

The Dispute against Faulkner's Direct Influence by Henri Bergson* and His Affinities with Jeremy Taylor in His Concept of Time

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(1) A Study of Faulkner's Concept of Time as Seen in *Intruder in the Dust* in Reference to Bergson

When we scrutinize Faulkner's concept of time, we cannot ignore the fact that he was influenced by Henri Bergson. In his interview with Loïc Bouvard in 1952 Faulkner commented on his agreement with Bergson's ideas on time and the nature of reality:

Since we have brought up Bergson, I next asked Faulkner to explain his conception of time. "There isn't any time," he replied. "In fact I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity. In my opinion time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist; after all, man is never time's slave."¹

I have endeavored to explain Faulkner's work in terms of Bergsonian concept and have succeeded in it to some extent.² However, we cannot dismiss the crucial difference between Bergson and Faulkner in their concept of time. In this paper we will see the difference in studying one of Faulkner's most popular novels, *Intruder in the Dust*.

It is true that there are many references that connote a Bergsonian view of the world in *Intruder in the Dust*. The following passages show a concept quite similar to Bergson's time-concept of accumulated past, which is revealed in *Matter and Memory*; "the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future" (*MM* 150):

. . . the vast millrace of time roared not toward midnight but dragging midnight with it, not to hurl midnight into wreckage but to hurl the wreckage of midnight down upon them in one poised skyblotting yawn. . . . (*ID* 79)

. . . you escape nothing you flee nothing . . . and tomorrow night is nothing but one long sleepless wrestle with yesterday's omissions and regrets. (*ID* 195)

The time scheme in the novel moves backward from the Sunday morning after Lucas's alleged murder is known, to Chip's unfavorable memory of having dinner at Lucas's house four years ago.

However, as Dr. Akiko Miyake points out, the whole backward movement of the time scheme suddenly stops when Chip, Aleck Sander and Miss Habersham decide to open the grave of Vinson Gowrie so as to prove the innocence of Lucas.³ What brings this dramatical change to the world is our immediate theme.

According to Bergson, "To act freely is to recover possession of oneself, and to get back into pure duration" (*TFW* 231–232). Pure duration is that irreversible succession of past and future states melting into one another as an organic whole:

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Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. . . . but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (*TFW* 100)

Gavin Stevens is one of Faulkner's characters who have difficulties in coping with duration since he chooses to be a detached observer. As Vickery points out, Gavin is a man with a "predilection for ordering and reconstructing past reality into a present, rationally acceptable, verbal pattern."⁴ However, the events of the Gowrie and Montgomery murders lead him to crucial realizations. By seeing how Mrs. Habersham, Chick Mallison and Aleck Sander "violated a white grave to save a nigger" (*ID* 242), Gavin does come to admit his faults, and when Gavin has realized the truth, he is quick to endeavor to save Lucas at any cost. In fact in *Requiem for a Nun* written in 1938 just after *Intruder in the Dust*, we see a transformed Gavin, for Gavin is no longer a detached observer but he is involved himself in Temple's salvation. It is interesting that the process of the redemption of time and the transformation of Gavin are paralleled. By looking into the process of his transformation, we will see how time was redeemed.

In reading *Intruder in the Dust* in reference to Bergson, we understand that Gavin Stevens, who "came back from Harvard and Heidelberg to learn enough law to get himself chosen County Attorney" (*ID* 3) and refuses to accept Lucas's innocence symbolizes Bergsonian intellect; and Mrs. Habersham, Chick Mallison and Aleck Sander, who have opened Gavin's eyes by their sympathetic action with unpreoccupied minds symbolize Bergsonian intuition.

Believing that the way to duration was by intuition, Bergson aimed at a radical criticism of all forms of intellectualism and materialism, saying, "the truth is that there would be one way, and one only, of refuting materialism, that of establishing that matter is absolutely what it appears to be" (*MM* 80). He held that in real life the function of the intellect is subordinate; and that it is intuition which leads man into life's flux. By intuition Bergson means "a disinterested instinct" (*CE* 186), a rightly oriented élan vital within man, an "intellectual sympathy" by which one places oneself in successive duration and "externalizes our concept in relation to one another, reveals to us the objectivity of things" and "foreshadows and prepares the way for social life" (*TFW* 236). In short, intuition, by sympathetic communication, treats everything organically (*CE* 174) and introduces us into life's own domain:

. . . intuition may enable us to grasp what it is that intelligence fails to give us, and indicate the means to supplementing it. On the one hand, it will utilize the mechanism of intelligence itself to show how intellectual moulds cease to be strictly applicable; and on the other hand, by its own work, it will suggest to us the vague feeling, if nothing more, of what must take the place of intellectual moulds. Thus, intuition may bring the intellect to recognize that life does not quite go into the category of the many nor yet into that of the one; that neither mechanical causality nor finality can give a sufficient interpretation of the vital process. Then, *by the sympathetic communication which it establishes between us and the rest of the living, by the expansion of our consciousness which it brings about, it introduces us into life's own domain*, which is reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation. (*CE* 187–8; italics mine)

Returning to the novel, Gavin Stevens thinks of Lucas as "a nigger a murderer who shoots white people in the back and aint very sorry" (*ID* 67). He is under the influence of "an idea: a belief: an acceptance, a passive acceptance by them themselves of the idea that being Negroes . . ." (*ID* 11), as if applying to himself his own statement that "no man can cause more grief than that one clinging blindly to the vices of his ancestors" (*ID* 49). He firmly protects the rigid principle of the moral code of the Old South, and by so doing he helps secure continued racism.

He believes the residents of the South to be the only homogeneous people in the country and he proclaims that the white people and the Negroes who have proved homogeneity in suffering should

confederate in order to make the South better:

It's because we alone in the United States are a homogeneous people. . . . We are not defending not actually our politics or beliefs or even our way or life, but simply our homogeneity from a federal government. . . . [By Sambo] I mean the rest of him [Lucas] who has a better homogeneity than we have and proved it by finding himself roots into the land where he had actually to displace white men to put them down: because he had patience even when he didn't have hope, the long view even when there was nothing to see at the end of it, not even just the will but the desire to endure because he loved the old few simple things which no one wanted to take from him. . . . We -- he and us -- should confederate. . . . (ID 156)

Gavin relies on his idealistic talk when immediate action for the case of Lucas is needed. To the jailer's anxiety as to whether the Southerners would lynch Lucas, he responds in a detached manner as if he were a mere observer, saying, "I dont think they will [lynch Lucas]. And if they do, it wont really matter. They either will or they wont and if they dont it will be all right and if they do we will do the best we can, you and Mr Hampton and Legate and the rest of us, what we have to do, what we can do. So we dont need to worry about it" (ID 54). Thus as pointed out, Gavin with "the too-thin bony eager face, the bright intent rapid eyes" (ID 169) and with "rhetorical self-lacerating" (ID 133) shows the characteristic of Bergsonian intellect.

His young nephew, Charles Mallison, Jr. known as Chick, together with Mrs. Habersham and Alexander symbolize intuition because of their "sympathetic communication" with Lucas; and they work on the circumstances in the way old Ephraim had told Chick:

If you got something outside the common run that's got to be done and can't wait, don't waste your time on the menfolks; they works on what your uncle calls the rules and the cases. Get the womens and the children at it; they works on the circumstances. (ID 112)

In understanding Chick's response to Lucas's request, we must recognize that there has been a complicated relationship between Chick and Lucas. When Chick fell into an icy creek on the Edmonds' place at the age of twelve, Lucas Beauchamp, who happened to be on the scene, took him to his cabin, dried his clothes and gave him dinner and treated him as a guest, "not arrogant at all and even scornful: just intolerant inflexible and composed" (ID 13). Though Chick tried to pay him for his hospitality, Lucas refused to take his money. And this incident remains for Chick an insult since it put a white boy under some obligation to a Negro. Repeatedly Chick had tried in vain to pay off Lucas for his services, since Lucas had also sent a gift in kind to Chick.

In spite of the confused memory of the relationship with Lucas, Chick instinctively believes in Lucas's innocence and obeys his frightening request to dig up the body of Vinson Gowrie in order to prove Lucas' innocence of murder. While Chick's mind is occupied with some puzzles concerning the racial gap, he flings himself into the unknown world, calling Aleck Sander, catching Highboy, and preparing immediately for the task requested by Lucas:

Because . . . he realised that he had never doubted getting out there and even getting the body up. . . . So . . . he flung himself bodily with one heave into a kind of deadly reasonableness of enraged calculation, a calm sagacious and desperate rationality not of pros and cons because there were no pros: the reason he was going out there was that somebody had to and nobody else would. . . . (ID 82-3)

Miss Habersham, an "independent solitary and forlorn erect and slight" (ID 187) spinster of seventy, also understands Lucas' innocence immediately when Chick tells her that Lucas had denied that it was his

pistol that shot Gowrie. And when Chick exposes his intention, saying, that they will “Go out there and dig him up and bring him to town where somebody that knows bullet holes can look at the bullet hole in him -,” she consents promptly by saying, “Yes” (*ID* 89). Though she might be deeply committed to tradition, she risks her life to save Lucas by accompanying Chick and Aleck Sander to the Gowries’ burial place, where they find Jake Montgomery’s body. Chick reflects upon the events of the night and realizes that without the old woman neither he nor Aleck would have had the courage to go through with it. Chick thinks because of women’s “fluidity” women are never beaten (*ID* 106).

Repeatedly Faulkner makes the point by means of his characters that because women live on an intuitive level, they understand reality instinctively and are more effective in action than men: “Women are wise. They have learned how to live unconfused by the reality . . . impervious to it.”⁵ Women are not confused by the abstractions of language, for “Women know more about words than man ever will.”⁶

In the story he points out that they are tougher than men:

Don’t you know she’s [Chick’s mother is] tougher than you and me both just as old Habersham was tougher than you and Aleck Sander out together. . . . (*ID* 106)

And he says that women can stand anything:

Just remember that [woman] can stand anything, accept any fact (it’s only men who burk at facts) provided they don’t have to face it; can assimilate it with their heads turned away and one hand extended behind them as the politician accepts the bribe. Look at her [Chick’s mother]: who will spend a long contented happy life never abating one jot of her refusal to forgive you for being able to button your own pants. (*ID* 107)

And this is what Gavin has pointed out when he says that, when women “deal with men, with human beings, all they need is the instinct, the intuition before it became battered and dulled, the infinite capacity for devotion untroubled and unconfused by cold moralities and colder facts.”⁷ This women’s fluidity and instinctive understanding of actuality is really a characteristic of Bergsonian intuition, which is “intellectual sympathy” which Chick shares. Gavin knows because of this sympathy they can believe Lucas:

‘Because you wouldn’t have believed him either,’ his uncle said coming in from the hall. ‘You wouldn’t have listened either. It took an old woman and two children for that, to believe truth for no other reason than that it was truth, told by an old man in a fix deserving pity and belief, to *someone capable of the pity* even when none of them really believed him. Which you didn’t at first.’ his uncle said to him. (*ID* 126; italics mine)

Here we can say Bergsonian intuition is akin to Faulkner’s “heart.” According to Ike in *Go Down Moses* it is heart that knows the truth intuitively:

That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You dont need to choose. The heart already knows. He didn’t have His Book written to be read by what must elect and choose, but by the heart, not by the wise of the earth because maybe they dont need it or maybe the wise no longer have any heart, but by the doomed and lowly of the earth who have nothing else to read with but the heart.⁸

Guided by intuition or heart, Chick “not would have done it but would have had to do it to preserve not even justice and decency but innocence” (*ID* 117). And as Gavin witnesses what Chick and Ms. Habersham have done, Gavin is beginning to change, from his “abnegant and rhetorical self-lacerating” (*ID* 133) to the consent to Ms. Habersham, “Yessem” (*ID* 118) to join their plan to save Lucas. Chick witnesses

he already has “some quality” in him “which brought people to tell him things,” even tempting Negroes to tell him what their nature forbade them telling white men (*ID* 70). Gavin comes to himself confessing his own shortcomings:

‘I am fifty-plus years old,’ his uncle said. ‘I spent the middle fifteen of them fumbling beneath skirts. My experience was that few of them were interested in love or sex either. They wanted to be married.’

‘I still don’t believe it,’ he said.

‘That’s right,’ his uncle said. ‘Don’t. And even when you are fifty and plus, still refuse to believe it.’ (*ID* 240)

Also to Chick’s “You’re just my uncle,” he replies, “I’m worse than that, . . . ‘I’m just a man” (*ID* 122).

And it is finally Gavin Stevens who leads Chick back into the society he so bitterly accuses by explaining the reality of the mob which is reduced to man again who is “conceptible of pity” with painful aspiration toward some serene universal light:

. . . because there is a simple numerical point at which a mob cancels and abolishes itself, maybe because it has finally got too big for darkness, the cave it was spawned in is no longer big enough to conceal it from light and so at last whether it will or no it has to look at itself. . . . Or maybe it’s because man having passed into mob passes then into mass which abolishes mob by absorption, metabolism, then having got too large even for mass becomes man again conceptible of pity and justice and conscience even if only in the recollection of his long painful aspiration toward them, toward that something anyway of one serene universal light. (*ID* 201)

Though by saying they are too idealistic Chick does not consent to Gavin’s words and criticizes Stevens repeatedly with the phrase “You’re a lawyer,” implying Gavin’s tendency to identify explanation with justification, Gavin’s new interpretation gives Chick a new vision to understand Southern history which includes Chick and his two friends.

If we refer to Bergson, we can say that the transformation of Gavin’s attitude is from that of the closed soul to “that of the open soul” (*TS* 38) which is revealed in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Since man “is part and parcel of society; he and it are absorbed together in the same task of individual and social preservation. Both are self-centered” (*TS* 38). And Bergson proclaims that, “it is not by a process of expansion of the self that we can pass from the first state [the attitude of the closed soul] to the second [that of the open soul]” (*TS* 38). There he brings in the concept of love; “one single feeling, growing ever larger, to embrace an increasing number of persons” (*TS* 38) that makes the transformation possible:

A love which each one of them stamps with his own personality. A love which is in each of them an entirely new emotion, capable of transposing human life into another tone. A love which thus causes each of them to be loved for himself, so that through him, and for him, other men will open their souls to the love of humanity. A love which can be just as well passed on through the medium of a person who has attached himself to them or to their evergreen memory and formed his life on that pattern. (*TS* 99)

Thus, to refer to Bergson again in the context of *Intruder in the Dust*, the intuitive power of Chick and Mr. Habersham has brought intellectual Gavin Stevens back into the duration, the reality of love. Instead of remaining an observer, he is now devoting all his energy to save Lucas with the attitude of Bergsonian “open soul.”

However, there still remains the problem which causes all the backward movement of time in the novel. It is described by Gavin as “the desperate the dreadful urgency, the loneliness the pariah-hood

having not only the horror and repudiation of all man against him but having to struggle with the sheer inertia of earth and the terrible heedless rush of time” (*ID* 231). And it has been at the core of the problem that frustrated Chick in the name of the mob “the massed uncountable faces” with “a volitionless, almost helpless capacity and eagerness to believe anything about the South not even provided it be derogatory but merely bizarre enough and strange enough” (*ID* 153) who resents Lucas for not acting “like niggers” (*ID* 48) and comes to the court “not to see what they called justice done nor even retribution exacted but to see that Beat Four should not fail its white man’s high estate” (*ID* 137). We can say the core of the problem is the guilt of the South which has culminated in the image of the “Face:”

. . . -- not faces but a face, not a mass nor even a mosaic of them but a Face: not even ravening nor ununsatiate but just in motion, insensate, vacant of thought or even passion: an Expression significantless and without past like the one which materialises suddenly after seconds or even minutes of painful even frantic staring from the innocent juxtaposition of trees and clouds and landscape in the soap-advertisement puzzle-picture or on the severed head in the news photo of the Balkan or Chinese atrocity: without dignity and not even evocative of horror: just neckless slack-muscled and asleep, hanging suspended face to face with him just beyond the glass of the back window yet in the same instant rushing and monstrous down at him. . . . (*ID* 182)

There needs to be the redemption their guilt. It is true as James Street Fulton in “Bergson’s Religious Interpretation of Evolution” says, “What first figures in Bergson’s philosophy as a cunning display of living energy comes forth in the end as the progressive achievement of divine love.”⁹ And at the end of his career Bergson had come to affirm a transcendent God of love which is creatively involved in human existence. He writes that he goes “beyond the conclusions we reached in *Creative Evolution*” (*TS* 256) which define God as “unceasing life, action, freedom” (*CE* 262) and in *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* Bergson develops the definition that “God is love, and the object of love: herein lies the whole contribution of mysticism” (*TS* 252). In the latter work, Bergson also defines God as a dynamic force engaged in a continuous making of Himself and of new and unpredictable things. However, we have to say that Bergson’s God is totally ineffective when we come to the problem of sin since in the Bergsonian world, evolution knows no break.

The central Christian doctrine states that God, in one of the modes of his triune being and without in any way ceasing to be God, has revealed himself to mankind for their salvation by coming amongst them as man. The man Jesus is held to be the incarnate Word or Son of God. “Taken into God’s eternity and glorified at the resurrection, the incarnate one remains for ever the ultimate focus of God-man encounter; for he not only, as God incarnate, mediates God to man, but also, in his perfect humanity, represents man to God” and “united with him, on earth in his mystical body, the church, and in heaven, in the communion of saints, men and women come to share, by adoption, his filial relation to the Father.”¹⁰

Thus Jeremy Taylor, to whom I have repeatedly referred,¹¹ writes that the greatest mystery of the gospel is Incarnation, as the finite and the infinite were able to be concentrated into one person to achieve his atonement on behalf of us:

For what power of human understanding could have found out the incarnation of a God; that two natures, a finite and an infinite, could have concentrated into one hypostasis or person; . . . that God should so love us as to be willing to be reconciled to us, and yet that Himself must die that He might pardon us; that God’s most holy Son should give us His body to eat, and His blood to crown our chalices, and His spirit to sanctify our souls, . . . (*Works* IV 331–332)

When we remember Faulkner’s “Dry September” which deals with a Negro, Will Mayes, who is lynched by the Southern mob because it has been rumored that he assaulted a white spinster, we remember the world of the story is full of references to “dust” and we understand it symbolizes the sin of

the South. The Bible cautions man to remember that he is dust and will return to dust, that unless he be regenerated he lives only toward death.¹² Human history is the history of the refusal or failure of man to accept the grace of God. In the text, Faulkner calls the adventure of the night “a communion” (*ID* 100). Communion between God and his worshippers was established by the sacrifice of Christ.¹³ Furthermore in his letter Faulkner even calls the novel itself “a mystery.”¹⁴ Here “the intruders in the dust” might be Chick, Aleck and Miss Habersham, but could we not say that in a larger sense “Intruder in the Dust” might be Christ himself who intervenes in this world of sin in human flesh in order to redeem us from the sin and invites us to God’s reality?

We can also see that in *Intruder in the Dust*, a very noteworthy reference on time is presented by Gavin: “yesterday today and tomorrow are Is: Indivisible: One” (*ID* 194). That reminds us of “Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13: 8). Then can we understand that the story describes the divine redemption of time using Chick and his friends as “the vessel of a potency” (*ID* 211) to transform Gavin as well as to save Lucas?

Owing to the redeeming power protruding by their act of intruding in the dust through their faith, the very problem of the guilt of the South, the backward movement of time, has changed. Face is no longer a strange entity to Chick but he knows his share in it, in “the composite Face of his people” of the South and its history:

. . . a Face, the composite Face of his native kind his native land, his people his blood his own with whom it had been his joy and pride and hope to be found worthy to present one united unbreakable front to the dark abyss the night -- a Face monstrous unravering omniverous and not even uninsatiate, not frustrated nor even thwarted, not biding nor waiting and not even needing to be patient. . . . (*ID* 194)

Chick recognizes that it is because of his fierce desire that the people of the South should be perfect that he has been so harsh on them, and he confesses his arrogance in denouncing them, his own people:

. . . that fierce desire that they should be perfect because they were his and he was theirs, that furious intolerance of any one single jot or tittle less than absolute perfection -- that furious almost instinctive leap and spring to defend them from anyone anywhere so that he might excoriate them himself without mercy since they were his own and he wanted no more save to stand with them unalterable and impregnable: one shame if shame must be, one expiation since expiation must surely be but above all one unalterable durable impregnable one: one people one heart one land: . . . ‘I was worse,’ he said. ‘I was righteous.’ (*ID* 209–210)

Gavin points out, though “we are willing to sell liberty short at any tawdry price for the sake of what we call our own . . . regardless of grief and cost even to the crucifixion of someone whose nose or pigment we dont like,” there can still be “that few of others who believe that a human life is valuable simply because it has a right to keep on breathing no matter what pigment its lungs distend or nose inhales the air and are willing to defend that right at any price” (*ID* 243–244). Chick comes to know that in spite of his Southern background, he himself in his turn can exercise his “one anonymous chance too to perform something passionate and brave and austere not just in but into man’s enduring chronicle” (*ID* 193). He remembers that when he was running the wild race through the night into the wilderness of Beat Four, he thought himself like the actor playing a crucial part:

. . . ringing his footfalls deliberate and unsecret into the hollow silence, unhurried and solitary but nothing at all of forlorn, instead with a sense a feeling not possessive but proprietary, vicegeral, with humility still, himself not potent but at least the vessel of a potency like the actor looking from wings or perhaps empty balcony down upon the waiting stage vacant yet garnished and empty yet,

nevertheless where in a moment now he will walk and posture in the last act's absolute cynosure, himself in himself nothing and maybe no world-beater of a play either but at least his to finish it, round it and put it away intact and unassailable, complete. . . . (ID 211)

Chick knows that actions of his own can redeem the past. Thus Gavin recommends to Chick "Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame. No matter how young you are or how old you have got. Not for kudos and not for cash: your picture in the paper nor money in the bank either. Just refuse to bear them" (ID 206).

We know that Gavin is transformed when we read *Requiem for a Nun* which was written just after *Intruder in the Dust*. The crucial point of the plot of *Requiem* is whether or not Temple will confess "everything." In this pursuit of "everything," Gavin is not only an active participant in the attempted purgation, but he is the moral guide to it. While in *Intruder in the Dust* he had simply been an answer to questions about moral issues, in *Requiem for a Nun* he himself asks the questions in order to probe the confusion in Temple's moral system. In *Intruder* he reveals the intellectual concept of time "that all man had was time, all that stood between him and the death he feared and abhorred was time yet he spent half of it inventing ways of getting the other half past. . . ." (ID 30). However, in *Requiem* he points out to Temple that though "The past is never dead" (RN 80), the presentness of the past means a continual opportunity for redemption and expiation. There what matters to him is love or truth:

"We're not concerned with death. That's nothing; any handful of pretty facts and sworn documents can cope with that. That's all finished now; we can forget it. What we are trying to deal with now is injustice. Only truth can cope with that. Or love." (RN 76—77)

Actually in the new interpretation Gavin admits the guilt of the South, saying, "I only say that injustice is ours, the South's. We must expiate and abolish it ourselves, alone and without help nor even (with thanks) advice" (ID 204). Thus we could say owing to the grace intruding in the dust as Christ came into our human history, instead of remaining as an observer Gavin is now in duration to be an active participant of love.

(2) The Difference Between Faulkner and Bergson in their Concept of Time:

Because we have now raised doubt in the interpretation of Faulkner's reference to Bergson, we must stop to answer definitely the question of whether Bergsonian philosophy really satisfies Faulkner. It is true that many of Faulkner's characters are confined in the past. We can interpret that Gavin Stevens for example is confined in his obsessive past and by way of intuition Gavin has come to realize his own faults and sees momentary illuminations of reality. But intuition does not free him from his sense of sin, which causes his confinement in the past. It is Christ's redeeming power protruding into him that has brought him salvation from his sense of sin. It is true that Bergson asserts that intuition helps them bring themselves into duration, but the past itself is never redeemed by it. In studying Bergson's concept of time, one cannot but find that in his philosophy the past is unredeemable. According to orthodox Christianity, time is redeemed by the atonement of Christ. Consequently my interpretations of Faulkner's work are complemented by references to Jeremy Taylor. Cleanth Brooks supports my doubt. He has noted that "the influence of Bergson has been generally overestimated and that its importance has been occasionally pushed to absurd lengths,"¹⁵ so here we will take a skeptical overview of their similarities by clarifying the difference in Faulkner's and Bergson's concepts of God.

First, though it is true that a number of critics have assessed Faulkner's characters in terms of Bergson's philosophy, analyzing their participation in or alienation from the fluidity of duration,¹⁶ there are no Bergson works of any kind in the catalogue of Faulkner's library, which at the time of Faulkner's death

included over 1,200 volumes from more than two dozen countries--though even Spinoza's work is included.¹⁷ We may assume that Cleanth Brooks is right when he says that Faulkner never "read Bergson very deeply or thoroughly."¹⁸

Here we must repeat that Bergson's theory of duration itself is critical. Jacques Maritain in his *Bergsonian philosophy and Thomism* points out that in Bergson's philosophy, between God and the world there is in reality only a difference of degree or intensity in duration. He further says that Bergson is no doubt far from professing atheism but he is far from finding a true God at all:

Attacking the study of divine things the philosopher arrives at the limit of philosophy. He becomes anxious to know God, and the relations of man to God. But reason demands—and Bergson is faithful to this method—that before coming to a decision on a question we should first surround ourselves with all the accounts, all the inquiries, all the positive documents which can enlighten us. . . . One thing is evident, we cannot find God without God, and God reveals Himself only to those who seek Him, not through a certain curiosity of the intellect, but with their whole heart, and as the sovereignly desirable good of their whole being.¹⁹

Also Alexander Gunn in his *Bergson and His Philosophy* says that Bergson's "whole philosophy is destructive of a large amount of the 'vested interests' of philosophy"²⁰ and asserts "Bergson does not offer us a God, personal, loving, and redemptive, as the Christian religious conscious demands or imagines" (*BP* 127). His God is not timeless or perfect in the sense of being eternal and complete. Since for him life and creation is "a continuity of shooting out" (*CE* 262), Gunn says that his "God would seem to be merely a *focus imaginarius* of Life and Spirit, a 'hypostatization' of duration" (*BP* 127). For Bergson "God reveals Himself in the world of Time, in the very principle of Change" (*BP* 126). He is not "a Father of lights in Whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning" (*BP* 126). And further he says, "The important point, however, in considering Bergson in relation to Religion and Theology, is his marked objection to teleology" (*BP* 131), which leads to a pessimistic atmosphere. While religion regards life and the universe as meaningful as God's creation, Bergson values religion so far as it is something which breaks away from a materialistic mechanism. It is true the term "creative" seems very prominent, but we are at loss when we find that the course and goal of evolution are unknown and unknowable. We must say Bergson presents too haphazard a universe.

In fact, we have seen what a difference their concept of God brings. In *Creative Evolution* Bergson has spoken of the vital impetus as a "super-consciousness" to which the name "God" might be attached. But this is very different from the conception of traditional theology. For if God is identical with the vital impetus, then he is pure activity, limited by the material world in which he is struggling to manifest himself. He is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. God "has nothing of the already made," but is ceaselessly changing. In his last book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson moved somewhat closer to the Christian position, saying evolution is nothing less than God's "undertaking to create creators, that He may have, besides Himself, beings worthy of His love" (*TS* 243). However, even here there is no teleology at all. How can we love such an impersonal God as his? As Baron von Hügel put it; "In Bergson's predominant view we struggle, suffer, live, and die, in order to exist and only to exist; to ask what life is, where it began, where it will end, towards what it is moving, is to put questions that cannot be answered, because they should never have been put; life does not progress or grow into anything; it moves always 'from the full to the full.'"²¹ No divine plan or supernatural design encroaches upon its virgin whiteness; the future has not even an embryonic shape; every moment we are on the edge of the gulf and are only carried over it by the impersonal *élan de vie*.²² We must conclude that his god is not the God of the ordinary religious consciousness, nor is it a conception of God which satisfies us, much less Faulkner.

The Christian world is completely teleological, for the purpose of creation is to unite all things in Christ:

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1: 9–10)

Here “the fullness of times (plural) [*kairoi*]” refers to a sequence of periods of time under God’s direction. By the phrase “to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth,” we are now shown the mystery. The word ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθα “to sum up” or “to summarize,” was often used in rhetorical contexts to refer to summing up or of recapitulating an argument. The summing up all things in Christ means the unifying of the cosmos or its direction toward a common goal in line with Col 1: 19–20; “For in him God in all his fullness chose to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood on the cross—all things, whether on earth or in heaven.” Both passages appear to presuppose that the cosmos had been plunged into disintegration on account of sin and that it is God’s purpose to restore its original harmony in Christ.²³ Not only was the universe created in the Son as the sphere, by him as the divine agent, and for him as the goal; it was also established permanently “in him” alone, as the second affirmation, “in him all things are held together,” asserts. He is the sustainer of the universe and the unifying principle of its life.²⁴

We must also know that the biblical conception of time is not that of evolution or progress. It is at bottom prophetic and historical promise and fulfillment concerning Jesus Christ. The most remarkable term in NT for time is *kairos*. Jesus himself affirms that the expected time has arrived; “The time (*kairos*) is fulfilled” (Mark 1. 15). The time of Jesus is *kairos* which is a time of opportunity. As the verses say: They “know what hour (*kairon*) it is” (Rom. 13. 11), “redeem the time (*kairon*)” (Eph. 5. 16 [Use the present opportunity to the full. . .]), Col. 4. 5 [Be wise in your dealings with outsiders, but use your opportunities to the full]); and “now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6. 2). To embrace the opportunity means salvation, to neglect it disaster. There is no third way. The Bergsonian concept of time gives man a good excuse to evade the past. However, for people who participate in the world which comprises various *kairoi*, or opportunities, decisive and significant actions are needed. Jesus says, “He that hears my word, and believes him that sent me, has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5. 24).²⁵

Contrary to Bergson, Taylor observes Christ as “the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity, equal with the Father, true God, without beginning of life, or end of days” (*Works* VII 595) and praises the mystery of Trinity:

Oh blessed, ineffable and most mysterious Trinity, how admirable are Thy beauties, how incomparable are Thy perfections, how incomprehensible are those relations of the three most blessed Persons, which we believe and admire and adore, but understand not! (*Works* VIII 614–5)

Thus Taylor writes how miserable life is without Christ since the content of time should be Christ:

O miserable condition of Human Nature! vain in all we live without Christ; all flesh is grass, and all the glory of it as the flower of the Field.²⁶

Taylor also expresses the teleological quality of time, that by doing good, we have to make much of time. In Section I of Chapter I of *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, he points out “The first general instrument of holy living,” which is “care of our time” (*Works* III HL 9). “God hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends; but so, that for every hour of our life, after we are persons capable of laws, and know good from evil, we must give account to the great Judge of men and angels” (*Works* III HL 9).

Consequently we dispute the direct influence of Bergson on Faulkner by saying that Bergson’s God is not teleological at all, which is quite different from Faulkner’s. Rather we attribute Faulkner’s concept of

time to the teleological view of Taylor. Like Taylor Faulkner, as we have seen, grasps time as opportunity to do good since the substance of time is Christ himself.

Notes

N. B. -- The following abbreviations have been used followed by page number:

ID for Faulkner, William. *Intruder in the Dust*: Vintage Books. 1948.

RN for Faulkner, William. *Requiem for a Nun*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.

CE for Bergson, Henri. *L'Évolution créatrice*. Paris: Flex Alcan, 1907. Translated as *Creative Evolution*, by A. Mitchell. New York. New York: Henry Holt, 1922.

MM for Bergson, Henri. *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*. Paris: Felix Alan, 1896. Translated as *Matter and Memory*, by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. New York: Zone Books, 1988.

TFW for Bergson, Henri. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*. Paris: Felix Alcan, 1889. Translated as *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, by F.L. Pogson. New York: Macmillan, 1910.

TS for Bergson, Henri. *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Paris: Flex Alcan, 1932. Translated as *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, by R. A. Audra and C. Brereton. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

Works for Heber, Reginald and Eden, Charles, eds. *The Whole Works of the Right Reverend Jeremy Taylor, D.D. with a Life of the Author*. 10 vols. London: Longman, Green, Longmans, Roberts and Greed, 1847–52.

Included bibliographical references and indexes in ten volumes

Content: v.1. *Clerus domini. Discourse of friendship. Rules and advices to the clergy. Life. Indexes*—v.2. *Life of Christ: Great Exemplar*—v. 3. *The rule and exercises of holy living and dying*—v. 4. *Sermons*—v.5. *Episcopacy. Apology for set forms. Reverence due to the altar. Liberty of prophesying. Confirmation*—v. 6. *Real presence of Christ in the sacrament. Dissuasive from popery, & c.*—v. 7. *Unum necessarium Deus justificatus. Letters to Warner and Jeanes. Golden grove, and Festival hymns.*—v. 8. *Worthy communicant. Supplement of sermons. Collection of offices.*—v. 9. *Ductor dubitantium*, part I, books I and II.—v. 10. *Ductor dubitantium*, part II, books III and IV.

(1) A Study of Faulkner's Concept of Time as Seen in *Intruder in the Dust*

¹ James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926–62* (New York: Random House, 1968), p.70.

² See "The Access to Life's Flux: A Study of Hightower in *Light in August* in Reference to Henri Bergson and Jeremy Taylor" in *The Kwansai Gakuin University Humanities Review*, Vol. 6, pp. 79–102.

³ Akiko Miyake, "William Faulkner's Inverted World in *Soldiers' Pay* and *A Fable*," *Kobe College Studies* XXVI (Dec., 1979), pp. 1–15.

⁴ Olga Vickery, "Gavin Stevens: From Rhetoric to Dialectic," *Faulkner Studies*, II (Spring, 1953), pp. 1–4.

⁵ William Faulkner, *Theses 13* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931), p. 355.

⁶ William Faulkner, *Soldier's Pay* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), p. 250.

⁷ William Faulkner, *The Town* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 193.

⁸ William Faulkner, *Go Down to Moses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 260.

⁹ James Street Fulton, "Bergson's Religious Interpretation of Evolution," *Rice Institute Pamphlet* 43 (no. 3), 1956, p. 21.

¹⁰ Cf. *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds., Alan Richardson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), p. 289.

¹¹ See "Salvation for Temple Drake: A Study of *Requiem for a Nun*," in *Sociology Department Studies* No. 82 (Kwansai Gakuin Daigaku, 1998), pp. 59–71. And "Faulkner's Ultimate Gospel: A Study of a Christ Figure in William Faulkner's *A Fable*," in *Sociology Department Studies* No. 83 (Kwansai Gakuin Daigaku, 1999), pp. 41–57.

¹² The most significant use is with reference to the material out of which God formed man (Gen. 2:7). Here it affirms the Hebrew view of man as being a temporal creature in intimate unity with the rest of

creation. It is also symbolic of man's frailty (Ps. 103: 14; cf. Gen. 18: 27; Job 4: 19; etc.) and of his mortality (Gen. 3: 19; cf. Job 34: 15; Ps. 104: 29; Eccl. 3: 20; 12: 7; etc.); hence it is used figuratively for the grave (Ps. 22: 15, 29; 30: 9; Dnl. 12: 2). (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* Volume One [Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979], p. 998.) See "The Courage to Be" as Seen in William Faulkner's "Dry September" in *Kwansei Gakuin University Sociology Department Studies* No. 77, pp. 55–62.

¹³ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 517–8.

¹⁴ *Selected Letters*, ed. Joseph Blotner (London: The Scholar Press, 1977), p. 267.

(2) The Difference between Faulkner and Bergson in their Concept of Time

¹⁵ Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*, p. 255.

¹⁶ Several dissertations emphasize Faulkner's affinities with Bergson's philosophy. In "Bergsonian Dynamism in the Writings of William Faulkner" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Tulane University, 1962), Shirley Callen observes Henri Bergson's concept of *élan vital* in *Creative Evolution* as a source of Faulkner's dynamic concept of man which rejected stasis and rigidity. In Vernon T. Hornback's "William Faulkner and the Terror of History: Myth, History, and Moral Freedom in the Yoknapatawpha Cycle" (Ph. D. Dissertation, St. Louis University, 1964), Hornback explained Southern entrapment in the past in cyclical time as a means of retaining identity. Susan Parr deals with techniques and analogues in "And by Bergson, Obviously" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972). In "Uses of Time in Four Novels of William Faulkner" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Auburn University, 1973), citing both Bergson and Proust, Daniel Ford described Faulkner's "creative memory" in *Absalom, Absalom!* as combining the clock time of reality with the self-conscious time of memory. In "In and Out of Time: Eliot, Faulkner, and the Legacy of Bergson" (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California, 1981), Malcolm Douglass concentrates on the work of intuitive power.

Also Paul Douglass shows how Bergson's intuition, duration and creative evolution influenced Eliot and Faulkner in his *Bergson, Eliot, American Literature* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

¹⁷ Joseph Blotner, comp. *William Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia, 1957), p. 109.

¹⁸ Brooks, *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*, p. 255.

¹⁹ Jacques Maritain in his *Bergsonian philosophy and Thomism*; translated by Mabelle L. Andison; in collaboration with J. Gordon Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 297–298. All subsequent references to this book will be identified in the paper by the abbreviation *BP*, followed by the page number.

²⁰ J. Alexander Gunn, *Bergson and His Philosopher* (London: Mathuen & Co. Ltd, 1929), pp. 124–131.

²¹ Baron Friedrich Von Hügel, *Eternal Life: A Study of its Implications and applications* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 297.

²² Frank Herbert Brabant, *Time and Eternity in Christian Thought* (London: Longman, 1937), p. 119.

²³ Summary of *Word Biblical Commentary* Volume 42 by Andrew T. Lincoln (Texas: Waco, 1982), pp. 22–32.

²⁴ Cf. *Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 42, pp. 34–35.

²⁵ A *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, 1950), pp. 258–267.

²⁶ Jeremy Taylor, D. D, *Contemplation of the State of Man In this Life, and That Which is to Come* (London, 1847), pp. 1–2, 5.

The Dispute against Faulkner's Direct Influence by Henri Bergson and His Affinities with Jeremy Taylor in His Concept of Time

ABSTRACT

When we scrutinize Faulkner's concept of time, we cannot ignore the fact that he was influenced by Henri Bergson. Faulkner commented on his agreement with Bergson's ideas on time and the nature of reality in his interview with Loïc Bouvard in 1952. I have endeavored to explain Faulkner's work in terms of Bergsonian concept and have succeeded in it to some extent. However, we cannot dismiss the crucial difference between Bergson and Faulkner in their concept of time. In this paper we will see the insufficiency of Bergson's philosophy in studying one of Faulkner's most popular novels *Intruder in the Dust*. By scrutinizing the difference between Bergson and Faulkner in their theological concept, we dispute the direct influence of Bergson on Faulkner. We can say that Bergson's God is not teleological at all, which is quite different from Faulkner's. Rather we attribute Faulkner's concept of time to the teleological view of Jeremy Taylor, to whom I have repeatedly referred. Like Taylor, Faulkner sees time as opportunity to do good, since the substance of time is Christ himself.

Key Words: time, Henri Bergson, Jeremy Taylor