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Temporal Nature of Philosophy and the Concept of Duration in the Philosophical Method of Henri Bergson

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This article explores the temporal nature of philosophy and the concept of *duration* (*durée*) in Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) philosophical methodology. The aim is to examine how time, particularly the concept of duration, is present in Bergson's philosophical approach and his understanding of the nature of philosophy itself. The analysis primarily relies on Bergson's works, including *Creative Mind* (1934), *Mind-Energy* (1920), and his 1916 speech delivered at the student residence in Madrid¹, while utilizing the definition of duration found in *Time and Free Will* and *Duration and Simultaneity*. The focus is on the role of duration in Bergson's methodology and the resulting implications for the nature of philosophy. I will exemplify the practical application of the concept of duration with examples especially from *Creative Evolution*.

Although there have been limited studies on the role of duration in Bergson's philosophical methodology, there exist works that explore duration and its relationship with *intuition*, which Bergson defines as his method. This distinction between intuition and methodology is necessary here, since in Bergson's writings intuition has also a strong association to a type of intellectual capability comparable to intelligence.²

¹ Cf. "Discours prononcé à la résidence des étudiants" in *Mélanges* (1972).

² In my perspective, the distinction between the two is not definitively clear-cut, as intuition, in fact, encompasses both aspects. However, due to the diverse nature of the concept, it is essential to acknowledge that a study solely focused on intuition does not automatically equate to an in-depth exploration of Bergson's methodology. More on this distinction cf. (Lipsanen 2021).

And while duration and intuition have been much studied attempts to reconstruct Bergson's method are scarce. This article is part of an effort to create this type of structured model of the Bergsonian method to make it available for current philosophical study. Very helpful for my study have been the studies by Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron and Leonard Lawlor (2010) on intuition and duration but also studies by David Lapoujade (2018) and Dimitri Tellier (2008) that have provided support for my methodological interpretations.

Concept of duration and spatialized time

The nature of time holds a significant position in Bergson's philosophy, a subject he already delves into in his first doctoral dissertation, *Time and Free Will*. Throughout this work, Bergson consistently revisits the notion that the root cause of numerous classical philosophical dilemmas lies in the conflation of quality and quantity. One example he explores in *Time and Free Will* is Zenon's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise. Bergson contends that this paradox stems from a confusion between motion and space, which, by extension, leads to a flawed comprehension of the essence of time:

Why does Achilles outstrip the tortoise? Because each of Achilles' steps and each of the tortoise's steps are indivisible acts on so far as they are motions, and are different magnitudes in so far as they are space.[...] This is what Zeno leaves out of account when he reconstructs the movement of Achilles according to the same law as the movement of tortoise forgetting that space alone can be divided and put together in any way we like, and thus confusing space with motion. (Bergson 2001, 113–114.)

This confusion, specifically, enables the paradox to arise. Instead of perceiving movement as an indivisible act, it is reduced to space and reconstructed through uniform immobilities. According to Bergson, motion itself lacks homogeneity, and any appearance of homogeneity is only found in the space it traverses (Bergson 2001 115, 140–221). This tendency to equate quality with quantity, as Bergson argues, is prevalent in our everyday lives and is inherent in the very nature of human understanding. Bergson observes how sensations such as pain, for instance, possess an intensi-

ty that can only be quantified by external factors unrelated to the pain itself. Our consciousness perceives pain as greater if it affects a larger portion of our body or if it is accompanied by additional sensations like nausea or heavy breathing. It is through the number of body parts affected or the additional sensations accompanying the pain that our consciousness grasps pain as a quantity. According to Bergson, pain in itself is a quality (Bergson 2001, 35–38).

For Bergson this indicates that the human mind has a tendency to quantify qualities, often resulting in the complete neglect or initial unawareness of the original quality. The human mind brushes the immediate impression to the side and an intellectualized impression takes precedence (Bergson 2001, 90). This happens because the human mind tends to intellectualize and with our sensations, this happens almost instantly. In this process, quality is transformed into a form that the human mind can measure. (Bergson 2001, 39, 42–43, 48–49.) In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson argues that this tendency to intellectualize stems from the evolution of human intelligence. Our minds are oriented towards tool fabrication, and the spatialization and quantification of qualities are merely extensions of this inherent habit (Bergson 2001, 139). Once this spatialization or quantification has been done, the qualities become our tools.

The very same tendency of the human mind extends not only to our everyday impressions but also to more complex concepts, including the notion of time. According to Bergson, what we commonly refer to as time is fundamentally no different from our concept of space. Rather than understanding time on its own terms, it is comprehended solely in terms of space (Bergson 2001, 113–114, 181–183; 2007, 4). This results in a spatialized conception of time. But what does “spatialized time” mean? It implies that time is perceived as something measurable, a homogeneous continuum that can be divided into units and represented as a timeline (Bergson 1965, 57; 2001, 98). Bergson’s central concern with this understanding of time is that it presupposes that the time under discussion has already passed, at least theoretically. Even when discussing future events, if time is depicted as a timeline, this representation implies that time has already been determined—it already has an endpoint (Bergson 2007, 2–3).

This presumed givenness of time, which forms the basis of our understanding, further influences the philosophical questions we attempt to address.

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson argues that the debate on free will, encompassing perspectives such as determinism and indeterminism, is rooted in a flawed spatial understanding of time. This spatial conception reduces the question of free will to a mere inquiry into whether a choice between predetermined options was genuinely a choice. This limited perspective eliminates the possibility of unexpectedness or the emergence of entirely new solutions (Bergson 2007, 8.) After these criticisms, Bergson's own solution might seem rather unsatisfactory. He asserts that "freedom is the relation of the concrete self to the act it performs," yet he acknowledges that this relation is ultimately "indefinable" (Bergson 2001, 219). According to Bergson, when we analyze our supposed free actions, we inadvertently convert their duration into extensity. The indefinability of the relation between the concrete self and the act arises precisely because of our freedom. Bergson argues that any attempt to provide a positive definition of freedom would ultimately result in the triumph of determinism (Bergson 2001, 220). He posits that a truly free act is one that cannot be predicted, and any effort to analyze the conditions and antecedents of an act, as well as their connection to the act itself, inherently disregards the continuous flow of time. Such analysis treats both time and the act as events that have already transpired.

In short in *Time and Free Will* Bergson finds that human mind has a tendency spatialize, leading to conceptions such as determinism and indeterminism that rely on a spatialized notion of time. This general and the common conception of time can be useful in many instances, even necessary to many fields of science (Bergson 1965, 56-57; 2007, 3-4). However, Bergson argues that this conception is inadequate for philosophy and its aims, as it fails to capture the true essence of time (Bergson 1965, 65). Spatialized time, according to Bergson, is a reconstruction formulated by human intelligence, transforming time into a model of space for instrumental purposes (Bergson 1965, 57). Human comprehension, as well as science itself, necessitates the use of time as a tool. The purpose of science is to present the world in a manner that

enables us to act upon it. It predicts and measures, so we can best utilize it (Bergson 2007, 25–26).

While science relies on time as a tool, Bergson argues that philosophy is concerned with exploring the true essence of time itself.³ Bergson's concept of *duration* presents a conceptualization of non-spatialized non-intellectualized real time. According to Bergson, our conceptions should be founded on our immediate experience (cf. Bergson 2001, 126–128). Bergson describes duration as the lived experience of time within ourselves, likening it to a flowing melody (Bergson 1965, 44; 2001, 100–101). It represents an ongoing continuity, characterized by constant movement and change, where individual moments can only be artificially separated. Just as a melody cannot be fully grasped by isolated notes, duration is understood by experiencing moments in a continuous succession (Bergson 1965, 49, 52). Real time, or duration, cannot be reduced to discrete units; it is an uninterrupted and heterogeneous flow.

The key differences between duration and spatialized time in their nature. Duration is a continuous and heterogeneous movement of change, while spatialized time is a homogeneous line that is considered already given, capable of being divided into measurable parts (Bergson 1965, 49). Real time is grounded in our immediate experience, whereas spatialized time is a reconstruction fabricated by human intelligence.

Duration has then an evident connection to the human mind. In Bergson's own words, duration no doubt unites or fuses into the continuity of our inner life (Bergson 1965, 44). Our immediate experience of time is rooted in the very continuity of our consciousness – without consciousness, there is no duration (Bergson 1965, 48). Memory is intrinsically linked to duration, as our perception of continuity and change relies on our ability to distinguish the past from the present and establish connections between them (cf. Bergson 1965, 44, 48–49). Without memory, our conscience would be in a sense reborn every moment, completely ignorant of the past. And there would be nothing to us except the present (Bergson 1965, 48; 2007, 137–138). These facts may appear self-evident,

³ It should be noted that for Bergson philosophy is not a science and that these fields of knowledge are different by nature.

but they elucidate the central role of consciousness in understanding the concept of duration. Our mind or spirit (*esprit*) is, by nature, duration – indivisible continuity of change – and it is the duration that is most familiar to us.

But what relevance does this have for the nature of philosophy and Bergson's philosophical method? In his work *Creative Mind*, Bergson expresses, "These conclusions on the subject of duration were, as it seemed to me, decisive. Step by step they led me to raise intuition to the level of a philosophical method" (Bergson 2007, 18). Here, Bergson refers to the conclusions he reached while working on his doctoral dissertation. He was taken aback by the supposed conceptions of time found in the philosophical systems of sciences and some positivist thinkers, particularly Herbert Spencer in this case.

In his studies and later during his doctorate, Bergson was interested especially in Spencer's evolution, creativity, and progress-oriented thinking, but also the manner of his study. For Bergson, Spencer seemed to base his philosophy more directly on impressions of things and follow the facts more closely than any other philosopher. (Bergson 2007, 2; Verdeau 2007, 364–366.) One of the central ideas in Spencer's work, *The First Principles* (1862), was to observe how the universe becomes increasingly heterogeneous and differentiated from a previously homogeneous state, placing evolution at the core of Spencer's philosophy (Weinstein 2019). Bergson believed that *The First Principles* fell short in its understanding of mechanics, and he desired to follow Spencer's path, almost redoing Spencer's work with special attention to this particular detail. However, as he began this work, he noted the problems of spatialized time as demonstrated above: it discards the time itself and measures something else, namely, the spatialized representation of time. (Bergson 2007, 2–3.)

The search for the real time led Bergson to develop this new method that he termed intuition. Interestingly, the discovery of duration and intuition occurred almost simultaneously for Bergson, even though he fully articulated his own conception of intuition much later.⁴ Based on Bergson's de-

⁴ This is mentioned for example by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1988, 13). Despite this, in *Time and Free Will* Bergson mentions intuition at least once

scriptions of intuition, a reference to a direct immediate vision in the context of duration already suggests that some idea of intuition was already present early on (Bergson 2007, 2-3). Bergson tries to dissociate his conception of intuition from the history of the concept, mentioning Schelling and Schopenhauer by name (Bergson 2007, 18). He emphasizes that the object of intuition is a primary reason for differentiating his concept from others, as intuition is often historically associated with grasping eternal ideas or principles. Bergson describes the initial use of his method as follows:

I had chosen first of all to try out my method on the problem of liberty. In so doing I should be getting back into the flow of the inner life, of which philosophy seemed to me too often to retain only the hardened outer shell. (Bergson 2007, 15.)

For Bergson, *Time and Free Will* was the first attempt at reanalyzing some of the classical problems of philosophy with his newly discovered conception of duration.

Bergson's methodology

Now, shifting our focus to Bergson's methodology itself, I will begin by providing a general overview and then delve into the role of duration within this process. Based on my analysis, Bergson's philosophical method can be seen as comprising two distinct moments. The first moment is scientific in nature, while the second, as stated by Bergson himself, is truly philosophical (Bergson 1972, 1197).

In the first moment of his methodology, the philosopher immerses himself in the latest research conducted in the scientific field relevant to the topic at hand (Bergson 1972, 1197). For example, if we are interested in the nature of life, we should familiarize ourselves with evolutionary biology. If, on the other hand, we are interested in conscience or memory, we should focus on psychology or neurology, for example. This demonstrates Bergson's aspiration to adhere to scientific facts as closely as possible in a Spencerian manner.

in a way that clearly illustrates the effort to grasp our immediate impressions (Bergson 2001, 114).

In Bergson's view, science and philosophy have different goals. Science does not fully grasp what philosophy aims for. Science, or intelligence, is focused on measurement, spatialization, and the creation of typologies and categories (Bergson 1965, 48). It aims to intellectualize its objects and make them useful and accessible for future actions. We are not dealing with reality as such, but rather with the version of reality that our human intelligence can grasp. According to Bergson, philosophy, on the other hand, is interested in the essence and nature of objects as such. (Bergson 2007, 18–19; 102–103.) It is then clear that simply taking facts from the scientists is not enough.

Our philosophical inquiry commences by delving into the pertinent scientific disciplines and thoroughly examining their research, acquiring proper directions for the study. Although Bergson's explanations regarding this process are limited, his work *Mind-Energy* suggests that science does not merely provide us with these guidelines; instead, it falls upon the philosopher to identify and interpret them. Bergson also implies that this process specifically involves recognizing inclinations present within scientific studies. In *Mind-Energy*, Bergson exemplifies the formulation of these guidelines through his lecture on the relationship between life and consciousness, as well as the function of consciousness in living beings. As consciousness operates through the brain in human beings, Bergson initiates his analysis by examining the function of the brain within the nervous system. He emphasizes that while certain reactions to external stimuli involve the brain, there are numerous instances where the nervous impulse bypasses the brain and directly travels to the spinal cord. Bergson contends that the brain's involvement arises when a choice is required rather than an automatic response. By considering this and various other facts, we arrive at the conclusion that the brain is an organ of choice (Bergson 1920, 11–12). Ultimately, Bergson argues that consciousness embodies freedom and creativity in the evolutionary process of life, and the brain, as an organ of choice, serves as an early indication of this discovery.

The directions derived from scientific studies do not lead us directly to the truth. They provide us with guidance and point us in the right direction, but alone they are insufficient.

Bergson appears to view coherence or convergence of facts as the criterion for determining the correctness of the direction.

In short, we possess even now a certain number of *lines of facts* which do not go as far as we want, but which we can prolong hypothetically. [...] Each, taken apart, will lead us only to a conclusion which is simply probable; but taking them all together, they will, by their convergence, bring before us such an accumulation of probabilities that we shall feel on the road to certitude. (Bergson 1920, 4, emphasis added.)

Philosophical knowledge and its methodological process rely on coherence and the gradual accumulation of probability for their validity and credibility. The outcomes of philosophical investigations are inherently speculative, and it is not possible to assert absolute certainty in our studies. Bergson does not specify the reason for the speculative nature, but it can be assumed that it arises from two factors. Firstly, the progress of science provides valuable information that can be drawn upon for philosophical studies. Secondly, the utilization of intuition and the application of duration to elaborate on scientific knowledge are not without uncertainty. Bergson asserts that philosophy, similar to the sciences, should be progressive and self-correcting, with subsequent philosophers building upon the work of their predecessors and incorporating new information they have acquired. (Bergson 1920, 1-4.)

Once we have acquired insights from the sciences regarding our subject of interest and outlined the general framework of our study, we must address the remaining gap, as the first moment alone does not lead us directly to the truth. It is in the second moment of the method, the distinctively philosophical phase, that duration and intuition come into play. Regarding duration, its significance in the philosophical method can be illustrated through the following two quotes from Bergson:

[L]et us in a word become accustomed to see all things *sub specie durationis* [...] (Bergson 2007, 106).

In fact, the more we accustom ourselves to think and to perceive all things *sub specie durationis*, the more we plunge into real duration (Bergson 2007, 132).

Sub specie durationis, "from the perspective of duration" refers to Spinoza's phrase *sub specie aeternitatis*, "from the perspective of eternity". The purpose of this contrast is clear: philosophy should move from the eternal, constant, and unchangeable perspective to the perspective of change (Bergson 2007, 6, 18–20). Bergson proposes that instead of seeking eternal ultimate principles, laws, or ideas, philosophers should direct their attention towards everything that changes and the inherent changeability of all things. The task of philosophy is to study reality from the perspective of duration, or rather study reality as change or duration.

In this very perspective, philosophy can be seen as the counterpart to science, which, according to Bergson, studies reality as static and homogeneous, aspiring to measure and spatialize it (Bergson 2007, 102–103). This also reveals the fundamental elements of Bergson's metaphysics, where reality consists of two basic factors: matter and spirit. Spirit represents the ever-changing and creative aspect of reality—it is inherently duration or the source of all duration. In Bergson's philosophy, everything in reality is formed of these two forces. The division of labor between science and philosophy specializes in each of these basic forces: philosophy focuses on spirit, while science focuses on matter (Bergson 1972, 887; 2007, 24–25). Ideally, the knowledge from each field complements the other, leading to a progressively more complete understanding of reality (Bergson 1965, 5; 1920, 7).

Before going further into philosophy's perspective, it is relevant to clarify the perspectives of science. What is the relationship between matter, space, and spatialization in the realm of science? According to Bergson, scientific thought, or intelligence, is modeled after matter; it treats everything as if it were matter. This perspective gives rise to spatialization. One might wonder if science is also concerned with change. Indeed, it is, but not in a similar way as philosophy. Bergson argues that sciences like biology do study change, such as evolution. However, this study involves transforming change into inertia and halting the movement of change. Science creates stages or phases to represent change in an analyzable form. (Bergson 1911, 170–172, 206–207.)

To use Bergson's analogy of a melody, grasping the change of melody as change (philosophy) means experiencing the

melody as it unfolds. On the other hand, analyzing the melody, treating it as if it were composed of individual phases strung together and effectively arresting the original movement of change (science), involves breaking it into notes and creating a notation. After making this distinction, one might be inclined to conclude that, for Bergson, science deals only with intellectualized constructions that lack a true connection to reality. However, I interpret Bergson's view as suggesting that science simply approaches reality from the perspective of matter and that it undeniably acquires knowledge that is no less valuable than the knowledge gained by philosophy. Notation provides us with a tool to analyze harmonies and compare melodies, even if it may lose sight of duration. This knowledge, while different from philosophical knowledge, is still valuable and true.

The task of philosophy is to study reality from the perspective of change: spirit as duration. According to Bergson, as we already previously mentioned, human intelligence tends to reconstruct everything changing spatially, time as a timeline as if it were like matter, measurable, and extensive object. In other words, the scientific outlook is the natural perspective of the human mind. The philosophical perspective on the contrary goes against human nature – human beings are not evolved to perceive change as change (Bergson 2007, 61–62). Instead, it is natural for the human intellect to freeze change into a particular form and view it as static. Time is not studied as it endures, but rather as a frozen timeline. Evolutionary changes are not observed as they occur, but rather as freeze-frame images, represented by different frozen phases (Bergson 1965, 60).

Duration and intuition

The question is, therefore, how despite this philosophy is capable of regarding change as change, if it is against human nature. This is possible with intuition. Bergson defines intuition in the following manner:

The intuition we refer to then bears above all upon internal duration. It grasps a succession which is not juxtaposition, a growth from within, the uninterrupted prolongation of the past into a present which is already blending into the future. It is the

direct vision of the spirit by the spirit,—nothing intervening [...]. (Bergson 2007, 30, translation altered.)

Intuition finds its foundation in the inner duration inherent within human beings themselves (Bergson 2007, 20). As mentioned earlier, duration is intimately connected to the human mind and its nature; in fact, the human mind and consciousness are inherently characterized by duration. Furthermore, we have discussed how the true nature of time as duration can be directly apprehended through inner experience. Within ourselves, we can directly perceive the flow of time and the ever-changing nature of our inner states.

Bergson's methodology rests on a Cartesian premise, wherein one duration that we can know with absolute certainty is intricately intertwined with our own existence—the duration of our own being.⁵ This is the key role of duration in his methodology. The question that arises is how we can utilize this immediate grasp of our own duration. In his methodology, Bergson seeks to extend the certainty and immediacy of our experience of duration to other objects of our knowledge, including things that exist external to ourselves (Bergson 2007, 20). However, the challenge lies in how we can establish a connection between the certainty and directness of our knowledge of inner states and the knowledge of other objects. There is an evident connection between our durations and other beings:

How do we pass from this inner time to the time of things? We perceive the physical world and this perception appears, rightly or wrongly, to be inside and outside us at one and the same time [...]. To each moment of our inner life there thus corresponds a moment of our body and of all environing matter that is “simultaneous” with it; this matter then seems to participate in our conscious duration. (Bergson 1965, 45.)

According to Leonard Lawlor, there exists an “infinity of other possible durations in my self” because my duration is a part of the greater “whole of duration”, which suggests our participation in a universal duration (Lawlor 2010, 33–34). There are many similar interpretations with different empha-

⁵ Similar interpretations have been made for example by Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (cf. 2004, 63).

ses. Michel Weber, for instance, explicitly asserts that our duration allows us to connect with the uninterrupted continuum of durations (Weber 2005, 129).

But to give this idea a more methodologically clear form, I introduce here Bergson's idea of reasoning by analogy.⁶ In order to extend intuition to other objects, we must perceive the object of our study as analogous to our inner duration. Just as everything in reality comprises both spirit and matter, the object of study, as something that undergoes change, must also include spirit, which inherently possesses duration. Lapoujade and Tellier highlight that Bergson's analogy is not between two identical things, but between two entities that share something in common (Lapoujade 2018, 45; Tellier 2008, 425). The object of our study and our inner continuity has a shared nature and that is duration (cf. Bergson 1965, 45; Tellier 2008, 425–426). We can perceive objects in reality as resembling duration-like change because we ourselves embody the very same temporal change. An even simpler way to state this would be to say that we can look at reality as a temporal changing thing because we are ourselves temporal changing beings.

In addition to analogy, the concept of sympathy is also relevant here. Our shared nature with reality and other beings enables us to intellectually sympathize with the object of our study. There is not only something similar between us, but something that is the same: duration. We can sympathize with this duration, which allows us to understand other objects "from within" (Lapoujade 2018, 40). In this sense, sympathy refers to the same thing as the Bergsonian analogy. Sympathy seems to be a less technical term, but it demonstrates the act by which our understanding of the nature of the object occurs, which is not purely analytical or intellectual. As Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron puts it, the intuition of duration is not the same as an idea of duration (Vieillard-Baron 2004, 50–52). While the immediate experience of our inner

⁶ David Lapoujade has made a detailed study of this type of reasoning in Bergson's philosophy, which I have adopted here (Lapoujade 2018, 44–52). Bergson mentions this type of reasoning in a couple of cases, but does not elaborate much on this idea (Bergson 1965, 46; 1992, 438; 1911, 270).

duration is certain, extending it to other objects necessarily involves speculation. (cf. Bergson 1920, 4; 1965, 46.)

Finally, what are the results of Bergson's methodology? How does the concept of duration contribute to a philosophical study? I will use Bergson's work *Creative Evolution* here as an example. In said work Bergson studies the nature of life as an evolution. His view is contrasted in the beginning with views such as mechanism and finalism. Without going to detail, both of these views essentially argue that evolution is predetermined in some aspect: either the end goal (finalism) is given or each of the changes of evolution are connected by necessity; one change is necessarily followed by another and there are no other possibilities. According to Bergson true change and duration is excluded from these views and wishes to introduce a point of view that regards evolution as truly change.

Bergson analyzes various evolutionary lines and the tendencies that manifest within them. As Bergson regards the movement of life and the changes that occur in it, he draws a parallel to our own inner experience of change. Inner duration and change are understood as analogous to the changes and duration of life. This analogy is stated very directly: "Such is my inner life, and such also is life in general" (Bergson 1911, 272). Just as we cannot distinguish specific states in our inner experience of duration, such as states of mind and the transitions between them (except artificially), we also cannot do so with the movement of life or the changes of evolution. We can acknowledge that we are a different person than we were 10 years ago and point out certain differences in our personality. Similarly, we can identify variations in the characteristics of a species from thousands of years ago to the present. However, these differences are labeled using static states of "then" and "now". The actual ongoing change can only be grasped by looking at our inner experience of change and the continuous duration of time that we feel within ourselves in every moment. Through this lens, we can think and immediately apprehend the change in the movement of life, almost as if we are experiencing it within ourselves.

Bergson arrives to the idea of *vital impetus* (*élan vital*) according to which, the movement of life is created by the interplay of two opposite forces spirit and matter. Spirit

signifies the effort to create as freely as possible whereas matter provides the means of creation, but with limited possibilities. Bergson's ultimate idea is that life's aim is to overcome the limits of matter and create as freely as possible. He arrives to this conclusion especially by studying the evolutionary path to man. As previously mentioned, Bergson has noted that human consciousness has something to do with choice and freedom. Bergson argues that this development of human conscience demonstrates the life's effort create more freely. Development of human intelligence that is modeled after matter, demonstrate the life's effort to overcome limitations of matter. Human cognition has triumphed over these limitations by acquiring tools to manipulate matter. Through the acquisition of tools—both physical and intellectual—as well as the development of language, human beings have attained the capacity create ever more freely. (Bergson 1911, 278–280.)

Drawing on the insights of evolutionary biology, tendencies toward this inherent need for creativity can be discerned in various lines of evolution. However, it is through our understanding of our own consciousness and its duration that the principle of vital impetus becomes most evident. Similar to our individual duration, the duration of life itself is finite—it undergoes maturation and different lines of evolution become specialized. Bergson's argument suggests that these specializations are directed towards discovering the optimal means of surmounting the limitations imposed by matter. Thus, it is through the analogy and comparison of our inner duration with life's duration that Bergson identifies the nature of life as a vital impetus—an incessant striving to create with increasing freedom.

Bringing duration to the objects of our study completes our understanding of their nature. It goes beyond merely providing a more comprehensive definition or image. With the inclusion of duration and intuition, the objects of our contemplation come alive, so to speak:

Thanks to philosophy, all things acquire depth,—more than depth, something like a fourth dimension which permits anterior perceptions to remain bound up with present perceptions, and the immediate future itself to become partly outlined in the present. Reality no longer appears then in the static state, in its

manner of being; it affirms itself dynamically, in the continuity and variability of its tendency. (Bergson 2007, 131.)

For Bergson philosophy animates the objects of its study. It does not view things as immutable or eternal, but rather acknowledges the inherent temporality within them. Philosophy regards reality as temporal, and ever-changing and preserves the temporal nature of the objects of its study. This perspective also has profound implications for philosophy itself, as philosophical thought becomes inherently temporal as philosophical thought itself is thinking in duration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Bergson's method of intuition is grounded in the notion that philosophy seeks to comprehend reality through one of its fundamental elements: spirit, duration, or change. Together with science, which examines reality from the perspective of matter, they complement each other and form a more comprehensive understanding of reality. Bergson's concept of duration offers philosophy a unique approach to its inquiry.

Within the framework of Bergson's method, duration assumes a significant role in the second phase, namely intuition. It follows the scientific phase, which provides philosophy with general orientations and a framework for the philosophical intuitive approach. The knowledge acquired through familiarization with scientific discoveries, guided by intuition, can be enriched in the second phase, where duration plays a crucial role.

The second moment requires us to grasp reality as ever-changing and moving. Even though the human mind according to Bergson is used to regard everything in the manner of science as something static and the study of change without stopping the change and studying the change as change is uncharacteristic of it, even against the human intellect, it is possible. Our temporal nature and immediate experience of the duration of time make it possible. Duration is an essential part of intuition, because only inner experience of it, makes it possible to extend intuition to other objects of our knowledge. Intuition requires us to regard the object of our knowledge as a duration that also exists within us. With duration, we can

be “*in sympathy with reality*” (cf. Bergson 2007, 133, citation 20). When our inner duration is understood as analogous to the duration of the object of our study, we can grasp its nature and complete the understanding we already sketched out with scientific knowledge. Seeing things *sub specie durationis* means that we are regarding them through our own duration.

Philosophy is not solely the study of changing reality. For Bergson, philosophy itself is immersed in that change. Even the results of philosophy are temporal, they are not absolute and need to be improved by later philosophers. Simo Knuuttila, in his Keynote presentation at The Philosophical Society of Finland's Annual Colloquium 2022 in Oulu, posed the question of whether a philosopher's perspective on time can be anything but detached, limited to the “conceptual present” (*käsitteellinen nykyhetki*). Henri Bergson would answer, yes it can be, and it should be. According to Bergson, philosophy should abandon the perspective of eternity, unchanging “conceptual present”. It should be temporal, finite, and speculative. For him, philosophy itself is temporal thinking, thinking in duration.

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