

**LIBRARY OF
PHILOSOPHY. MATTER
AND MEMORY**

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Library of Philosophy. Matter and Memory by Henri Bergson & J. H. Muirhead

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Library of Philosophy.

EDITED BY J. H. MUIRHEAD, LL.D.

MATTER AND MEMORY



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By

HENRI BERGSON

MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE
PROFESSOR AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

Authorized Translation by

NANCY MARGARET PAUL AND W. SCOTT PALMER

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TRANSLATORS' NOTE

THIS translation of Monsieur Bergson's *Matière et Mémoire* has been made from the fifth edition of 1908, and has had the great advantage of being revised in proof by the author. Monsieur Bergson has also written a new Introduction for it, which supersedes that which accompanied the original work.

The translators offer their sincere thanks to the author for his invaluable help in these matters and for many suggestions made by him while the book was in manuscript.

They beg leave to call the reader's attention to the fact that all the marginal notes are peculiar to the English edition ; and that, although Monsieur Bergson has been good enough to revise them, he is not responsible for their insertion or character, since they form no part of his own plan for the book.

N. M. P.
W. S. P.

INTRODUCTION

THIS book affirms the reality of spirit and the reality of matter, and tries to determine the relation of the one to the other by the study of a definite example, that of memory. It is, then, frankly dualistic. But, on the other hand, it deals with body and mind in such a way as, we hope, to lessen greatly, if not to overcome, the theoretical difficulties which have always beset dualism, and which cause it, though suggested by the immediate verdict of consciousness and adopted by common sense, to be held in small honour among philosophers.

These difficulties are due, for the most part, to the conception, now realistic, now idealistic, which philosophers have of matter. The aim of our first chapter is to show that realism and idealism both go too far, that it is a mistake to reduce matter to the perception which we have of it, a mistake also to make of it a thing able to produce in us perceptions, but in itself of another nature than they. Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of 'images.' And by 'image' we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*,—an

existence placed half-way between the 'thing' and the 'representation.' This conception of matter is simply that of common sense. It would greatly astonish a man unaware of the speculations of philosophy if we told him that the object before him, which he sees and touches, exists only in his mind and for his mind, or even, more generally, exists only for mind, as Berkeley held. Such a man would always maintain that the object exists independently of the consciousness which perceives it. But, on the other hand, we should astonish him quite as much by telling him that the object is entirely different from that which is perceived in it, that it has neither the colour ascribed to it by the eye, nor the resistance found in it by the hand. The colour, the resistance, are, for him, in the object: they are not states of our mind; they are part and parcel of an existence really independent of our own. For common sense, then, the object exists in itself, and, on the other hand, the object is, in itself, pictorial, as we perceive it: image it is, but a self-existing image.

This is just the sense in which we use the word image in our first chapter. We place ourselves at the point of view of a mind unaware of the disputes between philosophers. Such a mind would naturally believe that matter exists just as it is perceived; and, since it is perceived as an image, the mind would make of it, in itself, an image. In a word, we consider matter before the dissociation which idealism and realism have brought

about between its existence and its appearance. No doubt it has become difficult to avoid this dissociation now that philosophers have made it. To forget it, however, is what we ask of the reader. If, in the course of this first chapter, objections arise in his mind against any of the views that we put forward, let him ask himself whether these objections do not imply his return to one or the other of the two points of view above which we urge him to rise.

Philosophy made a great step forward on the day when Berkeley proved, as against the 'mechanical philosophers,' that the secondary qualities of matter have at least as much reality as the primary qualities. His mistake lay in believing that, for this, it was necessary to place matter within the mind, and make it into a pure idea. Descartes, no doubt, had put matter too far from us when he made it one with geometrical extensity. But, in order to bring it nearer to us, there was no need to go to the point of making it one with our own mind. Because he did go as far as this, Berkeley was unable to account for the success of physics, and, whereas Descartes had set up the mathematical relations between phenomena as their very essence, he was obliged to regard the mathematical order of the universe as a mere accident. So the Kantian criticism became necessary, to show the reason of this mathematical order and to give back to our physics a solid foundation—a task in which, however, it succeeded