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The Universal Circulus: On Mobility and Mutability
(Working title: "Déjacque: Of and Ahead of his Time")

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At the close of 1858, Joseph Déjacque published *Le Circulus dans l'Universalité* (The Universal Circulus) in *Le Libertaire*; *The Universal Circulus* contains Déjacque's discussion of "the philosophy of the ideas put forward in" *l'Humanispheré*. (Samzun, 111) As part of that discussion, Déjacque expresses cosmological positions and suggests that one may review claims from historically nonscientific domains of discourse such as religion and morality given findings from the sciences. (Notably, he does not address considerations associated with Hume's is-ought problem as it might pertain to such a project.) Contemporary scientific findings may support and qualify Déjacque's claims in *The Universal Circulus*.

In his summary of *The Universal Circulus*, Déjacque denies the existence of three conceptually related things: 1) "the soul, the absolute of the human, individuality one and indivisible, [an] eternally finished form," more generally 2) "the absolute soul of the infinite," and most generally 3) "the absolute," whose nonexistence, he asserts, logically precludes the existence of the other absolutes listed. Déjacque focuses readers' attention on an "absolute" declared nonexistent in an attempt to give a logical foundation to a rhetorical position akin to doctrines of anatman. To explore this, I wished to confirm Déjacque's conception of "the absolute" and because Déjacque does not define this term explicitly, I appealed to context.

Déjacque expresses much of *The Universal Circulus* in sets of idiosyncratic quasi-synonyms (e.g., "motion" and "progress") which lends the piece to close reading. According to translator Shawn P. Wilbur, Déjacque uses terms "suggestively," not "according to the established uses of...the writers or schools that they were drawn from." (Wilbur)

Déjacque summarizes his piece with three negations before asserting the identity of all as "matter": he would be more descriptive and self-consistent if he asserted the identity of all as "animated [i.e., living] and passional [i.e., feeling] substance," which he distinguishes in context from a contradictory dyad of "matter" and "mind." He indicates that "[w]hat we call matter is raw mind or spirit; what we call mind or spirit is wrought matter." Déjacque's characterization of the hard problem seems more nuanced than a

general panpsychism and accords with historically posterior positions that emphasize degrees of organization and emergence in constituents of a noosphere; his positions would seem to allow for the comparison of such constituents on a continuum of increasing awareness or intelligence.

He describes an ongoing and unbounded movement constantly transforming everlasting substance such that movement and substance share an identity in which they are mutually interdependent. Déjacque suggests that distinguishing "matter" from the transformation of this unity of movement and substance would be as misleading as distinguishing the transformation of the unity of movement and substance from "mind or spirit." He indicates that intelligent or inspired flux exists--or is existence--such that it has a capacity for betterment of beings, a "perpetual upward movement." Such an upward movement may transpire in the absence of effort, though Déjacque indicates that a being, sufficiently "perfected,"--one of his quasi-synonyms for "developed" or "evolved"--aspires interminably toward its further perfection [i.e., development] in proportion to increases in same.

Déjacque posits that because change will never stop--and perfection is always relative--, there is no condition without "perfectibility." ("There is and can be no absolute except perfectibility..."--its context makes clear that "perfectibility" is not the "absolute" Déjacque denies elsewhere in the text but rather that which is incompatible with that denied "absolute.")

Déjacque declares that, in addition to interminable development, movement precludes the existence of "the absolute." ("...with movement the absolute cannot exist") Déjacque argues that motion ceaselessly transforms all beings at all scales--including those of the human individual and species--and furthermore that such ongoing transformation occurs across the bounds of beings such that entities live "only on the condition of taking part in the lives of others." Déjacque thus articulates assumptions of impermanence and dependent origination consistent with the concept of anatman.

The idea of an exponentially increasing and inexhaustible tendency toward improvement provides a counterpoint to notions of an unchanging "thing-in-itself" not subject to "the same laws of decomposition as the body" (i.e., exempt from an arrow of entropy). An unchanging, independent (and perhaps perfect or teleologically complete) entity might be considered atemporal or non-physical: something other than "animated and passional substance," perhaps the "absolute" whose existence Déjacque denies.

Déjacque identifies his negated "absolute" with a negated "God," despite his complaints regarding the vagueness of the latter term as conventionally used. Déjacque discloses that he seeks to counter religion's historical role in (re)producing authoritarian social

organization such that conditions sufficient for a more perfect "fraternal communion of humans" may develop. Déjacque implies that one may regard authoritarian social dynamics as species-level developmental pathology; humanity's maturation arrested at a pre-solidarity phase. Normative participation in coercive dynamics, especially those that Déjacque recognizes in traditional religious forms, may contribute to developmental pathology in humanity as a species and in its constituent organisms. (In this context, Déjacque does NOT seem to note an explicit relation between coercion of humans and adverse consequences regarding development in/of other species).

Déjacque calls for the sciences to reshape normative aspirations associated with intuitions that he identifies at the roots of religion. He characterizes such intuitions as humanity's sense of "immortality in mortals" and suggests that science may influence the forms of their expression such that as knowledge improves so might such forms. For example, the contemporary Standard Model of particle physics embeds implications of special relativity in quantum field theory; such knowledge and subsequent scientific findings more generally might shape the religious forms that succeed the targets of Déjacque's critique. Similarly, such scientific findings may inform readings of Déjacque's claims themselves.

Déjacque suggests that successors to prior religious norms and knowledge may be found in "the science of man and of humanity, of humanity and of universality." He connects concepts of the social sciences to those of the sciences more generally and, echoing Plato, relates notions of the biological and the physical in recognizing movement as a condition of life. (Plato)

In describing his cosmology, Déjacque seems to attempt deriving a conclusion via the principle of non-contradiction, namely that the world "...cannot be a mutable thing and an immutable one...—[-]movement excluding immobility and vise versa—[-]but must be, on the contrary, an infinite unity of always-mutable and always-mobile substance, which implies perfectibility." Contemporary scientific paradigms--those that Déjacque charges with informing religious innovation--may challenge elements of his conclusion (leaving merits of the argument whereby he arrives at that conclusion aside). Such contemporary paradigms decouple conceptions of mobility and mutability in ways that offer paths toward integration between Parmenidean and Heracletian worldviews.

Déjacque's philosophical positions clearly echo those of Heraclitus in his discussion of nonduality and perfectibility. In Nietzsche's treatment of Pre-Platonic philosophers, he indicates that Heraclitus has a proto-Hellenistic conception of non-opposition between matter and "the nonmaterial" or spirit such that flux proceeds without end in a "[r]ejection of any teleological view of the world." (Nietzsche, p.72-3) Heraclitus identifies the cosmos as "living fire" and with the anthropomorphic deity Aiôn, whom

Heraclitus characterizes as a playing child. (Nietzsche, p.70) One might map Aion or "living fire" to Déjacque's "animated and passional substance." (Multiple meanings associated with "aiôn" (e.g., life, time, etc.) make interpretation of its intended usage in Heraclitus challenging. (Hadot, 11))

Déjacque posits an inseparability of "movement and substance" consistent with the notion of the substance as "animated." Such a conflation of movement and substance may be expressed in the formalism of Newtonian physics as linear or translational momentum (p) given the equation p = velocity scaled by mass, or, in terms of "movement and substance," p = movement's direction scaled by movement's speed scaled by amount of moving substance as measured in kilograms or pounds. Alternately, formal definitions of angular momentum that assume rotational motion first appear in the literature no later than 1858 (Rankine), the same year in which Déjacque published *The Universal Circulus*. Although Déjacque makes special mention of turning and circular revolution, given the broad, unqualified character of his claims regarding inseparable movement and substance, its expression in terms of momentum likely pertains to both translational and angular subtypes.

Perhaps exemplifying "perfectibility," 20th century concepts of momentum updated their 19th century predecessors. Einstein's Special Relativity Theory (SRT) extends intuitive "motion and substance" notions of momentum by permitting expressions of "velocity" (or speed and direction of motion) with regard to an inertial frame of reference (i.e., the paradigm does not admit absolute rest) and it further extends the concept of momentum by permitting "mass" or "substance" to be expressed in terms of "energy" because conversion between such units may be computed with known factors (e.g., E=mc^2). In quantum mechanics, momentum gets further generalized such that it admits cases of null rest mass (i.e., cases in which there is no measurable amount of "substance" when assuming no measurable amount of "motion"), as in cases of photon momentum, such that Déjacque's unity of "movement and substance" may be made legible as kinetic energy and made computable as a function of wave frequency, as in cases of photon momentum or matter waves. Momentum in quantum mechanics may map to the excitation (or energy level) of a field in quantum field theory, which combines SRT and quantum mechanics. With subsequent findings and innovation in physical modeling, scientific concepts of momentum and their relationships to Déjacque's claims may continue to unfurl.

If Déjacque's claim of ubiquitous "always-mobile" substance is read through the assumption that motion would require at least one thing at two different positions and times, quantum indeterminacy with regard to position may contradict the claim. In a prevalent interpretation of quantum mechanics, assuming an atomic object to speak of, its position at any given time is not uniquely determined and so one cannot properly

assert it goes from one place to another because, colloquially speaking, it's not in only one place to start with and can't be in only one place to end with. However, determination of atomic object unique position is not required to measure the average translational kinetic energy of a set of atomic objects (i.e., the temperature of a body or system)--a quantity proportional to atomic object momenta. In this way, a change in scale from the quantum to that of atomic aggregations in bodies may permit one to observe or compute thermodynamic phenomena such that measurement indicates that energy-momentum tends to cross system boundaries in accord with certain constraints. In this sense of motion as an expression of conservation laws, findings from the physical sciences support Déjacque's claim: a system at two different temperatures on two different measuring occasions whose amount of matter remains constant qualifies as evidence of mobility as per its proportional transfer of work and heat with its surroundings. Similarly, Déjacque might support his claim of ubiquitous "always-mobile" substance in thermodynamic terms with the impossibility of absolute zero, a phenomenon implied by indeterminism of momentum at quantum scale and corresponding zero-point energy.

Déjacque yokes his claim of ubiquitous "always-mutable" substance to his claim that such substance is always moving, declaring "[e]verything that is mobile is mutable, and everything that is mutable is mobile." While it is possible to read him as indicating, like so many other philosophers, an equivalence relation between motion and change, taking Déjacque at his word suggests a claim regarding, not first-order flux (i.e., his claim is not just about change as motion, or change as variation in energy-momentum distribution) but rather second-order flux (i.e., his claim is about the modification of first-order motion, or modification of variation in energy-momentum distribution). For example, a system may be measured at two different temperatures on two different measuring occasions (an instance of first-order flux) and if someone could alter the temperatures after they had been measured, that would be an example of second-order flux: changing the change. Regarding all of spacetime as equally real does not seem to permit second-order flux, though it does seem to permit first-order flux: it would not seem to permit changing the apparent future, although it does seem to permit affecting it (Silberstein, Stuckey, and McDevitt). Computable causal relations between events consistent with an absence of second-order flux imply that energy-momentum distribution(s) may be as fixed in the apparent past as in the apparent future.

Einstein's reported belief that SRT was Parmenidean (Popper) may assist in cultivating intuitions regarding the coexistence of the apparent past and future. For example, when Parmenides writes of an entity whose name has been translated as "What Is" or "the One," he indicates that it ”neither was at any time nor will be, since it is now all at once, a single whole,” his use of ”is” contrasts with the spirit of his message such that "we must suppose that the point of this remark is...to say that...a language which employs

tenses" cannot properly describe the colloquially "all-at-once" existence of What Is because it "involves no temporal succession of earlier and later." (Kneale, p.87-88) With such framing, one may conceive of the physical universe as ungenerated, unchanging, and as that from which ideas of change and creativity (perhaps even in Whitehead's sense of the term (Berthrong)) may be abstracted. In accord with SRT, one may conceive of event-sets that correspond to movement (e.g., point-particle motion) as containing events that coexist non-simultaneously: a worldview represented by Heraclitus is encompassed by one represented by Parmenides.

Déjacque's denial of an unchanging, independent absolute might be considered a denial of that which is not "animated and passional substance." However, a thing whose properties include independence and changelessness might also contain or be constituted by the physical in its historical entirety: all first-order flux instantiated as "animated and passional substance" and no second-order flux. Déjacque indicates that distinguishing "matter" from transformation would be as misleading as distinguishing transformation from "mind or spirit"; this suggests that the intuitive sense of "immortality in mortals" that Déjacque ascribes to humanity and identifies at the root of human religious behavior may be, as a mental or spiritual phenomenon, inseparable from transformation, perhaps inseparable from energy-momentum as distributed in apparent past and apparent future.

Déjacque recognizes apparently instinctual (i.e., ineradicable) human intuitions of immortality, yet he denies the existence of "the absolute of the human, individuality one and indivisible, eternally finished form..." If that denial constitutes a denial of one's immutable life-destiny (in the sense of "aiôn" as "the span of a human life" (von Leyden, 36) or a person's life as a "complete(d) whole" (von Leyden, 65)), one may translate that into the language of SRT as a denial of the region that encompasses the events of one's path through spacetime, one's worldtube. Déjacque might have attempted to justify such a denial in two ways.

Déjacque indicates that ongoing transformation occurs across the bounds of beings such that entities live "only on the condition of taking part in the lives of others." For each worldtube that one might propose, Déjacque implies a set of worldtubes whose intersections with the proposed worldtube correspond to life-giving or life-sustaining interactions. Consequently, Déjacque's denial of a human individual's "indivisible, eternally finished form" could resemble a line of argument that posits anatman as implicit in dependent origination, with worldtube intersection interpreted as counterevidence to the claim of individuality. However, if Déjacque's denial of one's eternal human absolute or soul hinges upon notions of impermanence that overstep into physical presentism (i.e., the idea that "now" is the only thing that exists or is more real than other times), such physical presentism would seem to contradict a

well-documented implication of the relativity of simultaneity: the existence of a physical event does not depend on an observer's reference frame.

Experimental vindication of SRT bolstered enthusiasm for philosophical positions associated with logical positivism. (Friedman, p. xiii-xiv) In the context of Einstein's era, Déjacque's philosophical positions seem more consistent with those of Einstein's reputed antagonist, Henri Bergson. Bergson was born in Paris about five years before Déjacque died there in 1864, and although a preliminary review of the literature indicates no evidence of a direct line of intellectual inheritance from Déjacque to Bergson, it may be a historical coincidence worth noting given the themes of *The Universal Circulus* that a 1909 publication, *The Equinox*, had a masthead which read "The Method of Science; the Aim of Religion" (Crowley); its publisher had previously associated with Henri Bergson's sister, Moina, through their contemporaneous membership in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. (Kaczynski, p. 2) In 1913, Henri Bergson was elected as president of the British Society for Psychical Research, an organization dedicated to impartial investigation of so-called paranormal phenomena whose work at times included debunking claims in the course of exploring them. (Barnard, p.288-289)

In 1922, Bergson and Einstein met publicly as Einstein's philosophical break with logical positivism was underway; they spoke at a gathering of *Societé francaise de philosophie* in Paris. (Sherman, p. 137, 144) Bergson indicated that he accepted SRT as a physical theory, yet he rejected Einstein's position regarding the social role of philosophy in relation to that of science. (Canales, 1170) Bergson's position regarding the relation between philosophy and science as articulated in *Creative Evolution* casts philosophy as "the study of becoming in general...true evolutionism and consequently the true continuation of science—[-]provided that we understand by this word ["science"] a set of truths either experienced or demonstrated..."; such that experienced truths may include "the turning of the mind homeward, the coincidence of human consciousness with the living principle whence it emanates, a contact with the creative effort..." (Bergson, p.402)

Déjacque expresses parallel sentiments with regard to religion (not "philosophy") in his earlier essay on religion from 1861, three years following the publication of *The Universal Circulus*. He indicates that religion ought be "[t]he evolving synthesis of all the contemporary truths; perpetual observation and unification; the progressive organization of all the recognized sciences...the principle and consecration of every movement in humanity and universality." (Wilbur) Bergson's advocacy regarding philosophical truths as inclusive of the experiential "coincidence of human consciousness with the living principle whence it emanates" suggests commonality between philosophical and religious domains so described; in this sense, Déjacque and

Bergson indicate ideals that share a common spirit. Bergson's conception of philosophical truth as inclusive of one's experiential "coincidence of human consciousness with the living principle whence it emanates" echoes a Heraclitian characterization of wisdom as congruence--if not unification or equivalence--between one's intuitive intelligence and that of the substance of "the world at play" (aiôn). (Nietzsche, p.71) As such philosophical truth or wisdom pertains to the roots of human religious need that Déjacque discusses (i.e., to intuitions of immortality in mortals), Déjacque embeds within his cosmology of momentum calls for the sciences to inform the reshaping of normative aspirations associated with that truth or wisdom so as to remove authoritarian impediments to human solidarity.

Within a few decades of the deaths of Bergson and Einstein--almost one hundred years after Déjacque died--theorists and activists began to recognize Déjacque as a "vital forerunner for their...perspectives," with differing schools of thought each interpreting him as their own such that it may be "grossly anachronistic to see him strictly as an anarchist or a proponent of a libertarian socialism..." (Hartman, p.36-37) It may be similarly anachronistic--and in other ways inaccurate--to characterize Déjacque as a Bergsonian or Thelemite; further investigation (perhaps in the vein of the work of Jim Urpeth (Ansell-Pearson & Urpeth) or Erica Lagalisse (Lagalisse)) may reveal to what extent such perspectives dovetail with positions articulated in *The Universal Circulus* and in Déjacque's work more generally.

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