

Whether or not the nineteenth century is or still is the most obscure, as Martin Heidegger once remarked, of all the centuries of modernity,¹ among contemporary Anglophone philosophers nineteenth-century French philosophy is much less well known than the German, British or North-American thinking of the same period. Henri Bergson's celebrity early in the twentieth century produced a few English-language studies of the recent history of French philosophy, but the decline of Bergson's influence left the tradition that he develops in an almost complete obscurity.² After the English translation of Félix Ravaisson's seminal 1838 doctoral dissertation *Of Habit* in 2008,³ the present volume of essays by a figure who was in many ways France's most influential philosopher in the second half of the century, and who was pivotal in the 'spiritualist' tradition that runs from Maine de Biran at the beginning of the century to Bergson as its end, should dissipate some more of this obscurity. It contains the most important of the shorter pieces – in philosophy, certainly, but also in art-theory, archaeology, pedagogy, theology and the history of religions – that Ravaisson wrote from the beginning of his long career to his death in 1900. The volume should therefore facilitate the nascent English-language reception of Ravaisson's work as a whole, and provide increased historical context to the recent, second wave of English-language Bergson studies.

Ravaisson – whose full name became Jean-Gaspard-Félix Laché Ravaisson-Mollien – was born in 1813 in Namur, then in France, where his father, François-Ambroise-Damien Laché-Ravaisson, was city treasurer. His parents left the city when French rule of Belgium ended with Napoleon's defeat the following year, and his father, *déclassé* in that he was unable to obtain a comparable position, died the year after that. His mother, Pauline-Gaspard Mollien, though related to Nicolas-François Mollien, Treasury Minister under Napoleon, was left to raise her two sons while

1 Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), p.99/*Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.75.

2 See, for example, Arthur Lovejoy, 'Some Antecedents of the Philosophy of Bergson: the Conception of "Real Duration"', *Mind* XXII (1913) 465-83; L. Susan Stebbing, *Pragmatism and French Voluntarism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914); and J. Alexander Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy: A Study of the Development since Comte* (London: Fisher & Unwin, 1922). Two illuminating studies of the work of Pierre Maine de Biran stand out amidst the general obscurity of nineteenth-century French philosophy within the Anglophone world during the second half of the twentieth century: Philip P. Hallie, *Maine de Biran: Reformer of Empiricism* (Harvard University Press, 1959) and F. C. T. Moore, *The Psychology of Maine de Biran* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

3 Félix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, trans. and ed. C. Carlisle and M. Sinclair, preface by Cathérine Malabou (London: Continuum, 2008).

managing an office of the Royal Lottery in Dunkerque. Both boys gained a taste from her for music and the arts; her younger son, the future philosopher, was taught to paint also by students of David, and would later exhibit his own work at the Paris Salon under the name Laché.⁴ Her brother, Gaspard-Théodore Mollien, an explorer who wrote popular books about his adventures in the jungles of Senegal (and who survived the legendary 1816 *Medusa* shipwreck famously painted by Gericault), took a special interest in his gifted younger nephew's education, and Ravaisson, much later, added his uncle's surname to his own.⁵

After brilliant success at the Collège Rollin in Paris – in 1833 he won first prize in the philosophy section of a national competition, the *Concours général des collèges de France*, with a dissertation on method – Ravaisson began his studies at university at a time when Victor Cousin's 'spiritualist eclecticism' was coming to dominate French philosophy. With the narrow sensualism and naturalism of the Ideological school, French philosophy had been "in a hole",⁶ but when Cousin began to emphasise the free activity and moral autonomy of the mind, in a manner that was seen to be as anticlerical as it was antimaterialist, he seemed to offer philosophical renewal. Upon the July revolution of 1830 establishing a liberal constitutional monarchy, and after having been barred from teaching under the Bourbon restoration because of his liberalism, Cousin rose to an almost total control of the institutions of philosophy in France: Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the Sorbonne and director of the *Ecole Normale*, as well as Peer in France's upper house and member of the

4 On Ravaisson's painting and drawing, see Tullio Viola's 'The Serpentine Life of Félix Ravaisson: Art, Drawing, Scholarship and Philosophy' in *Et in imagine ego: Facetten von Bildakt und Verkörperung*, edited by U. Feist and M. Rath (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 155-174. Viola's short intellectual biography of Ravaisson should be read alongside this one, and I am indebted to it on many points.

5 There is a tendency in English-language accounts to confuse Ravaisson's uncle Gaspard-Théodore Mollien with Nicolas-François Mollien, Napoleon's Treasurer, and thus to elevate unduly the young Ravaisson's social standing. For clarity on this point, see the best source on Ravaisson's life, namely Louis Léger's 1901 discourse on his predecessor at the *Académie des Inscriptions et de Belles-Lettres: Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Ravaisson-Mollien* in *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et de Belles-Lettres* 45 (1901) 327-72. Available at: http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/crai_0065-0536_1901_num_45_3_16840. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

6 Théodore Jouffroy, as cited by Pierre Macherey, 'Les débuts philosophiques de Victor Cousin', *Corpus* 18 (1991): *Victor Cousin*, ed. P. Vermeren, 29-49, p.31.

Royal Commission on Public Education, in 1840 he became President of the Jury of the *agrégation* – the competitive examination for positions in the state education system – in philosophy and, briefly, Minister of Public Instruction. From these positions, Cousin worked to reform French education and establish philosophy within it as a serious, historically orientated discipline taught methodically at university and in the *lycées*. He did this while defending the discipline against attacks from traditionalists who would have preferred to see philosophy return to being a handmaiden of theology, and from republicans who, deriding the new ranks of ‘salaried philosophers’, the ranks of what Cousin described as his ‘regiment’, demanded that philosophy serve socialist political objectives.⁷

The combined effect of Cartesianism, the Revolution and the Ideological school had meant that philosophy in France had lost contact with much of its history, and Cousin – translator of Plato and Proclus – did important work rediscovering the tradition. With this renewed historical awareness, Cousin’s ‘spiritualist’ philosophy took the form of an ‘eclecticism’, according to which all possible philosophical positions fall under the four headings of idealism, materialism, scepticism and mysticism. The history of philosophy is the expression of these archetypes, and the task of thinking in the present consists in synthesising the truths, and rejecting the errors, to be found in each of them. If both materialism and mysticism were to different degrees to be rejected (in time Cousin would accommodate revealed, Christian religion), this critical enterprise was to be grounded on a synthesis of idealism and scepticism. Cousin proposed to resolve the differences between German idealist philosophy, particularly the work of F. W. J. Schelling, and British empiricism, particularly the Scottish common-sense school. A spiritualist and eclectic philosophy had to preserve itself from the excesses of idealist speculation and empiricist scepticism, whilst synthesising both by means of a certain liberal *bon sens*, just as the July monarchy represented, according to the ‘Citizen King’ Louis-Philippe, a *juste milieu*, a liberal middle-of-the-road between the figures of reaction and socialist republicanism that had crystallised in France.⁸

Ravaisson came directly into Cousin’s orbit in 1835, when, at the age of twenty-one, he was the winner – the joint winner, since the prize was also awarded to the dissertation submitted by Carl-Ludwig Michelet, a disciple of Hegel’s and Extraordinary Professor in Berlin⁹ – of a competition

7 See Joseph Ferrari, *Les philosophes salariés* (Paris: Payot, 1983 [1849]).

8 For this analogy, see Patrice Vermeren, ‘Ravaisson en son temps et en sa thèse’, *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 1993/1, 65-86, and the whole of his *Victor Cousin: le jeu de la philosophie et de l’état* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995).

9 C.L. Michelet, *Examen critique de l’ouvrage d’Aristote intitulé Métaphysique*, Paris, 1836; reprinted with a preface by J.-F. Courtine, Paris: Vrin, 1982.

concerning Aristotle's *Metaphysics* instigated by Cousin at the newly reinstated Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques.¹⁰ Candidates were to illuminate the *Metaphysics* by analysing its structure and content, by "accounting for its history, showing its influence on later systems in Antiquity and Modernity", and by "discussing the share of truth and the share of falsity to be found within it".¹¹ This brief may appear impossibly broad for contemporary specialists, but it was crucial to renew study of the *Metaphysics*, since, as Ravaisson notes, this foundational text had been subject to "general discredit for over two centuries in France, due to the thick veils in which scholasticism had enveloped it".¹² The situation was quite different across the Rhine, and Ravaisson, an autodidact in his Aristotelianism, responded to recent German philological and philosophical scholarship on the *Metaphysics* and the history of philosophy.¹³ He was also markedly influenced – perhaps largely indirectly at this stage, through this historical scholarship – by Schelling's philosophy of identity, by the idea that philosophy can access, in an 'intellectual intuition', an absolute that constitutes the prior ground, the identity in difference, of mind and world. Schelling is cited in this dissertation submitted in 1834, Ravaisson's first major work of philosophy, and also in his last, 'Philosophical Testament', Chapter XI of the present volume, but the extent of the influence of both Schelling's early philosophy of identity and his later 'positive philosophy' on Ravaisson's intellectual development is uncertain. The extent to which there is here influence rather than merely a kind of natural affinity is a "nice problem in the history of ideas".¹⁴ It is clear, at the very least, that the German philosopher was right, when he read Cousin's report on the Aristotle competition, to sense something of a kindred spirit in the young French

10 Napoleon's animus against those he had mockingly named the 'Idéologues' led him to suppress the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1803.

11 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, vol. I, Paris, 1837, p.11. Most of the original editions of Ravaisson's work, including the reports for the Ministry of Public Instruction, are available on Gallica (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/>), but it would be ungainly to provide the particular electronic addresses each time.

12 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.5.

13 On these sources, see Joseph Dopp, *Félix Ravaisson: la formation de sa pensée d'après des documents inédits* (Louvain: Editions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1933), pp.72-80. See also Denis Thouard, *Aristote au XIX^{ème} siècle* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2004).

thinker.¹⁵ It is also clear that Schelling's critical preface to a volume of Cousin's work, which Ravaisson translated at Cousin's behest in 1835 during a brief period when he worked as the latter's secretary, helped the young French philosopher discern the limitations of the Eclectic project. In his brief introduction to this translation, Ravaisson describes Schelling as the "greatest philosopher of our century".¹⁶

In 1836 Ravaisson achieved first place in the *agrégation* in philosophy, and in Cousin's estimation, which possibly was sensitive to Ravaisson's snub, the laureate was *hors de ligne*, far above the rest but also 'out of line'.¹⁷ In the following year, he published a substantially reworked first part of his Aristotle dissertation as Volume I of his *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote*. A second volume studying the fate of Aristotelianism in Greek thinking up to and including Neoplatonism appeared in 1846, but both the projected third and fourth volumes tracing its reception in the three great monotheisms until the end of the Middle ages and in modernity, respectively, never appeared.¹⁸ On certain points, Ravaisson's philological contributions to study of the *Metaphysics* in the first volume are, as Pierre Aubenque has noted, "still authoritative", whereas his attempt to systematise Aristotle's ontological and theological doctrine is more free than immediately faithful.¹⁹ It is hardly controversial to state that Aristotle resists the idealist abstractions of Pythagoreanism

14 Jean Baruzi, 'Introduction' in *Félix Ravaisson, De l'habitude* (Paris: Alcan, 1933), p.1. For three of the more recent studies of the question, see J.-F. Courtine, 'Les relations de Ravaisson et de Schelling' in Jean Quillien (ed.), *La réception de la philosophie allemande en France au XIX^e et au XX^e siècles* (Lille: Presses du Septentrion, 1994), 111-134; C. Mauve, 'Ravaisson, lecteur et interprète de Schelling', *Romantisme* 25 (1995): 65-74; and Gaëll Guibert, *Félix Ravaisson: d'une philosophie première à la philosophie de la révélation de Schelling* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007).

15 See Dopp, pp.127-8, who presents a Ravaisson very strongly influenced by Schelling.

16 *Jugement de Schelling sur la philosophie de M. Cousin*, translated with a preface by F. Ravaisson, *Nouvelle Revue germanique* October 1835, p.65.

17 See Vermeren, 'Ravaisson en son temps et en sa thèse', p.69.

18 Charles Devivaise published some of Ravaisson's work towards the third volume as *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote: Fragments du Tome III* (Paris: Vrin, 1953).

19 Pierre Aubenque, 'Ravaisson interprète d'Aristote', *Les Etudes philosophiques* 1984/4, 435-450, p.437.

and Platonism by attempting to apprehend the individuality of the particular being as being in a primary sense; and that he thus attempts to redeem the natural world of particular things in their change and movement. On Ravaisson's reading, however, Aristotle does this in considering the natural thing, which has 'in itself the principle of its own movement', as structured by an immanent teleological principle that is *l'âme*, soul or spirit; "the internal principle of change, nature is ... spirit".²⁰ This claim, according to which all moving things are ensouled, may well amount, as Aubenque has it, to failing to see that hylozoism is not co-extensive with hylomorphism in Aristotle, and that on this point the Philosopher perceives an analogy rather than identity: the soul is to the body *like* form is to matter.²¹ In any case, Ravaisson adopts Aristotle's hylomorphic conception of spirit: it is "not a substance ..., a subject", which is to say that it is not an extra thing existing behind the scenes, beneath appearances, but is "a form, the form of a singular (*un seul et unique*) body whose individuality and life it constitutes".²² In this way, Ravaisson grapples with the traditional Aristotelian problem of the principle of individuation: this cannot be matter, indeterminate and next to nothing, but nor can it simply be form, inherently general. Spirit is not independent of body, is "something of the body", and though not simply form, is the "unity of form and actuality".²³ Ravaisson thus recognises the centrality of Aristotle's interpretation of being as *energeia*, 'actuality', and his spiritualisation of Aristotle's physics finds its main justification in the account of pure actuality within the *Metaphysics*' theology. Given that the supreme being as pure *energeia* – actuality unadulterated by matter, movement and potentiality – is *noein*, thought necessarily thinking of nothing but itself, and given that the actuality of the physical world is different not in kind but only in purity to the actuality of this principal being, the path is open to a 'noetic', spiritualist and unitary interpretation of Aristotle's onto-theology. Aristotle thinks being in the highest sense as *energeia*, but, according to Ravaisson's panpsychist position, actuality, everywhere, is 'thought', but not always of a self-conscious variety.

Ravaisson reads Aristotle in this sense as a thinker of continuity, of a graduated chain of spiritual being that begins even in the lowest, apparently inert and randomly formed matter to the highest being: "[nature] can free itself only by degrees from the ties of matter and necessity. It tends towards its goal and never loses sight of it; but it cannot immediately raise itself up to it. It is only by an ascending progression of forms that it attains the highest form. A scale of existences

20 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.419.

21 Aubenque, 'Ravaisson interprète d'Aristote' I, p.438.

22 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.420.

23 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.421.

is developed which fills, without leaving a void, the whole category of substance and Being. It is like one and the same power, from organism to organism, from soul to soul, that climbs in a continuous movement to the peak of pure activity; it is being emerging gradually from stupor and sleep".²⁴ This ascending progression, however, consists of a – decidedly Germanic – odyssey of spirit involving a form of undeveloped immediacy, a form of alienation and then its overcoming. Desire in nature – whereby the natural being realises its goal instinctively, without reflection and more or less immediately – becomes increasingly separated from its goal in human, voluntary consciousness, but finds a new, perfect immediacy in the highest being: "first, unity, confused unity, matter and sensibility; next the oppositions and abstractions of the understanding; finally the individuality and superior unity of reason in its immaterial form of pure activity".²⁵

Ravaisson draws on Aristotle's theology in spiritualising his physics, but the continuist onto-theology that he thus discovers conflicts with the Philosopher's own statements concerning the separation of the divine from the world, which It moves, in producing desire, without Itself being moved. In the *Essay's* first volume, Ravaisson recognises that Aristotle's "Prime Mover is not a soul of the world; it is a principle superior to the world, separate from matter, foreign to change and time, and which envelops things, without resting on them",²⁶ but he does not dwell on the challenge this poses to his own interpretation. In the second volume, however, he develops the problem: "if the first principle is ... separated from nature", if "it is only an end that natural powers tend and move towards", then "from where do these powers obtain the desire that moves them? How to attribute to them, if they are outside the sole veritable being, this sort of being and reality"?²⁷ A transcendent God, Ravaisson now seems to think, will undermine the essence of Aristotelian physics. Ravaisson argues that this problem is pivotal in the development – the decline – of Greek philosophy after Aristotle: as, in the face of this problem, "Aristotle's own school gradually abandons the characteristic idea of his metaphysics, the pure actuality of absolute thought", the path is opened to Epicurean and Stoic materialisms. This decline of Aristotelianism could have been avoided had the Philosopher posited the continuity of, and thus the immanence of, the divine principle in nature. This would allow for a kind of identity in difference of divinity and the

24 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.422.

25 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.482. See Aubenque, 'Ravaisson interprète d'Aristote', pp.443-4 on this originally Schellingian odyssey.

26 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* I, p.548.

27 *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote* II (Paris, 1846), p.24.

world: a philosophy of continuity can posit their pantheistic identity but at the same time, as Ravaisson will write later, “gradation saves difference”.²⁸

1837 also saw Ravaisson submit – he must have been working ferociously – ‘Of Habit’, Chapter I of the present volume, together with a secondary work in Latin on Speusippus,²⁹ as his doctoral theses. There exists no official record of Ravaisson’s thesis defence, but Ernest Bersot, then a student at the Ecole Normale, later wrote this about it: “Ravaisson, nourished early on by Aristotle and endowed with a mind strong enough to penetrate the concision of this great genius, was tempted to imitate this concision and wrote a doctoral thesis, *Of Habit*, in the manner of the master. This thesis [...] much troubled the judges and I can still remember Jouffroy’s profound consternation and the vivacity with which he protested against this novelty. But the thesis was remarkable, remarkably defended; Ravaisson obtained his doctorate, his text provoked curiosity outside, and many desired to obtain the key to this language; many, in turn, wanted to use it”.³⁰ Ravaisson’s thesis was not wholly well-received: its aphoristic and even oracular style – and doubtless its freedom in relation to Eclectic orthodoxy – perplexed Théodore Jouffroy, a leading light of the Eclectic school. Nevertheless, Ravaisson’s capacity to synthesise a range of philosophical influences in an original philosophical work, and to present a general metaphysics based on reflection on a particular, principally psychological phenomenon, was undeniable. His is one of the few doctoral theses – and in the mid-nineteenth century submitting an indigestible block of 500 pages was not yet required – that can be considered a philosophical classic.

‘Of Habit’ develops the remarks concerning habit as ‘desire’ in the earlier *Essai* and re-articulates the philosophy of nature that Ravaisson found in Aristotle.³¹ The continued influence of Schelling’s philosophy of identity is apparent, and would hardly be clearer were the German philosopher cited by name, in that Ravaisson’s fundamental metaphysical concern is to elucidate the “mystery of the identification of the ideal and

28 See Ravaisson’s October 1842 letter to Hector Poret: Dopp, *Félix Ravaisson*, p.298.

29 Ravaisson, *Speusippi De Primis Rerum Principiis Placita Qualia Fuisse Videantur ex Aristotele* (Paris: 1838). On this secondary thesis and its relation to Ravaisson’s work on Aristotle, see Dopp, *Félix Ravaisson*, pp.221-4, and Alain Petit, ‘Le symptôme Speusippe : le spectre de l’émanatisme dans la pensée métaphysique de Ravaisson’, *Cahiers Philosophiques* 129/2 (2012), 57-65.

30 Cited in Vermeren, ‘Ravaisson en son temps et en sa thèse’, p.71.

31 For these remarks on habit as ‘desire’, see, in particular, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote* I, p.450.

the real, of the thing and thought, and of all the contraries that the understanding separates”; reflection on habit is here a means of thinking beneath and beyond the dualisms of freedom and necessity, mind and body, and will and nature that condition modern thought. In late 1839, Ravaisson would finally spend several weeks in Munich in order to consult with Schelling and learn about his latest work.³² That the German philosopher is not cited by name in the texts of 1837 – in neither the published volume of the *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote* nor the dissertation on habit – would seem to be the result of, rather than the anxiety of influence, prudence on the part of a young philosopher and doctoral candidate, since Cousin had already come under attack for Germanising French philosophy by importing post-Kantian thinking, and since Ravaisson will again be candid about Schelling’s significance in 1840. Other sources cited rather than just paraphrased, however, serve to clarify Ravaisson’s approach to Aristotle: Leibniz is crucial for his theory of the continuum, his dynamics, and his account of *petites perceptions*.³³ Ravaisson’s philosophy of nature is also shaped by an attempt to synthesise the views of a range of animist and vitalist doctors from the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century.³⁴ The most important new philosophical influence on Ravaisson’s thinking in 1838, however, was Pierre Maine de Biran, whose voluntarist philosophical psychology had broken free of the Ideological school at the beginning of the century. Biran published little in his lifetime, but he began with a prize-winning dissertation submitted to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques on its question concerning the influence of habit on the faculty of thinking.³⁵ Ravaisson takes up Biran’s tentative conjectures in 1802 on the ‘causes’ of habit, as well as the general philosophy of effort further developed in his later work, according to which the ‘primitive fact’ of

32 Dopp. *Félix Ravaisson*, p.292.

33 For a reading of Ravaisson’s appropriation of Leibniz’s thinking in *Of Habit* as involving a return to a form of monadological metaphysics, see Jeremy Dunham, ‘From Habit to Monads: Félix Ravaisson’s Theory of Substance’, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2015.1078775>.

34 In this connection, see Jean Cazeneuve, *Ravaisson et la philosophie médicale* (Paris: PUF, 1958).

35 See Pierre Maine de Biran, *Influence de l’habitude sur la faculté de penser*, vol.1 of *Oeuvres de Maine de Biran*, ed. F. Azouvi (Paris: J. Vrin, 1987), and M. D.Boehm’s translation of the 1802 dissertation as *The Influence of Habit on the Faculty of Thinking* (Williams and Wilkins, 1929; Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970). This translation does not, however, contain some of the important notes offering conjectures on the causes of motor habit that Biran added to his prize-winning dissertation just before its publication.

consciousness, a dual 'fact' of a different order to those of objective experience, consists in the active will meeting resistance.³⁶

Ravaisson bases his approach on the 'law' that Biran, as well as others before him, had apprehended in habit: continued or repeated action becomes less conscious but more spontaneous, assured and precise; continued sensation, in also becoming less conscious, produces a need, which is manifest when the source of the sensation is removed, as when, on a journey, we wake up when the car has come to a stop. Both aspects of the law, Ravaisson argues, are resistant to physiological or psychological, realist or intellectual explanation; and both are the result of an 'obscure activity', a force intermediate between pure activity and pure passivity. The gradual decline of effort, and thus consciousness, in the acquisition of a motor habit shows us that this obscure activity is continuous with and not antithetical to the will and consciousness; an acquired habit does not become "the mechanical effect of an external impulse, but rather the effect of an inclination that follows from the will". The movement becomes a tendency, an inclination or propensity to act, a now pre-theoretical orientation to goals or possibilities previously posited in reflective consciousness. An acquired motor habit is not, therefore, 'the fossilised residue of a spiritual activity', as Bergson, memorably, would interpret Ravaisson to say – thereby expressing his own more dualist and mechanistic conception of habit – in the influential discourse he delivered in 1904 after taking his seat at the Académie de Sciences Morales et Politiques.³⁷ As much as habit naturalises spirit, it also spiritualises nature; habit is the 'descent' – and this idea of descent is important in relation to his later conception of 'condescendence' – of spirit into matter. It is precisely insofar as an acquired habit is not fossilised, dead or mechanical that Ravaisson can argue that reflection on habit is "the only real method ... for the estimation, by a *convergent infinite series*, of the relation, real in itself but incommensurable in the understanding, of Nature and Will". This method certainly involves the difficult attempt to describe within conscious philosophical reflection that which by its nature begins to transcend the understanding, namely tendency or inclination. Yet Ravaisson appeals to our experience of *becoming* habituated, of *becoming* inclined, as an experience wherein we glimpse a vital spontaneity continuous with both organic nature and consciousness. Consequently, and by the "strongest of analogies", it is possible to argue that the continuum underlying traditional mind-matter dualisms, a

36 On these points, see my 'Ravaisson and the Force of Habit', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 49/1 (2011) 65-85.

37 On this point, see Dominique Janicaud, *Ravaisson et la métaphysique: une généalogie du spiritualisme français* (Paris: Vrin, 1997) and my 'Is Habit the "Fossilised Residue of a Spiritual Activity"? Ravaisson, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 42/1 (2011) 33-52, which also examines the question of whether Ravaisson is necessarily committed to the thesis that all acquisition of habit begins in reflective thought.

continuum that reflection on habit allows us to apprehend, is present throughout nature as a whole.

Though his brilliant doctoral thesis had met some resistance, many would have expected Ravaisson to establish a fine university career. But he would never teach philosophy. In 1838 he became principle private secretary to Narcisse-Achille de Salvandy, Minister of Public Instruction and one of Cousin's political enemies, and although in the following year he was nominated at the university of Rennes, far from Paris, he decided not to pursue an academic career. This decision was perhaps motivated by "preferring a life more worldly, more elevated, more brilliant, far from the near impoverishment of professors",³⁸ but that Rennes was the only academic post open to him indicates that his relations with Cousin, discouragingly, had soured. Already in 1837, Ravaisson was seen to be one of Cousin's "victims".³⁹ To explain this dissension, one might point, following Bergson, to a difference in temperament, and contrast Cousin, the ebullient rhetorician, with Ravaisson, of a more philosophical, even ethereal nature, who would have gained the sobriquet 'Lion' only for the way he wore his hair. One might also invoke personal allegiances: Ravaisson's original philosophical mentor at the Collège Rollin, Hector Poret, who became his friend and, later, father-in-law, also had frosty relations with Cousin after deputising for him at the Sorbonne. Yet Ravaisson's differences with Cousin were above all philosophical, and the 1840 essay on 'Contemporary Philosophy', Chapter II of the present volume, sheds light on the dispute.

This essay, as pellucid as 'Of Habit' is poetic and oracular, is, in effect, a manifesto against Eclecticism and it created a stir. Its occasion was a French translation of the work of William Hamilton, product of the Scottish common-sense school and Professor at the University of Edinburgh, who had criticised – initially in the *Edinburgh Review* of October 1829 – Cousin's attempt to use the Baconian experimental method of observation and induction in order to attain the goals of German idealism, i.e. knowledge of the 'absolute'. Schelling, in the 1835 preface that Ravaisson had translated, made essentially the same point, but from the opposite perspective, and thus as Ravaisson puts it: German philosophy "approves of the end but disapproves of the means", while Scottish philosophy holds the "end to be chimerical and regards the procedure with which Cousin wants to attain it as a false application of a true method". Cousin thus finds himself subject to criticism from both

38 Jacques Billard, 'Introduction', in *De l'habitude: Métaphysique et morale*, 1-103, p.14.

39 Mme Poret, wife of the philosopher Hector Poret discussed below, wrote to her husband in 1837: "Your Cousin is the greatest acrobat I've ever known. Poor Ravaisson has now also become one of his victims. Fortunately, he already knew him well-enough so as not to be surprised by his caprices"; cited in Vermeren, 'Ravaisson en son temps et en sa thèse', p.85.

sides, and after damning him with faint praise – he has a “grand imagination; he likes high peaks, vast horizons” – Ravaisson makes no secret of his own view that the Eclectic synthesis is impossible. A little known reformer of empiricism, however, is able to lead French philosophy out of this Eclectic impasse: Maine de Biran. It is precisely in attacking Hume’s purported extension to psychology of a ‘Newtonian’, experimental method that Biran advances his philosophy of effort and active will.⁴⁰ Biran teaches us to renounce considering the mind “from the *objective* point of view, and as somehow belonging to the outside”, and to recognise, *pace* Hume, that in experience there is a direct intuition or apperception of a force, namely the force of the will in its meeting resistance. Cousin may well have attempted to incorporate Biran’s thinking, but, for Ravaisson, he has done so in a way that is as half-hearted as his decision in 1834 to begin to edit Biran’s unpublished manuscripts, which he had held in his possession for over ten years.⁴¹ Incorporation of Biran’s philosophy of the will requires renunciation of the Scottish experimental psychological method, and only thus, Ravaisson argues, can French philosophy gain common ground with the ideas of agency and activity advanced across the Rhine by both J. G. Fichte and Schelling; and only thus can it adequately resolve the problems of philosophical method addressed under the heading of ‘intellectual intuition’. By means of Biran’s philosophy, therefore, “France and Germany, by such different routes, have encountered each other again, and the country of Descartes seems near to uniting itself in thought, dare I say in heart and soul, with the country of Leibniz”.

‘Contemporary Philosophy’ is important not just for showing how its author envisages a union of nineteenth-century French and German philosophy, but also for underlining the originality of Ravaisson’s own thinking in its departure from Biran’s voluntarism. In its final pages, Ravaisson writes: “[e]ffort supposes, as Maine de Biran recognised himself, an anterior tendency that, in its development, provokes resistance”. Ravaisson refers here to Biran’s account of the genesis of effort on the basis of what – despite the phenomenological rigour of his analyses – he posited as a pre-existing and objective world independent of consciousness.⁴² Resistance presupposes will, and will resistance, and in

40 For analysis of Biran’s response to Hume, see Philip P. Hallie, *Maine de Biran: Reformer of Empiricism*, pp.84-104, and my ‘Is There a “Dispositional Modality”? Maine de Biran and Ravaisson on Agency and Inclination’, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 32/2 (2015) 161-79.

41 See Vermeren, ‘Ravaisson en son temps et en sa thèse’, p.75.

42 On this issue, see Michel Henry, *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps: essai sur l’ontologie biranienne* (Paris: Puf, 1965) and my ‘Embodiment: Conceptions of the Lived Body from Maine to Biran to Bergson’ in *The Edinburgh Critical History of Philosophy, Vol. 4: The 19th Century*, ed. A. Stone (Edinburgh U.P., 2011) 187-203.

order to avoid a “vicious circle” in accounting for the advent of consciousness we must posit “that the first movements of the sentient being are determined by *instinct*, an internal force that is quite real, quite independent ... of the *will* strictly speaking; but the movements whose execution must subsequently be guided by the will, cannot take place by the instinctive act without the individual being aware of it by this particular impression (that we name *effort*)”.⁴³ Biran, then, sees the need to establish some continuity between the organic and ‘hyper-organic’ strata he otherwise consistently separates, and thus he posits an *instinctive* effort that awakens *voluntary* effort. This move is problematic, for it undermines the specificity of the idea of effort in Biran’s philosophy, and ‘Of Habit’ presents instead the idea of an “effortless antecedent tendency”. It is, thus, far from clear that Biran thinks instinct as a tendency in Ravaisson’s sense, but ‘Contemporary Philosophy’ marks out more decisively its author’s distance from Biran’s philosophy when it characterises the essence of tendency as desire: “the will has its source and substance in *desire*, and it is desire that constitutes the reality of the very experience of will”, for the “notion of an object as a good presupposes in the subject that wants it the feeling that it is desirable”. Ravaisson deduces here what reflection on habit had demonstrated: desire is continuous with, but prior to, voluntary action and thought. This entails that “before the good is a *motif* in the soul, it is already, as if by a prevenient grace, a *motive*, but a motive that does not differ from the soul itself”. Tendency, then, is to be thought as desire that somehow touches and even constitutes the being that desires, but desire is still not the “ultimate source” of the will; in order to desire something “in some way we have to put into it its own goodness and felicity; we have to be aware of ourselves in it, to feel ourselves, at bottom, already united with it, and to aspire to reunite ourselves there again; this is to say that desire envelops every degree of *love*”. Love, as Ravaisson had written in *Of Habit*, “possesses and desires at the same time”, and it is the very condition of desire. Biran, then, is a philosopher of will, whereas Ravaisson is led, through an idea of tendency and desire, to a conception of love, which develops his interpretation of Aristotle’s onto-theology, and which will be crucial in his later work. In any case, ‘Contemporary Philosophy’ seems to authorise the following, doubtless unsatisfying, analogy: Ravaisson is to Biran as Schelling is to Fichte; and if Biran is the ‘French Fichte’,⁴⁴ it would not be absurd to describe Ravaisson as the French Schelling.

After his precocious philosophical beginnings, ‘Contemporary Philosophy’, closes a chapter in Ravaisson’s life and work. He would not

43 Biran, *Influence de l’habitude sur la faculté de penser*, pp.138-9.

44 See Ives Radrizzani, ‘Maine de Biran: Un Fichte Français?’ in *Fichte et la France*, Vol. 1, ed. I. Radrizzani (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), 107-140.

again have such a direct effect on the contemporary philosophical scene before a quarter century had passed. In the 1840s, he continued to labour on the second volume of his *Essai* on Aristotle, when he was not occupied by his duties as Inspecteur général des bibliothèques, a newly created post to which he was appointed in 1839 after de Salvandy had resigned as Minister. This post was certainly not a sinecure, but nor was it one that Ravaisson would have undertaken with a heavy heart, solely in order to fund his scholarly activities and well-connected Parisian life. The position involved cataloguing the holdings of exceptional interest in libraries and archives throughout France, and allowed Ravaisson to pursue his interest in history developed through his intellectual friendships with the historians Jules Michelet – translator of Giambattista Vico, whose historical periodization and notion of ‘common knowledge’ was significant (see ‘Metaphysics and Morals’, Chapter X of this volume) for Ravaisson’s later work – and Edgar Quinet.⁴⁵ Ravaisson’s duties allowed him, more specifically, to develop his preoccupations in the history of Christian doctrine. In the summer of 1840, he was tasked – by Cousin, Minister from March to October – with the inspection of libraries in the west of France, and to his report of the following year, Ravaisson appended some of his manuscript discoveries:⁴⁶ these include unknown variants of Cicero’s works and one of Voltaire’s letters, but over half of them concern the history of Christian doctrine, including two sermons Ravaisson attributed to Augustin, and a long sermon by John Eriugena on the beginning of St. John’s gospel, presented as a “new monument to the genius of this famous founder of the *mystical philosophy and theology* of the middle ages”.⁴⁷

In the 1840s Ravaisson was twice rejected as a candidate for the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques; Cousin was President, but Ravaisson also sensed that his interests might appear too “mystical” for the philosophy section of that Académie.⁴⁸ He would have to wait until 1880 to be received into it. In 1849, however, he was elected into the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, the wing of the Institut de France primarily concerned with classical antiquity and the Middle Ages. In 1849 and 1851 he read to this Académie his ‘Essay on Stoicism’, Chapter

45 In this connection, see Simone Goyard-Fabre, ‘Ravaisson et les historiens du XIX^{ème} siècle’, *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 1984/4, 481-96.

46 Ravaisson, *Rapports au ministre de l’instruction publique sur les bibliothèques de l’ouest, suivis de pieces inédites* (Paris, 1941).

47 For discussion of the significance of these texts for Ravaisson, see Dopp, pp.280-4, and for more philological detail concerning the Eriugena discovery, see Tullio Viola, ‘The Serpentine Life of Félix Ravaisson’, p163, n.26. Ravaisson made other significant discoveries in medieval philosophy, including texts by William of Champeaux and Abelard, in his later reports of 1846, 1855 and 1862; see Viola, p.163.

III of the present volume, which he then had published by its press as a long, intensely scholarly essay in 1856. The early to mid-nineteenth century was a period of decline in the study of Stoicism, “with German classical scholars and historians of philosophy interested more in Plato and Aristotle than the Hellenistic schools”, even though, as John Sellars also writes, “one might note in particular the work of the French philosopher Félix Ravaisson” as an exception.⁴⁹ This lack of interest was a function of a negative, critical attitude towards the Stoic philosophers.⁵⁰ Ravaisson, despite the remarkable depth and detail of his study, shares in some measure this attitude, which he had already expressed in the second volume of his *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote*. Felicitously, for us, ‘Essay on Stoicism’ summarises the two volumes: after presenting Aristotle as the veritable founder of metaphysics, Ravaisson shows how Stoicism, following Epicureanism, falls away from the inner truth of the Philosopher’s problematic onto-theological doctrine. Ravaisson illuminates the interconnectedness of Stoic metaphysical and ethical doctrines, but, on his reading, Stoicism presents an “intricate web of paradoxes”, principal among which is its attempt to understand metaphysical principles as physical; “[f]orced by reason always to go beyond phenomena falling under the senses to a prior cause of unity, while refusing to recognise as real the entirely simple unity of what is purely intelligible, the Stoic stops half way, with an idea of an unknown cause, which is material and extended, and at the same time one and indivisible, a cause that thus reunites, thanks to its obscurity, the irreconcilable attributes of the corporeal and the incorporeal”. Ravaisson is certainly intrigued by Stoic immanentism as a response to Aristotle’s problematic onto-theology, by its notion of ‘tension’ in particular, and he seems to write the essay as if testing an interesting hypothesis. Yet no physics, in his view, can ever replace metaphysics.

Ravaisson’s administrative career granted him in 1853 the opportunity to write philosophically about something that he had always practised, namely the art of drawing. Newly appointed under

48 In a letter to Hector Poret of October 1842, Ravaisson wrote: “I realised that my views seemed, rightly or wrongly, to have a mystical air, hardly made to please an assembly where political scientists and economists predominated”; see Dopp, *Félix Ravaisson*, p.294.

49 John Sellars, ‘Introduction’ in *The Routledge Handbook to the Stoic Tradition* (forthcoming).

50 See Katerina Ierodiakonou, ‘Introduction’ in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 1-22, p.4.

the Second Empire as Inspecteur général de l'éducation supérieure, he was named as president of a commission – which included the painter Delacroix and the architect Viollet le Duc among others – tasked with reporting to Hyppolite Fortoul, Napoleon III's first Minister of Public Instruction, on the reform of the teaching of drawing in schools. Ravaissou's views held sway, and he wrote the report of over seventy pages in his own name. In its first part, produced here as Chapter IV, 'The Art of Drawing according to Leonardo da Vinci',⁵¹ Ravaissou outlines a philosophy of the figurative arts with an interpretative paraphrase of the maestro's *A Treatise on Painting*. The art of drawing is contrasted with the analytic, scientific spirit of geometry, for art is concerned with a quality that geometry, focused on quantity, cannot see. Prior to, and the condition of, visible form and proportion is movement, which it is the vocation of art to express; drawing is primarily a function, in Leonardo's words, of the good judgment of the eye, which, for Ravaissou, has the task of interpreting the "silent language of visible appearances", so as to bring forth the movement, life and spirit of things. This living, moving spirit is grace, which, as Ravaissou will say after La Fontaine, is more 'beautiful than beauty itself'. In thus "not restricting itself to reproducing the letter of the forms and proportions, and in expressing the sense, the character, the spirit proper to things, art raises itself from imitation to interpretation". Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, certainly saw something essential in remarking that art or poetry is more philosophical than history, but art has a higher mission than merely reporting on the general rather than the particular. Figurative art can interpretatively access, Ravaissou argues, the individuality of the particular being that, for Aristotle, is being in a higher sense.

This was the first expression of Ravaissou's ardent interest in the philosophy and pedagogy of drawing, and he presented these ideas in their most developed form in his article on 'The Teaching of Drawing', Chapter V of the present volume, that he contributed to Ferdinand Buisson's 1882 *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*.⁵² Drawing divines the inner individuality of its object by grasping its

51 For reasons of economy, I follow Dominique Janicaud, *L'Art et les mystères grecs* (Paris: L'Herne, 1985) in producing just this first section of the report, but I alter his title 'L'Art et le dessin d'après Léonard da Vinci'.

52 'L'enseignement du dessin d'après M. F. Ravaissou' within the entry 'Dessin' of F. Buisson (ed.), *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire* Vol. 1 (Paris: Hachette), pp.671-84, in 1882. Ravaissou wrote two other entries in the dictionary that it was not possible to reproduce here: 'Art', Vol. I, 122-4, and another on the practical aspects of drawing in Vol. II (Paris: Hachette, 1882), 575-80.

serpeggiamento, as Leonardo had put it, its serpentine line: this is “in each object, the particular manner in which a flexuous line” is “its generating axis ... like one main wave unfurling in little surface waves”. This snaking movement, this flexuous line, which geometry cannot capture and is the principle of life itself, is not any one of the visible lines of the object, but rather a ‘super-physical’, metaphysical’ secret that artistic intuition can capture; it is a “sovereign line that commands all other lines, [...] that lets itself be divined rather than show itself, and that exists more for the imagination and thought than for the eyes”.

Bergson is right to underline in his admirable discourse on Ravaisson’s life and work – which he was not compelled to publish as the final essay of his final book – that this reflection on drawing is not ancillary but rather essential to his predecessor’s mature philosophy: “[t]he whole of Ravaisson’s philosophy derives from the idea that art is a figurative metaphysics, that metaphysics is a reflection on art, and that it is the same intuition, applied differently, which makes the profound philosopher and the great artist”.⁵³ Ravaisson’s account of habit as the “sole true method in philosophy” seemed to depart knowingly from Schelling’s promotion of art as the ‘organon and document of philosophy’, but by the mid-1850s the French philosopher has come to his own particular view that figurative art can grant us access to the non-generic, spiritual essence of things: “aesthetics”, as Ravaisson will write in ‘Philosophical Testament’, Chapter XI of this volume, “is the torch of science”. It is the generative axis of things that, in the practice of drawing, is expressed through the vision of the artist and the movement of her hands. Thus what in modernity is called ‘genius’ cannot be a principle of *ex nihilo* creation, deriving from nothing but the artist herself – as Gabriel Séailles will underline in his 1886 *Le génie dans l’art*,⁵⁴ dedicated to Ravaisson – and is rather a kind of revelation or divination, at once active and passive.

In the report of 1854, Ravaisson applied his views in challenging the mechanical and geometric methods in the teaching of drawing that had come to prominence earlier in the century: the student should instead begin with direct, intuitive drawing of the embodiment of grace in the human figure, by copying models of classical works. Only thus can the student genuinely learn to draw. This method was to be

53 Henri Bergson, ‘La vie et l’œuvre de Ravaisson’ in Bergson, *Œuvres* (Paris: PUF, 1959), 1450-1481, p.1461; ‘The Life and Work of Ravaisson’ in *The Creative Mind*, trans. M. Andison (New York: 1946), 220-252, p.231.

54 Gabriel Séailles, *Le génie dans l’art* (Paris: 1883).

facilitated by concentrating on parts of the body, principally the head, and by copying two-dimensional representations, even photographs of classical works. Ravaisson's proposals were enacted, and in order to support them he began to prepare a volume offering, as he describes the project retrospectively in 1882, "a photographic collection of models reproducing first-order works of the most excellent masters, in their most favourable aspects and with the most favourable lighting", which was to be distributed in all schools.⁵⁵ Ravaisson's *Les classiques de l'art: modeles pour l'enseignement du dessin* did not, however, appear for more than twenty years, which was all the more unfortunate in that in 1876, the year after its publication, under a Third Republic convinced that scientific and technical retardation had contributed directly to its humiliating defeat in 1870, Eugène Guillaume, Director-General of Fine-Arts within the Ministry of Public Instruction, had Ravaisson's programme replaced, after acrimonious debate with him in committee meetings, by more utilitarian and less 'elitist' prescriptions.⁵⁶ The teaching of drawing should – as Guillaume wrote in his own 1882 article on 'The Teaching of Drawing' that Buisson counter-posed to that of Ravaisson – be addressed to the masses, "where dreams of artistic vocations are the exception",⁵⁷ and tailored to the needs of workers, for whom habits of exactitude are crucial. Disconnected from the industrial realities of the modern world, Ravaisson's method remained in a kind of empirical imprecision, when students required the discipline of technical drawing. Ravaisson retorted that geometry did not have a monopoly on exactitude, and that Pascal's views about a greater, truer, intuitive exactitude should not be forgotten;⁵⁸ that his method had its own utility, particularly in a nation such as France with strong manufacturing traditions in the arts

55 See Ravaisson, *Les classiques de l'art: modeles pour l'enseignement du dessin* (Paris: Rapilly, 1875), and, for more detail on the project, Mouna Mekouar, 'Étudier ou rêver l'antique. Félix Ravaisson et la reproduction de la statuaire antique', *Images Re-vues*, 1|2005, document 6; URL: <http://imagesrevues.revues.org/222>.

56 For a full account of Ravaisson's controversy with Guillaume, see Canales, 'Movement before Cinematography: The High Speed Qualities of Sentiment', *Journal of Visual Culture* 5/3 (2006) 275-294.

57 Eugène Guillaume 'L'enseignement du dessin' in *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, 684-9, p.689.

58 On this point, see Canales, 'Movement before Cinematography', p.284.

of ornamentation and decoration; and that the state has a “duty not to refuse to ordinary schools an education designed to arouse the elite minds they might harbour”. Denying students the right to a liberal artistic education would doom the multitude to a slavish, technical “barbarism”, while only a “privileged class” would gain taste and first-hand experience of the secret of beauty. In promoting thus the equality of opportunity and the access of all to a genuinely liberal education, Ravaisson attempted to influence the great wave of educational reform in the Third Republic. Certainly, Ravaisson’s proposal that “the man of the people, on whom material fatality bears with such a burden” might “find the best alleviation of his harsh condition if his eyes were opened to what Leonardo da Vinci calls the *bellezza del mondo*”⁵⁹ – may appear breathtakingly incognisant of the real social and economic changes required in order to resolve *la question ouvrière*.⁶⁰ There is, however, no need to deny that Ravaisson’s political stance is, in a word, patrician, or that his political evocations of the past – ancient Greece was ruled by gentleness just as the court at Versailles was governed by sympathy – are picturesque, to recognise that his proposals concerning artistic education are, in themselves, no more a form of ‘reactionary dreaming’, even though written over half a century later, than those of Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.⁶¹

The 1860s saw Ravaisson’s re-emergence on the contemporary philosophical scene. When the *agrégation de philosophie* was reinstated in 1963, after having been suppressed early in the Second Empire by Fortoul, it was Ravaisson’s turn to be nominated – by the new minister Hector Duruy, an old Rollin classmate – as the President of its jury. This is a position of great influence, since the jury selects both the subject matter and the successful candidates in the examination. Ravaisson’s appointment must have been surprising: he was to preside over a university examination granting the right to

59 Ravaisson, ‘Art’, *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire* I, p.123, Bergson will repeat this proposal in an even less tenable fashion by prescribing not the beauty but the novelty in the world. See the concluding paragraph of the late essay ‘Le possible et le réel’ in *La pensée et le mouvant* in *Œuvres*; ‘The Possible and the Real’ in *The Creative Mind*, 91-106.

60 A question to which Ravaisson returns in his 1887 essay ‘Education’: *Revue politique et littéraire. Revue bleue* 17, April 23, 1887, pp.513-9.

61 See Goyard-Fabre, ‘Ravaisson et les historiens’, p.494 for the claim that Ravaisson is a reactionary dreamer.

dispense a curriculum that he had never taught.⁶² Yet Duruy soon provided Ravaisson with an opportunity to confirm his reputation as a philosopher by entrusting him with the writing of a report on the history of philosophy in France, part of a Ministry of Public Instruction series on the progress of the arts and the sciences, for the 1867 *Exposition Universelle*. Ravaisson immersed himself in the philosophical doctrines and scientific advances of the century, and then produced a long report-cum-manifesto outlining, in its concluding sections, a 'spiritualist positivism' or 'spiritualist realism' as the culmination of the philosophical tradition; a spiritualist *positivism* because Comte does not have a monopoly on 'the positive', and, in fact, offers only a shallow approach to it; a spiritualist *realism* because *idealism*, as Ravaisson understands it, succumbs to logical abstractions, as does materialism, and passes over the fundamental spiritual actuality constituting the essence of all things.⁶³ The text, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, concludes thus:

If the genius of France has not changed, there will be nothing more natural for her than the triumph of the high doctrine, which teaches that matter is only the last degree and, so to speak, the shadow of existence, over systems that reduce everything to material elements and to a blind mechanism; which teaches that real existence, of which everything else is only an imperfect sketch, is that of spirit; that, in truth, to be is to live, and to live is to think and to will; that nothing occurs without persuasion; that the good and beauty alone explain the universe and its author; that the infinite and the absolute [...] consist in spiritual freedom; that freedom is thus the last word of things, and that, beneath the disorder and antagonisms which trouble the surface where phenomena occur, in the essential and eternal truth, everything is grace, love and harmony.⁶⁴

Year after year students studied the *Rapport* in preparing for the *agrégation* and as Bergson has noted, it effected a "profound change of orientation in university philosophy: Cousin's influence gave way to

62 As Leroy notes: 'Notice sur M. Ravaisson-Mollien', p.357.

63 Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), p.243.

64 Ravaisson, *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^{ème} siècle*, p.320.

that of Ravaisson".⁶⁵ Ravaisson attempted to give more concretion, as we will see, to this new spiritualism in his final philosophical essays, but the work of the philosophers he directly influenced and inspired – principally Jules Lachelier, Emile Boutroux, Bergson and Maurice Blondel – would show, as Henri Gouhier put it, "how far and correctly Ravaisson saw".⁶⁶ This new spiritualist orientation would prevail in French universities until at least the late 1920s, until Bergson in particular, as its most prominent representative, was subject to bitter and influential invective – by Julien Benda, Georges Politzer and Paul Nizan – for having mobilised his philosophy in the service of French nationalism during the First World War.⁶⁷ Whether Ravaisson, had he been born two decades later, would have been able to resist the new, more nationalist philosophical 'regiment' led by Boutroux and Bergson in 1914, is a question as interesting as it is unanswerable.⁶⁸

Ravaisson had made a re-entrance on the philosophical scene, but his concerns extended beyond philosophy in a narrow, disciplinary sense, and in June 1870 he was appointed by Napoleon III as Curator of Classical Antiquities at the Louvre. Even though he had had no formal archaeological training, events very soon offered him the opportunity to demonstrate his aptitude for the post, and introduced him to a subject, the Venus de Milo, that would occupy him, even obsess him, for the remainder of his life.⁶⁹ Just two months after his appointment, Napoleon III was captured at Sedan by the Prussian army, which then

65 Bergson, 'La vie et l'œuvre de Ravaisson', p.1472; 'The Life and Work of Ravaisson', p.244.

66 Henri Gouhier, 'Introduction' in Maine de Biran, *Œuvres choisies* (Paris: Aubier, 1942), p.22.

67 On the pivotal nature of Politzer's critique, in particular, for the course of twentieth-century French philosophy, see Frédéric Worms, *La philosophie en France au XX^{ème} siècle: Moments* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 194-99 and Giuseppe Bianco, *Après Bergson* (Paris: PUF, 2015).

68 Ravaisson's philosophy of love would not have been much use for the French war effort in 1914. Bergson's philosophy of will before the war, in contrast, was well suited to it, as I argue in 'Bergson's Philosophy of Will and the War of 1914-18', forthcoming in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

69 For a full account of this story, see Gregory Curtis, *Disarmed: The Story of the Venus de Milo* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003).

marched towards Paris. In the Louvre, prized works of the great masters were hurriedly rolled up and sent to Brest, from where they could be shipped elsewhere, while the larger statues were merely stored in crates in a sandbagged hallway in order to offer them some protection against the Prussian artillery. Ravaisson had the museum's most prized statue, however, the Venus de Milo, packed in an oak crate and hidden behind two false walls in the basement of another building. In May of the following year, after the Siege of Paris and the French government's capitulation, and then the tumult of the Paris Commune and the murderous reprisals that followed it, Ravaisson led a team back into the basement of the building, which had been seriously damaged by fire during the government's struggle to recapture the city. The crate had done its job, and, fortunately, a burst water pipe had protected it from the flames. Even more fortunately, for Ravaisson, the humidity in the basement had softened the plaster with which four broken pieces had been reattached to the Venus, two to the left hip and two to the right, and these newly detached pieces allowed study of the inside of the statue for the first time since it had arrived at the Louvre in 1821.

Within a few weeks Ravaisson published the first of his essays on the Venus, essays which offer a combination of archaeological scruple and interpretative freedom that recalls his philological and philosophical approach in *Essai sur la Métaphysique d'Aristote*. First of all, Ravaisson proposed to right wrongs to which the Venus had been subject during clumsy attempts at restoration fifty years earlier. The statue is made of two halves that meet across the hips, but Ravaisson discovered that for some reason the Louvre restorers had been unable to put the detached lower piece of the left hip, which belonged to the lower half, into position so that it would be flush with the rest of the top of that half. The left hip would thus collapse under the weight of the upper half when reunited with it, and so, after attempting to chisel off the protruding section of the lower half, the restorers decided to place two thin wooden wedges – like elongated doorstops – between the two halves, with the wedges inclining down towards the front of the statue, and with one wedge marginally lower than the other, so as to make the small gap visible from the front between the two halves as small as possible across its whole length. This restoration had the effect of inclining the statue “from the left to the right and from the back to the front more than it was supposed to”, which entailed “that it did not quite have the proportions or movement that it had before”.⁷⁰ This was exacerbated by changes to the base of the statue: the old broken base, which Ravaisson shows was not supposed to be level, had been made level when fitted inside a new base, which meant that the line where

70 Ravaisson, *Venus de Milo* (Paris: Hachette, 1871), p.12.

the two halves of the statue met was now at least six degrees off the horizontal.

Ravaisson's proposals to rectify the pose of the statue – which would, he argued, return more grace and gentleness to it – were vetoed by the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which was reluctant to change ingrained viewing habits. In 1883, however, when repairs to the Greek and Roman galleries of the Louvre meant that the Venus was put into storage, Ravaisson took the opportunity to have the wedges removed. In 1892, he published a second version of his essay – the most philosophical, third section of which appears as Chapter VI of the present volume – to justify his decision and to defend his interpretation of the statue. This interpretation takes up the suggestion of the historian of art and architecture Antoine Crysostome Quatremère de Quincy: the relative negligence in the carving on the left side of the statue indicates that she was supposed to be viewed from her right, that another figure must have stood on her left, and thus that the Venus may well have belonged to a Greek original of Roman monuments showing her appeasing Mars.⁷¹ The Venus had, he suggested, her left arm on the shoulder of Mars, while her right was touching his arm, thus imploring him to stay with her rather than go to war. The composition would thus represent Venus's victory, without force, over force. Ravaisson essentially concurred, but supposing the Mars to be of a similar form to the Ares Borghese, also in the Louvre, he spent many years trying to determine the original position of the arms of the Venus in relation to this Mars, and even took up sculpture in order to do so. Although he urged that no restoration should ever be imposed on the Venus, his reconstruction of the ensemble can be seen among the plates at the end of the present volume. According to this reconstruction, the arm resting on the Mars' shoulder was, *pace* Quatremère de Quincy, the fragment of lower arm and hand carrying an apple that had been found in Melos along with the Venus. For Ravaisson, it is not necessary to reject these fragments in order to block the hypothesis according to which the Venus was carrying the apple of discord after winning the talent show on Mount Ida that was the Judgment of Paris, for, loosely held in the hand as a symbol rather than displayed overtly as a prize, the apple signifies “felicity and fecundity” instead of the frivolous “triumph of a puerile vanity”.

Aside from the fact that no fragment of the Mars was ever found at the site on Melos, two major objections stand in the way of Quatremère's and Ravaisson's interpretation. The first concerns the base of the statue, which is broken on one side, a break with which, in 1821, the base of one of the herms also found with the Venus fitted

71 On Quatremère de Quincy's interpretation, see Curtis, *Disarmed*, pp.77-83.

well. Now, if the base of the herm originally belonged with the Venus, it could not have formed an ensemble with a Mars, for there would have been no place for it to stand. The base of the herm carried the inscription "...xandros son of Menides citizen of Antioch of Meander made the statue", which was troubling, since Antioch was not founded until 270 BC and the statue was supposed – by curators keen to make up for the return of the Apollo Belvedere to Rome after Napoleon's defeat, and to rival Elgin's appropriation of the Parthenon Marbles – to be a masterpiece from the classical age of Greece. A drawing of the base of the herm is all we now have, for it was removed and 'lost', but Ravaisson adopts the view that led to its removal, namely that its attachment to the base of the Venus was the work of rudimentary restoration, which would explain why the first letters of the name of the artist are missing. Ravaisson's dating of the statue does not rely on his arguments to this effect, since, by 1892 at least, he concedes that rather than an original, classical work, the Venus is a later reproduction of a work from the classical period, but his interpretation of the original composition certainly does.

A second objection, which Quatremère had already met, is that Mars was little worshipped in classical Greece, and apparently not in his association with Venus, the story of which was recounted by Homer merely as an adulterous affair. Ravaisson responds by pointing out classical monuments featuring Venus and Mars together, and by disputing the veracity of the poetic narrative in relation to ordinary and early Greek beliefs: the union of the two divinities, he claims, was essential to popular Greek religious and moral ideas – ideas to which the poets were often, as in this case, unfaithful – as a symbol of conjugal felicity. Certainly, Venus came to be worshipped in many places as *hetaera*, i.e. as a courtesan, and came to be worshipped by courtesans in particular; but, Ravaisson notes, *hetaera* originally means 'friend', and only later, as in Plato's *Symposium*, does 'earthly' Venus Pandemos (Venus for 'all the people'), now with specially lascivious significance, emerge from Venus Urania. Ravaisson's ultimate motivations become apparent, however, with his further argument that what is named the Ares Borghese is, in fact, a figure of the hero Theseus, a mythological human and not a divinity, who established the cult of Venus Urania when founding Athens. The composition of Venus appeasing Theseus would thus offer the "expressive image of a divine grace seeking out humanity in order to unify itself with it; a conception that was not foreign to Judaism, in which Jehovah goes to the front of the chosen people to bring them closer to him, and that the Christian religion was to carry, after paganism and Judaism, to a new height." The composition would represent the generosity of a divine principle that lowers itself to humanity in order to raise humanity back up to its level; it would show, as Ravaisson will put it, the divine as a principle of 'condescendence'.

This is what Ravaissou attempts to capture in the Venus de Milo, and on this point Bergson says it all: “People smiled to see him model and remodel the arms of the goddess. Did they know that what Ravaissou was really trying to recapture in the rebellious clay was the very soul of Greece [...]?”⁷²

In having the wedges between the two halves of the statue removed, and in protecting it from any restoration, Ravaissou played a crucial role in the curation and conservation of the Venus de Milo. Later, however, more single-mindedly scientific archaeologists such as Solomon Reinach and Adolf Furtwängler, who locked horns over the Venus, agreed about at least one thing, namely that Ravaissou’s ‘inductions’ – which include the conjecture that the statue is modelled on the Venus of the Gardens, known only through textual sources, by Phidias or his school – were ill-founded.⁷³ The philosophical interpretation of Greek existence underlying Ravaissou’s interpretation of the Venus, however, also leads him to similarly controversial archaeological claims concerning, to cite the title of Chapter VII of the present volume, ‘Greek Funerary Monuments’. In 1873, a marble funerary lekythos – a tall vessel normally used for storing oil – bearing the name Myrrhine above a bas-relief showing her being led by Hermes to, presumably, the underworld and towards figures representing her family, was found in Athens, and a mould of it sent to the Louvre. Given the position of her family, and that a member of it, “an old man, perhaps her father, raises his right hand in a gesture of joy and admiration”, and also that “Myrrhine inclines her head with a gracious gentleness and smiles”,⁷⁴ the scene resists interpretation as one of separation or departure. Ravaissou takes this newly discovered monument, dated to 420-410 BC, to offer the interpretative key to ‘departure scenes’ in Greek funerary art in general: these scenes should instead be named “*reunion scenes*”, and, more precisely, “*reunion scenes in Elysium*”,⁷⁵ for they present – with varying degrees

72 Bergson, ‘La vie et l’œuvre de Ravaissou’ in Bergson, *Œuvres* (Paris: PUF, 1959), p.1477/‘The Life and Work of Ravaissou’, p.247.

73 In this connection, see Curtis, *Disarmed*, Chapter V, and Reinach’s brief notice on Ravaissou’s archaeological work in *Revue archeologique* 1900/I, p.460.

74 Ravaissou, *Le monument de Myrrhine* (Paris: 1876), p.2. This essay is reproduced in Ravaissou, *L’Art et les mystères grecs*, 207-38.

75 Ravaissou, *Le monument de Myrrhine*, p.3.

of potentially misleading simplification, and according to an equally misleading all too 'material' conception of the future life barely distinguishing it from this one – gracious greetings in another world. If we recognise, Ravaisson argues, that the classical Greeks, from the beginning, and like the peoples with which they were in relation, did indeed have a conception of a future life, we will be more able to recognise joyful, Elysian greetings in these scenes. Ravaisson believes that he can announce “without any temerity that soon the views I had to combat will have hardly any adherents”, but contemporary scholarship tends to explain the scenes as representations of our material, human world, even when it is indeed a reunion scene that is represented. In the words of Alain Pasquier, a classical art historian who has occupied Ravaisson’s position at the Louvre, it approaches the question with more “prudence”, considers that there was probably an “evolution in the spirit of funerary bas-reliefs”, and is reluctant to reduce the interpretation of these scenes to a single “key”.⁷⁶ Ravaisson’s proposals are not without merit, but his philosophical commitments do not allow him to pay sufficient attention to an essential ambiguity in some of these scenes, an ambiguity also expressed in the Greek salutation *chaire*, used on both arrival and departure.

‘Mysteries’, Chapter VII of this volume, offers a study of Greek religion whose necessity Ravaisson had already announced in the second volume of his *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote*,⁷⁷ and presents more deliberately his view that “the system of ideas and practices that constituted the basis of both dogma and worship in paganism, in Judaism and then in Christianity, and then everywhere else, is something universal and eternal.” The Eleusinian mysteries, he argues, were “a great concert of admiration and recognition”, whose ultimate purpose was to achieve a “union, whose image was conjugal partnership, with eternal beauty”; and the “supreme realisation” of these ideas is later “announced by Christianity in the coming reign of pure Spirit”. This approach could easily be taken to express an unremarkable Christian apologetics, yet Ravaisson’s Christianity is hardly orthodox: the “Gospels allow us to glimpse through certain veils, but to glimpse nevertheless, an intimate union with the divine essence as the consummation of religion, and it is in this that a dream of both paganism and Judaism, opposed in so many other respects, will be realised”. The Gospels, therefore, are still the inchoate expression of a

76 See Dominique Janicaud, ‘Entretien avec Alain Pasquier’ in Ravaisson, *L’Art et les mystères grecs*, 241-6, p.243.

77 See *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote*, II, p.350.

spiritual truth towards which paganism and Judaism already yearned, a truth which will be realised, Ravaisson suggests here, only in the middle-ages. Moreover, if the Christian message is new, Jesus Christ is the “new Prometheus and the new Orpheus”, as Ravaisson will write in ‘Philosophical Testament’, and he is “in agreement with Hellenism”.⁷⁸ Ravaisson’s views on the continuities or discontinuities between the Greek and Christian worlds depend on whether he writes of Greek art and religion or its philosophy: Venus may well reappear in Christianity, but the pinnacle of Greek philosophy, as he writes in a fragment of the unfinished third volume of his *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote*, “remained, amidst a religious world and the doctrine of nature, as a promise that could not be realised. It is in another world, and in another doctrine that that it would gain its realisation, in the world and the doctrine of Spirit”.⁷⁹ Aristotle’s idea of a lofty, immovable divinity had to be developed, within another horizon, in terms of a divine principle of love, self-abandon and ‘condescendence’.

Ravaisson had not, then, come to focus on erudite researches in archaeology and the history of religions at the expense of his philosophical work. On the contrary, the thematic unity underlying Ravaisson’s diverse professional and intellectual activities as archivist, historian, pedagogue, curator and philosopher is as remarkable as the continuity in the development of his thinking as a whole. It is not necessary to delve too deeply below the surface to divine the *serpeggiamento* uniting Ravaisson’s work.⁸⁰ It is through the “philosophical paleontology”⁸¹ in his archaeological researches that Ravaisson pursues his original Aristotle project, and that he is led to the philosophy of revelation – which is clearly indebted to Schelling’s philosophy of revelation that Ravaisson had studied closely⁸² – of his later essays.

78 The final citation is from a fragment published by Dominique Janicaud in *Ravaisson et la métaphysique*, p.262.

79 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote: Fragments du Tome III (Héllénisme-Judaïsme-Christianisme)*, ed. Devivaise, p.54.

80 See, again, Viola, ‘The Serpentine Life of Félix Ravaisson’.

81 Ravaisson, ‘Discours pour la séance publique annuelle de l’Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques’, 5 December, 1896.

82 See J.-F. Courtine, ‘Les relations de Ravaisson et de Schelling’.

The first of these essays is the 1887 'Pascal's Philosophy', Chapter IX of this volume. Pascal, Ravaillon proclaims, is a philosopher, and not merely a combination of scientist and Christian apologist, who provides, if not a complete system, then at least the "principles of a veritable philosophy" that allows for its harmonisation and unification with Christianity. The most fundamental of these philosophical principles is the distinction that Ravaillon had already invoked in his reflection on drawing, namely that between *l'esprit de géométrie* and *l'esprit de finesse*, translated here as 'geometric mind' and 'intuitive mind'. Pascal shows that: "the sciences generally depend on nothing other than geometric mind, whereas the arts [...] depend on intuitive mind; that to deal geometrically with art and morality, in the same way as the sciences, is to pervert them; that intuitive mind is, in opposition to reasoning or deductive mind, a faculty of immediate appreciation to which the name of judgment is particularly fitting". This is not to say that Pascal adequately reflected on art and aesthetic experience, for "if he had, he would have noticed that one of its essential characteristics is the infinite capacity to undulate in every direction without effort, and to be shaped in myriad ways by the folds and unfolds offered by the sinuosity of living things (*serpeggiamento*)". On this lack, Ravaillon is acutely critical elsewhere: Pascal "dives into an abyss without having aesthetics for a guide. He lacked Music and Painting. Orpheus, Leonardo, Corregio, Mozart; he remains a Jansenist, an iconoclast holding grace, women and children in contempt".⁸³ Nevertheless, the metaphysical secret that Pascal cannot grasp aesthetically, he grasps religiously. His development of the idea of intuitive mind in terms of 'the heart', the organ of knowledge of "first principles", departs from the voluntarism conditioning Descartes' philosophy, according to which the understanding is subordinate to the will. The heart teaches us first principles, but it also leads us to the First Principle: "what is in itself this centre to which the heart teaches us to relate everything, this extremity towards which everything that belongs to intuitive mind, to feeling, to judgment tends, whether it is near or far? A higher will with which it is our destiny to be reunited." Pascal's doctrine of the heart, Ravaillon argues, allows for a continuity between metaphysical knowledge and revelation - they approach each other, Ravaillon now holds, "by degrees to the point where they come at least to unite and

83 Ravaillon, fragment in Janicaud, *Ravaillon et la métaphysique*, p.237. See also Claire Marin, 'Introduction' in Ravaillon, *La philosophie de Pascal* (Paris: Sandre, 2007).

interpenetrate”⁸⁴ – and leads to the summit of the Christian spiritual and ethical ideal, namely charity and self-renunciation.

In 1893 the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* was founded by a group of young philosophers – principally Xavier Léon, Daniel Halévy, and Léon Brunschvicg – with the aim of defending ‘philosophy properly speaking’ against scientism and Comte’s Positivism, together with the forms of mysticism that had risen as a reaction to them.⁸⁵ For the inaugural issue, the eighty-year-old Ravaisson was chosen to contribute the lead article, which he entitled ‘Metaphysics and Morals’, and which offers, once again, something of a manifesto for a philosophical movement, but one that is now active in “many minds”, and no longer merely a possibility. After characterising Comte’s Positivism – and also, much more questionably, Kant’s Criticism, which Ravaisson takes to result in little more than scepticism⁸⁶ – as insufficient for the demands of the understanding” as well as for the “demands of the heart”, Ravaisson sketches an anti-Positivist philosophy of history: rather than religion giving way to metaphysics, and metaphysics in turn to positive science, “the instinctive perceptions of the early period (as Vico had said) return to be confirmed by the meditations of the most profound thinkers”. Philosophy, in other words, grasps genuine positivity not by eliminating religion and metaphysics, but by synthesising them. The account of the history of philosophy that subtends this philosophy of history also consists of three essential moments: Aristotle grasps, beneath Platonic idealising abstractions, the positivity or actuality of being; Descartes shows how this principle of activity and actuality is to be grasped in the mind itself, ultimately as will; Pascal leads us to grasp, beneath the will, the heart. This history of modern philosophy is strictly *franco-français*,⁸⁷ but, for Ravaisson, in the heart is revealed the highest being, not simply as the pure actuality of thought, but as a principle of ‘condescending’, loving creativity: “[i]n everything, first of all the

84 Ravaisson, *Essai sur la Métaphysique d’Aristote: Fragments du Tome III*, p.38.

85 See Stephan Soulié, ‘La Belle époque de la *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*: horizon académique et tentation du politique (1891-1914)’, *Le Temps des médias* 2008/2 (n° 11), pp.198-210.

86 On Ravaisson’s reading of Kant as sceptic, see Andreas Bellantone, ‘Ravaisson: Le Champ Abandonné de la Métaphysique’, *Cahiers philosophiques* 129/2, 5-21. It should not be forgotten, however, that ‘Of Habit’ (Part II, Section I) – in a rather difficult manner – attempts to incorporate the findings of Kant’s ‘transcendental aesthetic’.

perfect, the absolute, the good, that which owes its being only to itself; next there is what results from its generous condescendence, and which, by virtue of what the absolute has left behind gradually climbs back up to it". This is not simply a Plotinian idea of divine emanation, and if it can be described as a form of kenosis, it is necessary to distinguish, following Denise Leduc-Fayette, an ontological from a historical kenosis in Ravaisson's onto-theology, even though the two are inseparable:⁸⁸ things are given by a principle that "gives to the point of offering itself up", but such a gift allows for a return of the created, in time – through nature, humanity and history and divine condescendence – to the primal source. As 'Pascal's Philosophy' puts it: "Humanity having fallen, because it has detached itself from its own principle, it is necessary, in order to raise it up, that this principle itself descend into it; it is necessary that the principle lower itself into this region where humanity has let itself fall, that it make itself a mediator, so to speak, and that it bring humanity back, reborn, to the extremity of perfection for which it was made. This is what is called incarnation and redemption".

When Ravaisson died in 1900, he left notes for a substantial work on his desk. Xavier Léon collated and published them as 'Testament Philosophique' – this was the title that Ravaisson gave the work in conversation during the last years of his life – in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1901, and a second, expanded edition, translated as the final chapter of the present volume, was produced by Charles Devivaise in 1933. This 'Philosophical Testament' presents Ravaisson's attempt to draw together a metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics as a philosophy of love. Although it is constituted from fragments, the "organic architecture"⁸⁹ of Ravaisson's thinking in the

87 Should we "perhaps add Leibniz, with his monadology" to this list, as Bellantone suggests ('Ravaisson: Le Champ Abandonné de la Métaphysique', p.19)? Ravaisson states why he did not, despite all that he borrows from Leibniz, in the very same essay: "It is perhaps due to not having as profound an awareness of what is special and superior in the order of thought that Leibniz attempted, vainly, to replace with his pre-established harmony between the body and the mind their real union, and to explain the free decisions of the will by a preponderance of motives which transports to the spiritual sphere a mechanism of the corporeal world that is itself more apparent than real."

88 Denise Leduc-Fayette, 'La Métaphysique de Ravaisson et le Christ' in *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 1984/4, pp.511-27.

89 Claire Marin, 'Introduction' in Ravaisson, *Testament Philosophique* (Paris: Allia, 2008), p.7.

intertwining of its three key themes or streams, is evident. The metaphysics opposes the “nihilism” of those who “finding no force and no greatness within themselves, see also outside of them only weakness and smallness”, and “have no difficulty admitting that everything was formed from nothing”. Everything, on the contrary, begins from a principle of liberality, and the organic world is witness to this: the living being tends towards its goal, as even Claude Bernard had recognised after attempting to reduce life to the laws of physics and chemistry, but this is not a drive towards a conceptual aim. Instead, it is a kind of “thought without reflection”, an instinct, desire or tendency that, as Ravaisson had shown over half a century earlier, is instantiated in our habits. This approach serves to account for the development of particular beings, certainly, but also for the “successive production of different species”. In evolution, “[t]he creative principle, with the lines through which it is embodied, spreads out, like a spring that pours out into every part of the whole, and transforms itself there so as to be reborn even more worthy of admiration and love”. Living nature – an *élan vital*, as Bergson will say – advances not by a process of synthesis or association, but by dissociation, and in the process of spiritual “creative ascent”, “nature ... would be the history of the soul, a history continued and realised by humanity and its art”. It is, however, the loving principle of creativity in nature that is the principal object of creativity in art. More than simply the beauty or even the grace in its model, art can divine love: “a beautiful model ... is one where the whole and the parts seem permeated by a reciprocal love, and is all the more beautiful as their union appears more spontaneous.” This, Ravaisson claims, is what “Schelling must have wanted to explain when he said that beautiful things are those ... in which everything seems to love”. Harmony in the work of art, in other words, is an expression of a secret, metaphysical principle of love, and it is the same principle, Ravaisson argues, that should regulate ethics and morality as the art of life. This is not just a matter of loving thy neighbour as thyself, but rather of generosity and heroic love “to the point of an entire immolation of the self.” Ravaisson’s ultimate aim is to make minds more “penetrable by and to each other, open also to each other, quite the opposite to the separatism of the present time”, but this is not by providing a “new theory for the understanding”, but rather by convincing and changing our sensibility with “the contagious force of reality and life”.

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For philosophers at least, it is regrettable that Ravaisson, occupied by other interests and duties, did not complete his Testament, and that his

spiritualist manifestos did not, after his philosophical renaissance in the 1860s, lead to more concerted works in metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics. It is undeniable that even the sense of 'spirit' in the work of this 'spiritualist' philosopher remains in many respects indeterminate, for us to determine, and that Ravaisson could have addressed more directly the fundamental tensions in his philosophy of spirit as actuality and, at the same time, as 'something' actual. In the end, it was more of an impulse than a doctrine that he transmitted to twentieth-century French philosophy, an impulse manifest not only in Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*,⁹⁰ but also in the work of later phenomenologists such as Paul Ricoeur, whose *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*⁹¹ returns to 'Of Habit', and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who addresses the idea of the 'serpentine line' in *Eye and Mind*.⁹² Even on the other side of the Rhine, this impulse did not pass unnoticed, since Ravaisson's significance was highlighted by Martin Heidegger, who must have seen in him a philosopher revitalising the question of being, a philosopher whose spiritualist reading of the *Metaphysics*, according to which being as spirit is the highest being, brings to the fore the problem of the 'onto-theological constitution of metaphysics'.⁹³

This selection of Ravaisson's essays contains all of his shorter works in philosophy with the exception of his secondary doctoral thesis on Speusippus. That this text was translated for the first time into French only in 2012 speaks, indeed, of its secondary status; that it is not included in the present volume also speaks of my linguistic abilities. The late Dominique Janicaud's collection of Ravaisson's work

90 *L'Évolution créatrice* and *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, *Œuvres* (Paris: PUF, 1959); *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911) and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, translated by R. Ashley Audra and C. Brereton (University of Notre Dame Press: 1977).

91 Paul Ricoeur, *Le Volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1950); *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. E. Kohák (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

92 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964); 'Eye and Mind' in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* ed. G. A. Johnson, trans. M. B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern, 1993), 121-150.

93 See, in this connection, Daniel Panis, 'Le mot "être" dans "De L'habitude"', *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 1993/1, 61-64.

on art and religion – *L'Art et les mystères grecs* (Paris: L'Herne, 1985) – partially guided the present selection, but I added to it the key 1882 dictionary entry 'On the Teaching of Drawing', and omitted 'Le monument de Myrrhine', since it covers the same ground as 'Greek Funerary Monuments'. A full bibliography of Ravaisson's published work, which comprises over eighty items, can be found at the end of Joseph Dopp's *Félix Ravaisson: la formation de sa pensée d'après des documents inédits* (Louvain: Editions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1933).

It was not possible to present a critical edition of the essays selected, since the apparatus required could not be contained with the essays in a single volume. Besides, it would be odd to attempt such a project in English when no such edition yet exists in French. The translators have, however, occasionally supplied translations of the passages of Greek and Latin in the body of the text that are unaccompanied by an interpretative paraphrase. Either in the body of the text or in footnotes, these translations of Greek and Latin appear in square brackets. Occasional explanatory notes on the part of the translators are also presented in square brackets, and when they derive from the work of Janicaud, they are preceded by his name. The translations have been standardised across the volume, but it should be noted that in this volume of French 'spiritualism' there is no consistent rendition of *l'âme* or *l'esprit* – these are rendered variably as soul, spirit or mind depending on the context and even the mood of the translator.

My thanks are due to Frank Chouraqui, Tullio Viola, Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Jeremy Dunham, Christophe Perrin, Christophe Satoor, Eugenio Mozzarelli, Christopher Paone and Kevin Temple for their generous and insightful comments on a first draft of this introduction. I am also indebted to John Sellars for his patient advice concerning Ravaisson's classical scholarship in 'Essay on Stoicism'; to my departmental colleague Jason Crowley for advice on Greek funerary 'departure scenes'; to Matthew Barnard and Caroline Baylis-Green for occasional lexical inspiration; and to Liza Thompson and Frankie Mace at Bloomsbury for accepting my proposal for the volume and for their care in its production.

M.W.S.

Note on the Texts

'Of Habit' was first published as *De l'habitude* in Paris by H. Fournier in 1838. The translation here is modified, by Mark Sinclair, from his 2008 (London: Continuum) translation with Clare Carlisle.

'Contemporary Philosophy', translated by Jeremy Dunham, was originally published as 'Philosophie Contemporaine: *Fragmens de Philosophie* par M. Hamilton' in *La Revue des deux mondes* 1840, pp.397-427.

'Essay on Stoicism', translated by Adi Eyal and Mark Sinclair, was first published as *Mémoire sur le Stoïcisme, Mémoires de l'Institut Impériale de France, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, vol. XXI, 1857, pp.1-94.

'The Art of Drawing according to Leonardo da Vinci' is a translation, by Mark Sinclair, of the first, untitled main section of 'Rapport adressé à M. le ministre de l'Instruction publique et des cultes', December 28, 1853, published in 1854 as *De l'enseignement du dessin dans les lycées* (Paris: Dupont).

'On the Teaching of Drawing', translated by Tullio Viola and Mark Sinclair, was originally published under the heading 'L'enseignement du dessin d'après M. F. Ravaissou' within the entry 'Dessin' of F. Buisson (ed.), *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire* Vol. 1 (Paris: Hachette), pp.671-84, in 1882.

'The Venus de Milo', translated by Mark Sinclair, is the third section, pp.188-256, of the *La Venus de Milo* in *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1892, vol. XXXIV, Part I, pp.145-256, which was also published as an off-print by Klincksieck, Paris, in the same year.

'Greek Funerary Monuments', translated by Mark Sinclair, was originally published as 'Les monuments funéraires des Grecs' in *Revue politique et littéraire. Revue bleue*, April 10, 1880, vol. XVIII, pp.963-970.

'Mysteries: Fragment of a Study of the History of Religions', translated by Mark Sinclair, was originally published as 'Les mystères. Fragment d'une étude sur l'histoire des religions' in *Revue politique et littéraire, Revue bleue*, 19 March 1892, pp.362-6, and appeared as an off-print (Paris: Picard) the same year.

'Pascal's Philosophy', translated by Mark Sinclair, was published as 'La philosophie de Pascal' in *La Revue des deux mondes* 80, 1887, pp.399-428.

'Metaphysics and Morals', originally published as 'Métaphysique et Morale' and translated by Mark Sinclair, was the lead essay in the inaugural issue of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1893, pp.6-25.

'Philosophical Testament', translated by Jeremy Dunham and Mark Sinclair, was first edited and published by Xavier Léon in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 9/1 (1901), pp.1-31, and a second, expanded edition of the text, which is reproduced here, appeared thanks to Charles Devivaise in 1933 (Paris: Boivin).

Note on the Translators

Jeremy Dunham is a Leverhulme Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield Philosophy Department. He has written several articles on nineteenth-century French philosophy, including 'From Habit to Monads: Félix Ravaisson's Theory of Substance' and 'Idealism, Pragmatism, and the Will to Believe: William James and Charles Renouvier', both in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*. He is currently working on the importance of basement level cognitive processes (habits, instincts, etc.) for perception, thought, and reasoning in pragmatist and idealist philosophy.

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