

au trépas de Madame Doublet? On m'a dit qu'elle a fait une scène terriblement drôle. En sauriez-vous la vérité? —Eh bien, madame, jusqu'à ses derniers moments tout s'est passé de la façon la plus convenable du monde. On lui a envoyé un confesseur charmant, homme de goût et d'esprit, et d'une jolie éloquence, qui l'a gagnée toute entière par sa douce parole et sa théologie spirituelle. Enfin, il s'est si bien exprimé que madame l'a voulu embrasser. Monsieur le confesseur ne laisse pas d'être aimable, mais, malheureusement, en embrassant madame, il se montre un peu gauche: il dérange son rouge. Madame se met en colère, une colère épouvantable,—et meurt sans se confesser. . . . M. de Montesquieu devient très sérieux; on voit bien qu'il commence à vieillir: on ne trouve guère d'histoires galantes dans son *Esprit des lois*.—On y en trouve, pourtant. . . .

The candles are lit in the salon; the valets come to close the long windows. In the garden, the damp and gentle twilight of the north of France is dimming the whiteness of the statues and softening the rigidity of the paths. The clavichord sounds with an air of Rameau's, courteous, logical and gay. . . . Why should we not, we gens d'esprit, be confident and serene? The Enlightenment has all but won the day over superstition and error. Is there not already in Prussia a monarch who follows Voltaire,—who is to realize the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king? In another decade or two humanity will at last be free. Is not man by instinct good? Is it not institutions that have spoiled him? Let us then, with polished ridicule and the orderly arguments of reason, destroy the institutions, and the reign of justice will begin.

. . . But what nonsense all this is, my poor friend. Did you think you would have been happier then? Did you suppose that, for all the manners and the fineness and the wit, the spectacle of humanity was, any less than now, the spectacle of the follies and barbarities of a rude and ignorant race? You would have found the same thwarted purposes, the same unquenched desires, the same intolerable wrongs and no way to set them right. Did you think that there was no heart broken before Manon Lescaut could be written? Did you think that no suffering and no anger went to the writing of *Candide*? You imagine Voltaire an ironic god, supremely the servant of his reason, imperturbable and gay. He was also an eager idealist; a man of enthusiastic hopes, who had seen his hopes harshly defeated; a humane and highly sensitive creature, who smarted from cruel wounds. He had been humiliated and beaten and thrown into jail. He had seen his companion of six years, the Marquise du Châtelet, take a young guardsman for a lover and die in giving birth to his child. He had come to the court of Frederick, as to the temple of reason and justice, and had found the philosopher-king a vain and mischievous fellow, not a little fatuous in his cleverness, who was willing to drive the nations to war for no more philosophic reasons than "des troupes prêtes d'agir, mon épargne bien remplie, et la vivacité de mon caractère."

—Make no mistake! It was not the eighteenth century which would have given you happiness and peace: human life among the philosophers, no less than among the machines, was a mixture of disappointment and stupidity and pain,—a destructive and senseless war begun by a restless king, who professed to be directed by reason but confessed to a vivacious character,—a mistress, stolen by a guardsman, whom the philosopher should have had.

EDMUND WILSON, JR.

## POEMS by CARL SANDBURG

### Black Horizons

Black horizons, come up.

Black horizons, kiss me.

That is all; so many lies; killing so cheap;  
babies so cheap; blood, people, so cheap; and  
land high, land dear; a speck of the earth  
costs; a suck at the tit of Mother Dirt so  
clean and strong, it costs; fences, papers,  
sheriffs; fences, laws, guns; and so many  
stars and so few hours to dream; such a big  
song and so little a footing to stand and  
sing; take a look; wars to come; red rivers  
to cross.

Black horizons, come up.

Black horizons, kiss me.

### The Dinosaur Bones

The dinosaur bones are dusted every day.

The cards tell how old we guess the dinosaur bones are.  
Here a head was seven feet long, horns with a hell of  
a ram,

Humping the humps of the Montana mountains.

The respectable school children

Chatter at the heels of their teacher who explains.

The tourists and wonder hunters come with their parasols

And catalogues and arrangements to do the museum

In an hour or two hours.

The dinosaur bones

are dusted

every day.

### Unintentional Paint

The flat gray banana store front

is visited by a union painter with no intentions

and a bucket of high maroon paint

and a pot of high yellow.

The high maroon banana store front

sings its contralto with two stripes

of yellow soprano on the door.

The union painter meant nothing

and we can not attribute intentions

to a bucket of maroon nor a pot of yellow.

The door and the lintels sing.

Two banjos strum on the threshold.

Two people hum a snatch of song

They know well from singing together often.

I must come this way often

and not only for bananas.

## M. Bergson's Theories: What is their Permanent Importance?

*Mind-Energy, Lectures and Essays, by Henri Bergson. Translated by H. Weldon Carr. New York: Henry Holt & Co.*

"THE greatest philosophical luminary that has risen above the horizon for a long time"; such was the verdict on M. Bergson of a very eminent American philosopher. But he went on to say that he did not profess to understand all his thought. A dozen philosophic specialists could be mentioned who have made the same confession. William James, who by generous praise gave the first great impetus to M. Bergson's fame in England, remarked: "I have to confess that Bergson's originality is so profuse that many of his ideas baffle me entirely. I doubt whether any one understands him all over, so to speak." The greatest luminary does not appear to give a very clear light.

None the less in the years immediately before the war he was probably the object of a more widespread, a more nearly worldwide interest than any philosopher in history has during his life commanded. This was due in part, of course, to modern communications. But the fact remains that his impressiveness is exceptional. And since not even the specialists find him pellucid, it is obvious that he has conquered, not by clearly proving his point and compelling acceptance, but by the fascination and inherent acceptability of the ideas he propounds. The countless readers undrilled in the abc of philosophy who have found a certain thrill for the imagination in the current summaries of his philosophy, the numerous women of fashion who have listened to his lectures and derived sensations from his ideas, may be our witnesses. His volumes, crowded with arguments for these ideas, could not be called popular; but there is something in the ideas themselves which is unmistakably popular.

Can it be that the reason why the specialists do not fully understand him and the reason why the popular mind is drawn to him are connected—are consequences of one and the same fact? Can it be that the same trait makes his thought alluring to the mind's embrace and baffling to its understanding? Let us see.

Nothing makes much headway toward a full comprehension of M. Bergson but a long, plodding, minute study of his writings, the collation of passages, the persistent putting of questions about any difficulties in his meaning and the insistence upon finding the answers. Even this does not light up all the dark crannies. But it brings some interesting results. The philosophers mentioned had not bestowed this kind of labor upon him; they were busy bestowing it on the universe.

First of all, the broad features of his teaching familiar to all his readers must be recalled. He has published six volumes, all of which deal with the relation of matter to mind; each of which in one respect or another tries to show the ascendancy of mind over matter. The first book, *The Immediate Data of Consciousness*, translated under the title *Time and Free Will*, argues that mind or consciousness is not, like matter, a subject of calculation, because it is not, like matter, a thing of quantity. It is not composed of separable units whose sum may be cast up; if it has any parts they are fused into one being. We could never calculate its future acts, for there are no calculable factors. Mind is "free."

The second book *Matter and Memory* argues that mind is not a *product* of matter (that is, of the material brain) for matter has no power of producing mind. The nature of mind has been misconceived. In reality the brain is the point at which mind, treating the present material situation in the light of memory, can act upon matter, through an original and ripe decision. Memory is not dependent on the brain, but by its own nature retains always the whole of one's past (such is M. Bergson's bold assertion) and is merely restricted and brought to bear by the brain. Moreover matter itself turns out to be a form of mind in disguise, a lower form produced by the mind's "running down." The tables are turned; matter is a product of mind.

In his third book, on *Laughter*, the theory is charmingly original. It is that we laugh only at people, not at things, and only then when people are behaving as if they were things. This book has sometimes been spoken of as though it represented an excursion quite apart from the author's philosophy and main interests, but in fact it is precisely in the line of them. It stands for the ascendancy of spirit and spontaneity over matter and necessity. The great joke is when a man, a free spirit, behaves as if he were an automaton, when he fails to *live*, with spontaneity or freedom, when he lets his habits or mannerisms or confirmed crotchets rule him, instead of making a fresh living response to a new situation.

An *Introduction to Metaphysics* (as the translation is called) deals with the proper method of philosophy. Philosophy has been impaired, M. Bergson maintains, by the encroachment of methods appropriate to matter only. Analysis, or the intellectual division of things into their parts, is a process appropriate to matter, but, as he sought to prove in his first book, not appropriate to that of living, continuous consciousness, which we are. Instead of seeking mentally to tear limb from limb, to dismember a living reality, we should rather seek to realize it as it is. This the author calls the method of intuition. It is, so to speak, the method of *being* the thing we wish to understand, so far as by imagination we can, rather than that of taking it apart and putting it together. It might also be called the method of sympathy. Living realities can indeed be approached analytically, if we desire. We do so rightly so far as we desire to take action with reference to the things studied, to foresee consequences, to calculate so far as calculation is possible. But so far as we wish really to face and see reality as it is, the external, analytic method is of no use. It merely substitutes some dead combination of units for the living, energizing thing.

The fifth and most famous book, *Creative Evolution*, maintains again the ascendancy of the mind's life over matter. It argues that living bodies, as we call them, are not a product of matter alone, but that psychic life, not dependent on body but slowly working out its will upon and through body, has developed organs that it requires and is still developing them. This effort and energy of life, which the author variously terms the "vital push," the "vital impetus," the "vital current," and which he compares to a wave and to a wind, has been the directive principle of the whole process. There was in living beings a bent, a tendency, a set toward seeing, for instance, that steadily pushed toward the creation of an eye. Here the method of intuition and not the method of physical analysis will avail us. It is when we lend ourselves to share the instinct of life itself that we comprehend something of the process. Physical or mechanical explanation is the device