THE RHYTHM OF PHILOSOPHY: INTUITION AND PHILOSOPHIC METHOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON

By

CAROLE TABOR FISHER

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Taylor University

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Thesis Approved:

Neil R. Luebke
Thesis Advisor

Robert L. Ledford

Edward S. Lawry

Norman N. Durham
Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

The writing of this thesis has been a tiring, enjoyable, frustrating and challenging experience. M. Bergson has introduced me to a whole new way of doing philosophy which has put vitality into the process. I have caught a Bergson bug. His vision of a collaboration of philosophers using his intuitional method to correct each others' work and patiently compile a body of philosophic knowledge is inspiring. I hope I have done him justice in my description of that vision. If I have succeeded and that vision catches your imagination I hope you will make the effort to apply it. Please let me know of your effort, your successes and your failures. With the current challenges to rationalist epistemology, I believe the time has come to give Bergson's method a try.

My discovery of Bergson is the culmination of a development of my thought, one that started long before I began my work at Oklahoma State. However, there are some people there who deserve special thanks for awakening me from my analytic slumber. Doren Recker showed me logic was a game -- an enjoyable game, but a game all the same -- and Ed Lawry opened my eyes to the sins of reason. For all his enthusiasm and the many book loans, I thank him.

My committee, Dr. Neil Luebke, Dr. Robert Radford and, again, Dr. Lawry were helpful with their comments and direction. I must also thank Dr. Richard Eggerman for his input on Kant. Special acknowledgement must be made to Dr. Pete Gunter, who consented to reading unfinished portions of this manuscript and provided me with copies of many of his articles on Bergson. His time and encouragement added depth to the final work. All of these gentlemen provided

sounding boards for my developing understanding of Bergson, but of course, if I have failed to understand him, the fault is mine, not theirs.

I am deeply grateful for the support of my family, who always believed I could see this project through to its end in the allotted time. Special thanks go to my two moms: to Mom Hoff for travelling cross-country to celebrate the completion of the project and to Mom Fisher for Matter and Memory -- you cannot know how much I appreciated your gift. John and Nancy Davis are like family, and like family they provided much needed support -- and the use of their laser jet printer. Thanks also to Adrian, for just being himself and bringing me back to earth from time to time.

More than thanks go to my husband Dave -- for assuming the proper expression and nodding at the appropriate times whenever I tried to explain something about Bergson to him -- and also for cleaning, changing diapers, making dinner, changing diapers, doing laundry, changing diapers, giving me space and changing diapers. I never could have made it without your support. This paper is dedicated to you; I hope it is worthy of that dedication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Henri Bergson was born in 1859, the same year Darwin's Origin of the Species was published. Evolutionary theory was to have a large impact on his thought.[1] His early studies were in mathematics, in which he excelled. At the age of nineteen, having won a national award for his solution of a mathematical problem, he was poised for a brilliant career in the sciences. He chose philosophy instead.[2]

His doctoral dissertation, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (English title: Time and Free Will), was published in 1889. It went practically unnoticed although in it he first presented his novel conception of duration. He followed the *Essai* with *Matiere et mémoire* (Matter and Memory) in 1896. Ian Alexander calls Matter and Memory "the bed-rock of Bergsonism."[3] It is a tightly argued, complex presentation of Bergson's theories of perception and the mind/body relation, yet it also received polite reviews and was forgotten.[4] Relevant to the study of Bergson's method is the article *Introduction à la métaphysique* ("An

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[1]Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, vol 9: Maine de Biran to Sartre (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1985), p. 194.

[2]Pete Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," in The Evolution of Physics, trans. and ed. P. A. Y. Gunter (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 4.

[3]Ian W. Alexander, Bergson: Philosopher of Reflection (New York: Hillary House, Inc., 1957), p. 30.

[4]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," p. 12.

Introduction to Metaphysics"), published in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1903.[5]

However, it wasn't until the publication of *L'Évolution créatrice* (Creative Evolution) that Bergson made his mark on the world. In it the duration Bergson had introduced in the *Essai* flowered into the *élan vital*, the life-force behind evolution. Creative Evolution presents "a metaphysical vision on a grand scale."[6] With its publication Bergson became famous overnight -- and not only famous, but a fad.

He was a dynamic speaker, drawing standing room only crowds. Gabriel Marcel describes how Bergson's students at the Collège de France "submitted to the course of Mr. Leroi Beaulier -- submitted, rather than listened -- so as to be there when [Bergson] arrived."[7] The Paris newspapers began to debate whether Bergson's classes should be moved to the Paris Opera in order to facilitate the crowds.[8]

In 1914 Bergson resigned his teaching post, feeling his credibility was compromised by his popularity.[9] In 1924 he came down with severe arthritis, curtailing his ability to work. During the period after his resignation he released two collections of essays and lectures, *L'Énergie spirituelle* (Mind-Energy) in 1919 and *La Pensée et la mouvant* (The Creative Mind) in 1934. His last major work, *Les*

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[5]"An Introduction to Metaphysics" was later republished in The Creative Mind.

[6]Pete Gunter, Henri Bergson: A Bibliography, rev. 2nd ed. (Bowling Green, OH: Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University, 1986), p. 4.

[7]Gabriel Marcel in Thomas Hanna, ed., The Bergsonian Heritage, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 124.

[8]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," pp. 15-16.

[9]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," p. 16.

Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion (The Two Sources of Morality and Religion) was published in 1932. Bergson died January 4, 1941 in Paris.

Although Bergson was extremely popular in his day, his popularity did not outlive him.

> When we look at Bergson's position -- or rather lack of position -- in today's intellectual life, we find it hard to imagine that some decades ago he was not just a famous thinker and writer; in the eyes of Europe's educated public he was clearly *the* philosopher, the intellectual spokesman *par excellence* of the era.[10]

Leszek Kolakowski charges a lack of method for the waning of Bergson's popularity: "Bergson . . . offered no applicable 'method' apart from his own results; he inspired other people, but left them no ready-made instruments for further research."[11] The reason for this, according to Kolakowski, is that an intuitional method, beyond interpersonal or aesthetic empathy, is impossible.[12] Julien Benda, a contemporary of Bergson and one of his most vocal critics, agrees that Bergson's philosophy cannot provide a method and is patently irrational.[13] Pete Gunter, one of Bergson's few modern supporters, points out that it is plausible to question whether intuition can have a method -- and in one sense of the word ("rules which would automatically ensure success") an intuitional method is impossible.[14]

There are two basic misconceptions of Bergson's philosophy which led his critics to believe that he had no workable method. Gunter summarizes them as follows:

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[10]Leszek Kolakowski, Bergson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 1.

[11]Kolakowski, p. 101.

[12]Kolakowski, pp. 35-36.

[13]Kolakowski, p. 88.

[14]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," The Southern Journal of Philosophy, 16 (Fall 1978):172.

> Those who, like Bertrand Russell or George Santayana, attacked Bergson for introducing intuition as a veritable mode of knowledge, have done so not only because Bergson's intuitionism seems to lead to a dangerous kind of anti-intellectualism but because it also seems to culminate in a conceptually baffling, inexpressible experience: a conceptual *cul de sac* from which there is no semantic or syntactical exit.[15]

The two criticisms of Bergson's method, then, are that it is irrational and that it is a "dead end."[16]

Bergson has consistently been labelled an "irrationalist."[17] Bergson critiques intellect, and in a way similar to Kant, attempts to limit its sphere. This criticism has been taken to be a complete denial of any validity to intellect or science. Cornelius Benjamin notes that a difficulty in Bergson's intuitive method is that "it seems to displace science and render all its conclusions worthless. But Bergson cautions against this inference . . ."[18] Julien Benda,[19] Bertrand Russell[20] and Jacques Maritain[21] found no reason to accept that caution and concluded that Bergson is an irrationalist.

Because his critics misunderstand that Bergson sees intuition and intellect working together, they also see intuition as a dead end. Benda thought Bergson's intuition was "a barbarous appeal to passive emotions" which resulted in an

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[15]Gunter, Henri Bergson: A Bibliography, p. 6.

[16]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and its Applications to the Sciences", p. 168.

[17]Kolakowski, p. 24.

[18]A. Cornelius Benjamin, "Introduction to Metaphysics," in World Philosophy: Essay Reviews of 225 Major Works, ed. Frank N. Magill, vol. 4: 1896-1932, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1982), p. 1586.

[19]Kolakowski, p. 88.

[20]Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Bergson," The Monist 22 (July 1912):323-326.

[21]Jacques Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, trans. Mabelle L. Andison in collaboration with J. Gordon Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 146-147, 132; and Ransoming the Time, trans. Harry Lorin Binsse, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 65-67.

inexpressible and unverifiable insight. Therefore, "it was incapable, in spite of all Bergson's claims, of working out a 'method' or of yielding any results."[22] W. T. Jones is mystified that Bergson wrote conceptually argued books about epistemological and metaphysical theory based upon an inexpressible intuition.[23] Kolakowski concludes:

> On this point it would be hard to clear Bergson of the charge of inconsistency. On the one hand he does assert that the insight he praises is indeed performed without symbols and that whatever cognitive gains we get from it are inevitably distorted in symbolic representation; in other words, intuition *is* incommunicable. On the other hand, he calls intuition a 'method', thereby suggesting that it might become a common good; he calls it 'metaphysics' as well, and it is hard to tell how an incommunicable metaphysics is conceivable.[24]

Both the charge of irrationalism and that of uselessness rest on a fundamental misunderstanding of Bergson's conceptions of intellect and intuition and their relation. Bergson both proposed and used an intuitional method, one in which intuition and intellect complement and critique each other. I intend to show that Bergson's philosophic method is neither irrational nor useless.

To do so, Bergson's idea of the nature of philosophy and philosophic method must be considered. Next, a clear understanding of his critique of intellect is necessary, as well as an explanation of intuition. Once we have clarified how Bergson views intellect, intuition and philosophic method we can take an in-depth look at his method. There we will see that Bergson's method involves a creative interchange between intuition and intellect. By showing that intellect plays an important (albeit not the central) role in Bergson's method, the claims of irrationalism can be refuted. Also, it will become evident that the interaction of

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[22]Kolakowski, p. 88.

[23]W. T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy, 2nd ed., vol. 4: Kant to Wittgenstein and Sarte (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), p. 267.

[24]Kolakowski, pp. 28-29.

intuition with intellect provides a means of expression and verification for the method's discoveries, removing any claims that Bergson's intuition is useless.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHY AND ITS METHOD

A Definition of Method

In order to discuss Bergson's philosophic method we must first determine what Bergson means by "philosophy" and in what sense we can call intuition a "method". As noted in the introduction, Gunter can understand why Bergson's critics felt intuition could not constitute a method. If by method it is meant "rules which would automatically ensure success," then there cannot be an intuitional method.[1]

That is not to say there is no sense of the word "method" which can be applied to Bergson's use of intuition. The word "method" comes to us from the Greek "meta" meaning "after" and "hodos" meaning "way, road or journey."[2] We can view "method", then, as designating a way of going along a road. It is not necessary, however, for all travel to have a specific goal or a guarantee of success. We may set out on a trip looking for adventure, although not certain of our exact destination and without a guarantee of finding anything.

The metaphor of travel with a general aim, but no specific destination or guarantee of success is in line with Bergson's view of reality as process. That his method does not consist in performing the correct steps and thereby coming up with

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[1]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 172.

[2]A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament, 1971 ed., s.v. "hodos".

a guaranteed result is in keeping with his denial of a mechanistic view of the universe.[3]

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "method" as "a special form of procedure adopted in any branch of mental activity, whether for the purpose of teaching and exposition, or for that of investigation and inquiry."[4] This definition does not imply that there must be clearly stated rules, always followed in the same order, with a guarantee of success. Bergson's method, however, corresponds most closely with an alternate definition: "the rules and practice proper to a particular art."[5]

Gunter considers the intuitional method an art:

> Perhaps what we are looking for is not method, but genius. In one respect it must be admitted that this objection is valid. That is, it must be admitted that for Bergson the quest for intuition is an art, for which rules that would automatically ensure success can not be given.[6]

I think this conception of Bergson's method as art is the most fitting. Artists go about their work in an organized way, but they cannot be certain that what they create will be a masterpiece. It is the same with Bergson's philosophic method. There is a way of proceeding, there are things to be done in order to pursue an intuition, but they are flexible and do not guarantee results. It is in this sense that I will use the word "method" in this essay.

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[3]Copleston, p. 194.

[4]The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., s. v. "method". Definition 2a.

[5]The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., s. v. "method". Definition 2b.

[6]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and its Applications to the Sciences," p. 172.

Philosophy and Reality

According to Copleston "[Bergson] had his own idea of the nature and function of philosophy; and his way of philosophizing, and even his style, were connected with this idea.[7] Bergson would accept the Oxford English Dictionary definition of metaphysical philosophy as "that department of knowledge or study which deals with ultimate reality."[8] However, as a process philosopher his view of "ultimate reality" differs from that of substance philosophers, thereby altering his conception of philosophy and its method.

> With reference to the nature of philosophy, Bergson maintains--and here too he is following the tradition--that philosophy is pure theory. Yet theory, as this attitude and mode of cognition were conceived in Greek philosophy, was understood as knowledge of the permanent and static. Moreover, theory was possible since there was a permanent object to be known, like Plato's ideas or Aristotle's pure form. Bergson maintains that though theory is directed towards the knowledge of things as they really are, he takes a different position as to the nature of things and of reality in general. . . . Bergson views change and motion as the essence of reality.[9]

In a letter written in 1923, Bergson describes mobility as the "leading idea" of all his work. The key to all philosophical problems is "to see in mobility the only reality that is given."[10] The name Bergson gives to the mobility which is reality is "duration."

For Bergson, the essence of reality is duration.[11] Duration is time, but not time as measured by a clock; it is time as we live it.[12] Duration is a flow of

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[7]Copleston, p. 180.

[8]The Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "philosophy".

[9]Nathan Rotenstreich, "Bergson and the Transformations of the Notion of Intuition," Journal of the History of Philosophy, 10 (July 1972):341.

[10]Kolakowski, p. 12.

[11]Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell, Ph.D., (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), p. 272.

[12]Creative Mind, p. 12.

creativity.[13] It is "the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances."[14] Reality is process.

Mobility, or duration, is the central and all-encompassing idea of Bergson's philosophy. This mobility doesn't happen to things -- it just happens. Inf act, "there are no things, there are only actions."[15]

> *There are changes, but there are underneath the change, no things which change: change has no need of a support. There are movements, but there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile.*[16]

Our concepts of static things, substances which may undergo change but which remain essentially themselves are not true pictures of reality. Everything is change - not something changing, but change itself.

> To tell the truth, there never is real immobility, if we understand by that an absence of movement. Movement is reality itself, and what we call immobility is a certain state of things analogous to that produced when two trains move at the same speed, in the same direction, on parallel tracks: each of the two trains is them immovable to the travellers seated in the other.[17]

Mobility doesn't happen <u>in</u> time, it <u>is</u> time. It is duration. Bergson's view of the world is not of things, which go through changes as they pass through time. Reality does not consist of time and change added to things; it is time itself, flowing and changing without any "things" at all.

Still Bergson speaks frequently of matter and of duration's effort to flow through, around or in spite of matter.[18] For this reason there is some question as to whether Bergson is a dualist or not. He can be read as viewing reality as containing

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[13]<u>Creative Evolution</u>, p. 11.

[14]<u>Creative Evolution</u>, p. 4.

[15]<u>Creative Evolution</u>, p. 248.

[16]Henri Bergson, <u>The Creative Mind</u>, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 173.

[17]<u>Creative Mind</u>, p. 169.

[18]<u>Creative Evolution</u>, p. 181.

two elements: mobile duration and static matter. Hanna maintains that Bergson affirmed "a clear-cut metaphysical dualism which makes an absolute distinction between two realities: the reality of life or spirit and the reality of matter."[19]

If there are two realities so completely opposed, Bergson will need two philosophic methods. But is Bergson a dualist? He calls Matter and Memory "frankly dualistic"[20] and does oppose science and philosophy, matter and spirit, duration and space throughout his writings.[21]

I maintain, however, that he is not a dualist. Alexander explains:

> In actual fact, the reality is, for Bergson, a process of which the temporal and the spatial are the two sides, the one corresponding to the contraction of consciousness, the other to the expansion of its material projection.
>
> We have, therefore, to do away with the old dualism of mind and matter. All reality is tendency, "a nascent change of direction."[22]

Bergson viewed reality exclusively as duration, although it consists of multiple durations of different rhythms. There is a continuum of durations from matter's brief, repetitive pulses of duration to pure spirit's eternal, living duration.[23] Thus Deleuze calls Bergson's ontology a monism encompassing a limited pluralism.[24] There is only one duration, but it contains varying rhythms. Each rhythm is qualitatively different from the others, thus there are true differences in kind between them (not just differences in degree). Yet all are aspects of the one duration which encompasses reality.

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[19]Hanna, p. 5.

[20]Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, (New York; Zone Books, 1988), p. 9.

[21]Gilles Deleuze, Bergsonism, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, (New York: Zone Books, 1988), pp. 21-22.

[22]Alexander, p. 41.

[23]Creative Mind, p. 221.

[24]Deleuze, p. 82.

Although Bergson calls himself a dualist in Matter and Memory he differentiates himself from "ordinary dualism." Ordinary dualism admits of no continuum between matter and mind; they are absolutely separate. Bergson's "dualism" includes "an infinite number of degrees between matter and fully developed spirit."[25] Matter is instantaneous duration -- a pulsing devoid of memory. Each rhythm of duration is differentiated by the greater amount of duration which it holds in its existence as memory. Each level retains "an ever higher degree of the past in order to influence ever more deeply the future."[26] But all of these rhythms of duration take place within the flow of absolute duration, which encompasses all of the past. In it we live and move and have our being.[27]

Whether we call this view a modified dualism, a special monism or a limited pluralism, it is apparent that all reality is duration on one level or another and therefore philosophy must be able to apprehend duration through its method.

If philosophy is to gain knowledge of ultimate reality, it must begin by apprehending change.[28]

> We said there is *more* in a movement than in the successive positions attributed to the moving object, *more* in a becoming than in the forms passed through in turn, *more* in the evolution of form than the forms assumed one after another. Philosophy can therefore derive terms of the second kind from those of the first, but not the first from the second; from the first terms speculation must take its start.[29]

Bergson maintains that intuition alone apprehends ultimate reality, so it must be the central element of a philosophic method. According to Bergson intellect makes the error of starting with immobility and trying to recreate mobility, but we

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[25]Matter and Memory, p. 221.

[26]Matter and Memory, p. 222.

[27]Creative Mind, p. 186.

[28]Rotenstreich, p. 343.

[29]Creative Evolution, p. 316.

have another faculty which begins with mobility: intuition.[30] Therefore, Bergson uses an intuitional philosophic method. To see why intuition is more suited to apprehend duration than intellect let us examine Bergson's critique of intellect and his theory of intuition.

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[30]Creative Mind, pp. 38-39.

CHAPTER III

BERGSON'S CRITIQUE OF INTELLECT

Evolutionary Account of Intellect

Philosophy is the study of reality and reality is duration according to Bergson. Can we gain knowledge of reality through our customary mode of thought, intellect?[1]

Bergson was highly critical of the ability of intellect to apprehend reality and to practice philosophy. It is partly this critique of intellect which has earned Bergson the epithet of "irrationalist". It is ironic that Bergson's critique of intellect was so poorly received, when one realizes that what Bergson was doing was a continuation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, which was widely accepted at the time.[2]

Bergson was disturbed by Kant's acceptance that all knowledge is relative[3], but he accepted Kant's critique. The faculty Kant critiques is, in general, the same faculty Bergson labels "intellect."[4] They agree that intellect imposes its own form on reality, does not apprehend reality as it is in itself, and commits philosophical

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[1]Creative Mind, p. 208.

[2]Margaret W. Landes, "A Suggested Interpretation of Bergson's Doctrine of Intuition," Philosophical Review, 33 (September 1924):457; and A. D. Lindsay, The Philosophy of Bergson (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1968), p. 12.

[3]Creative Mind, p. 42, Alexander, pp. 9-10.

[4]Landes, p. 459.

mistakes when it attempts to make conclusions about the nature of reality.[5] The difference lies in Bergson's contention that a second faculty of knowledge exists which does attain absolute knowledge.[6]

Bergson takes Kant's critique and adds to it. Kant described the intellect as an *a priori* aspect of humanity. He does not know why the intellect is as he describes it.[7] As an evolutionary philosopher, Bergson provides an evolutionary explanation of the operations of intellect. Bergson viewed intellect as a successful adaptation of humanity to its environment.

> We regard the human intellect, on the contrary, as relative to the needs of action. Postulate action, and the very form of the intellect can be deduced from it. This form is therefore neither irreducible nor inexplicable.[8]

This evolutionary explanation results in a rosier picture of intellect than Kant develops. Bergson claims that intellect does know "things-in-themselves," although only in part, and that absolute knowledge of reality is possible.[9]

Bergson is an empiricist. Knowledge begins for him, therefore, with perception. Perception, however, is not purely speculative -- it is not there simply to

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[5]Landes, p. 458; Creative Evolution, pp. 203-205; Matter and Memory, p. 16.

[6]Landes, p. 459; Creative Mind, pp. 164-165.

[7]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, unabridged ed., trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 161; Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, in Classics of Western Philosophy, 2nd ed., ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1985), p. 885; Gunter, "Introduction to the UPA Edition of Creative Evolution", in Creative Evolution, p. xxvii; Creative Evolution, p. 205.

[8]Creative Evolution, p. 152.

[9]Matter and Memory, p. 230; Creative Evolution, p. 230; Creative Mind, p. 42.

provide us with knowledge of the external world.[10] Perception is shaped along the needs of action.[11]

Bergson describes the evolution of intellect most completely in Creative Evolution.[12] Life needs things from matter to continue to live. In order to get these things, life must act. In its development of means to take from matter what it needs, life had two choices. It could adapt itself to fit exactly to matter in just such a way as to receive from it what it needs, or it could adapt itself to be flexible to take from matter what it needs in a variety of ways. The first solution results in instinct, the second in intellect.[13]

Reality, as we have stated, is duration -- a continual flow of change. Perception, however, is of distinct objects. Perception, since it is a faculty tied to our need for action, is only interested in certain aspects of reality. It hones in on things which are useful or dangerous for us.

This discrimination is not conscious. At its most basic level perception is simply our reaction to the world around us.[14] If we were instinctual this reaction would occur automatically and unconsciously.[15] However, we are intellectual beings. We have developed a faculty for flexible use of the matter which surrounds us.[16] It is this freedom of choice which generates consciousness.[17] Since intellect is

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[10]Matter and Memory, p. 28.

[11]Creative Evolution, p. 12, 206, 300; Matter and Memory, p. 158.

[12]Creative Evolution, pp. 137-165.

[13]Creative Evolution, pp. 142-143.

[14]Matter and Memory, p. 32.

[15]Creative Evolution, p. 145; Matter and Memory, p. 32.

[16]Creative Evolution, pp. 137-139.

[17]Creative Evolution, p. 262.

a flexible means of obtaining life's needs from matter, it often has to choose between various courses of action.[18] There is a hesitation to our response while we consider our options and it is this hesitation which is consciousness.[19]

The courses of action available to us must be laid out for intellect, before it can choose. Where unconscious perception is an immediate and actual action; conscious perception is a layout of our potential actions.[20] Therefore we perceive objects arrayed around us, some closer and some farther away, the closest clearly perceived, the furthest blending into a horizon where distinct objects cannot be distinguished. This perception is a layout of objects upon which we can act, ranked according to the immediacy of our action upon them. Those closer are the ones we can act upon the easiest, those farther away are not yet within the range of our influence.[21]

We do not lay out all of the flow of duration, but just those aspects which are of interest to us as we decide upon our action. We cut out of the flow of reality the parts that interest us, marked out along the lines of our action.

> The bodies we perceive are, so to speak, cut out of the stuff of nature by our *perception*, and the scissors follow, in some way, the marking of lines along which *action* might be taken.[22]

In order to cut duration along the lines of action our perception is shaped by space.

> The whole of matter is made to appear to our thought as an immense piece of cloth in which we can cut out what we will and sew it together again as we please. Let us note, in passing, that it is this power that we affirm when we say that there is a *space*, that is to say, a homogeneous and empty medium, infinite and infinitely divisible, lending itself indifferently to any mode of

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[18]Creative Evolution, pp. 143-145.

[19]Creative Evolution, p. 144.

[20]Creative Evolution, pp. 11-12.

[21]Matter and Memory, pp. 20-21.

[22]Creative Evolution, p. 12.

> decomposition whatsoever. A medium of this kind is never perceived, it is only conceived.[23]

Just as Kant held that perception was through the form of space,[24] Bergson maintained that our intellect views reality through a matrix of space which is a conception itself and not actually part of reality. Using this "infinitely divisible" medium as the form of our perceptions allows us to consider any potential line of action we choose.

Our perception, however, is not entirely arbitrary. Remember that the initial content of our perceptions is our natural reactions to the world around us. The matter of perception is real -- although it does not represent the complete matter of reality -- it is the form which is imposed by our need of action.[25] We do not entirely construct the object, we carve it out and give it a shape which is not part of reality, but the matter does exist.[26]

This perceptive activity takes time. "However brief we suppose any perception to be, it always occupies a certain duration, and involves, consequently, an effort of memory which prolongs one into another a plurality of moments."[27] We compress into one perception a number of instantaneous impressions of reality. It is the common characteristics of the instantaneous impressions which we perceive as the object's essence.[28] Rather than viewing the object in the rhythm of its duration, we view it in the rhythm of our own, compressing the many instants of its rhythm that occur in one pulse of ours into one perception. Thus perception gives us only

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[23]Creative Evolution, p. 156.

[24]Critique, p. 67.

[25]Creative Evolution, p. 149.

[26]This position differs from Kant's. He insists that nothing of the object itself is known, even in part. cf. Critique, pp. 73-74.

[27]Matter and Memory, p. 34.

[28]Creative Evolution, p. 328.

part of reality -- that which interests us -- abstracted from duration and placed in space.

Intellect recognizes perceptions as instances of general ideas. Bergson provides an evolutionary explanation of this process, also. The groupings of objects into genera is based upon the common reaction these objects elicit from us.[29] Just as in Kant perception is completed by conception,[30] in Bergson perception is not complete until memory associates the object with a general idea.[31] This is a necessary process to enable us to choose our reaction from the possibilities perception has laid out for us.[32]

> The essential function of our intellect as the evolution of life has fashioned it, is to be a light for our conduct, to make ready for our action on things, to forsee, for a given situation, the events, favorable or unfavorable, which may follow thereupon. Intellect therefore instinctively selects in a given situation whatever is like something already known; it seeks this out, in order that it may apply its principle that "like produces like."[33]

Our experienced perception is of the object spatialized and generalized. "Perception is never a mere contact of the mind with the object present; it is impregnated with memory-images which complete it as they interpret it."[34] Perception is of "whatever is like something already known" not only of the object itself.

Thus as intellect completes its conceptualization of the object we are left with a partial view of reality removed from duration and impregnated with memory images which emphasize its characteristics common to other objects. We have lost

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[29]Matter and Memory, pp. 158-160.

[30]Critique, p. 93.

[31]Matter and Memory, p. 33.

[32]Matter and Memory, p. 65.

[33]Creative Evolution, p. 29.

[34]Matter and Memory, p. 133.

the object's wholeness, duration and uniqueness. We have not, however, lost the object entirely.[35]

It is important to note here that matter's duration is pure repetition.[36] Therefore it approaches, although it does not quite reach, pure spatiality.[37] Thus the proportion of the object lost in the conceptualization of matter is minimal. Therefore intellect is well-suited to science, that is the study of matter,[38] although it fails miserably at metaphysics, as we shall see.

Intellect and Metaphysics

Kant limited human knowledge to the objects of possible experience and possible experience to that which could be intuited through space and time and categorized by the understanding. The objects of metaphysics could not be experienced in this way, although we create ideas of them as ultimately unified realities. These ideas serve a regulatory function, aiding in the categorization of perceptions by serving as a goal.

> Just as the understanding unifies the manifold in the object by means of concepts, so reason unifies the manifold of concepts by means of ideas, positing a certain collective unity as the goal of the activities of the understanding . . .[39]

However, if we postulate true existence for these ultimately unified ideas, we are creating illusion.[40] Thus, for Kant, metaphysical science is impossible.[41] We cannot obtain knowledge of ultimate realities.

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[35]Matter and Memory, p. 71.

[36]Creative Mind, p. 221.

[37]Creative Evolution, pp. 206-207, 219.

[38]Creative Mind, p. 41.

[39]Critique, p. 533.

[40]Critique, p. 533.

Bergson is still in agreement with Kant. He, too, describes how intellect continues its conceptual activity outside of its appropriate sphere and thereby creates fallacious ideas of metaphysical objects.[42]

Because our perception is incomplete, we complete it with conception.[43] Once we have our static perception of things and seek to act upon them, we must again consider movement and change in order to conceive of our action causing the end desired.[44] We picture the state of things before our act and the state of things after our act; we cannot picture the change from one to the other because intellect does not apprehend the mobility of duration.[45]

We are aware, though, that a change has occurred; all our faculties are adapted to achieving desired changes. Therefore we create an abstract idea of movement or change with which to string together the series of static states of affairs we perceive.

> We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself. Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general.[46]

This idea of change is not empirical; it is an imitation of real duration. In the same way we create other abstract ideas used to reconstitute reality. Bergson discusses in particular the abstract ideas of "multiplicity, "unity," and "time."[47]

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[41]Copleston, p. 304.

[42]Creative Evolution, p. 273; Matter and Memory, p. 16.

[43]Creative Mind, pp. 156-158.

[44]Creative Evolution, pp. 299-300.

[45]Creative Evolution, p. 299.

[46]Creative Evolution, p. 306.

[47]Creative Evolution, p. 257, 21.

We also create pseudo-ideas by using practical concepts speculatively. For example, when we consider the possibility of an action we mean only that there is "no insurmountable barrier to its realization."[48] That action is within our power of choice. When we speculate on possibility, however, we create the idea of the action itself, hovering just offstage, completely formed before its realization.[49] This "possible" is, by definition, outside of our experience. It is not an empirical idea.

So, with Kant, Bergson agrees that the intellect should not do metaphysics. Its attempts to do so result in false conceptions which do not reflect reality. He does not agree, however, that metaphysics is entirely impossible. Because he has explained how these ideas are developed he has revealed how to avoid a false view of reality and obtain a true experience of duration.

As we have shown, intellect does not touch reality absolutely; it apprehends only a portion of reality. It overlooks all of reality which falls outside of its interests. If we could find a faculty which was disinterested, then we could experience all of reality.

It is interesting to note that Kant examines briefly an alternate mode of knowing, one which he stated only God possessed. In one place he says, "An understanding in which through self-consciousness all the manifold would *eo ipso* be given, would be *intuitive*; our understanding can only *think*, and for intuition must look to the senses."[50] Again he says, "An understanding which through its self-consciousness could supply to itself the manifold of intuition--an understanding, that is to say, through whose representation the objects of the representation should at the same time exist--would not require, for the unity of consciousness, a special act

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[48]Creative Mind, p. 22.

[49]Creative Mind, pp. 21-22. Bergson discusses other pseudo-ideas. We will deal with the pseudo-idea of nothing in the chapter on method.

[50]Critique, p. 155.

of synthesis of the manifold."[51] Copleston describes Kant's position: "But realities, if there are any, corresponding to the transcendental Ideas cannot be given in experience in the absence of any faculty of intellectual intuition."[52]

Bergson agreed with Kant's critique of intellect. He has only two objections to Kant's position. First, that intellect does apprehend part of reality and is not, therefore, entirely ignorant of things-in-themselves, and second, that the inadequacy of intellect is caused by its interested nature and therefore, by suppressing interest, we can regain the direct intuition of reality which Kant deemed impossible.

Intellect and Language

Before discussing this disinterested faculty of knowledge, it is necessary to make a few observations about intellect and language.

Language is the child of intellect. Language mirrors intellect's spatialized, abstract vision of reality. "We break up this continuity into elements laid side by side, which correspond in the one case to distinct words, in the other to independent objects."[53]

Language is a tool for action, as all our faculties are.[54] Like intellect, language is flexible and thus words are mobile. A given word can be transferred from one object to another.[55]

It is language's mobility which has created in humanity the ability to form general ideas and the desire to philosophize.

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[51]Critique, p. 157.

[52]Copleston, p. 305.

[53]Matter and Memory, p. 183.

[54]Creative Evolution, p. 158.

[55]Creative Evolution, p. 158.

> [A word] can therefore be extended, not only from one perceived thing to another, but even from a perceived thing to a recollection of that thing, from the precise recollection to a more fleeting image, and finally from an image fleeting, though still pictured, to the picturing of the act by which the image is pictured, that is to say, to the idea.[56]

Language makes conceptualization possible and invites intellect to disinterested speculation.

> From the moment that the intellect, reflecting upon its own doings, perceives itself as a creator of ideas, as a faculty of representation in general, there is no object of which it may not wish to have the idea, even though that object be without direct relation to practical action.[57]

Intellect creates formal knowledge which gives humanity the idea of a complete knowledge, even of things which have no practical use. Intellect invites theory, but cannot attain it.[58]

Intellect does not apprehend duration. Thus it is unsuited for philosophy. However, intellect itself seeks theory. It is intellect which reveals to us the need for intuition.

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[56]Creative Evolution, p. 159.

[57]Creative Evolution, pp. 159-160.

[58]Creative Evolution, p. 151.

CHAPTER IV

INTUITION

Instinct, Intellect and Intuition

We have discussed how intellect is unable to apprehend reality and is therefore unsuited to philosophy. Coming to a similar conclusion Kant decided that metaphysics is impossible. Bergson does not.

Bergson agreed, as I have said, with Kant's critique of intellect. He stated that the "greatest service" Kant performed for philosophy was having established

> . . . if metaphysics is possible, it can be so only through an effort of intuition.-- Only, having proved that intuition alone would be capable of giving us a metaphysics, he added: this intuition is impossible.[1]

According to Bergson, Kant (and all other philosophers) accepted the assumption that perception's purpose is purely speculative, and therefore decided that if this purely speculative faculty had failed at speculation, true reality would never be apprehended through it. Kant decided only an intellectual apprehension of reality could solve the problem, and such an intellectual apprehension is impossible.[2] Bergson, however, begins from the premise of perception's action-orientation. Perception has not been used purely speculatively -- but perhaps the experiment can yet be made.

It is his evolutionary description of intellect which brought Bergson to this conclusion, and again evolution would provide the key to the solution. Perception

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[1]Creative Mind, p. 165.

[2]Creative Mind, p. 165.

and intellect need not have evolved as they did. In fact, evolution took a different path in the case of insects, culminating in instinct.[3] Instinct involves immediate knowledge of reality. Bergson describes instinct as "molded on the very form of life."[4] In instinct life itself is known exactly as it is in the flow of duration. Yet instinct, like intellect, is interested -- it must seek out a particular quality upon which to act. Intellect, as we have noted, achieved this ability of discriminating qualities by cutting them out of the flow of reality and apprehending them as distinct objects. Instinct, on the other hand, finds the quality it needs by narrowing its scope and responding only to that quality. Intellect has partial knowledge of all objects while instinct has complete knowledge of just one.

As we have said, intellect through its formal knowledge leads to speculation. The theory it develops can never be correct because of intellect's inability to apprehend reality. Instinct, on the other hand, apprehends reality, but because of its limited scope has no conception of speculation. Bergson concludes: "*There are things that intelligence alone is able to seek, but which, by itself, it will never find. These things instinct alone could find; but it will never seek them.*"[5]

There is hope of resolving this impasse. Since both instinct and intelligence evolved from the same basic tendency, there are elements of each in the other.[6] Humanity retains some instinct. By combining the scope of intellect with the immediacy of instinct direct knowledge of reality will be possible.

One stumbling block to this effort is that instinct is unconscious. It responds automatically to its object, thus there is no need of the hesitation which creates

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[3]Creative Evolution, p. 143.

[4]Creative Evolution, p. 165.

[5]Creative Evolution, p. 151.

[6]Creative Evolution, pp. 135-136, p. 142.

consciousness. Bergson distinguishes the type of unconsciousness in instinct carefully. This unconsciousness is not the absence of consciousness (as a stone is unconscious) but the nullifying of consciousness as when humans perform a habitual action mechanically, without thinking.[7] Thus consciousness is a possibility for instinct.[8] If we can develop instinct, bring it to consciousness and widen its scope to a greater number of objects we would have a speculative faculty of knowledge.[9] Intuition is such a faculty. "By intuition," Bergson writes, "I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."[10]

Describing this intuitive faculty is difficult. Bergson asks that "no one ask me for a simple and geometrical definition of intuition."[11] Just as "that which is instinctive in instinct cannot be expressed in terms of intelligence,"[12] intuition, as an enlarged and conscious form of instinct, is outside of intellect's realm of knowledge. Intuition itself must be intuited. Let us make some observations which may lead us to a glimpse of intuition.[13] Bergson states that something intuitional cannot be communicated "unless one takes views of it that are multiple, complementary and not at all equivalent."[14]

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[7]Creative Evolution, pp. 143-145.

[8]Creative Evolution, p. 143.

[9]Creative Evolution, p. 165.

[10]Creative Evolution, p. 176.

[11]Creative Mind, p. 37.

[12]Creative Evolution, p. 168.

[13]Creative Mind, p. 195.

[14]Creative Mind, p. 38.

There are those who interpret Bergson as saying that intuition is instinct. Bertrand Russell defines Bergson's intuition as "instinct at its best,"[15] and quips that "instinct is seen at its best in ants, bees, and Bergson."[16] K. W. Wild equates instinct and intuition.[17] He says "when an instinct . . . has been reflected upon and had its object enlarged at will, it is nothing more or less than an analysed instinct."[18]

Bergson does describe instinct and intuition in parallel ways. He calls both of them "sympathy"[19] and contrasts both of them to intellect.[20] He uses the words "instinct" and "intuition" in parallel passages:

> But we must not forget that there still hangs round the edge of intelligence a fringe of instinct . . .[21]

> But we know that all around intelligence there lingers still a fringe of intuition, vague and evanescent.[22]

However, intuition is not instinct, nor is it glorified instinct. "Intuition is neither instinct, nor intelligence, but in a sense both."[23] We must remember that Bergson draws his distinctions more clearly than they really are in order for us to see the differences in kind between instinct, intellect and intuition. He warns us:

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[15]Russell, p. 324.

[16]Russell, p. 323. cf. Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," p. 25.

[17]K. W. Wild, Intuition (London: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 6-9.

[18]Wild, p. 6.

[19]Creative Evolution, p. 176; Creative Mind, p. 190.

[20]Creative Evolution, pp. 167-168; p. 267.

[21]Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1935), p. 118.

[22]Two Sources, p. 212.

[23]Alexander, p. 54; cf. Gunter, Bibliography, p. 6.

> The reader must expect to see in what follows only a diagrammatic drawing, in which the respective outlines of intelligence and instinct are sharper than they should be, and in which the shading-off which comes from the indecision of each and from their reciprocal encroachment on one another is neglected. In a matter so obscure, we cannot strive too hard for clearness. It will always be easy afterwards to soften the outlines and to correct what is too geometrical in the drawing--in short, to replace the rigidity of a diagram by the suppleness of life.[24]

Because his objective is to show clearly the inadequacies of intellect for philosophy and, in contrast, intuition's suitability for metaphysics he most often discusses the incompatibilities of the two.[25]

Yet, intuition has aspects in common with intellect. It too is conscious[26] and it is flexible, able to apprehend durations of various intensities[27]. Margaret Landes maintains:

> . . . if we turn back to the *Introduction to Metaphysics* where Bergson's doctrine of intuition is more concisely and completely stated than in any other of his writings, we find scattered but unambiguous expressions and statements to the effect that intuition is not absolutely opposed to the intellectual method, but rather supplements it.[28]

She cites as examples[29] Bergson's descriptions of intuition as "intellectual sympathy,"[30] "intellectual auscultation,"[31] "intellectual expansion,"[32] and "intellectual

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[24]Creative Evolution, p. 137.

[25]Creative Mind, pp. 38-39.

[26]Creative Mind, pp. 35-36.

[27]Creative Mind, p. 221.

[28]Margaret W. Landes, "A Suggested Interpretation of Bergson's Doctrine of Intuition," Philosophical Review, 33 (September, 1924):453.

[29]Landes, pp. 453-454.

[30]Creative Mind, p. 191. "*sympathiser intellectuellement*," Henri Bergson, Oeuvres, édition du centenaire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 1396.

[31]Creative Mind, p. 206. The Andison translation differs, calling it spiritual auscultation. In Oeuvres, "*auscultation spirituelle*," p. 1408.

intuition,"[33] as well as his contention that intuition is expressible by concepts, albeit more flexible concepts than intellect uses.[34]

Intuition is, then, a mixture of instinct and intellect, but this combination is not achieved by synthesizing the two. Intellect cannot re-absorb instinct.[35] Intuition is a return to the "ocean of life" as it is before its division into instinct and intellect.

> . . . a beneficent fluid baths us, whence we draw the very force to labor and to live. From this ocean of life, in which we are immersed, we are continually drawing something, and we feel that our being, or at least the intellect that guides it, has been formed therein by a kind of local concentration. Philosophy can only be an effort to dissolve again into the Whole.[36]

Because both intellect and instinct have developed away from the same principle, one cannot re-absorb the other,[37] but they can be re-absorbed by the principle itself.[38]

Intuition, therefore, has connections to both intellect and intuition. Intellect apprehends matter, while instinct apprehends life. "Between these two extreme limits moves intuition, and this movement is metaphysics itself."[39]

As Bergson describes it, intuition would be suited to philosophy. But is there such a faculty and can it be used in a philosophic method?

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[32]Creative Mind, p. 216, 231. The Andison translation renders this "dilation of the mind." In Oeuvres, "*dilatation de l'esprit*," p. 1415 and "*dilatation de notre esprit*," p. 1428.

[33]Creative Mind, pp. 230-231.

[34]Creative Mind, 198.

[35]Creative Evolution, p. 168.

[36]Creative Evolution, p. 191.

[37]Creative Evolution, p. 168.

[38]Creative Evolution, p. 191, 193.

[39]Creative Mind, p. 221.

The Possibility of Intuition

There is one aspect of intuition which is not like either instinct or intellect: intuition is disinterested.[40] Intuition grasps reality as it is, rather than picking out of it those aspect which interest us. "We must strive to see in order to see," Bergson commands us, "and no longer see in order to act."[41]

Since intuition is not developed by combining intellect and instinct, which humans do posses, but by rediscovering the root from which they have sprung, and since intuition, unlike any other human faculty, is disinterested, it is appropriate to ask whether the discovery or development of such a faculty in humanity is possible.

Bergson admits the difficulty of an effort to reverse the direction of intellect and return to a direct vision of reality, but insists that such an effort is not impossible.[42] He claims that all "durable" philosophical systems are the result of just such an intuitive glimpse of reality.[43] In his lecture "Philosophical Intuition" he cites Berkeley and Spinoza as examples.[44] The intuition which motivated his own work was the vision of time as real duration.[45]

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[40]Creative Evolution, p. 176.

[41]Creative Evolution, p. 298.

[42]Creative Evolution, pp. 237-238.

[43]Creative Evolution, p. 237; Creative Mind, pp. 127-132.

[44]Creative Mind, p. 133.

[45]Creative Mind, pp. 10-13.

Bergson presents the examples of artists and aesthetic perception as evidence of a latent faculty of intuition in humanity.[46] Composers, (he mentions Beethoven explicitly) are intuitive.[47]

> But now and then, by a lucky accident, men arise whose sense or whose consciousness are less adherent to life. Nature has forgotten to attach their faculty of perceiving to their faculty of acting. When they look at a thing they see it for itself, and not for themselves. They do not perceive simply with a view to action; they perceive in order to perceive -- for nothing, for the pleasure of doing so.[48]

Artists see for "pleasure"; they see in order to see rather than to act. Mystics also receive intuitions.[49]

It is not just special minds -- artists, mystics and philosophers -- that experience intuition. In the "Introduction to Metaphysics," Bergson writes:

> There is at least one reality which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own person in its flowing through time, the self which endures. With no other thing can we sympathize intellectually, or if you like spiritually. But one thing is sure: we sympathize with ourselves.[50]

In Creative Mind he writes, "The experiment was within reach of everyone, and those who were willing to make it had no difficulty in getting an idea of the substantiality of the ego, as of its duration."[51] We all experience the flow of our own inner duration as it is. We do not spatialize it. We do not view changes in ourselves as separate, distinct states succeeding each other, but as an interpenetration, a flowing of past into present. We do recognize novelty in ourselves. We see our

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[46]Creative Mind, pp. 159-160.

[47]Two Sources, pp. 252-253.

[48]Creative Mind, p. 162.

[49]Two Sources, pp. 249-250.

[50]Creative Mind, p. 191.

[51]Creative Mind, p. 83.

various moods as qualitatively different. Like need not produce like; we intuit ourselves as free.

Thus it is evident that humanity has an intuitive faculty.[52] It is rarely used and underdeveloped, but it is there. It can be "methodically cultivated and developed,"[53] though not without effort.

> [Our mind] can be installed in the mobile reality, adopt its ceaselessly changing direction, in short, grasp it intuitively. But to do that, it must do itself violence, reverse the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories, or rather, recasting them.[54]

In response to those who considered intuition as mere feeling Bergson says, "I repudiate facility. I recommend a certain manner of thinking which courts difficulty; I value effort above everything."[55]

That an intuitive faculty can be developed, however, is not sufficient to establish the possibility of an intuitive philosophy. An intuitive faculty, no matter how completely developed, would be useless if its discoveries cannot be expressed.

Expressing Intuition

We have discussed the relationship between language and intellect above. Words and objects correspond, both cut out of the flow of reality by intellect.[56] Intuition is of that flow, uncut. How, then, can language be used to express intuition? This question has been asked by many of Bergson's critics.[57]

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[52]Creative Mind, p. 53.

[53]Creative Mind, p. 92.

[54]Creative Mind, p. 224.

[55]Creative Mind, p. 103.

[56]Matter and Memory, p. 183.

[57]Harald Höffding, Modern Philosophers and Lectures on Bergson, trans. Alfred C. Mason (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920), p. 234; Jones, p. 267; Kolakowski, pp. 28-29.

Bergson faced the question squarely. First, he claims language can be used in a manner which goes against its normal, spatializing and categorizing function. This is the language of metaphor and imagery. There are times, Bergson claims, when a metaphor captures meaning more accurately than scientific prose and the later is, in fact, more falsifying than the former.

> Comparisons and metaphors will here suggest what cannot be expressed. That will not constitute a detour; it will amount to going straight to the goal. . . . Abstract ideas alone would, therefore, in such a case, be inviting us to imagine mind on the model of matter and to think it by transposition, that is, in the exact meaning of the word, by metaphor. Let us not be duped by appearances: there are cases in which it is imagery in language which knowingly expresses the literal meaning, and abstract language which unconsciously expresses itself figuratively. The moment we reach the spiritual world, the image, if it merely seeks to suggest, may give us the direct vision, while the abstract term, which is spatial in origin and which claims to express, most frequently leaves us in metaphor.[58]

Bergson also states that using an assortment of verbal descriptions will aid in expressing an intuition. By painting pictures of intuition from various sides it is hoped the inadequacies of the various perspectives will cancel each other out, allowing the reader to discover the nature of the intuition itself.[59] Thus when describing the intuition of one's duration he uses the metaphors of the unrolling of a spool, the rolling up of a ball of thread, a spectrum of a thousand shades and an infinitely small piece of elastic.[60] Each of these images is, in itself, incomplete "because no metaphor can express one of the two aspects [of duration: unity and multiplicity] without sacrificing the other."[61] Duration is all these things at once.

In the end, therefore, the purpose of philosophic discourse is not to describe the intuition, but to bring the reader to an intuitional experience of her own.

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[58]Creative Mind, pp. 48-49.

[59]Creative Mind, p. 195.

[60]Creative Mind, pp. 192-194

[61]Creative Mind, p. 194.

> In this regard, the philosopher's sole aim should be to start up a certain effort which the utilitarian habits of mind of everyday life tend, in most men, to discourage. Now the image has at least the advantage of keeping us in the concrete. No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on.[62]

Bergson also believed that intuitions, as they reshaped our understanding of the world around us would have an effect on intellectual language itself. Intuition "will arrive at fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things."[63] Intuition can change our forms of symbolism. The example which Bergson provides most often of a new, more flexible conceptual scheme is the infinitesimal calculus.[64]

Intuition, therefore, is both possible and expressible. It is a faculty which reaches duration itself. As such it is capable of doing philosophy.

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[62]Creative Mind, p. 195.

[63]Creative Mind, p. 224.

[64]Creative Mind, pp. 225-226.

CHAPTER V

METHOD

Introduction

Having determined that philosophy as the study of duration is possible only through the development of intuition, we must turn to Bergson's intuitional philosophic method. When doing philosophy it is necessary that we go against our habitual mode of thinking in order to intuit reality.[1] We must also search for an adequate formulation of our findings and a means of verifying our results.

Bergson both proposed and used an intuitional philosophic method.

> *Intuition* is the method of Bergsonism. Intuition is neither a feeling, an inspiration, nor a disorderly sympathy, but a fully developed method, one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy.[2]

This method involves the use of intellect, for it is intellect, as we have said, that seeks to transcend itself. Intuition in its disinterest will not seek knowledge; intellect must pose it a question.[3]

The question is solved through an intuition of the real.[4] Intuition's discovery reshapes intellectual concepts and is itself slightly altered as it is symbolized and expressed. In the end we will not be able to capture the full essence of the intuition but our intellectual concepts will have been pulled closer to life and made more

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[1]Creative Mind, p. 208.

[2]Deleuze, p. 13

[3]F. Grégoire, "La collaboration de l'intuition et de l'intelligence," Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 3 (1949):392.

[4]Matter and Memory, p. 69.

flexible.[5] An advance will have been made. The intuition will remain with us, haunting us,[6] if you will, and constantly challenging and enlivening our thought. The method, then, involves a creative interchange between intellect and intuition.[7]

This is just a brief sketch. In a way, however, this sketch is more accurate than the detailed analysis I am about to provide. Remember that the intuitional method is an art, not always repeatable in the same fashion. To nail it down to specific steps is artificial. The description below is like the outlines of feet painted on a dance class floor. To follow it woodenly can be called dancing -- but you'll never be Fred Astaire until you go beyond the painted feet on the floor. So, with that word of caution, let us proceed.

The intuitional method has four steps. First, there is a negative work done by intellect which I call clarification. Next there is the empirical work which, with effort, will give rise to an intuition. This I call positioning. Once an intuition has been received it must be wedded to a means of expression, changing and being changed by intellect. This joint work of intuition and intellect I name solidification. Last, verification takes place as the effects of the intuition are worked out. These stages: clarification, positioning, solidification and verification are my inventions -- my way of describing Bergson's process of philosophizing. They are too precise -- numbered feet painted on the floor. This point cannot be over stressed.

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[5]Creative Mind, p. 52.

[6]Creative Mind, p. 128.

[7]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 179; Copleston, p. 199.

Clarification

The Problem with Language

"A whole labor of clearing away is necessary in order to open up the way to inner experience."[8] The first step in Bergson's philosophic method is the negative work of critiquing accepted concepts and presuppositions about reality. It is necessary to clear away the philosophical mistakes committed by intellect. Philosophy begins by "eliminating ready-made concepts."[9]

Intellect, as we have discussed, cuts reality into objects and develops language to corresponding to them.[10] Language develops general, abstract ideas of two kinds; general concepts which overlook the uniqueness of each individual being and abstract ideas necessary to reconstitute a semblance of the real. By completing perception with conception we create pseudo-ideas.[11]

> It is this covering [language] that we must grasp in order to tear it off. But we shall grasp it only if we consider first its aspect and its structure, if in addition, we understand its intended purpose. It is spatial by nature and has a social utility. Spatiality therefore, and in this quite special sense, sociability, are in this case the real causes of the relativity of our knowledge. Brushing aside this veil, we get back to the immediate and reach an absolute.[12]

Philosophic problems are stated with words, and words were not created with pure speculation in mind, but instead were created for practical purposes. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the question and the categories it implies and be sure those categories correspond to true articulations of the real.

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[8]Creative Mind, p. 53.

[9]Creative Mind, p. 52.

[10]Matter and Memory, p. 183.

[11]Creative Mind, p. 157.

[12]Creative Mind, p. 29.

> [Words] have most often been elaborated by the social organism in view of an object which has nothing to do with metaphysics. In order to form them society has cut out reality according to its needs. Why should philosophy accept a division which in all probability will not correspond to the articulations of the real? . . . But the truth is that in philosophy and even elsewhere it is a question of *finding* the problem and consequently of *positing* it, even more than of solving it. For a speculative problem is solved as soon as it is properly stated. By that I mean that its solution exists then, although it may remain hidden and, so to speak, covered up: the only thing left to do is to *un*cover it.[13]

Philosophic problems must be analyzed to determine the categories they imply and then be restated. Once restated the answer is forthcoming. An understanding of how the practical function of the intellect created the terms involved will result in "brushing aside" the veil of language and allow us to "get back to the immediate and reach an absolute." General ideas must be analyzed to determine if they artificially carve reality and pseudo-ideas must be removed. Let us examine the second case first.

Pseudo-problems

When Bergson is faced with the philosophic problem of the existence of the universe he begins by discovering and analyzing the concepts involved. The philosopher asks why he or the universe or the Principle which created the universe exists.[14]

> Now, if I push these questions aside and go straight to what hides behind them, this is what I find:--Existence appears to me like a conquest over nought. I say to myself that there might be, that indeed there ought to be, nothing, and then I wonder that there is something.[15]

The question resolves itself into the relationship of the categories of "something" and "nothing" and can be restated "Why is there something rather than nothing?"

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[13]Creative Mind, p. 58.

[14]Creative Evolution, p. 275.

[15]Creative Evolution, pp. 275-276.

> Now, if we could prove that the idea of the nought, in the sense in which we take it when we oppose it to that of existence, is a pseudo-idea, the problems that are raised around it would become pseudo-problems.[16]

Bergson shows that "nothing" is a pseudo-idea first by illustrating that while we can conceive of the annihilation of any number of individual things, we cannot conceive of the annihilation of everything.[17] He uses a number of arguments to support this claim. He states that we cannot imagine the non-existence of everything because we would have to exist ourselves in order to do so.[18] He argues also that the idea of the non-existence of an object is actually made up of the idea of the object existing and the idea of its removal.[19] Therefore, the idea of nothing actually has more content than the idea of something.

Beyond these logical arguments he discusses the use of negation in human language -- its derivation for the exigencies of human action. Negation in general is used as a warning or correction. It has a social purpose. It warns that a different affirmation should be substituted for one proposed. For example, "The table is not white," warns that something other than "The table is white," should be affirmed. The color to be affirmed is left undetermined, perhaps because it is unknown but more often because it was whiteness which was of interest.[20]

Thus we rediscover how an idea was formed along the lines of action and how it is to be used. The word "nothing" is used when what interests us is substituted by something which does not.[21] When your teenage son complains that there is nothing to eat in the house, he means nothing he was interested in eating is

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[16]Creative Evolution, p. 277.

[17]Creative Evolution, pp. 278-298.

[18]Creative Evolution, p. 279.

[19]Creative Evolution, p. 286.

[20]Creative Evolution, pp. 288-289.

[21]Creative Evolution, p. 281.

in the house. When we say a new apartment has nothing in it, we overlook the presence of air filling every nook and cranny because it is not air that is of interest to us in that situation.

The word "nothing" is used when what is expected or desired is not there, but never is there a "hole" in our experience, never is there really "nothing" in the way philosophers use the term. Our experience is complete and full, by "nothing" we mean the replacement of the thing which interests us by something else. Thus the use of "nothing" implies the existence of something: the replacement.

Intellect is directed by interests and its terms have their true meaning in the context of interest. To use "nothing" to mean the non-existence of everything is a pseudo-idea, created when the interested, intellectual word is transported into the realm of disinterested speculation. Once "nothing" is defined by its use, the question, "Why is there something, rather than nothing?" becomes absurd. "Nothing" is something. Bergson applies the same critique to the pseudo-ideas of "disorder"[22] and "possibility."[23]

Realizing that the nonexistence of one thing always means the existence of another opens the way to an intuition of the real. Taking away our interest in the missing object, we see that there is always something present.

> Suppress all interest, all feeling, and there is nothing left but the reality that flows, together with the knowledge ever renewed that it impresses on us of its present state.[24]

With nothing filtered out by our interests, we experience reality totally, as it is. Thus intellectual analysis of pseudo-ideas can lead to an intuition.

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[22]Creative Evolution, pp. 220-222.

[23]Creative Mind, pp. 21-22, 107-125.

[24]Creative Evolution, p. 295.

False Articulations of Reality

In the case of pseudo-concepts, clarification removes the concept and all the problems related to them. While recognition of pseudo-ideas reveals the problem to be a pseudo-problem, analysis of general concepts to determine if they correspond to true articulations of the real merely sets the stage for further work on the problem.

Bergson states that intellect, as it creates objects and the words that correspond to them, carves reality however it desires. This carving can, and often does, go against nature's true articulations. Bergson writes:

> Plato compares the good dialectician to the skillful cook who carves the animal without breaking its bones, by following the articulations marked out by nature. An intelligence which always proceeded thus would really be an intelligence turned toward speculation. But action, and in particular fabrication, requires the opposite mental tendency.[25]

Quoting this passage, Deleuze summarizes Bergson's method as "The determination of true problems or of genuine differences in kind."[26]

An example of this part of the method is evident in Bergson's consideration of the problem of perception in Matter and Memory. The general concept of perception is what must be analyzed in this case. By clarifying what perception is and showing how past philosophical concepts of it have been guilty of false articulations of reality, Bergson finds the middle ground between idealism and realism.

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[25]Creative Evolution, p. 156.

[26]Deleuze, p. 33. Deleuze is wrong to limit Bergson's method almost exclusively to this first step, but he does an excellent job of describing it. (He mentions, but does not give a description of the intuitional experience which I place in the "positioning" step.)

In the past, philosophers had considered perception to be purely speculative. Both idealist and realists agreed on this point.[27] They also agreed that memory and perception differed only in degree, not in kind.[28] The truth, according to Bergson, is that perception is not purely speculative, but oriented to action.[29] This means it is different in kind from memory and more closely aligned to reflex action.[30] We have described Bergson's theory of perception above. By exhibiting perception as our reaction to the world around us, Bergson affirms the reality of objects, but without turning perception into a mystery as the realist does. He explains representation, as the idealist is able to do; but also explains the regularity of natural laws, which the idealist cannot do.[31]

Bergson's discussion of the nature of perception in Matter and Memory is complex and this brief summary does not do it justice. It will suffice, however, to exhibit two aspects of his method. First, he seeks to rediscover true articulations of the real in order to resolve a philosophic problem. He states that memory and perception differ in kind, not degree; while perception and reflex are of the same kind. Also, he discovers and questions an assumption common to both sides of the issue.

According to Kolakowski, questioning a shared assumption is Bergson's "favourite method of analysis."[32] Discovering a shared postulate will aid in pointing to a false articulation of the real. Bergson says:

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[27]Matter and Memory, p. 28.

[28]Matter and Memory, pp. 66-68.

[29]Matter and Memory, p. 28, 158.

[30]Matter and Memory, p. 69, pp. 23-24.

[31]Matter and Memory, pp. 26-28; Hanna, p. 13.

[32]Kolakowski, pp. 6-7.

> if we look closely at the two doctrines [realism and idealism], we shall discover in them a common postulate, which we may formulate thus: *perception has a wholly speculative interest; it is pure knowledge*. . . . Now, it is just this postulate we dispute.[33]

Questioning perception's speculative nature led Bergson to the action-oriented description of perception which resolved the realism/idealism impasse.

We must remember that intellect is the habitual faculty of human cognition. The false articulations of reality which intellect creates form our view of the world, a view we share in our language.[34] Therefore, when we discover proponents of radically different philosophic systems agreeing on a postulate, the chances are good that the postulate embodies a cutting of reality necessitated by intellect. If we question that postulate we will be driven to undo intellect's cutting, which is only possible through direct apprehension of reality through an intuition. Once again analysis has led us to intuition.

Clarification, then, by removing pseudo-ideas and redefining general concepts to fit more accurately true articulations of reality, is the first step in the intuitive process. By clarifying and critiquing intellect's action-oriented handling of a philosophic problem we brush aside the veil which separates us from an intuitive vision of reality.

Positioning

Gathering Images

> Bergson has complained that philosophy has lacked precision.[35]

> The fact is that a self-contained (vrai) system is an assemblage of conceptions so abstract, and consequently so vast, that it might contain, aside from the real,

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[33]Matter and Memory, p. 28.

[34]Two Sources, p. 104.

[35]Creative Mind, p. 9.

> all the possible and even impossible. The only explanation we should accept as satisfactory is one which fits tightly to its object, with no space between then, no crevice in which any other explanation might equally well be lodged; one which fits the object only and to which alone the object lends itself.[36]

We have seen how clarification eliminates the impossible and the possible from our conceptions as well as more clearly delimiting the object of our study. In order to develop an explanation which fits the object completely and uniquely, however, we must have recourse to intuition. Intuition is "the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it."[37]

How do we go about having an intuition? Since intuition is by definition immediate knowledge there are no steps to describe in the process of intuiting.[38] Intuition is a simple act.[39] However, there are some things we can do in order to elicit an intuition.

Let me offer an analogy in order to explain. Sight is analogous to intuition -- all we need do is look and we see. However, there are things we can do to improve our chances of seeing a particular object. Obstacles in our line of vision must be removed -- we may have to step closer to the object in order to see it clearly. We need to get into the right position in order to see. Yet seeing itself is just seeing -- as soon as our eyes light upon the object we see it.

In order to have an intuition, we must position ourselves so as to coincide with the object.[40] To do so, we install ourselves in the flow of our own duration and

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[36]Creative Mind, p. 9.

[37]Creative Mind, p. 190.

[38]cf. Rotenstreich, p. 336.

[39]Creative Mind, p. 191.

[40]Creative Mind, p. 190.

then use that experience as a bridge to the object's duration. Bergson is confident we can all intuit our personal duration without difficulty.[41]

It is a rare individual who cannot intuit his own duration; but it is also a rare individual who can make the effort to intuit another object.[42] Bergson describes what the aspiring metaphysician can do to elicit an intuition. We can position ourselves for an intuition by "piling up" images of the object until we realize the whole from which these images flow.[43]

> No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, any one of them will be prevented from usurping the place of the intuition it is instructed to call forth, since it would then be driven out immediately by its rivals.[44]

To "position" oneself is to so surround yourself with different views of the subject that you are forced inside in your effort to view them all. This is, of course, a highly metaphorical description, but explaining Bergson any other way is impossible.

What are the images used to elicit an intuition? Bergson uses the word "image" in two senses. In Matter and Memory Bergson uses the word "image" for the immediate data of our perception, which is something less than, but not something different from, the thing itself.[45] A concept, on the other hand, is a symbol of the image.[46] When Bergson tells us that the use of images will keep us "in

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[41]Creative Mind, p. 83.

[42]Two Sources pp. 212-213, pp. 249-50; Creative Evolution, pp. 200, 267-268.

[43]Two Sources, p. 222.

[44]Creative Mind, p. 195.

[45]Matter and Memory, p. 9, pp. 35-36.

[46]Creative Evolution, pp. 160-161; Creative Mind, pp. 195-196.

the concrete" it seems he intends this meaning of image as opposed to abstract concepts.[47]

However, Bergson tells us to use images to provoke intuition immediately after he has used the metaphors of the unrolling of a spool, the rolling up of a ball of thread, a spectrum of a thousand shades and an infinitely small piece of elastic to describe inner duration.[48] He calls these metaphors images.[49] By "image" does he mean immediate perception or metaphor? A footnote to the passage clarifies the situation. Bergson writes:

> The images referred to are those which can arise in the mind of the philosopher when he wishes to make his thought known to others. I am disregarding the image, near-neighbor to intuition, which the philosopher may himself need, and which frequently remains unexpressed.[50]

It seems the philosopher uses metaphor to express his intuition,[51] although the images of perception are what evoked the intuition to begin with. The image as metaphor is the expression of the image as perception. We can allow the word "image" to remain ambiguous, for both the immediate data of perception and the metaphors used to express them can elicit an intuition.

It is important to stress that the intuition you have is not the result of piecing together all the images or a synthesis of them. It is something entirely separate from the images, although the images spring from it. The various images you have of the object can help bring up an intuition, but will not constitute it. You must have an experience of the object itself. Bergson writes: "But metaphysical intuition, although

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[47]Creative Mind, p. 195.

[48]Creative Mind, pp. 192-194

[49]Creative Mind, p. 194.

[50]Creative Mind, p. 195n.

[51]Creative Mind, p. 48.

one can achieve it only by means of material knowledge, is an entirely different thing from the summary or synthesis of this knowledge."[52]

Bergson describes an artist who has made sketches of various Parisian scenes:

> Now at the bottom of all the sketches made in Paris the stranger will probably write "Paris" by way of reminder. And as he has really seen Paris, he will be able, by descending from the original intuition of the whole, to place his sketches in it and thus arrange them in relation to one another. But there is no way of performing the opposite operation; even with an infinity of sketches as exact as you like, even with the word "Paris" to indicate that they must bear close connection, it is impossible to travel back to an intuition one has not had, and gain the impression of Paris if one has never seen Paris. The point is that we are not dealing here with parts of the whole, but with *notes* taken on the thing as a whole.[53]

The pictures the artist has made of Paris can serve as reminders, calling up a memory of his visit there. His memory of Paris, however, is much fuller than the pictures. Imagine yourself the memories you recall when looking at snapshots of a vacation. There is more in the memories then in the pictures. The memory is the original of which the pictures are copies. The relationship is similar between images and intuition they evoke. An important difference is that by positioning ourselves for an intuition we are attempting to call up an experience for the first time, not revive a memory of it. We are attempting to see an object with which we are familiar in a new way.

We must already be familiar with the object in order to collect images of it. We receive these perception-images from scientific research and personal experience.

> For one does not obtain from reality an intuition, that is to say, a spiritual harmony with its innermost quality if one has not gained its confidence by a long comradeship with its superficial manifestations. And it is not a question simply of assimilating the outstanding facts; it is necessary to accumulate and fuse such an enormous mass of them that one may be assured, in this fusion, of

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[52]Creative Mind, pp. 236-237.

[53]Creative Mind, pp. 201-202.

> neutralizing by one another all the preconceived and premature ideas observers may have deposited unknowingly in their observations. Only thus does the raw material of the known facts emerge.[54]

We must be conversant with as much as possible of what science has to say about the object of our study. Bergson insists on the need for scientific study and points to the scientific background of his writings as evidence of his respect for scientific research.[55] His major works are based on in-depth study of the relevant scientific data. He studied aphasia for six years before writing Matter and Memory and spent eleven years studying in preparation for Creative Evolution.[56] In Creative Mind he writes:

> The masters of modern philosophy have been men who had assimilated all the material of the science of their time. And the partial eclipse of metaphysics since the last half century has been caused more than anything else by the extraordinary difficulty the philosopher experiences today in making contact with a science already much too scattered.[57]

Even though we assimilate as much scientific observation as possible, we keep in mind science's practical orientation. We must not reintroduce the false concepts and presuppositions we discarded during the clarification step. We view the data in a new way. This is why it is necessary to gather "an enormous mass" of data so that prejudices of one kind or another will be balanced out.

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[54]Creative Mind, p. 236.

[55]Creative Mind, pp. 78-80.

[56]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and the Evolution of Science," pp. 10, 12.

[57]Creative Mind, p. 236.

Changing Rhythm

With all these images about us we attempt to obtain a pure perception of the object ourselves. This is intuition. ". . . in pure perception we are actually placed outside ourselves; we touch the reality of the object in an immediate intuition."[58] Pure perception takes place in the object, not in us.[59] Thus, through a pure perception we can "coincide" with the object and know it "from within".[60] This occurs when we recognize the rhythm of the object's own duration and are able to apprehend that rhythm.

To explain this, let us look again at a passage partially quoted above:

> No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, any one of them will be prevented from usurping the place of the intuition it is instructed to call forth, since it would then be driven out immediately by its rivals. By seeing that in spite of their differences in aspect they all demand of our mind the same kind of attention and, as it were, the same degree of tension, one will gradually accustom the consciousness to a particular and definitely determined disposition, precisely the one it will have to adopt in order to appear unveiled to itself.[61]

When we are surrounded by many images of the object we notice that they all demand the "same degree of tension." In the passage quoted, Bergson is discussing the intuition of our own duration, and therefore concludes that when we achieve this degree of tension the mind is unveiled to itself. We can infer from this that if we notice the same degree of tension in all images of an external object and can tune our duration to that same tension, we will have the object unveiled to us.

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[58]Matter and Memory, p. 75.

[59]Matter and Memory, pp. 43, 61, 64, 75.

[60]Creative Mind, p. 190, 191.

[61]Creative Mind, p. 195.

Different objects have their own rhythm of duration, each flows at its own rate.[62] Matter has the fastest, most repetitive duration; pure spirit (God) is eternal duration.[63] Our mind has its rhythm, also. In normal perception we contract a plurality of instantaneous perceptions given during one pulse of our own duration into one perception with the aid of memory.

The rhythm of our duration is a function of the degree of freedom we possess. The more freedom we have, the more we are master of our actions, the greater the number of instantaneous pulses of duration we can combine in one perception. Thus human perception contracts more instantaneous duration in one "glance" than animal perception, animal more than vegetable, and so on.[64] The rhythm of matter is faster than ours, closer to being instantaneous, while the rhythm of God would be much slower. He would contract the greatest number of instants into one perception.

The contraction of a series of instantaneous perceptions into one is achieved by memory. Thus memory is the source of subjectivity in knowledge; it imposes the rhythm of our own duration on to our perceptions.[65] Therefore, objectivity can be gained by expunging memory from perception, i.e. to return to pure perception. In pure perception we would perceive the object according to the pulses of its own duration, rather than our own.

> For if we follow to the end the principle according to which the subjectivity of our perception consists, above all, in the share taken by memory, we shall say that even the sensible qualities of matter would be known *in themselves*, from

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[62]Creative Mind, p. 218.

[63]Creative Mind, p. 221.

[64]Creative Evolution, p. 301.

[65]Matter and Memory, p. 34.

> within and not from without, could we but disengage them from that particular rhythm of duration which characterizes our consciousness.[66]

If we can relax or contract the tension of our own duration to match the objects duration we will apprehend it as it is.

> . . . the intuition of our duration, far from leaving us suspended in the void as pure analysis would do, puts us in contact with a whole continuity of durations which we should try to follow either downwardly or upwardly: in both cases we can dilate ourselves indefinitely by a more and more vigorous effort, in both cases transcend ourselves. In the first case, we advance toward a duration more and more scattered, whose palpitations, more rapid than ours, dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity: at the limit would be the pure homogeneous, the pure *repetition* by which we shall define materiality. In advancing in the other direction, we go toward a duration which stretches, tightens, and becomes more and more intensified: at the limit would be eternity. This time not only conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. It would be a living and consequently still moving eternity where our own duration would find itself like the vibrations in light, and which would be the concretion of all duration as materiality is its dispersion. Between these two extreme limits moves intuition, and this movement is metaphysics itself.[67]

Intuitional metaphysics is the dilation and contraction of our own duration to match the duration of other objects and thus know them in themselves. This is a metaphorical description of intuition -- all this dilating and stretching and contracting -- but as we have discussed, as we get closer and closer to intuition metaphors are more exact than straight prose and yet still leave some of the experience unexpressed.

Having an intuition of an object is an experience of gestalt. You have started with a multitude of images, but suddenly you see the object itself in its wholeness. Bergson describes the experience of recapturing the intuition of another philosopher in his lecture "Philosophical Intuition." After in-depth study of the philosopher's complex system we suddenly experience it as a whole.

> In the first place, its complication diminishes. Then the various parts fit into one another. Finally, the whole is brought together into a single point, which

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[66]Matter and Memory, p. 69.

[67]Creative Mind, p. 221.

> we feel could be ever more closely approached even though there is no hope of reaching it completely.
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> In this point is something simple, infinitely simple . . .[68]

This unity and simplicity is not achieved by a synthesis of the images. It is not the combination of images, but the source of those images. We use images to achieve the intuition, but the images do not make up the intuition.

Gunter seems to imply that intuition is synthesis. He says:

> . . . for Bergson, if intellectual analysis spatializes and fragments reality, it should be possible to return, though abstractly, to reality by picking up these spatial pieces and putting them back together again.[69]

He also says:

> Philosophy, unlike scientific empiricism, aims not at practical effectiveness but at a more and more encompassing reflection, that is, an intuition. It takes the inverse direction from intellect and instead of fragmenting what the intellect has to teach, tries to weld together the intellect's observational and theoretical 'atoms' and, without losing sight of particulars, to bind them together into a synthetic intellectual picture of the world.[70]

This interpretation is not in line with Bergson's thought. He warns us that we cannot achieve an intuition by piecing together the elements which intellect has separated out of the object.[71] Bergson states clearly:

> But metaphysical intuition, although one can achieve it only by means of material knowledge, is an entirely different thing from the summary or synthesis of this knowledge.[72]

From our clarification, research and effort we gain a vision of the object in its entirety and uniqueness. Suddenly the opposing viewpoints philosophers have taken

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[68]Creative Mind, p. 128.

[69]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," pp. 29-30.

[70]Gunter, "Bergsonian Method and The Evolution of Science," p. 31.

[71]Creative Mind, p. 196

[72]Creative Mind, pp. 236-237.

on the subject are perfectly understandable and yet dissolve for we can see how each was created by emphasizing one or another aspect of the reality itself.[73]

> Finally, philosophy thus defined does not consist in choosing between concepts and taking sides with one school, but in seeking a unique intuition from which one can just as easily come down again to the various concepts, because one has placed oneself above the division of the schools.[74]

Philosophy is defined as "seeking a unique intuition" for each problem it studies.

Now we have removed intellect's falsifying work through clarification and gained a direct vision of the object of our study through intuition. The next step is to express the findings of our study and then to test them.

Solidification

So far we have cleared away the work of intellect and gone against the usual habits of our mind in order to install ourselves in reality itself. It is easy to see why Bergson calls intuition a reverse mode of thinking.[75] Instead of pulling the qualities which interest us out of the flow of reality, as intellect does; we place ourselves into the real in a reverse movement.

We cannot stop here with our intuition. As stated above, an intuitional philosophy would be useless if its findings could not be expressed. It is necessary to express the intuition so it can be tested and so that other philosophers can share our work.[76] We started by removing concepts, but now it is time to return to them.

> Bergson's method, if it dispenses with symbols, does so only briefly and--what is more important--only provisionally. Symbols (including both the most

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[73]Creative Mind, pp. 197-8; p. 207; cf. p. 205 and Matter and Memory pp. 26-28.

[74]Creative Mind, p. 207.

[75]Creative Mind, p. 224.

[76]Grégoire, p. 405. Bergson stated that his method of philosophy, being truly empirical, would be a collaborative enterprise.

> abstract language and images) are not only necessary to reach intuition; they are also necessary to express intuition, to formalize it in a testable way.[77]

Even the conceptualization of the intuition is a reverse mode of thinking. Bergson tells us that to "think consists ordinarily in going from concepts to things, and not from things to concepts."[78] The intuitional method removes concepts at the start and goes to the object instead. It is only after the intuition of the object that we return to concepts.

> . . . if metaphysics is possible, it can only be an effort to re-ascend the slope natural to the work of thought, to place oneself immediately, through a dilation of the mind, in the thing one is studying, in short, to go from reality to concepts and not from concepts to reality.[79]

I call this process of going from reality to the concept solidification because the fluidity of the real is made solid by static concepts.[80] The intuitional philosopher will struggle, however, to express his intuition with the most fluid concepts possible.[81] He will have recourse to metaphor and imagery because in this case a metaphor is actually more accurate than scientific prose.[82]

Instead of using "ready-made" concepts, it may be necessary to create new concepts to describe the object.[83] Alfred North Whitehead, who was heavily influenced by Bergson,[84] writes:

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[77]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 174.

[78]Creative Mind, p. 208.

[79]Creative Mind, p. 216.

[80]Creative Mind, p. 228.

[81]Creative Mind, p. 224.

[82]Creative Mind, pp. 48-49.

[83]Creative Mind, p. 198.

[84]Charles Hartshorne, Creativity in American Philosophy, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), p. 5.; Hanna, p. 22.

> Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles. Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably. Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage; and however such elements of language be stabilized as technicalities, they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap.[85]

With all his effort the philosopher will be unable to fully express his intuition. As we said in the previous chapter, the philosopher's true goal is not to express the intuition, but to elicit for her readers the same intuition he has experienced. This is the "imaginative leap" to which Whitehead referred. The philosopher provides the images and metaphors her readers need to position themselves for an intuition.

> Bergson has himself explained at length the function of the image in his work. As he sees it, the aim of the intuitive philosopher is to excite at each stage of his reflection corresponding intuitions in the mind of the reader.[86]

Through the philosopher's effort to express intuition, our symbol systems are enriched.[87] We come up with new, more flexible concepts in order to express the intuition of the object.[88] Bergson uses the infinitesimal calculus often as an example of symbolic restructuring. An example Bergson does not give, but which seems clear to me is the advance from Aristotelian syllogisms to the propositional calculus. Our symbol systems move closer to reality with each intuition, but will never reach it, precisely because it is reality and they are symbols.

Verification

Bergson, as an empiricist, always sought to verify the findings of his intuitional method. This verification is performed by intellect. It is true that at

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[85]Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffen and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 4.

[86]Alexander, p. 17.

[87]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 174.

[88]Creative Mind, p. 198.

times the finding cannot be directly verified, but Bergson seeks a point of contact between intuitional philosophy and intellectual science where the vision he has had will make a difference.[89]

For example, when attempting to verify his views of perception and memory in Matter and Memory, he has to find an effect of his hypothesis which can be verified, since the hypothesis itself cannot be. In order to prove that the brain is an instrument of action, not representation he finds that e cannot study perception itself. He says that "with regard to external perception, the thesis which we dispute and that which we substitute for it lead to precisely the same consequence."[90] However, the two hypotheses have different consequences for memory. Therefore, he turns instead to the study of memory and aphasia to show that memory stands in relation to perception as he has proposed.[91]

There will always be a way of verifying the intuition. Matter -- which intellect apprehends sufficiently -- and life have points of contact, a boundary along which the effects of one are felt by the other.[92] Thus we can always discover a material effect of intuition which can be studied by intellect. Pete Gunter tells us that "if we can find no possible verification our putative insight is not an intuition at all."[93]

There is a second way in which the intuition can be verified. It must be fruitful. This is what Bergson refers to as a second type of clarity. The first kind of clarity, which intellect provides, is that of the clear and distinct idea. It is clear in

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[89]Creative Mind, p. 50.

[90]Matter and Memory, p. 75.

[91]Matter and Memory, pp. 74-76.

[92]Creative Mind, p. 50.

[93]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 172.

itself.[94] The second kind of clarity belongs to the idea which is obscure itself, but lends clarity to others:

> It is the clarity of the radically new and absolutely simple idea, which catches as it were an intuition. As we cannot reconstruct it with pre-existing elements, since it has no elements . . . our first impulse is to say it is incomprehensible. But let us accept it provisionally, let us go with it through the various departments of our knowledge; we shall see that, itself obscure, it dissipates obscurities. by it the problems we considered insoluble will resolve themselves, or rather, be dissolved, either to disappear definitively, or to present themselves in some other way.[95]

A true intuition will show how antinomies about the object have developed and how they will be resolved. Each side of the argument will become understandable as an overemphasis of one side or the other of the reality under study and a new position will become apparent which resolves the conflict between the existing positions.[96] We have discussed briefly Bergson's resolution of the conflict between realism and idealism above.

The intuition, expressed and verified by intellect, will be clarified and new avenues of research will open up. Bergson continues the passage just quoted:

> From what [the intuition] has done for these problems, it will in its turn, benefit. Each one of them, intellectual by nature, will communicate to it something of its intellectuality. Thus intellectualized, this idea can be aimed anew at problems which will have been of use to it after having made use of it; better still, it will clear up the obscurity which surrounded them, and will, as a result, become itself still clearer.[97]

The intuitional philosophic method involves a creative interchange between intellect and intuition. Intellect begins the process by critiquing its own abstracts. Intuition picks up the process, providing a direct contact with reality. Then intuition and intellect recombine, expressing and verifying the discovery. This process

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[94]Creative Mind, pp. 39-40.

[95]Creative Mind, p. 40.

[96]Creative Mind, p. 207.

[97]Creative Mind, p. 40.

develops and clarifies both our symbol systems and the intuition itself and reveals new areas to which the method can be applied. Thus the cycle begins again, intellect posing problems to intuition and intuition answering with its insight, both enriched by the contact.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

In Bergson's philosophy reality is duration, a flow of creativity. Therefore philosophy, the study of ultimate reality, needs a method which can apprehend the mobility of duration.

Intellect is ill-suited to this task. Developed as a tool to facilitate action intellect is not interested in reality as it is; but rather is directed toward those aspect of reality which are of use for human action. Therefore it extracts from the flow of reality only those qualities which are of interest to it. It removes those qualities from duration and conceives them as spatial in order to facilitate action upon them. Lastly, it categorizes the object with the aid of memory, recognizing the object not as it is, but as it resembles other objects. The result is a partial knowledge of the object devoid of duration and lacking its uniqueness.

When intellect, faced with this partial perception of reality, attempts to complete perception with conception it creates abstract ideas of two kinds. First, it creates general ideas which encompass a class of objects, overlooking the uniqueness of each one. These general ideas often embody false articulations of reality. Second, intellect develops abstract conceptions, artificially used to reconstitute the flow of reality. These abstract ideas are often pseudo-ideas.

Intuition, on the other hand, is direct coincidence with reality. It consists of pure perception in which we apprehend the object according to the rhythm of its own duration. Therefore intuition apprehends the object as it is, without eliminating aspects of it or spatializing it. Intuition apprehends duration itself.

Therefore intuition must be the cornerstone of philosophic method. Bergson developed and used a method of this type. His philosophic method involves a creative interchange between intellect and intuition. Intellect critiques its own abstractions and gathers data which serve as the starting point for intuition.

In the possession of the multitude of data, the philosopher dilates his mind, suppressing memory, and attempts to discern the rhythm of the object's duration. Through this violent effort he may achieve an intuition of the object.

The intuition then offers itself back to intellect, creating fluid concepts in an effort to express itself and thus reshaping intellect's symbol systems. Although full success in expressing the intuition will never be gained, the philosopher may succeed in evoking the same intuition in his readers through metaphorical description of his intuitional experience. In the meantime, intellect's symbol systems will be brought closer to reality.

Intellect provides the verification for intuition, finding a place along the border between its own and intuition's proper domains where the hypothesis can be tested. It also recognizes the fruitfulness of a true intuition: its ability to resolve existing antinomies and to indicate avenues of fresh research.

Once Bergson's views on intellect, intuition and their relationship have been made clear, charges of irrationalism are revealed to be groundless. Gunter writes:

> An insight which enriches our symbol-systems, rather than disrupting or merely denying them, is not irrationalist in any ordinary sense of the term. Moreover, an insight which is capable of doing so must contain conceptual content. This is precisely Bergson's contention: "My intuition is reflection." [Creative Mind, p. 103] Intuition thus appears to be a dynamic kind of reasoning, rather than some sort of evasion of reason. One is hard-pressed to think of a definition of "irrational" or "anti-intellectual" which could be plausibly applied to such a process.[1]

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[1]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," pp. 174-175.

Bergson has great respect for the sciences; the data they provide are necessary to evoke an intuition. Intellect plays an important role in the intuitional method, providing the initial clarification, aiding in the expression of intuition and instrumental in its verification.

Maritain argues that Bergson was forced to an irrationalist position because he developed his concept of *élan vital* in Creative Evolution without first working out a theory of knowledge. Maritain claims that Bergson refused to choose between realism and idealism in Matter and Memory, and it is this failure which left him without a foundation for a rational epistemology.[2]

Obviously this position is based on a total misunderstanding of Matter and Memory and Bergson's epistemology. Bergson does not need to choose between realism and idealism in Matter and Memory because his novel conception of the mind/body relation provides a third alternative which resolves the disagreement between the two while at the same time explaining perception and conception more adequately than either.

I have used examples from Matter and Memory to show how Bergson used the intuitional method in that work. Much of Bergson's epistemology was already worked out by the time of Matter and Memory's writing.[3] Anyone who could read Matter and Memory and not see that it contains a fully developed theory of perception upon which the rest of Bergson's epistemology is based, has entirely missed the point. Also "An Introduction to Metaphysics" was published four years before Creative Evolution. If there is a irrational epistemology in Bergson (which there is not) it cannot be because the conception of *élan vital* propounded in Creative Evolution forced Bergson to accept it.

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[2]Maritain, Ransoming the Time, p. 66.

[3]Gunter, Bibliography, p. 2.

Bergson's critique of intellect is not as unfounded as Maritain claims, nor as destructive. Intellect remains an important and useful faculty of human knowledge. Bergson is not an irrationalist.[4]

Claims that his philosophy leads to a dead end are equally unfounded. Gunter agrees:

> Intuition is . . . so far from being a "dead end" for Bergson that if we are not careful to formulate his position clearly, he begins to seem overly preoccupied with "results": i.e., with verifiable, "useful," experimental consequences.[5]

Intuition can be expressed, although it will not be expressed with clear and distinct scientific prose nor will it be expressed completely. Through metaphor and imagery the intuition can be approximated and a corresponding intuition may be evoked in the reader.

Intuition can be verified. There will always be a material effect of any intuition which can then be tested by scientific observation. The intuition will provide insight into philosophic problems; clarifying them however obscure it remains itself. Therefore Bergson's intuitional philosophic method cannot be considered a dead end.

Although Bergson's method is difficult it is possible and useful. It seems that other than Bergson himself, however, no one has made a disciplined attempt to use it. Perhaps, the time has come for such an effort.

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[4]Alexander, p. 8.

[5]Gunter, "Bergson's Philosophical Method and Its Applications to the Sciences," p. 174.

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VITA

C. Tabor Fisher

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: THE RHYTHM OF PHILOSOPHY: INTUITION AND PHILOSOPHIC METHOD IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON

Major Field: Philosophy

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from DuVal Senior High School, Lanham, Maryland, in June, 1976. Received Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Literature, Taylor University, Upland, Indiana, August, 1983. Completed requirements for Master of Arts degree in Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, May, 1990.

Professional Experience: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, January, 1988 to May 1989.