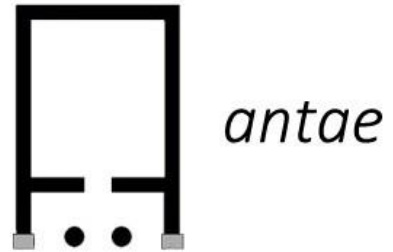


Thinking the Moment of the Ordinary: Memory and the Paradoxes of Re-turning

Subro Saha

antae, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Dec., 2018), 287-299

Proposed Creative Commons Copyright Notices



Authors who publish with this journal agree to the following terms:

- a. Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](#) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

- b. Authors are permitted and encouraged to post their work online (e.g., in institutional repositories or on their website) prior to and during the submission process, as it can lead to productive exchanges, as well as earlier and greater citation of published work (See [The Effect of Open Access](#)).

antae (ISSN 2523-2126) is an international refereed journal aimed at exploring current issues and debates within English Studies, with a particular interest in literature, criticism and their various contemporary interfaces. Set up in 2013 by postgraduate students in the Department of English at the University of Malta, it welcomes submissions situated across the interdisciplinary spaces provided by diverse forms and expressions within narrative, poetry, theatre, literary theory, cultural criticism, media studies, digital cultures, philosophy and language studies. Creative writing and book reviews are also encouraged submissions.

Thinking the Moment of the Originary: Memory and the Paradoxes of Re-turning

Subro Saha

Utrecht University

Any form of Knowing has to negotiate the unanticipatable. By definition, the act of knowing has to know what is already not available to knowledge. To make known what already is known does not involve the process of knowing; it is the act of repeating the already-known.¹

Any attempt at knowing always calls for a certain semblance of ontological certainty, and thinking the ontological remains, as always, linked with questions concerning time and presence. Conceptualising the functional modalities of memory, therefore, does not simply involve knowing the presence that is available “now” but is also, crucially, a gesture towards knowing the residual traces of a presence that is no longer available.

This process, however, involves not only knowing such relationalities in their generality but also in their own specificities. In other words, as one attempts to explore the relationalities bringing time and presence together, it becomes crucial also to discuss them in their own specificity in order to understand how they become entangled within networks of general relationality. Thinking “memory” remains shaped by such play of the general and specific, and thus remains always linked with the conceptual structures of thinking “turning”, while the thinking of re-turning (as “turning again” or “turning back”), on the other hand, remains always shaped the thinking of the originary. The turning, re-turning, and the origin that are intrinsic to the thinking of memory thus calls for (re-)thinking the question of time itself. Two crucial questions emerge in this relation: can one think of time *in terms of time* without any relation to something else, and, if one cannot, how can one think of the functional modalities of memory? How does the thinking of origin come to acquire its significance in relation to the question of time, and how does it affect the conceptualisation of memory? To explore such questions, in relation to the thinking of memory, I address the ideas of Henri Bergson and Martin Heidegger, while working also with the contingencies that haunt any such attempt at re-turning—as it was, indeed, also the case with Heidegger’s turn towards Bergson concerning the thinking of time and the originary.

As stated, the thinking of origin remains always premised upon the thinking of presence which, quite paradoxically, remains an ever-elusive concept which both memory and the act of conceptualisation itself attempt but perennially fail to grasp. The thinking of origin that memory attempts to re-turn to remains always linked with our conceptual framework of “time” as a linear

¹ Anirban Das, *Towards a Politics of the (Im)Possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms* (London and New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2010), p. xiii.

and teleological progression. The question, then, emerges: how does time come to be framed within a structure of linearity, and how does the thinking of origin come to be shaped through this framework? For Bergson, it is the modern scientific temperament of objective measure(-)ability that constitutes time in terms of linear, detachable clock-time, whereas, for Heidegger, it comes to be conceptualised in linear homogenous terms through Dasein's existential understanding of presence and continuity. Though they differ from each other's views on time and presence in several crucial ways, what connects these two philosophers is the realisation that thinking the originary remains a task that is never available in its entirety. Thinking time in its entirety always remains shaped by its inherent and continuous slippage. As Elizabeth Grosz's reflects:

[T]ime is not merely the attribute of a subject, imposed by us on the world: it is a condition of what is living, of matter, of the real, of the universe itself. It is what the universe imposes on us rather than we on it; it is what we find ourselves immersed in, given, as impinging and as enabling as our spatiality [...]. Time is neither fully 'present', a thing in itself, nor is it a pure abstraction, a metaphysical assumption that can be ignored in everyday practice. It cannot be viewed directly, nor can it be eliminated from pragmatic consideration. It is a kind of evanescence [...]. We "naturally" think of time through the temporality of objects, through the temporality of space and matter, rather than in itself or on its own terms. [...]. We can think it only in passing moments, through ruptures, nicks, cuts, in instances of dislocation, though it contains no moments or ruptures and has no being or presence, functioning only as continuous becoming.²

While the early Greek thoughts on time as "chronos", "kairos", and "aeon" reflect the human tendency to anthropomorphise time, the later concept of objective clock-time attempts to portray time as both measurable and disembodied. In whatever case, the inability to grasp at the entity of time has always haunted Western philosophy. Since presence has always been signified as a factic category for thinking existence, this same emphasis on presence coupled with the thinking of linear time has also haunted continental philosophy with the search for origin. As such, the question of origin comes to acquire an unavoidable air in terms of any attempt at thinking history and/or philosophy of time. Time, presence, and origin thus form three connecting points for both Bergson as well as Heidegger, although this not without contradictions.

What Bergson attempts can be understood as a re-evaluation of the existing philosophical understanding of time, while Heidegger's efforts amount to a critique of such approaches and re-evaluations. Bergson turns towards Aristotle's approach to the thinking of space and time, Heidegger turns towards Bergson's turning towards Aristotle. Bergson constitutes his own views of time by questioning Aristotle's views on time and space, Heidegger develops his own concepts by questioning Bergson's questioning of Aristotelian concept of time. Common to such

² Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Australia and New Zealand: Allen and Unwin, 2004), p. 5.

contingent acts of turning remains a generality; both of them turn towards the existing tradition of thinking about time available to them. The search for origin leads Bergson to Aristotle and Heidegger to Bergson.

In Emmanuel Levinas's view, Bergson's most significant contribution to philosophy was the theory of duration which enabled the destruction of the primacy of clock-time, and it was his questioning of the traditional understanding of time that subsequently enabled Heidegger's conceptualisation of Dasein's finite temporalisation, despite the radical differences which separates, of course, the Bergsonian conception of time from the Heideggerian one.³ While Bergson declares in *Matter and Memory* that '[q]uestions relating to subject and object, to their distinction and their union, should be put in terms of time rather than of space',⁴ Heidegger on the other hand turns towards 'the interpretation of time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being'.⁵ Bergson attempts to dissociate the thinking of time from that of space while Heidegger attempts to assert being as the organising aspect in the thinking of presence. Thinking the origin of time, therefore, has been always been characterised as a debate between an empirically objective approach in contrast with the subjectivity of experience, which Edmund Husserl too reflects:

The question about the essence of time thus leads back to the question about the "origin" of time. But this question of origin is directed toward the primitive formations of time-consciousness, in which the primitive differences of the temporal become constituted intuitively and properly as the original sources of all the evidences relating to time. The question of origin should not be confused with the question about psychological origin [...]. The question about empirical genesis is a matter of indifference as far as we are concerned; what does interest us are experiences with The Origin of Time respect to their objective sense and descriptive content [...]. That these experiences are themselves fixed in objective time, that they belong in the world of physical things and psychic subjects, and that they have their place, their efficacy, their empirical being, and their origin in this world does not concern us and we know nothing about it.⁶

For Husserl, the question of our subjective experience of time, as well as the thinking of time as objective entity, remains always dependent upon certain *a priori* structures of conceptualisation. By emphasising the shaping role of the 'immediate data of consciousness' in the thinking of time, Bergson seems to anticipate Husserl's departure from psychology concerning the question of origin, and Heidegger extends it even further by focusing on neither "consciousness" nor

³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 27.

⁴ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York, NY: Zone, 1988), p. 71.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), p. xxix.

⁶ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, ed. by Rudolf Boehm, trans. by John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), pp. 9-10.

“lived experience” but on the phenomenological inquiry of being.⁷ The search for origin leads Bergson to turn towards Aristotle, dismissing his ideas on the ground of thinking time in terms of space, and in the same way, in turn, Heidegger turns towards Bergson and dismisses him on the ground of relying too heavily on Aristotle’s definition of time and neglecting the question of being; in this respect, Heidegger places Bergson in line with thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Scheler, and Edmund Husserl, all of whom he criticises for neglecting the question of ontology.⁸ However, Heidegger’s turn towards Bergson is not simply marked by rejection; in fact, he had at several points praised Bergson in many of his crucial works prior to *Being and Time*. Turning towards Aristotle, Heidegger declares in *Being and Time* that ‘Aristotle’s treatise on time is the first detailed interpretation of this phenomenon that has come down to us. It essentially determined all the subsequent interpretations of time, including that of Bergson’; there does immediately follow, however, a footnote dismissing Bergson for relying too much on the traditional model of time.⁹ Certain crucial questions arise here: why Bergson, and not Husserl, whose lectures on time-consciousness would soon be published under his supervision? Why not Hegel, whose interpretation of time—not Bergson’s—is the subject of the penultimate chapter of *Being and Time*? Why not even Dilthey, whose thinking is the focus of some of Heidegger’s most important early investigations into time?¹⁰

As early as in his 1915 *Habilitation* lecture entitled ‘The Concept of Time in the Science of History’, in fact, Heidegger turns toward Bergson (who too was writing during that period) to differentiate the thinking of temporality from the quantifiable time of physics, and it was Bergson’s concept of “duration” that Heidegger would be using continuously. It was around the same time that Bertrand Russell, in Lecture V of his *Our Knowledge of the External World* (in the chapter ‘The theory of continuity’), proclaims continuity as a purely mathematical subject and not, strictly speaking, part of philosophy. According to Russell, a notion of change must fit into a logical framework, with the result that logical necessity compels us to a conception of ‘instants without duration’.¹¹ While Russell (like many other physicists of the time) strongly argues for a replacement of the philosophical treatment of time (a virtual multiplicity) with a mathematical one (a numerical multiplicity), it becomes clear that, despite crucial differences, what connects Bergson and Heidegger was their attempt to reflect the essential incalculability of time.¹² The Bergsonian “duration” takes time as continuous qualitative changes operative within a contingent network of simultaneity, whereas the division of time into “so many” relies on thinking continuity as a flat surface that can be measured and therefore cut into pieces. The focus on measure(-)ability that physics had brought with the concept of quantifiable time enables one to think time in terms of space, thereby shaping the thinking of continuity itself as measurable.

⁷ Heath Massey, *The Origin of Time: Heidegger and Bergson* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015), p. 6.

⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 25.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Massey, p. 12.

¹¹ Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1922), p. 158.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 7.

As Heidegger reflects:

Motions run their course in time. What exactly does this mean? “In” time has a spatial meaning; however, time is obviously nothing spatial. [...]. In the relation between motion and time, what is clearly at issue is measurement of motion by means of time.¹³

And it is this same point that leads him to dismiss Bergson in terms of failing to explain time without relying on space, though he credits Bergson continuously as the first approach within recent philosophical approaches to question the existing views on time:

Despite all differences in justification, Bergson’s conception agrees with Hegel’s thesis that space “is” time. Bergson just turns it around: Time (temps) is space. Bergson’s interpretation of time too, obviously grew out of an interpretation of Aristotle’s treatise on time [...]. With regard to the Aristotelian definition of time as ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως [arithmos kineseos], Bergson analyzes number before analyzing time. Time as space (cf. *Essai*, p. 69) is quantitative succession. Duration is described on the basis of a counter-orientation toward this concept of time as qualitative succession.¹⁴

According to Heidegger’s reading, Bergson developed his distinction between time and duration while he was writing a thesis on Aristotle’s concept of place and, as such, Bergson’s attempts to move beyond Aristotle are deemed as still haunted by him. Heidegger, it seems, oscillates continuously between praise and complaint in his turning towards Bergson. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger asserts that Bergson fails to develop an absolutely original conception of time, yet simultaneously credits Bergson’s efforts as ‘valuable’ because ‘they manifest a philosophical effort to surpass the traditional concept of time’.¹⁵ This same tension reappears the following year in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, a course delivered in the summer of 1928, where he explains that though Bergson explores more clearly the relation between time and consciousness (as well as derived and original time) than any previous philosopher, Bergson is judged as equating time with space.¹⁶ In *Being and Time*, too, we see a similar oscillation where, while dismissed in a footnote, Bergson is also praised on a philosophy of time comprising the most ‘independent’ and ‘intense’ investigations of the contemporary age.¹⁷ In Heidegger’s view, Bergson turns toward Aristotle but remains trapped always under his shadow, and as such Heidegger turns to Bergson as a cautionary example of a contemporary philosopher who attempted to rethink time but could not do so radically enough because of his

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 53.

¹⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 410.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 232.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. by Michael Heim (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 203.

¹⁷ Massey, p. 15. It is also interesting to note that Heidegger praises Bergson as ‘original’ and ‘independent’ in his approach to the question of time, instead of reserving such praise for his teacher and mentor Husserl who too had been, by that point, writing on time for a considerable period.

dependence on Aristotle.¹⁸ However, Heidegger's turning towards Bergson too remains embedded with multiple paradoxes. In 'Aristotle's Concept of Place', Bergson focuses on Aristotle's views on place (*topos*) as developed in *Physics* IV (1-9) instead of focusing on Aristotle's views on time that he develops in the sections 10-14, and, in *Time and Free Will*, likewise, hardly any direct reference to Aristotle's account of time is made except only once in passing.¹⁹ Focusing on developing a critique of the existing philosophical views on time as 'homogeneous medium', Bergson never simply focuses on Aristotle only but also on Kant, empirical psychology, classical physics, astronomy, and Zeno. Besides, Bergson's views on duration as 'a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another' is never presented as a universal formula but rather, as he emphasises continuously, as 'qualitative multiplicity' and 'continuous multiplicity' to distinguish duration from any numerical or discrete multiplicity.²⁰ Heidegger, in his turning towards Bergson, misses this crucial emphasis on qualitative multiplicity and qualitative continuity in terms of thinking time; nor, even after using the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous time in his own early works, does Heidegger address the heterogeneity of pure duration as Bergson conceives it.²¹ As it is with Bergson's turn towards Aristotle, we see Heidegger's turning towards Bergson and the continental philosophical tradition's approaches toward the question of time also as an attempt that is full of ambivalence and paradoxes, especially the contingencies that mark his re(-)turn towards Bergson that vacillates between celebration and complaint, acceptance and rejection, continuity and rupture, cognition and slippage. Such play of ambivalences and paradoxes, I submit, not only marks Bergson's turning towards Aristotle or Heidegger's turning towards Bergson, but rather any attempt at turning in general.

Time remains operative always as a shifting and paradoxical concept, one that remains undefinable yet operates as the defining category for everything else, remaining absent by itself yet determining the immediacy and category of presence for others while shaping our understanding of the concepts of becoming, change, movement, and life itself. As such, it is this paradoxical entity of time—as operating between the axes of absence and presence (the conceptual axes of which are in turn shaped in relation to time itself)—that makes it almost impossible to theorise time despite the fact that we *live* time continuously. The paradox emerges in the unavoidability of thinking time *in terms of time itself*, which remains always outside the grasp of its human cognition. Comprehending life in its becoming thus always calls for comprehending the puzzle and paradox of time, and it is in this process that the thinking of time, as linearity signifying a continuity, comes to be constituted. As Heidegger reflects, the perplexity of the traditional question—"What is time?"—thus seems to rely on the "is-ness" of time that seems to call for a definition of time-in-itself. As Heidegger points out, answering this question

¹⁸ Massey, p. 15.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp. 104, 226.

²¹ Massey, p. 51.

always calls for the possibility ‘*to understand time in terms of time*’. However, since we measure time (in Grosz’s words) in terms of cuts, nicks, motion, and change, thinking time-in-itself emerges as an impossibility. The attempt to measure time be it through sun, moon, or clock constitutes an attempt ‘not to indicate the how-long or how-much of time in its present flowing, but to determine the specific fixing of the now’, thereby shaping the immediacy of “now”—the only difference being that clock-time constitutes this immediacy on an even more urgent basis. This leads Heidegger to parse the question as follows: ‘Is the now at my disposal? [...]. Am I myself the now and my existence time?’²² The “now”, it seems, is thus never there as some “thing” given but comes to be constituted through a certain associative process involving the thinking of the presence of the being. The signification of the “now” as symptomatic of an unavoidable presence and performative urgency enables the assertion of the presence, authentic, and factic materiality of the being (“I am”) that constitutes time also in relation to such immediacy of the “now”. The capacity to say “now”, to read time by sun or measure it by clock, thus enables the being with an unavoidable certainty in terms of thinking time, instead of remaining trapped passively ‘within time’; thus, Heidegger asserts that Dasein ‘is in time in a distinctive sense’; or, in other words, Dasein ‘*is time itself, not in time*’.²³ The thinking of time thus comes to be constituted in a specific way that enables the being to measure time by viewing it as a linear homogeneity, by assigning a quantity and/or number to the “now”, and by reading it in terms of a space that contains it. Such constitution of time as a linear and “measurable” progression thus enables the constitution of assurance in terms of the continuity of the being. The past, as such, emerges not simply as a question concerning “what” but rather as the “how” of the “now”, something which one can return to again and again, thereby shaping the teleology of time. Thus, the question emerges, if time is never accessible in its entirety, and if turning remains always partial, how then can memory turn towards a time and the presence of the originary?

It becomes clear how the thinking of progressive linear time comes to be constituted as a symptom of mapping the puzzle of time, and it is through such contingent entanglements of linearity, presence, and continuity that the emphasis on origin comes to be constituted. Western philosophical tradition has always been haunted by a search for absolutes, as a symptom of assuring the specificity, authenticity, and existence of individual entities (be it “meaning”, “identity”, or “self”) against the threatening exposure to the all-encompassing vastness of chaos and nothingness. Such searching for specificities also comes to be constituted through the emphasis on presence as a marker of existence that simultaneously shapes the emphasis on the moment of the originary. This division of the conceptual structures of presence and absence thus shapes the division of zones itself—idea/matter, imaginary/real, possible/impossible—leading, therefore, to binaries. Such emphasis on presence, as symptomatic of existence, thus shapes the reality of real, the materiality of matter, the thingness of thing. The division of time into detached zones reflects a conceptual framework that relies on the presence/absence division and speculation through differentiation. Besides, it is such emphasis on presence that also posits

²² Heidegger, *Metaphysical Foundations*, p. 5.

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 7, 14.

“death” as the marker of absolute absence, the end of all movement. The threatening exposure into an all-encompassing nothingness forces the (human) being to search for meaning as the *telos* of its journey, meaning that would not only validate the specificity of its existence and journey but would also shape the possibility of movement, thereby shaping the hope of progression (a futurity “to come”) against the despair of stasis. This search for meaning as an assurance of the existence of being remains directly linked with the visibility of presence that shapes the thinking of the possible itself, and it is such search that shapes the thinking of time as a linear teleological progression. However, just as the expectations of a futurity remain operative in an ambivalent way because of the absence that shapes it (unlike the immediacy and visibility of presence shaping the being of ‘here-and-now’), the thinking of *an origin that is never accessible in its entirety* remains similarly embedded, always, with uncertainties and paradoxes. Memory, which remains connected simultaneously with absence (what was once *there*) and presence (*here and now*), remains also operative through the play of attachment (*here, this time*, and so on) and detachment (*there, that time*, and so on) and thus with the performative and the iterative. Any attempt at turning towards the originary, I propose, also remains operative always as partial, contingent, and iterative turns.

Turning towards Bergson or Heidegger one can realise how the puzzle of time had haunted their thoughts as it haunts many contemporary thinkers today, and for them, too, thinking time in its absolute singularity was always an impossibility.²⁴ In the same way, for Bergson, memory too is never singular but operates as a continuous negotiation between three related aspects that he terms “pure memory”, “memory-image”, and “perception”.

Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory images which complete it as they interpret it. The memory-image, in its turn, partakes of the ‘pure memory’, which it begins to materialize, and of the perception in which it tends to embody itself.²⁵

To picture is not to remember. No doubt a recollection, as it becomes actual, tends to live in an image; however, the converse is not true, and the image, pure and simple, will not be referred to the past unless, indeed, it was in the past that I sought it.²⁶

Memory operates on a contingent and continuously shifting zone which brings differences together—idea and matter, past and present, visible and invisible—in the formation of some evolving narrative. However, the narrative “memory” presents to the mind is never fixed, and is therefore never anticipatable nor is it always comprehensible. If “memory” turns back towards the past moments of the originary then that act of turning is never absolutely complete, and nor

²⁴ For further details, see Tina Chanter, ‘Heidegger’s Understanding of the Aristotelian Concept of Time’, in *Interrogating the Tradition: Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy*, ed. by Charles E. Scott and John Sallis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 131–157. See also Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. by Mary McAllester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000).

²⁵ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 133.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 135.

can it be. The act of turning remains always mediated through the lens of the present, through the immediacy of what *is* here-and-now. Besides, because the act of turning-back is always partial and unanticipatable, there remains an element of surprise within it which by the same act of turning also holds the potential for problematising the present. Memory, therefore, remains operative through/in an ambivalent structure where it is simultaneously desired as well as sometimes feared, where it can be comforting as well as tormenting. What effect it will produce remains linked entirely with its connection with the present which shapes the contingent act of turning-back. It is the tendency to search for clarity, precision, and absolutes that enables the mind to form narratives according to its ways of understanding. Therefore, according to Bergson, the intellect presents the flux of pure time as stable perceptions and static conceptions. It establishes clear-cut distinctions and substitutes, 'for the continuous the discontinuous, for motion stability, for tendency in process of change, fixed points marking a direction of change and tendency'.²⁷ For Bergson, consciousness and perception are crucially linked with memory, and perception is 'never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it'.²⁸ In fact, according to Bergson, every perception is already a memory; we perceive only the past, 'the pure present being the indivisible progress of the past gnawing into the future'.²⁹

Even within Bergson's views one can thus trace how the act of turning and thinking the originary remains a task that remains qualitatively approachable but never in its entirety. However, when Bergson asserts that the tendency of every memory to gather to itself other memories must be explained by 'the natural return of the mind to the undivided unity of perception', it becomes clear how a certain privileging of the visibility of presence shapes his view of perception as an organising principle.³⁰ Besides, by investing perception with an 'undivided unity', Bergson seems to invest perception with a narrative power that ties together otherwise unlinked, scattered, and fragmented ideas into unified meaning, and in doing so Bergson seems to fall in line with those thinkers who seem to privilege perception, presence, and visibility as the controlling principle shaping experience. As reflected already in how the act of turning towards the originary remains a task always exposed to its own internal contradictions, one can thus also similarly trace many contradictions within Bergson's own thinking about the originary as with Heidegger's views on Bergson. Since turning towards the originary remains an act that tries to bring together presence and absence, any attempt to grasp the unavailable remains always a slippery task embedded with uncertain paradoxes and ambivalences.

Presence remains operative as one of the constitutive aspects investing the being with an ontological certainty, and thus also shaping the question of origin as symptomatic of presence. Since the originary remains a moment after all, one that comes to acquire its signifying force

²⁷ Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1992), p. 49.

²⁸ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 170. See also p. 24.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 194.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 215.

within structures of teleological time that enables the act of turning, *as a moment* the originary remains always a moment of slippage. As such, the originary “thing” to which memory re-turns thus remains always relational and contingent. The presence that memory turns at does not operate as a self-contained and in-itself entity but gets shaped through the mediations of the presence of the being in relation to the immediacy of here-and-now, and it is such mediation that shapes the question of possibility. However, memory does not remain linked only with the is-ness of presence but also with presence that is no longer available, not only with the visible of the immediate here-and-now but also the invisible. Memory, which operates as a continuous negotiation between a presence that is no longer available and the immediate presence of here-and-now, remains always exposed to the limits of connecting the once-present with the present of here-and-now. The connections that shape the functional modalities of memory thus remain operative always as contingent connections. The thinking of memory *as* a bringing-back of the past moments operates not simply as a passive bringing-back but rather as a continuous modification and (trans)formation according to the immediacy and presence of the here-and-now through the negation of the contradictions emerging in the path of such bringing-back so as to *enable* a narrative of continuity, linkage, understanding, and intelligibility. However, such narrative of intelligibility remains always exposed to the uncontrollable eruptions of the unthinkable which threatens to disrupt the narrative of continuity, thus placing memory in a zone of undecidability and ambivalence. In other words, memory and its turning remain operative always within the contingent zones of simultaneity: of presence and absence, the visible and invisible, the possible and impossible.

Unlike the possible, which remains shaped by the question of presence, the impossible suggests an inaccessible realm beyond the reach of possibilising. Memory and its turning towards the moment of the originary, I submit, thus remains operative within the contingent zones of (im)possible, where the prefix “im-” suggests a continuous movement, inter-action, and negotiation between the realms of the “possible” and the “impossible”. To reflect Anirban Das’s concept of the “(im)possible”, a ‘politics of the possible’ remains wholly derivable from the present even if it is pluralised into multiple presences.³¹ On the other hand, a politics of the (im)possible creates things that are not fully derivable, nor even anticipatable from what *is* present.

[A] politics circumscribed within the ‘possible’ is destined to replicate the structures of the present in any order of transcendence; while that aspiring to a total impossibility—without a whole-hearted engagement with the ‘present’ and the ‘possible’—is hardly worth the name. That probably explains the parentheses around the letters ‘im’ that I propose to add to the title of this section—retaining and working through the ‘possible’ to

³¹ Das develops his concept of the (im)possible from Kumkum Sangari’s ‘The Politics of the Possible’, as well as Derrida’s concept of the impossible, to suggest a continuation between the elements of the present (which Sangari calls the ‘real’) and those of pure absence (which Derrida views as the realm of “impossible” and radical otherness). See Das, p. 168.

reach its limits and the trace of the ‘impossible’; a hanging on to both ends of the binary.³²

Since memory and the act of turning remains operative in an ever-shifting zone, language with its definitive structures and categories cannot reflect the ceaseless movements of memory and, as such, any attempt to capture the movements of memory within the structures of language remains always partial and incomplete. With the impossibility to achieve the moment of originary in its entirety, any attempt to re-present memory within the structures of language thus calls for a continuous negotiation that would reflect the contingent modalities of memory, rather than simplifying (and sometimes even reducing) the contingencies of memory within the structures of intelligibility, presence, and visibility.

Memory remains operative always with a certain ontological specificity as well as with an uncontrollable uncertainty. The structures of thinking premising upon the normative structures of intelligibility, on the other hand, remains operative within the parameters of thinking the possible and as such constitutes, re-presents, and supplements the presence of being in relation to the modalities of thinking the possible in some way or other. Any attempt to reflect the question of memory and turning thus involves such an (im)possible and aporetic task of capturing that which is always slipping: time, presence, and origin. Since any attempt to understand the unintelligible calls for a transferring of it into the realm of the intelligible, any attempt to reflect memory that remains rooted in moments of absence similarly calls for a transferring of absence into the realm of presence. This remains the unavoidable paradox of any attempt to *re-present* memory in or through a language which remains always operative *within* the structures of the possible and intelligible, and by the same logic any claim to the impossible by the same act of *claiming* also transfers itself into the intelligible language of positivity and therefore remains no longer impossible. The absent moment is never fixed and as soon as we attempt to understand, re-claim, and re-present it, we have already transferred it into the structure of the possible, intelligible, and present. If to be rendered unintelligible is to be made invisible and unrecognisable, then we can “*see*” the unintelligible only after it has become intelligible. In other words, every time we try to offer an example of the unintelligible we have already, by way of the example itself, rendered it intelligible. Nonetheless, this paradoxical logic does not prove that there is no unintelligible; it merely demonstrates that we have no immediate access to the unintelligible until we have attempted to make it *visible*. It is such play of the possible and the impossible, presence and absence, intelligible and unintelligible that locates the originary in such a position of undecidability and makes it almost impossible to capture it in its entirety. It is such undecidability and constant trans-formation of its own movement that leads us to move from a structure of teleological progression towards an iterable movement where it becomes impossible to reach at any definite, ultimate, or final point of locating the moment of the originary. Questions concerning the search for alternatives to linear representations of time, or even non-linear “new” definitions to time, remain always exposed to such an (im)possibility, since any

³² Das, p. 164.

such attempt at novelty always calls for the same paradoxical gesture of thinking time *in terms of time*. When we turn towards Bergson, Heidegger, Deleuze, or Derrida, we see not only how attempts to think time outside linearity have a long and elaborate history, but also how there remains always a task that is never complete. However, this does not also mean accepting what is simply available; ranging from Bergson's duration, Heidegger's temporality, or Deleuze's affirmative multiplicity, questioning time is also a paradoxical necessity for thinking an alterity that one cannot not want. Any attempt to re-think the concept of turning and memory thus calls for such continuous negotiation between the specificities that constitutes the thinking of originary and the generalities shaping the thinking of alterity. Such attempt thus calls for a textuality (in the sense of textile, *as* weaving-together) that gestures towards a general *enabling* of the connecting together of the contingencies of memory and turning, while also holding the specificities of their different modalities and negotiations. It is towards such zones of simultaneity (of embrace, contingency, and negotiation), that, I propose, one situates the (im)possibility of turning towards the moment of the originary.

List of Works Cited

- Bachelard, Gaston, *The Dialectic of Duration*, trans. by Mary Mcallester Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000)
- Bergson, Henri, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York, NY: Zone, 1988)
- , *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Mabelle L. Andison (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1992)
- , *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. by F.L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959)
- Chanter, Tina, 'Heidegger's Understanding of the Aristotelian Concept of Time', in *Interrogating the Tradition: Hermeneutics and the History of Philosophy*, ed. by Charles E. Scott and John Sallis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 131–157
- Das, Anirban, *Towards a Politics of the (Im)Possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms* (London and New York, NY: Anthem Press, 2010)
- Grosz, Elizabeth, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Australia and New Zealand: Allen and Unwin, 2004)
- Heidegger, Martin, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982)

- , *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962)
- , *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002)
- , *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. by Michael Heim (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992)
- Husserl, Edmund, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, ed. by Rudolf Boehm, trans. by John B. Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991)
- Levinas, Emmanuel, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985)
- Massey, Heath, *The Origin of Time: Heidegger and Bergson* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015)
- Russell, Bertrand, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1922)