one hand, by his superior intuition leading up to God, a mystic is communicated <*élan de vie*>, synonymous with the demand of God for His lovers or the divine love itself; then he takes pains to imprint it upon the whole humankind by setting a good example. On the other hand, an artist receives equally by his intuition the *élan*, that is, an emotion which is nothing but the demand for creation, somehow like the divine love; and by developing it organically he produces a work of genius. Then the work, through its mere presence, imprints the *élan* communicated by the artist upon the public. As for the relationship formed through a work of genius, we can therefore consider it to be a relay of the demand for creation, the same as the other one.

At the same time, however, we also have to pay attention to the differences between them. The first to notice is the difference between the effective ranges of mystical intuition and artistic intuition. In *Evolution*, as stated above, though he brings artistic intuition close to the philosophical one, Bergson maintains that the latter applies to life in general while the former covers only individual living things. Then in *The Two Sources*, he introduces the idea of mystical intuition, which is superior to the philosophical one because it leads to the very origin of life in general. Now, it is obvious that the notion of mystical intuition has a wider range than that of artistic intuition. So we cannot take the relationship formed through a work of genius to be a relay to take over the demand of God for His lovers thoroughly in the same manner as the other kind of relationship. In fact, as previously mentioned, it is not from God, but from his or her subject that an artist receives the *élan* through his artistic intuition; and besides, driven by the *élan*, which is a demand for a “specific” work (D.S., 1014), he produces it, which is not at all about transforming the whole of humankind.

Furthermore, we can call both relationships a relay, indeed, but each in a slightly different way. We can argue that an artist doesn’t give birth to another artist in the case of the transmission of the artist’s *élan*, while the mystics successively take over the divine creation and thus go forward step by step. In *Laughter*, Bergson regards the pure perception, which is passed on through a work of genius, as a certain immaterial way of life. Subsequently, he

develops this idea of pure perception into the concept of <intuition>, and then, while grappling with the problem of God, Bergson comes to emphasize the impulsive element of <intuition>; as stated above, this change is surely reflected in *The Two Sources*. Thus, if the discussion on art in *The Two Sources* developed from that in *Laughter*, it is quite reasonable to suppose that through the transmission of the artist's élan a certain creative way of life beyond the context of art is taken over, or, to quote Bergson's profound sayings again [25], that through it "an effort which draws out much from little, something from nothing, and adds incessantly to the richness in the world" is spread. If that is the case, individual works and individual relationships are isolated from each other, and they don't form a linear history of art.

It is probably due to the differences noted above that *The Two Sources* isn't a book on aesthetics, nor even on both mysticism and art [26]. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the relationship formed through a work of genius is for sure a relay of a certain creativity, even though involving discontinuity within the artistic context [27].

Things don't always go well, of course. Bergson maintains that even those who don't follow a mystic are at least forced to modify their religious beliefs, as seen above. In that passage, where he compares mysticism to art, he says – "as it happens when an artist of genius produced a work beyond our understandings, whose spirit we don't succeed in assimilating, but which makes us feel the vulgarity of our previous admirations" (D.S., 1157). Then we should add the words "at least" also to the passage where a work of genius is said to transform the public taste [28]. Even though some people are not so encouraged as to live certain creative lives, they are at least forced to modify their conceptions of art.

## Conclusion

If we find in this way a kinship between a work of art and a mystic, understood to be a superior moral innovator, we can consider the following. When he started to pay attention to moral innovators in order to solve the problem of God, Bergson resorted to his conception of art, of which we can catch a glimpse in *Laughter*. In *Laughter* where he mentions such a work of genius as an example, the pure perception so peculiar to artists and also described as a certain immaterial way of life, is said to be communicated through the work. This idea seems to act as an example, so to speak, for the conception of the mystics who show the good example by fighting against the resistance of matter.

Simultaneously, his conception of art was equally deepened, reflecting the change of his idea of <intuition> after *Evolution*. Pure perception in *Laughter* developed into an artistic intuition through which the élan is received, owing to the fusion of the two points discussed separately in *Evolution*, that is, artistic cognition and artistic creation. That is why the relationship formed through a work of art is considered to be the relay of a certain creativity. Now, we should conclude by suggesting that Bergson was concerned with the transmission of creativity in the field of art. His interest in art, in parallel to that in morality, resulted in this original thought.

## Abbreviations

*Oeuvres*, éditions du centenaire, André Robinet (éd.), P.U.F., 1991 (1959<sup>1re</sup>).

D.I. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889.

M.M. *Matière et mémoire*, 1896.

R. *Le rire*, 1900.

E.C. *L'évolution créatrice*, 1907.

E.S. *L'énergie spirituelle*, 1919.

D.S. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, 1932.

P.M. *La pensée et le mouvant*, 1934.

M. *Mélanges*, André Robinet (éd.), P.U.F., 1972.

## Notes

- [1] Cf. Henri Gouhier, *Bergson et le Christ des évangiles*, Vrin, 1999 (1962<sup>1re</sup>). Gouhier cites three documents to suggest that Bergson “hesitated between [art and morality]” (Gouhier, p. 96). I. A note by Benrubi, a journalist, dated on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1909; “[h]e answered that he intended to devote himself completely to a new work which he was preparing, but [that] he still didn’t know whether this would be an aesthetics or a morality or perhaps the two at the same time” (Isaac Benrubi, *Souvenirs sur H. Bergson*, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1942, p. 32, cited by Gouhier, p. 96). II. An interview with Lotte, a journalist, on the 21<sup>th</sup> April 1911; “[t]he aesthetics also interests me. I am working hard. Aesthetics, morality, there must be kinship, there must be common points. But it’s so obscure, so obscure...” (*Bulletin Joseph Lotte*, 1940, p. 284, cited by Gouhier, pp. 96-97) (M., 881). III. A statement recorded by Maire; “[i]t is very vain to oppose art against morality. Their origin[s] and their intention[s] could be as distant as possible. But the one and the other run up a road uphill: they meet up at the summit” (Gilbert Maire, *Aux marches de la civilisation occidentale*, 1929, p. 25, cited by Gouhier, p. 97).
- [2] In 1934, Bergson answered to Benrubi, who had asked him whether he had the intention of writing on aesthetics or not; “[t]hese problems interest me to a great degree, but I am too old to be able to gather information on them as I did it when I composed my other works. If I were to come back once again onto the earth, I would surely treat them” (Isaac Benrubi, “Un entretien avec Bergson,” *Henri Bergson, Essais et témoignages*, Albert Béguin, Pierre Thévenaz (éds.), Neuchâte Bacconière, 1943, p. 365, cited by Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin*, P.U.F., 1959, p. 280).
- [3] Although there is evidence of some earlier research approaching the philosophy of Bergson from an aesthetic viewpoint, none examines this matter. As far as particular points are concerned, however, this paper owes much to those previous works, of course. Above all, as for the attention paid to the similarity between a mystic and a work of genius in *The Two Sources*, suggestions come from Taki (Ichiro Taki, “Sakuhin to Eiyu – Bergson niokeru Bigaku to Rinrigaku tono Setten [A Work of Art and a Hero – A Point of Contact between the Aesthetics and the Ethics in Bergson],” *Bigaku-Geijutsugaku-Kenkyu*, 10, 1991, pp. 41-74).
- [4] Such a difference between philosophical intuition and the aesthetic one probably comes from the fact that the former is methodical but the latter is not. In *Laughter* (1900), when he refers to artistic perception, which will be developed into <intuition> later (This will be seen in Chapter 3), Bergson compares this “natural” talent, peculiar to artists, with “systematic” philosophical cognition (R., 461). Besides, in the “Introduction” of *The Creative Mind* (1934), already completed in January 1922, he suggests philosophers should go in the same “direction” as “novelist[s],” but more “methodically” (P.M., 1268).
- [5] These two aspects have not been related to each other so far. As we shall see later, however, they

will crystallize into one in *The Two Sources*. Incidentally, Tatarkiewicz highlights two different aesthetic points of view in the philosophy of Bergson (Ladislas Tatarkiewicz, “L’esthétique de Bergson et l’art de son temps,” *Bergson et nous, actes du Xe congrès des sociétés de philosophie de langue française*, Armand Colin, 1959, pp. 297-302).

- [6] Jacques Chevalier, *Entretiens avec Bergson*, Plon, 1959.
- [7] In *Evolution*, Bergson just briefly mentions God as the “centre from which the worlds gush out” (E.C., 706).
- [8] Chevalier, *op.cit.*, p. 65. As we shall see in Chapter 5-1-1, Bergson comes back to this again in *The Two Sources*.
- [9] *ibid.*, p. 20.
- [10] It is not true that the philosophy of Bergson had entirely nothing to do with God before *Evolution*. For example, as we shall see in Chapter 4-2, in the article “Introduction to Metaphysics” (1903), when various durations are lined up in a row according to their degrees of <tension>, the word “eternity,” which does remind us of God, is applied to the kind of duration that has maximum tension. Moreover, in *Matter and Memory* (1896), Bergson also points to the different “rhythm[s]” of various durations, and talks about “a consciousness tenser than ours” (M.M., 342) (By the way, Gouhier considers this passage to be the first one where Bergson refers to God. Cf. Gouhier, *op.cit.*, p. 89). Nevertheless, it is from *Evolution* onwards that Bergson treats God as the origin.
- [11] This article is on the whole based on a lecture given in 1911. But a careful collation with the record of that lecture (M., 915-933) tells us that the passage we are going to quote was added when published in 1919.
- [12] See the interview with Lotte, quoted in Note [1].
- [13] Here we don’t take into consideration *Duration and Simultaneity* (1922), which was withdrawn from print by Bergson himself.
- [14] In addition, we should also look into his maiden work *Time and Free Will* (1889), the lecture “Politeness” (1892) (M., 318-332), and the article “Perception of Change” (1934) (P.M., 1365-1392), which is based on a lecture given in 1911.
- [15] See Note [4].
- [16] In the version printed in *The Creative Mind* (1934), “a direction of movement,” the words we cite here, are replaced with “an urge to movement.” For our discussion, however, it is necessary to stick to the wording in 1903, consulting the annotation by André Robinet (P.M., 1539).
- [17] Taki also points out the coexistence of these two elements in “Introduction” (Ichiro Taki, “Introduction à l’étude de l’esthétique bergsonienne – Première formation de la notion d’«intuition»,” *Bijutsuka-Kenkyu*, 14, 1996, pp. 17-33). He reaches the conclusion according to which contemplation and creation are unified in the philosophy of Bergson.
- [18] Some researchers have already paid attention to this emphasis on the impulsive element in “Philosophical Intuition.” Cf. Léon Husson, *L’intellectualisme de Bergson, genèse et développement de la notion bergsonienne d’intuition*, P.U.F., 1947. Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, “L’intuition bergsonienne,” *Revue philosophique*, Avril-Juin, 1948, pp. 195-206. Henri Gouhier, “Bergson et l’histoire des idées,” *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 10, 1949, pp. 434-444.
- [19] As for this comparison, suggestions are received from Taki (Ichiro Taki, “Bergson niokeru Kami no Ishiki (1) – <Tetsugakuteki Chokkan> no Shatei [Consciousness of God in Bergson (1) – the Effective Range of <Philosophical Intuition>],” *Tamagijutsugakuen-Kiyou*, 15, 1989, pp. 112-120).
- [20] See the annotation by Bergson himself (P.M., 1330).
- [21] A report by Chevalier, who attended the lecture given in 1920, shows that the passage we are going to quote was surely included in the lecture (Chevalier, *op.cit.*, p. 30).
- [22] See Chapter 2-2.
- [23] Also in the lecture given in Madrid in 1916, sixteen years before *The Two Sources*, Bergson mentions “the great mystics” who advance, “beyond the vision of God,” up to “the contact with

God,” and calls them the “instrument[s]” of God (M., 1235).

- [24] Concretely, Bergson has in mind the foundation and the management of convents or religious orders (D.S., 1175-1176).
- [25] See Chapter 2-1.
- [26] See the note by Benrubi, quoted in Note [1].
- [27] As for the similarities and the differences between the transmission of the <élan de vie> and that of the artist’s élan, to be sure, there is room for further studies, which would focus in a much better way on the relationship between religion and art in the philosophy of Bergson. But this is outside the scope of this paper.
- [28] See Chapter 2-2.