

June 25

It is Sunday morning. The most **beautiful** Sunday, with a capital S. Gaya was not at breakfast, and I decided not to look for her and to walk by myself. I am glad I did, because it was a wonderful experience. I said in the beginning of this book that I am writing it for my friends, at least the top part, the one I am writing now. So I will take the liberty of giving you a few paragraphs of description; Just a description of my morning walk. There is no punch line. If you think you are not up to a banal description of nature, skip a few paragraphs. (I don't know how many yet, as I have not yet written it).

It was a late night yesterday for the whole small population of Edam, because of the 'Bullshit Blues Band', which played until one in the morning in the main village square. It felt as if everyone was still sleeping, although it was already close to ten in the morning. It was **completely** quiet; Except for birds, of course. I walked out of *De Fortuna* and headed towards the village square, where the concert took place last night (maybe I'll tell you about the concert later). I walked slowly, breathing the cool air, that hadn't had a chance to warm up yet by the beautiful morning sun. After less than ten minutes of walking I spotted a bench that was facing a wide canal and shaded by large oak trees. I set down, paying attention. I watched sparrows, doves and ducks. A sparrow was busy looking for food. It was very close to me; I sat completely motionless. I watched its eyes as it was closely examining the ground it was hopping on. I wondered how it decides what is edible and what is not. All the tiny crumbs on the ground looked the same to me. But still, the sparrow could tell. It never hesitated for a second before taking this bit and not that. Then it began to nibble at some short wild grass that was growing on the ground. It was funny - it didn't look like a **bird** at all, nibbling at the grass. More like a sheep or a goat. I remembered how I fed a few sparrows with a biscuit the other day, when I was having coffee at the cafe. The sparrows knew **very well** that they liked the biscuit. They were around me as soon as I took it in my hand. How can they tell? By its shape? Maybe its smell? I don't remember having read anything about this. Amazing.

° Bergson made the following observations about humor (He discusses **laughter**, but means **comedy**, or **humor** in general): (1) It is **human** - An exclusively human phenomenon; (2) It is alien to **emotion**: Where deep emotion is involved, there is no humor. Humor lies in the domain of **reason**, not feelings. (I would here substitute 'reason' with 'logic'). (3) It is **social**. It happens in **public**, when at least two people are involved. Bergson emphasizes that humor is often associated with the **mechanical**, or automatic, where conscious **choice** is in order. Bergson maintains that whereas social life is demanding, requires attention and **care** (a notion Heidegger will later develop as central in his thought), the **disregard** for this requirement prompts laughter, whenever this disregard is not grave enough to invoke humor's foe, emotions. Social life requires **flexibility**, and the **lack** of it is funny. He takes laughter to be a sort of mild 'punishment' for not completely adhering to society's rules. In his words "*The comic appears just when society, or an individual, are freed from the care for their self preservation and start to view themselves as works of art*". **Stiffness** is comic, and **laughter** is its penalty. Physical deformations are sometimes funny because they manifest a kind of 'stiffness'. Caricatures are funny because they enhance certain features, 'freezes' them, in a manner untypical to an inherently **changing** subject: A human being. Impersonating someone is nothing but mimicking the **automate** that characterizes his personality; Something that has become **fixed** in him, rigid, like an **object**, not a person. An extremely close resemblance between two people is humorous because it portrays people as if they were duplicable **things**.

A duck family was having a morning nap on the canal. A green necked male, its spouse, and the slightly smaller (teen-age?) gray ones. They were just **sitting** on the water, slightly drifting in the weak current. One had its head under its wing, sleeping. The other was cleaning its feathers, and the other two just sat still. I kept hearing flapping noises above me. I looked up and saw a dove fighting with a twig. The twig was still connected to the tree, and the dove was trying to disconnect it, break it, so it can be used as building material. She couldn't break the twig, and kept switching positions to get a better grip. It was difficult, because she had no place to maneuver, as there were branches all around her; there was no room to fly. That was the source of the flapping noises I heard: She was flapping her wings, trying to keep her balance on the thin branch she was standing on. She seemed to give up on the twig she was after, and turned around to look for another candidate. She approached several, but seemed not to like them. She turned around again, returning to the one she was originally after, and in one decisive pull, managed to break it. She seemed proud of herself. She improved the grip her beak had on the twig, which was unusually long. I wondered how she will manage to fly out of the bush without losing the long twig, but she did. I followed her flight to see where was the nest she was building. It was on the same tree, about ten meters higher.

I heard duck voices. I saw two of them swimming towards the bend of the canal, out of my sight. Then the dove returned. This time she was searching on the ground, where the sparrow was a few minutes ago. She was a beautiful creature; Green, brown, gray and white. She had four parallel dark stripes painted diagonally on her neck, on both sides. Animals must have an aesthetic perception. There is no other explanation to the colorful beauty so many animals exhibit. Their courtship behavior practically proves that they do. The dove was examining a twig she found on the ground. It was much shorter than the one she got before, but otherwise looked the same. She weighed it in its beak for a few seconds, then dropped it. No good. Why? She searched the ground a few moments longer, then decided to go for a near by tree. Another dove spotted her and joined her on the tree. Now she has company. On the canal I saw why the two ducks swam towards the bend: They were welcoming a group of six or seven other ducks, that were on a Sunday morning swim. The two groups merged, forming a flock of ten or eleven all together. I kept watching them. They must have quite an enjoyable life here in the canals of Edam:

° Bergson considers any form of **disguise** to be comic. Not only disguised people, but even displaced objects, such as plastic flowers in a real garden. He observes that category mistakes are funny, also in the opposite direction: By attributing human properties to still nature, such as lady that was invited by a famous astronomer to watch an eclipse, but arrived late. She said: "Would you please start over for me?" The conventions and ceremonies prevailing in society are therefore a fertile source for humor. A central motive in Bergson's conception of humor is the **automatization** where it does not belong; Undue rigidity. This principle is clearly manifested when too much attention is directed to a person's physical body, rather than to his personality: When a person is treated (or treats himself) as if it was **his body** that is actually **him**, the situation is funny. **Sitting**, for example, maintains Bergson, is much more comic than **standing**, because it is **physically** more convenient; Actors in tragedies hardly ever **sit**. Actors in comedies sit much more frequently (or lie down). "*Comic is every system of actions and events, that provides an illusion of life combined with a feeling of mechanical order.*"

No predators, plenty of food... Then I remembered the invalid duck from last week, and thought to myself that they must have their duck-problems.

A minute later the morning-swimmers were back on their way. They continued their journey, A big green-necked duck leading the way. The family of four resumed its morning nap. It looked exactly as if the group came for a Sunday morning visit, stayed a few minutes, and then went on, maybe to visit other families along their course. I thought of Gaya. She claims that it is **me** that is the source of... No, just **it is me**. It is **not I**, one thing, sitting and watching **it**, another thing. It is **I**, enjoying **myself** (or my world, which is the same thing). Well, let it be me; I am proud of my world. I was concentrating on the feeling of **oneness**, when I remembered a short piece of the video movie from my daughter's 12th birthday party. We had a *Tarot* card reader, a young woman, as part of the entertainment. She was reading cards for the guests. She also did Maya (the birthday girl), and the cameraman got it on the tape. I was not present when it happened, but I saw the video several times. She said to Maya: (I almost remember the exact words): "*This card means that you are in control of your **reality**. You have the power of **weaving** for yourself any reality that you wish...*" I often wondered about her use of the word **reality**. I suddenly understood what this young woman was saying to Maya, as I never did before.

° A frequent manifestation of this mechanicality is the motive of **repetition**, so frequently used in comedies. Repetition is something **non-human**. When a person constantly repeats himself, he is like a machine. He is funny. Bergson's equation is: 'Put the mechanical into the **living**, and you get **humor**'. The source of **seriousness** in life is our **freedom of choice** - our capacity (and duty) to exercise care. The humor in life emerges whenever this freedom of choice is replaced by some mechanical principle. Bergson rejects Herbert Spencer's explanation for laughter: "*An effort that was suddenly faced with a void*", or Kant's similar claim: "*Laughter comes from an expectation that suddenly evaporates*". He claims that the reverse is also often comic: Small things that got 'inflated': An insignificant event that grew out of proportion. Laughter, maintains Bergson, is a 'diversion from life' (I would add '**real** life'). A human imitation of the lifeless. Bergson noticed that humor is often associated with the intersection of two seemingly unrelated series of events, especially common in situation comedies. Another aspect of the same principle is the construction of a comic phrase by introducing an **alien**, sometimes absurd idea into a well known figure of speech, which is also a kind of 'category mistake'. Bergson provides no explanation to this principle in terms of "the living vs. the mechanical". *Don Quixote* is, for Bergson, a paradigmatic example: His severe categorical mix-up between objects (windmills) and people (fierce knights).

Towards the end of his short book, Bergson summarizes: Human conceptualization is **teleological**. We make our **distinctions** in accord with our **goals**, of what we **need**. Humor is a deviation from this tendency. In the third and final section he offers a brilliant account of **art** as a manifestation of personal originality and individuality, as completely **non** teleological. **Humor**, he maintains, lies on the border zone between art and science; between the 'real' (social!) world and the individual; It is a **diversion** from the moral to the scientific. It is a special case of an individual's failure to adjust to society.

Laughter is one of Bergson's early publications, but his metaphysical views and ideas are already clearly visible; Particularly the emphasis he puts on the flow of **life**, the **human**, on the constantly **changing** nature of human existence. Bergson operated before the dawn of the linguistic turn, and puts no emphasis on the relationship between 'language' and 'reality', which to **us** seems extremely relevant when considering humor as a social phenomenon. But his Idealism and (future) mysticism are already there. It is only a pity, that a book about **laughter** should be as **un-funny** as this one.

I got off the bench and resumed my walk. I am telling you all this because I feel it is important. It is a genuine description of my state of mind; The most direct, non-filtered account possible. The whole purpose of this book is to tell a few people what I think about some important issues, and what I am describing is inseparable from what I have to tell. The content feeling, the beauty around me, seemed to me a direct consequence from a new **attitude**. So, in a way, I am describing the **reward** for adopting such an attitude. I walked the quiet streets. In the distance I could hear the church choir, accompanied by an organ. Ten o'clock service. I decided to get closer to the church. The singing was beautiful. Behind me I heard a child screaming. It was a scream of joy and excitement. I looked back, and saw two bicycle riders, a husband and wife, each with a small child as a passenger: The woman with a little girl, the man with a little boy. The kids were screaming in excitement. They were American. The boy shouted: Faster! Faster! The bicycle ride must have been a new experience to them. They looked to me like a family of ducks in a morning swim. I sat on the church stairs, outside, listening to the music. For a moment I thought of going in, but it seemed too much of a commitment. They might be offended if I walk out in the middle. And the music was audible from here. I saw a Sunday painter stand nearby, painting the view. Maybe he picked this spot because of the singing; I wonder how he will show it in his painting...

This is the place to return to if you skipped the last few paragraphs of emotional babble. When I returned to *De Fortuna* Gaya was having her morning coffee. I said: "It is a wonderful morning." "Good morning" she said; "Did you have a **nice** walk?" I didn't know if she was insinuating anything, so I said: "Wonderful. You want to go again?" "No." she replied; "You know, I was thinking: Yesterday I spoke to you about the clown. I later realized that I am quite ignorant about the subject of **humor**."⁷¹ When I spoke about the clown, I was talking more about **having fun**, than about **being funny**. There is a difference; probably an important difference. But somehow it escaped me. I am quite

⁷¹ I tend to agree with much that Bergson had to say about humor. I agree that it is **social**, that it involves **category mistakes**, often between the category 'living' and the category 'mechanical', which are (usually) mutually exclusive. I also agree that it is often a question of undue **rigidness**, and that it excludes (and is excluded by) strong **emotions**. What I find that is **missing** from Bergson's account is something that could hardly be expected to be found there, and which is the general **arena** of this thesis: The philosophy of language. More particularly, the connections between **language** and **humor**. This connection **must** be significant, because of Bergson's first three observations: That it is **human, social** and **logical**. What other philosophical topic qualifies here more than **language**?

Humor is a phenomenon of **language**. Where there is language, there must be humor. Where there is humor, there must be language. Language is the **place** where humor **occurs**, or, rather, **is perceived**. The latter claim is trivial: Without language, nothing **much** can happen, let alone said (or laughed about). But the first claim is stronger. It means, that humor, as a phenomenon, is a **necessary consequence** of language. The justification of this claim will be outlined in the next three footnotes. As speakers S1 and S2 have demonstrated, lingual communication (a bit redundant, whereas every communication is 'lingual') requires the constitution of an objective subdomain; An objective world, **about which** the speakers converse. It is a **condition** for meaningful communication (the 'meaning' in 'meaningful' is provided by that very objective subdomain). Moreover: Every particular conversation presupposes a **particular** subdomain for the specific conversation. E.g., when a **joke** is told, the necessary background information is provided as a part of the joke, to act as the **context** of the joke; supplying the **presuppositions** required to understand it.

familiar with the western way of thinking, but every once in a while my eastern upbringing surfaces. In the east, **humor** is not **nearly** as significant as in the west. Buddha is not laughing. It is just **smiling**.” I never knew that. “Really?” “I think so” she replied. “I’m no expert, as I just said; But I suspect humor is **very** western. Can you think of **humor** anywhere in history **before** Greek comedies?” Well, I am no expert either. Definitely not in history. “You mean to say that humor is the product of an objectivist perception? If so, it is a strong point in favor of objectivism!” Gaya agreed: “Indeed. But how many times do I have to tell you: there is no **quarrel** between the two paradigms. I am only preaching against the **exclusivity** of either! Don’t be so fanatic!” I wasn’t fanatic. I said: “I’m not. Maybe I’m behaving a little like someone recently converted: ‘Holier than the Pope’ so to speak”. Gaya was back to humor: “Yes. This is what I mean. I am not **stating** it. I am suggesting it. Let me tell you why: First of all, I cannot think of humor before the Greek⁷²: There is none in the bible, is there?” I searched my mind from when I

⁷² The Greek were the first **pluralists**: The first to recognize that there are many possible ‘right’ contexts. This is what **sophism**¹⁰⁹ was preaching: We have **our** reality, **our** way of thinking, but others are possible; even **legitimate**. Greek culture was the first to recognize the possible coexistence of different cultures. Before that, it was just a question of ‘defeating the barbarians’, as the Bible so clearly manifests.

The constitution of a **conventional** shared context is required for meaningful communication. But the Greek were the first to recognize that this context is not *Physis*, but *Nomos*: It is constituted by **people**, not some divine force or rule of nature. That is when **comedy** emerged, mostly based on **mistakes** people made in interpreting, or understanding, this *Nomos* - ‘the **rules**’. Breaking rules that are generally agreed and provide the basis for mutual understanding is absurd, funny. Provided, of course, nobody gets hurt. If someone ignores it to the extent of causing damage, society protects itself. But in case no such danger exists, it invokes **laughter**: At the one that is unaware of the (evident) rules; the evident **structure of** (social) **reality**. And sometimes not even **social** reality, just plain reality.

It is the essence of language to **denote**: To be **about** the (objects in the) domain, the shared context. Every time it seems that this is **not** the case, every time some speaker makes a **mistake** (often considered a ‘category mistake’), and his words seem to ‘refer wrongly’, it prompts laughter. Even when no **words** are uttered. When a clown tries to hang his coat on thin air, his behavior is in the domain of language, in the broad sense of the word. It is as if the clown says: ‘I want to hang this coat on **this** hanger’, when there is no hanger! Or, ‘I expect the coat to remain suspended in the air’, when “the air” is not something that can support a coat. The clown manifests a significant **misunderstanding** as to the nature of things, the **real** structure of the **real** world. It is the very same reason why kids consider insane people **funny**. Humor always involves a misconception as to the **real** (evident, presupposed) state of affairs.

Humor is found in **situations**. Situations are always a lingual interpretation of some state of affairs. A **wrong** interpretation, when it is **harmless**, invokes laughter; Maybe a laugh of **relief**, for no damage was caused as a result of the unfortunate instance of **misinterpreting reality**. A ‘correct’ picture of the world is essential for survival; Particularly essential for **society**. Failure to comply, to properly understand reality, is either **punishable**, or **funny**. In this I share Bergson’s view, that laughter (particularly ridicule) is a sort of ‘mild punishment’ for not properly grasping reality, not completely adhering to the publicly agreed upon nature of things (or laws, or public **context**).

In a manner of speaking, **humor** is the thin film separating **epistemology** from **ontology**. If epistemology is taken as the (grasping of the) **picture** of ontology (what there **is**), Every instance perceived as doing it the **wrong** way is funny. The bigger the deviation from (what is considered) the **right** interpretation, the bigger the laugh; Unless there is **damage**. Humor emerges only when no damage is apparent (to the **laugher**, of course). In a way, it is a **substitute** for the **anger** society should feel when one of its members fails to adhere to its requirements regarding the (real) nature of objectivity. That is why mistakes in the (proper)

was God, and came up with one example: “Yes there is. You know how **Isaac** received his name? It is a derivative of the Hebrew word ‘to laugh’. Besides, the word would not have existed if there was no laughing. It is absurd to say that before Aristophanes people didn’t laugh.” Gaya wasn’t convinced: “Wait, wait. Don’t jump to conclusions. Don’t be so **dogmatic**. **What** was funny about Isaac?” Now I was the teacher. “That his mother should have a baby at ninety years of age.” Gaya seemed to have taken it personally. She couldn’t be **that** old; “What’s so funny about that? I’m **serious**: **Why** is it funny? **What exactly** is funny about it?” Now I saw what she was doing. She was examining the first recorded case of **humor** in human history... Or was it in **western** history? I replied: “Let’s see. It is **well known** that women of ninety have no kids.” Gaya pursued: “You mean like a **law of nature**? We’re talking about **God** here!” She had a point. I played along. “Sarah’s having a baby at ninety was a **freak**. Even if God himself made all the rules, they were still rules. God’s possible **deviation** from the rule, even if his own, seemed to her **funny**. This suggests the humor is somehow associated with **breaking a rule**.” Gaya nodded in agreement. “Fine. But, of course, not **every** instance of rule breaking is funny. What makes **this** instance of breaking a rule **funny**? Besides, **who** broke the rule, and **who** laughed?” Maybe she was on the right track. “Let me see: **He** (if you don’t mind me using the masculine) made the rule, **he** broke the rule, and **she** laughed. What do you make of that?” Gaya was thinking. I could **see** her thinking. I was fully aware of the significance of the event: This is the process by which she reaches her **conclusions**, her **truths**. Then she said: “No. I think this is a dead end. Breaking rules *per se* is not funny. Neither is breaking **one’s own** rules. Maybe along the lines of ‘laws of nature’, like you said before. Ignoring a ‘natural necessity’, an inevitability. God’s law can be perceived by Sarah as such. Suppose it has to do with ignoring an inevitable consequence, a necessity: Sarah was **doomed** in her childlessness. It was too late. If it just **happened**, it wouldn’t be funny. It would be a miracle, but nothing **funny** about it. What was funny to her, is the absurd **belief** that it was at all possible.” She was gaining confidence, and seemed to be thinking aloud: “Sarah, Abraham and God had a **shared context**. A certain agreed upon **structure** of reality, and the rules prevailing therein. All of a sudden one expresses a belief (even if it is God. He is extremely personified anyway): Reality **could**, or can, be different. Absurd. And funny. What do you think?” I tried to rephrase her idea: “You mean that the funny element is **breaking out of an agreed context**?” Gaya continued: “And there must be a kind of **blindness**, unawareness (to this context) which is involved: Someone is not **aware** of some fact regarding the **real** context on which the conversation is based... Wait, I think I got it. Look: Every conversation requires some agreed set of presuppositions. Right?” She didn’t wait for an answer. “This set is clear. Obvious. It is the context the whole **conversation** is based on in the first place. The conversers are **aware** of this fact. Then someone, either one of them, or someone **else**, says or does something which implies his **unawareness** to some important aspect of the context in question. This unawareness is **funny**.” She turned to me: “Can you think of a counter

employment of language itself are considered so funny. When a language is not well spoken (e.g. by a tourist or an immigrant) it is an endless source of laughter, because the incompetent speaker seems as if he has a completely confused objective subdomain: As if he has his **world** upside down: A strange, incoherent subdomain.

example?” I tried. I found it hard to recall any jokes. Anything funny. Maybe I developed **immunity**. Then I said: “Why are clowns funny?” Gaya had an answer: “Because they are **stupid**. They don’t understand the evident: That they cannot pick up the ball if they keep kicking it. **Cartoons** are funny for the same reason: You know that cartoon figures only fall when they **realize** that they are standing on thin air. Falling is perceived as **epistemic** rather than ‘natural’, which is a funny disregard for the way things **really** are.” I tried another direction: “Some cases of ignorance or unawareness can be **tragic** rather than **comic!**” Gaya nodded. “Good point. When does something stop being funny and becomes sad? When is it **overdone**? Sometimes it is not funny **in the first place**. I guess it depends on the **consequences**. If it is a hypothetical story, no one gets hurt. Even **death** or **torture** may be funny: Look at jokes taking place in **hell**. If a real person gets a creamy cake in his face, it **is** funny, because no **real** harm was done. You are right. Not getting the context may be a grave business sometimes. **But when it is not**, the reaction is laughter! ‘Breaking the rules’ is serious business. Society objects to it. So every instance of breaking the rules which does **not** have serious consequences, is funny! This is why extreme **fear**, if it proves **unjustified**, is followed by a burst of laughter! It is relieving, to find out that the proper context was missed, and **still** no harm was done. It’s like ‘getting off the hook’. Ignoring the rules without paying the price invokes laughter.” I was already quite convinced that laughter is in fact associated with ignoring or disregarding some important and obvious assumption. I said: “This explains why **category mistakes** are funny: Taking things out of their proper context. I remember the funniest **impression act** I ever saw: Two guys impersonating **vegetables**.⁷³ It was hilarious. The **ultimate** category mix-up. It also explains **wit**: The ambiguous use of words so they have a second ‘hidden’ meaning, **not** in the regular context of the discussion. Paraphrases are like that: The adoption of some quotation in a different sense than originally intended. Incidentally, why do **children** laugh more than adults?” Gaya offered an explanation: “Because they are just **forming** a shared world, putting together their version of **the** world. Things keep jumping in and out of it. Also, what is funny **changes**: What used to be funny fifty years ago may not be funny today: Either because the **world** changed, or because the joke became so well known, it became a part of it; or rather, of **language**. It is **always** just in language: It is a **product** of language, of the notion of ‘shared context’ which language **requires**. That’s why funny costumes are funny: They are displaced - ‘do not belong’ so to speak. Also, what is funny to one may not be funny to the other. They might have different notions about what the agreed context actually is. But if two people are close, know each other well, they are bound to laugh in the same places.

⁷³ Impersonation of vegetables is a good example of a category mix-up. Here the humor is particularly effective, because it comes in two layers: First, the very **idea** of impersonating a vegetable is funny, because it is usually **people** (and sometimes animals) who are impersonated, in the **real** ‘impersonation context’. If everybody starts impersonating fruits and vegetables as well as people, this (funny) aspect would disappear, whereas ‘impersonating vegetables’ will join the objective, public context (of impersonations). Secondly, there is the impersonation itself, as is the case of mimicking anything (or anyone): The impersonator is **not** the one he impersonates; he is somebody **else**. Still, it **seems** it is someone else: It is as if he is saying: “I am him!” When he clearly (really) is **not**. Therefore, the more he **resembles** the subject of impersonation, the funnier the situation.

Gaya had enough: “It’s not **so** important, is it? You don’t think we are **guinea pigs** of some extraterrestrial, do you?” “No” I replied. “But I have a personal interest: I seem to be losing my sense of humor. I used to be a great joke teller. Now I can hardly remember anything funny. I’m afraid I’m losing it.” Gaya laughed: “It is a well known fact: Solipsists don’t have a sense of humor!”⁷⁴ Then she smiled and said in a reassuring tone: “Don’t worry. If I am right, there is a perfectly logical explanation. You are now in the process of **destroying objectivity**. You reject **any** shared context. You are fighting the materialistic conventions, trying to prove them for what they are. For you **now**, nothing is inside the context. Nothing is **self evident**. Nothing is a **ground rule**. Except **God** and **contradiction**, maybe” she said with a smile. “Maybe I should think of a joke about contradiction. No, seriously. To find something funny, you must take **some** context for granted, without questioning its **reality**. But you can still **understand** jokes, right? If you are **provided** with a particular artificial story, just for the sake of the joke, you still find it funny, don’t you?” I agreed: “Yes. It’s just that lately I haven’t had many situations containing artificial contexts. I was too obsessed with finding out **the truth**.” Gaya knew exactly what I was talking about. “Yes. You are much too serious. Time to change that. I think it will change anyway. You cannot float in your metaphysics for the rest of your life. You are bound to resume your **human** activities some time soon.

I wasn’t **completely** satisfied. Not as I was when she taught me other things. But she said herself that she was not an expert. Maybe there will be a sequel. It was almost noon, and I said to Gaya: “I have to get on with my work. I am reading **Bergson**.” “Oh, another Frenchman!” she proclaimed; “I like him. He deserves more credit than he got. He had some **really** interesting things to say about **time**.”⁷⁵ “I’m more interested in what he had to say about humor” I replied. “It is your fault. You brought it up.” She persisted: “And now I am bringing up **time**. Just pay attention, if you read him anyway. He **always** says something about time. I believe this is his biggest contribution. If you want, we can talk

⁷⁴ Solipsists don’t laugh. They find nothing funny. For them, there **is** no objective subdomain: There is only **the** world, one world: Their own. Even if the figures appearing in it are acting strangely, it is, for them, just one of their own oddities. Nothing to laugh about. Nobody is mixing the language with the world. Only when the solipsists joins the (language) game, takes himself as a **player** in the game, not just as audience, he is able to laugh. To speak, he must use **language**, hence **some** objective subdomain; **some** context to speak about. And with this in place, there is already plenty to laugh about.

⁷⁵ The concept of **time** is central in Bergson’s philosophy. He distinguished between **objective** time, a scientific concept, and a **subjective** perception of time, *duree*, which is a *substratum*, a domain **within which** humans live and act. Time is the subject of Bergson’s first publication, *Time and free will*¹¹⁰. The scientific notion of time is **measurable**. It is an abstract, theoretical notion, posited by the intellect. It does not **exist**. Reality, on the other hand, is **made out of duree**; a flux of shifting experiences that **never** repeat, never re-occur. It is purely subjective, and cannot be shared. It is closely related to his notion of **freedom**, which is also completely subjective, personal, private: *duree* and freedom are not conceptualizable.

Free action, for Bergson, is the manifestation of **creation**. A person’s carrying out what he authentically **wants** is a pure act of divine creation, a product of the *elan vital*, the life force, that characterizes everything **alive**. Bergson regards Zeno’s paradoxes as products of attempts to conceptualize where conceptualization is not in order, but an **intuitive**, unintellectual perception.

about it tonight. Or tomorrow". I knew that it was inevitable. I **was** going to hear what she has to say about **time**. Not that I wasn't interested.

I decided to take another solitary walk after dinner. Maybe because the morning walk was so nice. Besides, I wanted to watch the sunset again. So I went to the church. It was getting cool, and there was a breeze. I had my coat, but I was still cold. I got to the church and sat on the bench. I was blinded by the sun, that was still about two inches above the horizon. I forgot my sunglasses. I was cold. This was no magical moment. I thought of Gaya: What would she have said? I knew her very well already. We haven't spoken **that** much, but in an hour or two a day for ten days you get to know someone. And besides, she was on my mind most of the day, which also makes a difference. She wasn't there, but I still received her advice: "So why are you sitting there if you don't like it? Go do something more pleasant!" I obeyed. I started to walk the streets aimlessly, without knowing when I'll make the next turn. I did right (needless to say), because walking was much better. First, I wasn't cold any more. In the inside streets there was no wind. Besides, it was interesting. I was nodding hello to several couples of locals whom I passed; The locals have this habit of waving to their neighbors and friends who are sitting at home, behind the large glass windows. The people inside are hardly visible from outside, because for some reason they like sitting in the dark; Sometimes with the television on, sometimes with a small reading lamp. Either they save electricity or they like privacy. (But then, why have the large glass windows?) I was walking close to the windows, peeking into every house. I let myself do that, because, after all, this is **my** world; remember? I don't think they minded. I was just as much a sight for them as they were for me. Maybe **that's** the reason for the large windows: Maybe they are curious: Maybe they want to know who is walking in their street? The houses were all **very** tidy. Everything in place; Many ornaments. Behind one of the windows I passed sat a middle aged women and practiced first-step piano pieces. Two cyclists passed me. They were riding their bikes at high speed. I knew the people: A couple of locals who ate at *De Fortuna* occasionally. Probably on their way to visit some friends. It's really convenient, this bicycle business: Gets you anywhere in two minutes, without the hassle of a car. Nice walk. Good thing I didn't insist on the sunset. Serves me right, trying to duplicate a magical moment. Can't be done.