A conspicuous trend among physicists in the later twentieth century was the rapid and quite unexpected development of theories that had at the century’s outset generally been associated with Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Karl Popper (1902-1994), conspicuously in the work of Nobel prize-winner Illya Prigogine. This was now usually termed chaos theory, and was closely allied to concepts of nonlinearity, fractality, and complexity, and has notable ramifications in cosmology and the philosophy of Time. Prigogine himself acknowledged his philosophical predecessors, above all in Bergson and ultimately in Heraclitus.

Evidence of the specifically modern continuities of this trend or development can be traced before Bergson to an interpretation of Heraclitus and the Philosophy of Time written by a powerful Scottish Common Sense philosopher of the mid nineteenth century, James Frederick Ferrier. In what follows it will be shown how, very much contrary to his normal tendency of thinking, Ferrier arrived at this interpretation, and just how it relates to Bergson and thence to Prigogine.

Born in 1808 and dying from heart disease in 1864, James Ferrier’s philosophically productive years were confined essentially to the two decades from the end of the 1830s until the end of the 1850s. In Scotland these were years of particularly turbulent ideological struggle for leadership and power, and were termed by Ferrier’s rather dreary nemesis, Alexander Campbell Fraser, the years of the ‘Scottish Ecclesiastical Wars’. They marked, namely, the Ten Years Conflict and the Disruption of 1843, in which the...

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evangelical party within the Church of Scotland split from the establishment over the patronage question to form the Free Church of Scotland. The same period also sees the unprecedented and destabilising impact of apparently objective hard science on some accepted realities, for example in the wild successes of Scottish authors such as Robert Chambers and the phrenologist George Combe. To give an idea of the startling success of these two alone, according to James Secord, Chambers’ quasi-evolutionary text *Vestiges of Creation* outsold almost all other books in the Victorian period - far more than Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* - while even before his breakthrough in the 1840’s George Combe could routinely command audiences of 600 at short notice for a public lecture. At the same time, the incredibly productive Hugh Miller was publishing the works exploring geological time that got him the reputation of having committed suicide because he could not reconcile science and faith.

The extreme social tensions between factions at this point make it hard to agree entirely with Elizabeth Haldane in the otherwise very good book on Ferrier she produced for the *Famous Scots* series, when she says

> When Ferrier began to write, Scotland was in a very different state from that of twenty years before. The Reform Bill had passed, and men had the moulding of their country’s destiny practically placed within their own hands…a new era seemed to be dawning, not so glorious as the past, but more untrammeled and more free.

This view is complacent because not only was the extension of the electoral franchise in 1832 a minimum concession in Scotland, it was also by this time that the evangelical party of the Church of Scotland had developed and refined a blistering critical vocabulary based on a claim to ownership of the nation’s Covenanting heritage, and the supposed Erastianism of the Tory hegemony.

This was in fact the context within which Ferrier began to publish, and the reason this context is emphasised here is because it plays such a dominant role in determining Ferrier’s vocabulary, his choice of targets for attack, and the implied readers of his texts. Of course, it could be argued that historical context need not play
such a key role. After all, the contexts for, say, J.G. Fichte, or Destutt de Tracy were dramatic too, but require no overstatement. The difference is that Ferrier was virtually the personification of the ancien régime. Like Thomas Brown, John Wilson, J.G. Lockhart and even Sir William Hamilton, his university degree was actually from Oxford while his family background was in the Edinburgh Tory élite described by Henry Cockburn as the ‘official seat of Scotch intolerance’. His grandfather James was a writer to the Signet employed by the Duke of Argyll, and even his middle name, Frederick, came from his father’s friendship with Lord Frederick Campbell, the Lord Clerk Register of Scotland. An aunt on one side was the well-regarded society novelist Susan Ferrier, who was a stern Calvinist critic of new wealth and consumerism, and an advocate of ‘tasteful restraint’. Ferrier himself was very close to his aunt, but he was no less close, and all the more damningly, to an uncle on the other side, namely John Wilson, whose daughter he married. As ‘Christopher North’, Wilson was editor of Blackwood’s Magazine along with J.G. Lockhart. Their attacks on mainstream Scottish society were so venomous that even their political fellow travellers thought them outlandish and tried to restrain them. Wilson is often attributed with a rather demonic personality; not least, for example, in his notorious treatment of James Hogg. He has been described by one critic as the ‘perfect example of Gramsci’s analysis of the bourgeois intellectual’.

Following the premature death of Thomas Brown, who had been busily undermining Dugald Stewart since inheriting Stewart’s Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, John Wilson and Sir William Hamilton put themselves forward as candidates for the newly vacant Chair. The news that Wilson was going for the Chair was reported virtually everywhere and regarded with dismay. Even Sir Walter Scott was surprised, and hoped rather feebly that if Wilson got in he might curb his drinking. The contest was of course a political fix, as everyone knew, and it consigned Sir William Hamilton to the margins for years afterwards. The Scotsman covered the contest simultaneously with the notorious trials of Baird, Hardie, and Wilson, and declared it the worst abuse of patronage since Caligula appointed his horse as a Proconsul. The Scotsman was already by this time in a long-running dogfight with Blackwood’s Magazine, having described Wilson and Lockhart as depraved and worthless, while protesting against the extremism of an offshoot of Blackwood’s, the
Quarterly Review, that had described the Scotsman as ‘the scum and feculence of the worst Jacobinical journals’.13

Ferrier was always very close to Wilson – at one point he reports meeting Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, J.G. Lockhart and George Canning at Wilson’s house at Lake Windermere when he was just seventeen.14 He also devoted a huge amount of time to editing and publishing Wilson’s 12-volume collected works on the latter’s death, albeit that he hints in the introduction that James Hogg was perhaps a better writer.15 In one of the many articles that he wrote for the Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography (a commission that was passed on to him by David Brewster when no-one else could be found to give an intelligible account of Hegel) Ferrier quite obviously glosses over the genuine turbulence and controversy of Wilson’s life.16 For example, he states, ‘Young John showed a very precocious predilection for three things which in later life occupied much of his attention – oratory, angling and ethics’.17 Ferrier also noted that Wilson had spotted Wordsworth’s talent when no-one else did, least of all the Whigs. Francis Jeffrey, of course, famously started his review of Wordsworth in 1807 with ‘This will never do’, and otherwise he found Wordsworth ‘low, silly and uninteresting’.18 Ferrier also states rather oddly that Wilson’s Oxford degree was ‘the most illustrious degree within memory of man’.19 But in fact this is precisely what was said of Wilson’s competitor for the 1820 Chair, which is to say, Sir William Hamilton. If this is only a slip and nothing more sinister then it is quite a telling one because Ferrier seems to have had something of an Oedipal relationship with the two older men.20

The emphasis thus far has been on Ferrier’s establishment credentials. But it is also important to note that there is a striking evangelical aspect to Ferrier’s rhetoric. It is important because Ferrier clearly attempts to find common ground with the evangelicals at the start of his career, and it is also clear that he has some natural affinity with them. Whence this derives is a matter of conjecture, but an evangelical minister, Henry Duncan, who left the Church in the Disruption of 1843, tutored him at an early age. Duncan’s views were however not particularly extreme – he thought that Scotland’s Godliness was the reason Providence favoured it above all other parts of the world; he emphasised fallenness and fides sola; and he assumed that prosperity would
generate evil, but this was good because it gives us the opportunity
to exercise Christian Virtue. What is more, although he went out
in the Disruption and was critical of luxury, Duncan did not
exactly face a life of penury because he was an ardent capitalist as
well as a minister, and wealthy in his own right. But in any event,
and wherever it came from, Ferrier’s evangelical streak showed
through at an early stage when he attempted his own version of
Robert Pollok’s monomaniacal long poem *The Course of Time*.
Pollok’s poem is part of the evangelical appropriation of the
heritage of the Covenanter’s symbolism mentioned above, and it
is only this aspect that explains the amazing success of the poem,
which went through an improbable number of editions, yet is
extraordinarily turgid and is, in fact, worthless. Ferrier’s attempt
to mimic this piety was published in 1829 by Blackwood’s to
complete indifference as *The Hope of Immortality*. The point of
mentioning it here is simply to note Ferrier’s genuine evangelical
tendency and also that his first published work was not in philos-
ophy. Ferrier was therefore in tune with the spirit of the age
(to use William Hazlitt’s phrase) for all that he could be identified
or associated with some of the most reactionary parts of it. This
is again evident in his first philosophical publication, a series of
articles for Blackwood’s from February 1838 to March 1839,
titled *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Consciousness*. It was
reprinted after his death for his *Collected Works* but some of the
more extreme statements in it were subsequently edited out for
late Victorian sensibilities.

George Davie has repeatedly stressed the significance of this
eyearly work. In his essay *Victor Cousin and the Scottish Philosophers*
he expands on this emphasis and elucidates the influence of
Victor Cousin on Ferrier as well as the relationship and the
Common Sense school to twentieth-century phenomenology.
Even so, there has been virtually no commentary written on this
eyearly work by Ferrier. Again, there is some evidence of Wilson in
this text – Wilson had published a series of philosophical articles
the year before, and indeed these were praised highly by
Hamilton of all people (although at a much later date) as showing
‘great acuteness’. Another influence in this text, one suspects,
is that of J.G.Fichte. Ferrier’s discussion of heroic self-positing,
and dynamically or actively negating the attempt by Nature, or
the World, to negate one’s self-hood, appears very close to the
position expounded by Fichte in the famous *Wissenschaftslehre*. 
Besides Wilson and Fichte, Victor Cousin’s philosophy of history rephrased in a hyperbolic vocabulary also appears in this earlier work. It shows further general agreement with the outlook of the followers of Dugald Stewart in the sense that it takes almost for granted that change in society should be thought through and led by philosophically educated or enlightened élites. And this entails that the philosophy of the élites be a true one (there is the echo here of the mediaeval warning against false philosophies whose claims – *non solum mortua sunt sed mortifera* - are not only dead but deadly) because weak or inaccurate philosophies have dangerous social consequences:

…the danger accruing from inattention, on the part of man, to the facts revealed to him in the study of himself, is to be seen in the strongest light when reflected from the surface of his moral and practical life. Man takes to pieces only to reconstruct; and he can only reconstruct a thing out of the materials into which he has analysed it…when any element has escaped him in the analysis, it will also escape him and not be combined, in the synthesis: and so far he will go forth into the world again shorn of a portion of himself – and if the neglect has involved any important ingredient of his constitution, he will go forth a mutilated skeleton.

So imperfect methods and ideas have dangerous social consequences, and the example that everyone alluded to at that time was the course of the French Revolution. And the fact that has been absent, in Ferrier’s view, from enlightenment theories of human nature until now, has been the fact of consciousness, because philosophers, especially ones like Thomas Brown, have persisted in attempting to depict human beings as kinds of machine. It is, as he says (and repeats almost word for word twenty years later in his lecture on the Eleatics) ‘reserved for man to live this double life. To exist, and to be conscious of existence; to be rational and to know that he is so’. Human beings are born ‘at home’ in nature, a non-alienated part of the physical machine, whether or not as a *tabula rasa* or with ‘innate capacities’, but become something like a monster. It is worth recalling the etymology of the word monster – a show, portent, or reminder, or
in Heidegger’s term, a ‘clearing’; but at any rate this revealed beast provides Ferrier with another occasion for a visionary stream of Romantic and Augustinian eloquentia:

...the graceful passions of childhood naturally grow up in man into demons of misery and blood. As life advances, the garden of nature becomes more and more a howling wilderness, and nature’s passions and indulgences blacken her own shining skies: and before her course is run, life under her guidance, has become a spectacle of greater ghastliness than death itself.²⁸

Now, at this point at the end of the 1830s, and prior to the split in the Church, it is evident that there remains some common cause with the liberals. But as has been well documented, Ferrier’s aspirations to social leadership were thwarted, and he was held up as an atrocious example both of Old Corruption and also, oddly enough, as an example of dangerous theological liberalism in his supposed keenness for German pantheism. One anonymous pamphlet, for example, calls him a ‘mephistophelean metaphysician’.²⁹ Ironically enough, the post that he did finally manage to get had belonged to Thomas Chalmers, eventual leader of the Disruption, which is to say, the post of Professor of Moral Philosophy and Political Economy at St Andrews.³⁰ From this point onwards he is usually characterised by historians of philosophy as becoming increasingly alienated and disenchanted and, especially in the 1850’s becoming more and more absorbed in Plato, even at one point seeming to echo and anticipate Whitehead’s famous ‘footnotes to Plato argument’.³¹ It should be added that he carried on the job at St Andrews more or less as if it was the job he did not get and which he most desired, Hamilton’s Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh, because it was essentially as a teacher of Metaphysics that he represented himself to his students at St Andrews. Indeed it was with the apparent failure of his book The Institutes of Metaphysic that he turned to what was essentially his last publication, the Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and it is finally to these and to a possible original insight in them that we shall now turn.³²

The Lectures are interesting in a number of ways, not least for the fact that they are a demonstration of Ferrier’s concept of a
tradition. Having argued earlier in his career that Burke’s concept of a tradition in nature was misconceived because a tradition has to be dynamically self-critical, and to evolve, and subsequently having been persecuted for attempting to renew the Scottish Tradition, the Lectures on Greek Philosophy attempt to show how a tradition develops and, as he sees it, works through its essential concerns, in this case – which is exemplary for all others – culminating in Plato. At the same time, he is explicit in saying that philosophy needs a history of philosophy, which is to say that history and philosophy are not ultimately two distinctly separate things. He mentions a couple of other historians of philosophy other than Hegel, but it seems that he has finally accepted that Hegel is too obscure to be much use. His treatment of the pre-Socratics appears to have come mostly from one source, the Dutch philosopher Simon Karsten.

It is his treatment of time and change in his discussion of Heraclitus however, rather than his general view of Plato, which is probably the most interesting and unexpected. It is unexpected because at a historical position in the century very roughly halfway between Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason in 1781 and the radically Parmenidean departure given to the philosophy of time by McTaggart in 1908, it may not seem likely that he would have much to say of unusual interest. And given his increasing concern with Plato it would be unsurprising had he produced something like the argument in the Timaeus, that Time is a moving image of eternity.

At any rate, Ferrier approaches Heraclitus first by way of Parmenides and the Eleatic School, who were the first ones, he informs us, to be ‘generally dialectical in their procedure’. The basic problem their philosophy attempts to resolve is an antithesis – that between the one and the many; or the permanent and the changeable; or the universal and the Particular. And this, says Ferrier, is just a way of opposing Reason and Sense. This antithesis can be cast in two ways, namely objective and subjective. Permanent versus Changeable is the objective form; and Reason versus Sense is the subjective form. But change was actually described as motion says Ferrier, and coming to terms with the idea of change was how the Eleatic school distinguished itself as a school of dialectic.
The antithesis of change and not-change is a fundamental one says Ferrier; no higher category exists within which these two extremes may be reduced to unity – it is, namely, a radical opposition. The Eleatics understood that the structure of thought itself seemed to declare this to be an ineradicable opposition. Having declared this however, they were concomitantly forced to accept that this binary opposition subsequently structures all predicates of either, leading inexorably to the conclusion that if the One is, then The Many are not. So, sensible existence is unreal, because sense-data are changeable.

It is in Parmenides that the rigidity of this movement is most obvious, according to Ferrier.35 In Xenophanes, for example, sensible reality was merely subjective. In Ferrier’s words:

Sensible existence has no existence in and for itself; no existence irrespective of the mind and senses of man, no existence at all resembling that which must be conceded to the one, the permanent and the real; but an existence in all respects unreal and untrue.36

Ferrier returns constantly to theme of the double in all his writings. Here he suggests that Xenophanes invented what he calls the double conscious, rational on the one hand, turned towards the Real, and sensible on the other, turned towards the spurious and relative.37

Having said all this, Ferrier adds the warning not to confuse Plato’s dialogue Parmenides with the actual poem by Parmenides. They do not both argue the same thing. Plato’s dialogue is very much Plato’s own and its value as such lies in the effects it had on subsequent thinkers. And interestingly, Ferrier spends virtually no time on Zeno save to introduce Heraclitus with the mighty statement that the resolution of antitheses is a necessary truth of reason, not its most absurd description, indeed it is nothing less than the law of the universe, both in things and in thought, and Heraclitus is the one who discovered it. Where previous philosophers had sought for a universal and declared it to be water or air, Heraclitus declared it to be movement or change. This is the philosophy of Becoming says Ferrier and with Being amounts to the cardinal distinction of Greek philosophy. He also notes that in
modern times the main expositors of Heraclitus are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ferdinand Lassalle – Ferrier had the writings of these authors in his personal library along with others such as Friedrich Jacobi – but thus far no-one in Europe appeared to have grasped the significance of Heraclitus; and Hegel’s attempt to make something of it ‘has proved a rock of offence to all who have ventured on his pages’.38

Heraclitus’ essential idea is that of change, says Ferrier; the universe is a never-resting process. In that case we need to analyse exactly what is meant by the word becoming. It is worth just mentioning at this point that whenever Ferrier puts aside the striking of attitudes and the spectacular metaphors, his strength as a philosopher emerges. But at any rate, his analysis of the concept begins with the ordinary-language usage – which is to say a thing becomes different from what it was. Therefore we get the very familiar distinction in the debate of one definite state of Being, another definite state, etc, etc, a series or succession of definite states occupying time.

But this is no different from the concept of Being, says Ferrier: each state is. So this is obviously not what Heraclitus had in mind. Becoming gets its meaning by contrast with Being, even though, he adds, the concept does not exclude Being. So what is the central meaning of the concept of Being? Well, it is rest, fixedness; the opposite of rest, fixedness, is the central feature of the concept of Becoming, i.e. unrest, unfixedness. A thing never rests in any of its states, and is not measurable by time. There is continuous change without measurable pause, a radical flux. In fact, says Ferrier, there is an infinity of becoming in any, even the most microscopic, given time. Thus in the act of being what it is, it is not. Take the sunrise for example. As the sun rises we can never say that the degree of light is definite and fixed, but in fact it is constantly changing; the end of one change is, as Heraclitus says, the road upwards, while the beginning of another is the road downward, both being the same road. Thus there can be no absolute end or absolute beginning. Take also the example of growth and decay. Growth is continual change, and no creature can be described in fixity. It is always passing into another state. This perpetual change is a discovery of reason, Ferrier is quick to point out. What the senses do in fact show is indeed precisely rest, or fixity. Again, the senses are not to be trusted and reason
reveals that the Universal, the truth for all intellect, is that the Universe is a process of Becoming. Therefore the Eleatics and Heraclitus agree about the senses but differ in the way they mislead. On this basis he manages to get in a sidelong dig at George Lewes’ popular history of philosophy for completely misreading Heraclitus because it is claimed there that the senses do not mislead.

So far however, this interpretation of Heraclitus is merely interesting. But one of Ferrier’s great strengths (and simultaneous weaknesses) was his linguistic dexterity and inventiveness. He is able to attack a subject, or illustrate it, from a myriad of perspectives such that the argument becomes compelling. This incessant or merciless quality is doubtless the mark of a powerful philosopher (Hume is of course one of the greatest examples\textsuperscript{39}) and so it is unfortunate that the gesticulatory influence of Hamilton encouraged him in the parallel belief that endless public disputation was also the mark of an important public philosopher. But at any rate, he proceeds further with the analysis of Becoming, and attempts to deny the possible charge that if Becoming is the Universal then Being is impossible. Being \textit{must} be predicated, he says, otherwise there is nothing to speak of. But at the same time we also have to speak of not-Being. The Universe is therefore in process as continual variation. It is also at any given time in Being, but also out of it, a state called not-Being. Denominated thus it is in Being and not-Being simultaneously. This \textit{is} intelligible, says Ferrier, even if only just, and it is indeed the toughest concept in metaphysics. Put another way, “Being and not-being are the two elements, the two abstract factors, into which Becoming resolves itself when analysed”\textsuperscript{40}

Ferrier proceeds to give a number of further arguments such as the continual change of direction in a circle. In effect he seems to be arguing a position similar to the contemporary theory most often associated with the legacy of Nietzsche that time is rhythmic or like a pulse\textsuperscript{41} Present-time both is and is-not, he argues, it has Being and not-Being, it disappears in appearing, vanishes in a new present. Time is in fact the best \textit{symbol} that expresses the concept of Becoming as the unity of Being and not-Being.

Now, as we know, it was in trying to explain time via change
that John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart much later produced the philosophy of the unreality of Time, and the ideas of the A-series and B-series.\textsuperscript{42} For Ferrier, Being and not-Being are the necessary moments of the indivisible conception of change. What is more, change is properly understood this way, rather than if the elements were sundered. A change has to either happen in a continuum or in a jump; but the continuum thesis supports the idea of the indivisibility of Becoming. Arguing on the other hand that not-Being can explain change does not work either, it just brings you round in the same circle. Equally, moving from a continuum to a conception involving intervals is absurd because it involves empty time.

So this is Heraclitus’ doctrine, says Ferrier. Change is the Universal, the truth for all intellect. Reason must think Being, but in the very same thought Reason must think not-Being. The unity of the two is the law of all life and is called a process, a becoming. Ferrier also claims that Heraclitus is the first philosopher to identify true moral nature with the Universal, and the immoral with the particular. As with an increasing number of philosophers subsequently, Ferrier is fascinated with what he can make of Heraclitus and considers that the beginning of, as he puts it, ‘the solution of the enigma of the Universe’ lies there.\textsuperscript{43} He returns constantly to Heraclitus throughout the Lectures, but also realises that this is a major philosophical program or project and not likely to be taken up under current conditions, and so there he leaves it, only to fall ill and die within a few years.

George Davie has suggested that there was something Bergsonian about Ferrier’s interpretation of Heraclitus.\textsuperscript{44} Given that the meditation on Heraclitus is so conspicuous among the other lectures, also that Ferrier is himself explicit about its path-breaking potential, it is tempting to consider whether it was in light of it that Ferrier had again decided to reconsider his philosophy from the beginning. As Davie notes, Ferrier’s Heraclitus is a pellucid anticipation of the philosophy of Henri Bergson that was to arouse so much intense interest prior to World War Two, and, since 1990, in its reawakened form at the hands of Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, many passages of Bergson’s \textit{The Creative Mind} are highly suggestive of Ferrier and not only in the sense that Ferrier and Bergson clearly share a fertility of imagination and brilliance of literary craftsmanship. Thus for example Bergson argues that
‘[T]here is an external reality which is given immediately to our mind. Common sense is right on this point against the idealism and realism of the philosophers…[T]his reality is mobility…rest is never anything but apparent…’.

For Ferrier, to philosophise is to reconcile common sense with philosophy by reasoning while for Bergson ‘…to philosophise means to reverse the normal direction of the workings of thought’ [i.e. unphilosophical common sense]; and in so doing ‘science and metaphysics meet…’; a concept that is also strongly supported by Prigogine. Likewise for Ferrier, where time is the symbol that expresses becoming, for Bergson it is duration.

Prigogine agrees with Ferrier that the philosophy of time and becoming is rational, hence the opening chapter of *The End of Certainty* is titled ‘A New Rationality?’ Here and elsewhere Prigogine argues that there must be a new reasoning about time because of ‘the spectacular growth of nonequilibrium physics and the dynamics of unstable systems, beginning with the idea of chaos’. It is doubtless important in passing to note here that the postmodern scarecrow of mindless relativism has nothing to do with this. Prigogine observes that there have been occasional historical predecessors who support his claims, above all Heraclitus, but also importantly his fellow thermodynamicist James Clerk Maxwell. By an interesting coincidence, Maxwell was a student colleague of Ferrier’s in the lively philosophical circle of Sir William Hamilton at Edinburgh. Indeed Maxwell himself suggested, similarly to Ferrier’s comment about Heraclitus, that there might be ‘a new kind of knowledge about the universe’. Further, Maxwell kept up his contact with Ferrier through reading and in a lecture in 1878 he implicitly upbraids Ferrier’s *Institutes of Metaphysic* for adopting what turned out to be the most distant and deterministic position from the Heraclitus lecture.

For Prigogine the new kind of knowledge is the rationality of what Bergson called the ‘Creative Mind’ and marks radical progress in science over the stasis induced by Newton and Einstein:

The main point is that structure formation and complexity are non-equilibrium phenomena
and that non-equilibrium is related to irreversibility [i.e. the phenomena of becoming]. That is why I always thought that irreversibility is the basis of the structures that we see in the universe. We see all kinds of structures. We see the structure of the sun, the structure of the earth, the geological structures formed in non-equilibrium conditions, in an irreversible way.\textsuperscript{51}

Finally then, in regard to the comparison of Ferrier and Bergson, there is an additional forceful dimension. Reid, Hamilton, Brown and Ferrier were standard reference points for French philosophers of the nineteenth century. Bergson was a student of Felix Ravaissin (writing an obituary notice on his life and works in 1904)\textsuperscript{52} whom George Davie has described as a path-breaker precisely in the mould of his coeval Ferrier. Again, Ravaissin was the author of a major commentary on Hamilton and Intuitionism for the \textit{Revue des Deux Mondes} in 1840.\textsuperscript{53} Therefore it is from an intense common debate that Ferrier and Bergson arrive independently at their positions on Time and Becoming.\textsuperscript{54} Furthermore, and no less suggestively given Alexander Broadie’s powerful recent work on the relationship of Common Sense and Duns Scotus,\textsuperscript{55} in his persuasive topography of the philosophy of Time, Philip Turetzsky notes that the Deleuzian analysis mentioned above is self-consciously Bergsonian and includes Duns Scotus’ theory of the Univocity of Being within its overall structure.\textsuperscript{56} Deleuze, Joanne Waugh, and recently Cairns Craig, note further the parallel or virtual existence in the history of philosophy of what (given the lack of a better term) may be described as a postmodern critique above all of Enlightenment fundamentalism to which a significant if selective contribution from Scottish Philosophy and Literature (as both inventor and critic) can be derived.\textsuperscript{57} Ironically, in finding himself banished to the philosophical and geographical margins of a nation now finally, after the Disruption, ‘Out of History’, and as the most significant philosopher who remained fundamentally committed to the attempt to think through Scotland’s European heritage in philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century, Ferrier conceived of a position radically suited for the postmodern age of chaos, complexity and becoming.
Notes


Brown was a former student of Stewart’s, his assistant from 1808-1810, joint professor with him from 1810-1820, and for official purposes continued Stewart’s line on Common Sense. But it is clear that he was quietly taking it in the direction of Hume while doing so. He subsequently incurred ferocious criticism from Sir William Hamilton and Ferrier.


The Scotsman; or, Edinburgh Political and Literary Journal, September 25, 1819.

Haldane, James Frederick Ferrier, p. 22.


Letter from David Brewster to James Ferrier, March 26th 1861, Edinburgh University Library Special Collections.


Article on Wilson, op.cit., p. 921.

In this respect I am thinking not only of the classic myth but also of Harold Bloom’s famous and respected book The Anxiety of Influence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).


The view presented here is of course at odds with that of Arthur Thomson in his execrable biography of Ferrier, Ferrier of St Andrews: an Academic Tragedy (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) where he suggests that it is better than Tennyson, and Ferrier had ‘sinned most grievously’ in failing to pursue his metier’.

The essay can be found in G.E. Davie’s immensely valuable collection A Passion for Ideas (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994), pp. 70-110. See also Paul Gorner, ‘Reid, Husserl and Phenomenology’, British Journal


27 Ibid. See footnote 37 below for a startling aspect of this interesting motif of the double in Ferrier.


29 The Universities (Scotland) Bill protested: with remarks on Professor Ferrier’s ‘letter’ to the Lord Advocate (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1858), p. 22.


32 The edition I shall refer to is Lectures on Greek Philosophy (Blackwood: Edinburgh, 1888), which contains the 1866 ‘Introductory Notice’.

33 Ferrier’s discussion of the role of a tradition anticipates almost to the letter Alasdair MacIntyre’s famous theory of tradition in his work on Scottish Philosophy, albeit that MacIntyre seems never to have read Ferrier. I have discussed the limits of the relationship of Alasdair MacIntyre to Scottish Philosophy in my unpublished PhD thesis The Scottish Intellectual Tradition and Alasdair MacIntyre’s Ideology Critique, with particular Reference to J.F.Ferrier and Alexander Smith of Banff (Strathclyde University: Glasgow, 2000).

34 Ferrier, Lectures, pp. 88-102


36 Ferrier, Lectures, pp. 87-88.

37 Besides the theme of the double he also dwells frequently on the notion of being possessed. These motifs would be highly interesting in
and of themselves but are made all the more so (retrospectively) by a startling coincidence. Ferrier’s son Walter was the best friend of Robert Louis Stevenson and the families were very close. It appears from Stevenson’s letters as though the model of the double, and of external possession, was drawn from his experience of the fatal extremes of Walter Ferrier’s personality. Writing about the death of Ferrier’s mother in 1884 he says, (to give the briefest of examples) ‘…Ferrier was above me, we were not equals; his true self humoured and smiled paternally upon my failings, even as I humoured and sorrowed over his…the good, true Ferrier obliterates the memory of the other, who was only his ‘lunatic brother.’ See, e.g., the Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson vol 1, part 3, at http://robert-louis-stevenson.classic-literature.co.uk/the-letters-of-robert-louis-stevenson-volume-1/ e-pages 95-97.

38 Ferrier, Lectures, p. 114. Given that Ferrier had made a determined effort to get to grips with Hegel even if not finally to his own complete satisfaction, it might be suspected that his version of Heraclitus did indeed owe something to Hegel, but in fact Hegel himself vacillates between two possible interpretations of Heraclitus, and this makes his exposition doubly obscure.

39 Given the references to Bergson and the Scottish philosophers above and below, it is worth pointing out here that connection between these and the philosophy of becoming was made by Gilles Deleuze long before the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche which is more commonly associated with him started to dominate his work. Thus in his Empiricism and Subjectivity: an essay on Hume’s theory of Human Nature (New York: Columbia Press, 1991), pp. 92-93, we find Deleuze insisting upon an uncompromisingly Bergsonian reading of Hume.

40 Ferrier, Lectures, p. 125.


43 Ferrier, Lectures, p. 145.


46 Bergson, *Key Writings*, p. 276.


49 Quoted in Prigogine, *The End of Certainty*, p. 4-5.


54 Alexander Mair attempts to reveal the Scottish connection underlying Bergson in the introduction section he provides to *Bergson and his Philosophy* (London: Methuen, 1920) by J. Alexander Gunn.


56 Turetzsky op. cit. chapter 14. See also the very illuminating discussion of Bergson and Deleuze in Jeffrey A. Bell, *The Problem of Difference: Phenomenology and Poststructuralism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 183-222. Bell’s discussion is all the more absorbing in light of the parallels that can be drawn with his analysis of Merleau-Ponty and George Davie’s comparison of Ferrier and Merleau-Ponty.