

INTUITION VERSUS INTELLIGENCE IN H. BERGSON

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***Resumé.** L'intuition constitue un pari gagné par Henri Bergson, qui a réussi de démonter beaucoup des fausses idées de la conception rationaliste „classique”.*

C'était une réaction justifié contre les exés du scientisme, un appel à la continuité de nos sentiment, pensés et pensables.

Henri Bergson rises against the scientism and the intellectualism of his age, pleading for metaphysics in a period in which the positivist movement attempted to destroy it. Bergson's special contribution consists in the substantiation of the concept of intuition and in the effort of proving the superiority of the intuitive knowledge vs the discursive one. He speaks of the continuous interaction between intuition and the discursive knowledge, the last one being its foundation, he argues against it and studies it thoroughly.

The Bergsonian intuition aims at understanding the essence of the creation of the world as a whole, it does not divide the world into separate things, the way intelligence does. The latter is a means of creating instruments and it cannot explain the origin and the evolution of life because it goes along only with matter, reality, immobility and

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discontinuity. On the contrary, intuition is an unselfish act, it is not an action or a utility and it has repercussions on the spirit, on the possible, on the mobility and continuity.

The main thesis of the Bergsonian doctrine is that of the intuition of duration. The theory of intuition separated from that of duration is general but lacking substance, the theory of duration separated from that of intuition gives a concrete vision of reality, without methodological justification. The theory of intuition is associated with knowledge, whereas that of duration is the object of knowledge. By means of this idea of the intuition of duration, Bergson opens a new philosophical perspective on the whole reality of conscience.

In the first chapter of "*Essay on the Immediate Data of Conscience*", Bergson proves that in their process of understanding spiritual life, philosophy and science committed a serious error. This error consists in mistaking quantity for quality, in approaching conscience in terms of quantity and not of intensity. The main cause that triggered this error consists in the extension of the mathematical model, which presupposes a spatial approach of time in a field it does not fit: that of spiritual research. It will be necessary, Bergson urges, to try to find out the result of the multiplicity of our inner feelings when it comes to leaving aside the setting. It is therefore compulsory to give up the deeply rooted practice of blending time and space.

In Bergson's view, space and time are two utterly different dimensions: space is an attribute of substance, whereas time, as duration, is an attribute of life and of spirit. Time is an abstract notion, whereas duration is concrete, it is life itself witnessed in its pulse, in its becoming. That is why,

duration cannot be represented, expressed as a concept. Time, acknowledged by means of physics and mathematics, does not capture but some sequences from it: those that can be measured and that concern space. The inner vibration of time is still beyond any science, because it cannot be known, it can only be the object of experience. Duration and movement are not things that possess length, spatial homogeneity and simultaneousness. The so-called duration is not made up of identical moments, being heterogeneous when compared to itself, indistinct and with no analogy with the number. Placed into the temporal order, the temporal duration will oppose the length of spatial order. The thoroughly pure duration is the form adopted by the succession of our manifestations of conscience, when our ego does not separate the present feelings from the past ones.

As Bergson sees it, real duration and movement are successive and heterogeneous mental syntheses. Pure duration is pure heterogeneity, whereas space is absolute homogeneity; that is why the problems raised by the essence of knowledge must be tackled in connection with time rather than with space. The target of intuition will thus be the inner duration, representing the direct vision of spirit by the spirit. Intuition consists of a succession of processes, which is an indivisible continuity of the pulse of the inner life, that is why it will no longer appear as a reflection of its two faces - space and language. "To our mind, intuition refers, above all, to inner duration. It renders a different succession of juxtaposition, an evolution from exterior to interior, the continuous extension of the past usurping the future. It is the direct vision of spirit through the spirit. Nothing

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interposed, no refraction, through a prism whose sides are on the one hand the space and on the other – the language."

Intuition is knowledge that needs contact and even coincidence. This contact and this coincidence with the object are possible by means of the phenomenon of psychological endosmosis, that is by means of the combination of human knowledge. Conscience sympathises with everything inside and outside its range of action. But "do we sympathise only with conscience? If every human being is born, grows up and dies, if life is evolution, and if duration is here a reality, isn't there an intuition of the vital things and consequently a metaphysics of life in their extension of the science of the living thing?"

The answer of this kind of question is given in "The Creative Evolution" in which, by tackling the intuition of the vital things, Bergson tries to leave behind the mechanistic and finalist theories on life. In his opinion, mechanicalism is wrong to view life as a static process, the events of life; as for finalism, it should not approach life as established beforehand; that is why neither mechanicalism nor finalism will ever testify for the essence of life. "The mechanistic explanations consist of seeing the future and the past as aspects to be measured with direct reference to present. Finalism is but a twisted mechanism. It finds its away of expression through the same postulate, with the only difference that it replaces the impulse of the past with the attraction of the future." This consists in the vital impulse which is present in all forms of existence and continuously determines a creative evolution. This vital impulse and this creative evolution can be felt only intuitively.

"In the page selected from the greatest book of the world, intuition is meant to recover its motion and rhythm, to re-experience creative evolution by means of sympathy." By sympathy we understand the virtual, unconscious knowledge which derives from an extension of some organic interaction. The vital has, according to Bergson, its own laws which prove inaccessible if explored in the same way as the field of 'inertness'. The cognitive value of intuition will thus reside in the exploration of creation. If analytical segmentation is a practice of intelligence, the target of intuition will be creation as a whole and will lead us into the very core of life.

In the introduction to the volume "*Thought and Movement*", Bergson points out that the advocates of Romanticism, even though sensible to the uselessness of conceptual thinking when it comes to grasping the essence of the spirit, reached the conclusion that "transgressing intelligence is transgressing time." Not being able to understand that "intellectualised time is space," they spoke of a superintellectual intuitive faculty. In order to pass from the relative to the absolute, it is not the transgression of time that is necessary, but the new approach of duration and the perception of reality in its own immobility, that is the very essence of life.

As far as the intelligence is concerned, Bergson considers that it does not have access to the origin and evolution of life, because it applies only to matter, immobility and discontinuity; intuition, on the other hand, does have access to both the origin and evolution of life, as it has to do with the spirit, mobility and continuity. Intelligence is meant to study a part of the whole and not the whole; when

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looking into things on the whole, it more often than not faces difficulties and contradictions.

In the last chapter of "*Creative Evolution*" entitled "The Cinematographic Mechanism of Thinking and the Mechanicist Illusion"⁷, it is asserted that the intellect is meant to help life rather than understand it, because it shatters to pieces what we call experience; really, experience is nothing more than a continuous flux of purely conventional moments and moods. The intellect, just like the cinematograph, creates instantaneously something that is always in motion and it does this by means of static successive representations, none of them real, because life, that is the captured item, never stops moving. Thus, the cinematograph creates an image of life and of movement.

Intelligence develops properly only in space, that is why its evolution takes hold especially of science and technique. It is "the human way of thinking. It was given to us, the way instinct was given to the bee, in order to guide us." Being synonymous with the manner of seeing each thing separately, it cannot catch the 'vital pulse' and the 'creative evolution', these being accessible only to intuition.

Intuition has a different function from that of intelligence. It means "the sympathy through which we get inside the object in order to identify ourselves with what is unique and therefore cannot be expressed."

The criticism of intellectual knowledge is not synonymous with the discouraging lack of trust in its operations of analysis. As Bergson sees it, intelligence is the innate aptitude of recognizing the balance, but this kind of knowledge is not essential.

Starting from the limits of abstract thinking and from the classical theory of the formation of the scientific notions, Bergson embarks upon analysing the intellect and placing the entire process of knowledge in the perspective imposed by the very cycle of life.