The Intuition of Duration: A Holistic Approach to Henri Bergson's Theory of Freedom

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Declaration

I, Ömer Faruk Kayacı, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The proposition that every event in time is predetermined by a prior event has been central to many debates over the philosophical problem of freedom as it has been utilised to demonstrate that freedom cannot be attributed to anything that has a temporal existence. In his *Time and Free Will*, Henri Bergson rejects this proposition on the ground that it presupposes a conception of time which is quantifiable. He contends that real time, which he calls duration, is purely qualitative, and that it cannot be divided up into mutually external moments among which causal bonds are then artificially established. Therefore, viewed from this angle, the problem of freedom as it relates to the notion of predetermination in time turns out to be a false problem.

Bergson's solution to the problem of freedom is not so simple, however. His doctrine of duration provides the means to dissolve any false problem that may be recast as "the problem of freedom." For it forces us to change our conception of reality altogether. To understand his unique approach to the problem of freedom, then, his doctrine of duration must be elucidated first. I do this mainly by setting Bergson off against Kant since the former responds primarily to the latter in his discussion of time. I follow the same strategy in my exposition of Bergson's theory of intuition. This is because Bergson himself mentions Kant for his discovery that, if metaphysics were to be possible, it would have to proceed by (intellectual) intuition. In this connection, I also touch upon Bergson's distinction between science and metaphysics as it is an integral element of his "anti-positivistic" stance.

Finally, after showing what Bergson's "intuition of duration" means, I come back to the problem of freedom as he conceives of it. I contend that his doctrine of duration, along with his conception of reality as movement, leads inevitably to a novel understanding of the notion of freedom to which neither determinism nor indeterminism can be posed as a threat.

Impact Statement

The present thesis is intended to contribute to the renaissance of Bergson's philosophy in recent scholarship. In this work, I provide a comprehensive exposition of Bergson's intellectual enterprise with a special focus on the concepts of time, intuition, and freedom. Since these are among some of the most fundamental concepts of human life, examining them from a rather unorthodox but equally illuminating standpoint has benefits extending well beyond academia. Furthermore, the results of the present thesis may serve as a guidance for future research in humanities and social sciences pertaining to the concepts of time, intuition, and freedom.

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Abbreviations for Henri Bergson's Works

CE	Creative Evolution
CM	The Creative Mind
DS	Duration and Simultaneity
M	*Mélanges*
ME	Mind-Energy
MM	Matter and Memory
TFW	Time and Free Will

Abbreviations for Immanuel Kant's Works

CPR	Critique of Pure Reason
CPrR	Critique of Practical Reason
CPJ	Critique of the Power of Judgment
ID	Inaugural Dissertation of 1770
LL	Lectures on Logic
LM	Lectures on Metaphysics
Prol	Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics

I. Introduction

The proposition that every event in time is predetermined by a prior event has been central to many debates over the philosophical problem of freedom as it has been utilised to demonstrate that freedom cannot be attributed to anything that has a temporal existence. The reason that is commonly offered for this is that the ordinary conception of time, in which the temporal order of events is projected onto a time-series, is taken to imply causal necessity of a devastating kind, given the assumption that the law-governedness in nature is manifested temporally. Perhaps the most exquisite articulation of this idea is presented by none other than Immanuel Kant, one of the most passionate champions of freedom, as follows: "…every event, and consequently every action that takes place at a point of time, is necessary under the condition of what was in the preceding time. Now, since time past is no longer within my control, every action that I perform must be necessary by determining grounds *that are not within my control*, that is, I am never free at the point of time in which I act."[1] It is not difficult to see why Kant would think that every action that takes place at a point of time, customarily abbreviated as t_n, is necessitated by the state of the world in the preceding time, t_{n-1}. For he recognises no other way of representing succession other than by dividing time into time-points, such as t_n and t_{n-1}, and treating it as if it is composed of moments that are external to each other.[2] In this picture, cause and effect become clearly distinguishable from each other in terms of their respective positions in the time-series.[3] No wonder, then, that the law of causality would rule over things that preside in time.[4] In fact, this is precisely why Kant insists that the only way to save freedom is to place it outside time, that is, in the noumenal world.[5]

[1] CPrR, 5:94. *See* also CPR A532/B560.

[2] CPR, B50. Importantly, however, Kant is not advocating an atomistic conception of time from a realist standpoint, for he regards time merely as the form of sensible intuition. *See* CPR, A35. His alleged atomism, therefore, is concerned exclusively with the *representation* of succession. Mark Sacks refers to this view as "perceptual atomism," and he explains how it differs from the sensory atomism of the empiricist. *See* Sacks 2000, 78, fn6i in particular for further discussion.

[3] Significantly, Kant acknowledges that cause and effect may be simultaneous; yet he argues that they are nonetheless *ordered* in a temporal sequence. In this regard, he writes: "If I consider a ball that lies on a stuffed pillow and makes a dent in it as a cause, it is simultaneous with its effect. Yet I still distinguish the two by means of the temporal relation of the dynamical connection. For if I lay the ball on the pillow the dent follows its previously smooth shape; but if (for whatever reason) the pillow has a dent, a leaden ball does not follow it. The temporal sequence is accordingly the only empirical criterion of the effect in relation to the causality of the cause that precedes it." CPR, A203/B249.

[4] Of course, this is on the condition that one prefers event-causation over substance-causation. However, as it will become clear in what follows, Bergson rejects substance-causation altogether on the ground that it is founded upon the misleading conception of *static* substances that do not *endure*. On the other hand, as John Mullarkey notes, in Bergson's philosophy, "substance is not denied so much as reinterpreted as *durée* [duration], 'a substantial continuity.'" Mullarkey 1999, 14.

[5] CPrR, 5:95. In distinguishing appearances from things in themselves, Kant is largely motivated by the worry that "if appearances are things in themselves, then freedom cannot be saved." CPR, A536/B564.

However, since we cannot have access to the noumenal world as he concedes, to borrow Henri Bergson's words, freedom becomes "an incomprehensible fact"[6] in Kant's philosophy. Unsatisfied with this solution, Bergson approaches the philosophical problem of freedom from a different angle, and he launches a fierce attack on Kant for succumbing to the age-old mistake of conflating time with space.[7] Bergson attempts to dispel this confusion by inviting us to grasp time as it really is, i.e., as *duration*. And he argues that, once this is accomplished, the philosophical problem of freedom simply vanishes.[8] For the kind of determinism that is posed as a threat to the existence of freedom rests on a particular conception of time, i.e., spatial (or quantified) time. Bergson rejects this conception on the grounds that time is actually indivisible, and that it cannot be measured in terms of quantities.[9] In his view, to represent time amounts to spatialising it, thus turning it into space. However, in pure duration, the moments of time are not external to one another, but each represents the whole by mutual penetration.[10] Consequently, the cause-effect pair, which manifests itself in a nature governed by mechanistic laws, loses its rigidity within real time, leaving room for genuine freedom, which Bergson often associates with unforeseeable novelty,[11] and ties closely with the idea of creation.[12]

In this thesis, I will set out a guideline for interpreting Bergson's theory of freedom in light of his unique approach to some of the central problems of epistemology and metaphysics which, although not constitutive of a unified system,[13] nor intended by the author himself to be so, forms a comprehensive and highly original way of philosophising. It is important to highlight at the outset that Bergson's entire philosophy is ultimately rooted in the thesis that reality consists fundamentally of movement rather than things that move.[14] This leads him to develop a novel epistemology in which a distinction between two kinds of knowledge becomes urgent,[15] which in turn incentivises him to introduce the method of intuition as the

[6] TFW, 232.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] TFW, xx.
[9] TFW, 105.
[10] TFW, 101.
[11] DS, 141.
[12] ME, 23. Crucially, Bergson insists that creation is not a relation between "*things* which are created and a *thing* which creates." CE, 248. This is a direct consequence of his metaphysical commitments, one of which is to define *things* in terms of their utilities. This will become clearer in the next chapter as I discuss the salient aspects of his doctrine of duration.
[13] *See* Moore 1996, xvi on this point.
[14] CM, 119.
[15] Throughout his writings, Bergson repeatedly argues for "the existence of another faculty capable of another kind of knowledge," and he identifies it with intuition. He argues that it provides the kind of

"direct vision of the mind by the mind."[16] For intellectual knowledge, representational in character, is restricted to the domain of things; and for this reason, it cannot have movement itself as its object. It cannot represent reality as movement, for movement is bound to become in intellectual representation the juxtaposition of immobilities, thereby having its dynamic nature concealed. On the other hand, the non-representational character of intuition, which is capable of producing a rather different kind of knowledge, makes it possible for us to grasp the true nature of time, that is, to conceive of time as duration. In this way, intuition as a philosophical method serves as a means to dissolve a number of philosophical problems apropos the nature of representation in general. Crucially, Bergson agrees with Kant that although time and space differ in kind, the former can only be represented in terms of the latter. His protestation against Kant, therefore, lies in this, that time cannot be represented at all, for it is to be lived.[17] And the role of the method of intuition is to get one in immediate contact with life, instead of looking at it from a distance, as it were, in order to project it in representation spatially by dint of the intellect.

The present thesis is divided into three main chapters. I take it that a proper understanding of Bergson's theory of freedom requires, first of all, a firm grasp of "the intuition of duration" which Bergson himself describes as the central theme of his philosophy.[18] Accordingly, I shall begin by asking the following question: What is duration? And in what respects is it different from the ordinary conception of time? Since Bergson develops his conception of time as duration as a response to Kant's analyses, I will provide the details of the latter for contrast and comparison. After this, I will show that the Bergsonian notion of duration makes sense, and assumes a pivotal role with respect to the philosophical problem of freedom, only if the fundamental unit of reality is taken to be movement (or, what amounts to the same thing, change) rather than things that move. Then, I will proceed with a thorough investigation of the concept of intuition as it is utilised by Bergson. Here, again, I will address the evolution of the concept of intuition from Kant to Bergson, and try to clarify what exactly is meant by it. This is especially important, since intuition is frequently, and

knowledge with which metaphysics is, or at any rate should be, concerned (as opposed to science which derives its knowledge from the intellect.) *See* CM, 62. I will say more on this in III.

[16] CM, 20.

[17] Or to be intuited, as we shall see later in the present thesis. In any case, with this move, Bergson aims to show the possibility of freedom on the basis of his conception of time as duration. Note that he never trivialises the practical value of representing time by means of a spatial analogue; what he disputes is rather the presumption that, in this way, the true nature of time, which bears on the philosophical problem of freedom, can be revealed.

[18] M, 367.

quite mistakenly, thought of as some sort of mystical power. As I will demonstrate, at least in Bergson's philosophy, it has no such mystical connotation whatsoever. For, as Bergson states explicitly, to think intuitively is simply "to think in duration."[19] Lastly, I will come back to the original question that I have started with: Are we essentially free? The crucial point to see here is that whether an action is carried out freely cannot really be known if knowledge remains restricted to the sphere of the intellect which has as its object only things that move, excluding movement itself. The method of intuition, on the other hand, comes in precisely at this point in that it "starts from movement, posits it, or rather perceives it as reality itself, and sees in immobility only an abstract moment, a snapshot taken by our mind, of a mobility."[20] And since action appears to us in the form of movement,[21] and since time is activity,[22] grasping reality as movement in duration by an effort of intuition puts us in immediate contact with the actions that we perform, and as a result, lets us grasp their essence in which freedom is to be sought. Finally, I will show that, by redefining reality as movement, Bergson comes up with a novel conception of freedom, which by definition cannot be subject to the difficulties that the traditional accounts often lead to. Furthermore, viewing reality as movement carries the consequence that a free action and a non-free action cannot be distinguished from one another in terms of their relation to so-called antecedent conditions. For that method of distinguishing them is reminiscient of the conception of quantifiable time. In duration, on the other hand, what may be referred to as antecedent and precedent conditions are not regarded as external to each other, so that they cannot be juxtaposed as causes and effects. In Bergson's theory, freedom comes in degrees, and the degree of freedom that a free action has is determined by how much of the personality is reflected in it.

II. Duration

1. Existence and Nothingness

Any metaphysical claim regarding the nature of time turns on the particular ontological view to which one subscribes with respect to the question of what reality

[19] CM, 22. Revising Spinoza's *sub specie aternitatis*, Bergson asserts that the method of intuition enables us "to see all things *sub specie durationis*." CM, 106.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] CE, 329. I hasten to add that Bergson uses the term "movement" in a rather broad sense. He seems to have in mind *change* (or *becoming*) in general, whether it be mental or physical, or indeed in some other form. The following remark of his is especially helpful in understanding his interpretation of movement more clearly: "*Real movement is rather the transference of a state than of a thing*." MM, 202. *See* also Mullarkey 1995, 233 and Mullarkey 1999, 13-14 for further discussion on Bergson's characterisation of action as movement.
[22] DS, 145.

consists in, and Bergson's doctrine of duration is no exception to this. His discussion of the notion of *nothingness* proves particularly fruitful in this context, for it sheds considerable light on how he understands existence, which is traditionally, and according to him, erroneously, regarded as that whose intellectual content is richer than that of nothingness,[23] and that which is consequently *more* than, or something *added* to, nothing.[24] Bergson contends that, based on this misguided supposition, the intellect poses the first false problem, which is "asking oneself why there is being, why something or someone exists."[25] And he maintains that this surfaces as a problem "only if one posits a nothingness which supposedly precedes being."[26] It seems, therefore, that the confusion arises because we tend to think as if existence is constructed on top of nothingness, treating the latter as though it provides the empty place for the former to come and fill; when it is actually the opposite that is the case, viz., that nothingness presupposes existence. Of course, this is contrary to what common sense tells us since it defines nothingness as absolute void which is supposed to have been there all along even before anything had ever come into existence. The problem with this, however, is that when one actually tries to think of pure nothingness so defined, the content of that thought necessarily ends up being empty. In other words, as Vladimir Jankelevitch writes, "the thought of nothingness is a nothingness of thought."[27] Bergson's criticism of the common sense position is thus founded upon the premise that pure nothingness can neither be perceived nor conceived.[28] It cannot be perceived, because the only way in which nothingness can be represented in consciousness is by a *suppression* of a *certain* thing.[29] For example, when we say that *this* pencil does *not* exist, we are merely suppressing the image of the pencil, and representing another image in its stead, be it that of a virtual vacuum with distinct outlines or another object in the vicinity of the now non-existent pencil.

[23] CM, 81.
[24] CE, 276. For a critical exposition of Bergson's account of nothingness, *see* Gale 1974.
[25] CM, 78.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] Jankelevitch 2015, 173.
[28] CM, 78.
[29] CM, 79. Note that this is a necessary consequence of Bergson's theory of perception in which reality as it is perceived through the intellect is considered the representation of the utility that we can make of matter. Following this line of thought, then, in pure perception, nothingness really means absence of utility. *See* CE, 297. Incidentally, this can be construed as a response to the objection that, by denying the existence of pure nothingness in this way, Bergson is attributing a nothingness to the concept of nothingness itself. John Mullarkey points out in this connection that "the critique of nothingness, be it relative or absolute, really bears on the scope of nothingness rather than on its existence *simpliciter*. The real conclusion of the critique is that negativity has a position only within the social sphere as a corrective action." Mullarkey 1996, 370.

This means that suppression is a form of *substitution*.[30] It is to substitute the image of the non-existent thing for that of another thing which actually exists. And this bears on why pure nothingness cannot be conceived either. For, if particular instances of nothingness are indeed particular suppressions, it follows that the concept of nothingness denotes the suppression of everything; but if suppression is substitution, we arrive at the absurd conclusion that the intellect, in order to conceive of pure nothingness, substitutes everything for everything else. Bergson presses this point to demonstrate that the concept of nothingness, when regarded as total annihilation in this way, is reduced to a mere word which has no meaning.[31] On the other hand, in the domain of action (and fabrication), the idea of nothingness *does* have a meaning.[32] How else could we employ it in ordinary discourse? And as far as it serves the function of *negation*, its content is far from being empty. In fact, Bergson argues, as has already been indicated, that there is *more* in the idea of nothingness than in the idea of existence, since "to represent the object A [sic] non-existent can only consist […] in *adding* something to the idea of this object: we add to it, in fact, the idea of an *exclusion* of this particular object by actual reality in general."[33] The nature of the operation of exclusion in this context is essentially practical, since it involves the notion of *interest* at its core. This becomes all the more evident when we consider Bergson's identification of the absence of a thing with the presence of another thing which does not interest us.[34] This means that when we attribute non-existence to a thing, we simply express our *disappointment* to find in its place something else, that is, something in which we are not interested.[35] Following the same strategy, then, can we define, reversely, existence in terms of our interests? Can we say thereby that things that exist are those in which we have at least some interest?

2. Interest and Consciousness

Interest is admittedly a vague term. First of all, how do we define it? Why do we have interest in *this* rather than *that*? I take it that it is extremely useful to locate the notion of interest within the broader context of Bergson's philosophy, ranging from his comparison of metaphysics with science, to the distinction that he draws

[30] CM, 78.
[31] CE, 305, 308, 324.
[32] CM, 78.
[33] CE, 285. The metaphysical underpinnings of Bergson's claim here are found in Kant's analysis of existence in which it is denied the status of a real predicate on the ground that there is no difference between representing something and representing the same thing as existing. *See* CPR, A597/B625. This entails that nothingness, once represented, ceases to be nothing in the strict sense of the word.
[34] CM, 49.
[35] *Ibid*.

between intuition and intelligence.[36] In particular, the relation between interest and action need be stated explicitly and carefully, for it is not a *speculative*, but a *vital*,[37] or practical, interest that is at issue here.[38] It is practical in the sense that it is primarily directed toward action; and it is vital insofar as it helps the human organism survive in nature. Crucially, it is not arbitrary as to be deemed capricious, since it is determined by our practical needs which have to be fulfilled as the indispensable requirements of life. To this end, consciousness informs the human organism of the material reality through which she/he navigates herself/himself by means of her/his actions.[39] It is in this sense that Bergson describes the representation of matter as "the measure of our possible action upon bodies," and claims that "it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally, for our functions."[40] Language, the principal apparatus of the intellect, is born out of the same needs; it is a tool enabling us to communicate and cooperate with each other in the face of the exigencies of social life.[41] In other words, language is made for action too, as it is really a product and a function of the human body. And the human body is "an instrument of action, and of action only."[42] Before explaining the specific role that action is assigned in Bergson's philosophy, however, let me say a few words on his interpretation of the relation between consciousness and life,[43] because I think that the explanatory function performed by the notion of action cannot be fully appreciated without reference to its intimate connection to consciousness and life.

To begin with, Bergson refrains from giving an exact definition of consciousness for the simple reason that any definition would necessarily be less clear than consciousness itself.[44] Instead, he characterises it by its most prominent features, namely, *memory* and *expectation*.[45] This is due to his contention that consciousness is intrinsically temporal, that is, it necessarily involves a multiplicity in time, which means that it cannot be squeezed in a mathematical instant that is essentially static. It

[36] Note that one of the defining characteristics of the intellect (that is, intelligence) in Bergson's philosophy is that its work is never disinterested (as opposed to that of intuition.) *See* CM, 149.
[37] MM, 211-212.
[38] Bergson takes advantage of every opportunity to draw a line between speculation and action. This distinction will be of paramount importance when I address the method of intuition in the next chapter.
[39] Bergson writes: "…in a being which has bodily functions, the chief office of consciousness is to preside over action and to enlighten choice." MM, 141. He alleges, furthermore, that this is "the fundamental law of our psychical life." MM, 180.
[40] MM, 38.
[41] CM, 41. *See* also CM, 46.
[42] MM, 225.
[43] Note that Bergson labels the problem of the relation between consciousness and life the most important philosophical problem of which he is aware. *See* ME, 3.
[44] ME, 7.
[45] ME, 7-8.

must extend in time, i.e., it must *endure*. In this way, Bergson depicts consciousness as a bridge connecting the past and the future which together constitute the ever-growing present.[46] It must retain its past; since, otherwise, it would perish at each subsequent instant, giving way to another consciousness that is not it. In order to preserve itself as it really is, then, it accumulates the past in the present.[47] And it anticipates the future as well, for whenever the mind contemplates what is, it does so always with an eye to what is about to be.[48] However, it would be a grave mistake to suppose that consciousness has discrete and discontinuous past, present, and future. In fact, this is the most common mistake encountered in the attempted solutions to the problem of the diachronic unity of consciousness. Ultimately, it stems from forgetting that, when consciousness is divided into temporal parts in a manner that makes those parts appear to be external to each other, i.e., as transformed into *things*[49] as though they could exist separately from the whole, it becomes impossible to reunite them. On the other hand, if we construe, *à la* Bergson, the past of consciousness as memory and its future as anticipation,[50] we realise that consciousness is originally a unity, and that the multiplicity of the past, present, and future is purely *qualitative*, and not *quantitative*.[51] This is because consciousness resides not in spatial time, but in pure duration, which admits of no homogeneity as to be split into distinct parts and quantified.[52] It is an indivisible *continuum*,[53] and the intellect divides it in discontinuous constituents solely for practical purposes. For instance, the intellect posits the present as a mathematical instant representing the theoretical boundary separating the past from the future;[54] whereas the lived present, which necessarily occupies a duration,[55] "has one foot in my past and another in my future"[56] in the form of memory and expectation. For the real present is "that which interests me, which lives for me, and in a word, that which summons me to action."[57] Here, again, the notion of interest plays a critical role as has been indicated throughout this section.

[46] ME, 9.
[47] ME, 8.
[48] *Ibid*. The extent to which Bergson was influenced by the concept of the specious present in this connection is open to debate; however, his admiration for William James may suggest that he was at least aware of the use of the concept and how it was utilised in phenomenology of his day.
[49] MM, 125.
[50] ME, 8.
[51] In a qualitative multiplicity, "there is *other* without there being *several*." *See* Deleuze 2018, 42.
[52] TFW, 104.
[53] ME, 17.
[54] ME, 8.
[55] MM, 137.
[56] MM, 138.
[57] MM, 137.

And for this reason, before getting to what pure duration really means, I shall consider the following question: What practical purpose is consciousness supposed to fulfil?

3. Consciousness and Action

In Bergson's theory, the body, which is essentially the centre of action,[58] is portrayed as the transmitter that is set in-between external stimuli and the corresponding output. It receives a manifold of data from material reality and reacts accordingly with a number of movements.[59] In principle, this process is what gives rise to consciousness. Bergson sets out to explain the mechanism behind it by going through different species of living beings which, according to him, might have different levels of consciousness. He appeals to the empirical observation that in all animal species, consciousness is bound up with the nervous system[60] through which the external stimulus is addressed to the spinal cord which in turn produces a ready-made response in the form of spontaneous movements.[61] In its most basic form, this procedure is carried out *instinctively*, and the resulting movement is *automatic*.[62] However, in human beings (and in virtually all animal species), the external stimulus often goes through the brain before it reaches the spinal cord. Bergson adduces the following as explanation: "…when the stimulus, […] instead of following the direct path [to the spinal cord], goes off to the brain, it is evidently in order that it may set in action a motor mechanism which has been chosen, instead of one which is automatic."[63] And for this reason, he names the brain "the organ of choice."[64] The more the separation between the functions of the brain and those of the spinal cord becomes definite, the more consciousness, along with the amount of choice, increases.[65] That consciousness retains the past and anticipates the future is explained in this way, viz., that consciousness must extend in time in order to make a choice when called on to do so.[66] Accordingly, Bergson submits that "the variations in the intensity of our consciousness seem then to correspond to the more or less considerable sum of choice, or, […] to the amount of creation, which our conduct requires."[67] He writes:

[58] MM, 138.
[59] ME, 12.
[60] ME, 10-11.
[61] ME, 12.
[62] *Ibid*.
[63] *Ibid*.
[64] ME, 13.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] ME, 14.
[67] ME, 15.

> …consciousness is the light that plays around the zone of possible actions or potential activity which surrounds the action really performed by the living being. It signifies hesitation or choice. Where many equally possible actions are indicated without there being any real action (as in deliberation that has not come to an end), consciousness is intense. Where the action performed is the only action possible (as in activity of the somnambulistic or more generally automatic kind), consciousness is reduced to nothing.[68]

If the perception of things is really nothing other than the representation of possible actions that we may take on matter as Bergson contends,[69] then the richness of consciousness, which hinges on the complexity of perception, must be proportionate to the variety of conduct that it is possible for us to undertake,[70] and on this basis Bergson declares that "consciousness means virtual action."[71] He urges that perception is *never* a disinterested work of the mind,[72] and that intellectual cognition occurs always with a view to action: "Originally, we think only in order to act."[73]

The significance of action in Bergson's philosophy is hence non-negligible. As Goethe famously proclaims in the *Faust*, the Bergsonian motto can be put as follows: "In the beginning was the Act." He sees the world, above all, as a world of action.[74] It is through our actions that we live; speculation is a luxury.[75] For this reason, reflective consciousness seeks clean-cut distinctions by which it can map out material reality upon which the organism eventually exerts its influence through its actions.[76] And the primacy of action in this sense leads to a conception of reality that is composed of things with well-defined outlines. The auxiliary of action,[77] the office of perception is not to produce pure knowledge; it is rather to cut out of "the stuff of nature"[78] discrete images, i.e., individual things which reflect the design of our eventual action upon matter.[79] In other words, the intellect utilises the faculties of perception and memory to create a reality which consists of things that may be acted upon. What happens, however, if it attempts to represent action itself?

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[68] CE, 144. In the first case, the organism is governed predominantly by intelligence, whilst in the second, it is fully subject to the dictates of instinct.
[69] MM, 229.
[70] *See* MM, 49 in this connection where Bergson says that "conscious perception signifies choice, and consciousness mainly consists in this practical discernment."
[71] MM, 50.
[72] MM, 240.
[73] CE, 44.
[74] Hence his striking remark that "there are no things, there are only actions." CE, 248.
[75] CE, 44.
[76] TFW, 9.
[77] CM, 114.
[78] CE, 12.
[79] CE, 11.

Bergson writes: "In our actions, which are systematized movements, what we fix our mind on is the end or meaning of the movement, its design as a whole – in a word, the immobile plan of its execution."[80] This means that when we contemplate a certain action, what appears in our consciousness is not the action itself, but the steps that we must take in order to execute it, or those that we have already taken, for that matter. To put it differently, it is merely the schema of a movement. The steps are represented as so many immobile images, that is, snapshots taken on a mobility that is the action, among which a number of relations are then established. Bergson maintains that, in this context, a relation presupposes reciprocal exteriority between numerically different things, and that space is the medium in which they are juxtaposed side by side so as to stand as the terms of the relation. In his view, space is not a container subsisting on its own within which things are located; on the contrary, it is extracted from things themselves.[81] This is the main function of the intellect, i.e., that, upon abstracting space from matter, it relates "one point of space to another, and one material object to another."[82] To grasp matter in the shape of individual things, that is, to cut out of matter discrete objects, the intellect posits a space beneath them.[83] For it cannot divide the indivisible reality itself; all it can do is divide the space on which reality is superimposed in representation. In this sense, space is really the "mental diagram of infinite divisibility."[84] Therefore, to say that an action takes place in space would be deeply misleading. What one ought to say instead is that the intellect represents the *phases* of the action as static images in space.[85] In other words, it tries to capture mobility by juxtaposing immobilities and putting them together in a single collection. Bergson claims on multiple occasions that it is exactly this habit of the intellect that leads to Zeno's paradoxes which simply show that "every attempt to reconstitute change out of states [i.e., phases] implies the absurd proposition, that

[80] CE, 155.
[81] CM, 77. Note that this is in contradistinction to Kant's conception of space according to which space is the form of outer intuition. In this view, we cannot extract space from things, because the representation of the latter already presupposes the former. *See* CPR, A24/B39. It seems to me that the difference in the perspectives taken up by Kant and Bergson on this subject rest on their respective views on the nature of things in general. As I have mentioned in a previous footnote (fn32), Bergson defines things in terms of their utilities, which, in this context, implies that space is extracted from utilities which shape our possible actions upon matter. This means that Bergson is not really claiming that a thing, in the sense Kant understands the term, can be represented without the intuition of space. Instead, he is defining space itself on the basis of utilities which manifest themselves as the possible courses that life can take through action.
[82] CE, 175.
[83] MM, 219.
[84] MM, 206.
[85] Bergson makes this point explicit as follows: "Space is not a ground on which real motion [or action] is posited; rather is it real motion [or action] that deposits space beneath itself." MM, 217.

movement is made of immobilities."[86] It appears as though Bergson regards the absurdity of this proposition as self-evident. How comes it, then, that a great number of philosophers who came before him have supposedly failed to notice it? Bergson finds the culprit in ordinary language by which those philosophers, like anyone else, were deceived into overlooking the distinction between movement itself and the spatial trajectory that a moving body traces. For instance, when a body moves from the point A to the point B in space, thus traversing the line A-B, we tend to identify its movement with the line A-B. However, the representation of its successive positions along the line cannot constitute its actual movement.[87] For the line is simply measuring the distance that the body has travelled; the movement itself, on the other hand, is an absolutely indivisible act.[88] And since the defining characteristic of space (or, more generally, spatiality) is divisibility as Bergson assumes, representing actual movement in space is really impossible. Here, the conception of space is merely ideal; it refers to the concept of homogeneity in general. For infinite divisibility is intelligible only within a homogeneous medium. When we think of the movement itself as homogeneous and divisible, then, "it is of the space traversed that we are thinking, as if it were interchangeable with the [movement] itself."[89] However, as we have seen, the movement is actually heterogenous, and it cannot be represented in terms of quantities as it is purely qualitative in essence.

That the notion of space is derived from that of movement, and that movement eludes space,[90] when combined, entail that space is not a necessary condition of experience as Kant would have it.[91] Admittedly, within language and social life, movement is represented spatially, and by this so much is gained with respect to practical matters;[92] however, it is of great importance to recognise that this is not the primordial way of grasping real movement. Bergson himself acknowledges that the structure of movement may indeed be represented by way of the juxtaposition of immobilities, but with the proviso that this would merely be a practical construction. Real movement in its original heterogeneity, on the other hand, cannot be represented in this way, for it precedes the immobile elements out of which the intellect tries to reconstitute it. This is the crux of Bergson's entire philosophy, that movement

[86] CE, 308. *See* also CE, 316.
[87] It is the other way around, i.e., that it is the movement itself which deposits the line in the first place.
[88] CM, 118; TFW, 112.
[89] TFW, 110.
[90] TFW, 111.
[91] *See* Mullarkey 1995, 234.
[92] *See* CM, 119-120 on the practical legitimacy of immobilising movement.

precedes the so-called movable things. In fact, Bergson goes so far as to say that "movement is reality itself."[93] Here, the primacy of action is translated into the primacy of movement within a broader context, and this has a vital implication for Bergson. Provided that the distinguishing mark of movement from the juxtaposition of immobilities is its irreducible temporal dimension, it seems that the primacy of movement rests on its participation in pure duration. For movement is not a thing, but a *process*; and processes, by definition, persist in time. Yet, again, the intellect intervenes and attempts to represent it, which it is unsuited to do. Why can the intellect not represent a process which occupies not a space, but a duration? Why is it that it becomes defective, and in fact deceptive, when it comes to representing time flowing rather than time already flown, the latter of which is the spatial analogue of the former? I shall try to answer these questions in the remainder of this chapter.

4. Kantianism in the Background

Considering how prevalent Kantianism was in philosophy departments at the time when Bergson began his academic career, it should come as no surprise that he put forward his theory of duration partly as a response to Kant's treatment of time in which it is taken as "a time which neither flows nor changes nor endures."[94] Indeed, Kant states explicitly that it is not time which changes, but things that are within time.[95] This suggests that, in his view, change is superimposed on things which must already be given in consciousness. In other words, the perception of movement[96] presupposes that of movable things.[97] Notice that this is a view that is in diametric opposition to Bergson's convictions, for he is firmly committed to the thesis that "to perceive is to immobilize,"[98] which, again, means that the so-called movable things are necessarily perceived as immobilities. Considering Bergson's claim that the perception of immobilities is possible only in a spatial representation, then, we come to realise that the perception of immobilities being prerequisite to that of movement really leads to the principle that movement presupposes space. Rejecting the primacy of movement, Kant also argues that movement presupposes time,[99] which Bergson may have conceded were it not for his suspicion that the conception of time adopted

[93] CM, 119.
[94] CM, 117.
[95] CPR, A41/B58.
[96] Or change, for that matter. As I have already indicated, Bergson uses these terms almost always interchangeably.
[97] CPR, A41/B58.
[98] MM, 208.
[99] CPR, B48.

by Kant here is actually derived from a conception of space. Importantly, however, Kant grants that time is indeed different from space in that "it belongs neither to a shape or a position."[100] Nevertheless, he says:

> And just because this inner intuition [i.e., time] yields no shape we also attempt to remedy this lack through analogies, and represent the temporal sequence through a line progressing to infinity, in which the manifold constitutes a series that is of only one dimension, and infer from the properties of this line to all the properties of time, with the sole difference that the parts of the former are simultaneous but those of the latter always exist successively.[101]

Bear in mind that Kant denies absolute reality to both space and time;[102] for him, they are merely the forms of sensible intuition, thus cannot be perceived by themselves.[103] They are not general concepts which can be obtained through experience either; in fact, it is the other way around, that experience is possible only through them.[104] In this way, Kant separates space and time from their contents, and their empirical reality is supposed to be secured by this move. In his transcendental philosophy, neither are space and time absolute entities that could exist even if there were no object to be intuited (as Newton believed), nor do they simply stand for relations among objects so that they cannot exist on their own as independent entities (as Leibniz proposed). Instead, both space and time enjoy non-derivative reality insofar as they constitute the structure of representation in general.[105] However, if this is true, and if the sole method of representing time is by means of analogies to space as Kant confesses, how can he justifiably maintain that the two differ in kind? That space and time are not derived from the contents of experience, and that the same kind of descriptions apply to their representations, together, seem to undermine any substantial difference between them. Then how comes it that Kant differentiates between space and time? As we have seen, the contrast he draws consists mainly in the hypothesis that "different times are not simultaneous, but successive (just as different spaces are not successive, but simultaneous)."[106] Yet it is not clear how succession can be conceived of as something more than just a collection of simultaneities if it has to be represented by means of

[100] CPR, B50.
[101] *Ibid*.
[102] CPR, B56.
[103] CPR, B207.
[104] *See* CPR, B38 and CPR, B47.
[105] Despite his rejection of absolutism with regard to space and time, Kant seems to think it necessary to postulate a frame of reference (especially in the case of space) nonetheless, and this is the chief reason as to why he departs from the Leibnizian position. *See* Pippin 1982, 63 on this point.
[106] CPR, B47.

spatial descriptions, e.g., as a time-series.[107] This is precisely why Bergson rejects Kant's conception of time, for he thinks that when we try to represent time as a time-series, we inadvertently and inescapably contaminate it with characteristics exclusive of space, most notably, homogeneity.[108] It does not occur to Kant, however, that homogeneity should always imply spatiality; for he is not the least reluctant to assert that the representations of a determinate space and time through which appearances enter perception both require the synthesis of a homogeneous manifold.[109] And homogeneity involves the concept of a magnitude in his system.[110] At this point, it is crucial to understand what Kant and Bergson make of this concept if we are to see how and why the latter departs from the former on the question of the nature of time.

5. Extensive Magnitudes and Intensive Magnitudes

In the *Axioms of Intuition*, Kant introduces the principle that "all intuitions are extensive magnitudes,"[111] and he explains what he means by this as follows:

> I call an extensive magnitude that in which the representation of the parts makes possible the representation of the whole (and therefore necessarily precedes the latter). I cannot represent to myself any line, no matter how small it may be, without drawing it in thought, i.e., successively generating all its parts from one point, and thereby first sketching this intuition. It is exactly the same with even the smallest time. I think therein only the successive progress from one moment to another, where through all parts of time and their addition a determinate magnitude of time is finally generated.[112]

Whatever I represent, the intuition, which provides the structural component of the representation, is given in the form of extensions of space and time which correspond to certain magnitudes (or, quantities). This is how we can say of some appearance, for instance, that it is smaller or bigger, or that it lasts shorter or longer, etc. And deriving

[107] In the *Analogies of Experience*, Kant attempts to account for the ordered nature of succession, which supposedly distinguishes it from a mere collection of simultaneities, by appealing to the principle of necessary connection between events in time. I will come back to this point when I enquire into the relevant concept of ordinality.
[108] In fact, according to Bergson, the very definition of space derives from the conception of "an empty homogeneous medium" which serves as "a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation." TFW, 95. Moreover, Bergson refuses to admit two different forms of homogeneity, i.e., space and time, and he maintains that one must be reducible to the other. This is because, as J. Alexander Gunn notes, "since homogeneity consists in being without qualities, it is difficult to see how one homogeneity can be distinguished from another." Gunn 2018, 29.
[109] CPR, B202. Note that, in Kant's view, a synthesis is required to make a succession out of the juxtaposition of simultaneities. Bergson, on the other hand, rejects such synthesis-based views according to which, as he sees it, something needs to be *added* to the juxtaposition of simultaneities in order to produce a genuine succession. For he holds that it is impossible to reconstruct succession by synthesis when it is deconstructed by analysis in the first place.
[110] CPR, B203.
[111] CPR, B202.
[112] CPR, A162-3.

from this principle, Kant aims to prove that mathematics is applicable to empirical reality.[113] In other words, both space and time can be quantified mathematically. Furthermore, he maintains that every appearance is already intuited as aggregates as far as their spatio-temporality is concerned,[114] which is really to say that they are already given as magnitudes. Importantly, Kant concedes that not every kind of magnitude can be so perceived;[115] sensations cannot be perceived as aggregates, for instance. Considered in itself, a sensation is not yet an objective representation; hence, no spatial or temporal intuition accompanies it.[116] Nonetheless, we attribute determinate degrees to sensations, because we unwittingly consider them as magnitudes as well, albeit of a different kind, namely, intensive,[117] which Kant characterises as "that which can only be apprehended as a unity, and in which multiplicity can only be represented through approximation to negation = 0."[118] Take, for example, the brightness of light emanating from a bedside lamp. Kant seems to take it for granted that the relevant sensation admits of degrees while retaining its form as the specific sensation it is. As I increase the brightness of light by turning the dimmer switch upward, the sensation is said to increase in intensive magnitude, that is to say, the light gets brighter and brighter. Supposedly, however, it remains the same sensation all along, save in different degrees. In this sense, the degree of a sensation refers to the abundance of a quality. However, such abundance cannot be extensive, so we do not perceive qualities as aggregates. Imagine a greater degree of brightness. It is certainly not perceived as the aggregate of lesser degrees of brightness as is the case with extensive magnitudes. This is because the sensation does not proceed from its parts,[119] and it is thus not encountered in pure apprehension.[120] Consequently, the representation of a compilation of lesser degrees of brightness never gives us *a priori* the representation of a greater degree of brightness which the former is supposed to

[113] In fact, it is for this reason that Kant calls the principles discussed in the *Axioms of Intuition* and the *Anticipations of Perception* "mathematical principles." *See* Guyer 1987, 185-186 on this point.
[114] CPR, B204.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] CPR, B208. In perception, by the addition of the sensation (i.e., the real in appearance, as matter) to the intuition (as form), the representation of the empirical object arises. *See* CPR, B207.
[117] CPR, B208.
[118] CPR, B210.
[119] *Ibid*. As Paul Guyer notes, "intensive magnitudes are numerical comparisons, rather than measurements in terms of parts." Guyer 1987, 198.
[120] CPR, B210.

add up to,[121] meaning that the latter cannot be anticipated on the basis of the former. This is bolstered by Kant's succinct remark that a sensation fills "only an instant."[122]

Before proceeding to Bergson's critique of the concept of intensive magnitude, let me briefly clarify what Kant has in mind when he speaks of an instant. He contends that every segment of space and time must be given as "enclosed between boundaries" which are defined by points in space and instants in time.[123] This means that any given segment of space consists of smaller spaces; and the same holds true for segments of time too. Moreover, points and instants which define the boundaries of segments of space and time presuppose the intuitions of these segments. Therefore, without the initial intuitions of space and time, mere points and instants by themselves cannot constitute spaces and times.[124] For neither a point nor an instant refers to the smallest, or a simple, part of a magnitude; and herein lies the alleged continuity of magnitudes.[125] Importantly, the notion of continuity in this context relates to the discussion of extensive and intensive magnitudes, for they are both continuous in this sense – the former "in their intuition" and the latter "in their mere perception (sensation and thus reality)."[126] Kant wraps up the discussion as follows: "It is remarkable that we can cognize *a priori* of all magnitudes in general only a single quality, namely continuity, but that in all quality (the real of appearances) we can cognize *a priori* nothing more than their intensive quantity, namely that they have a degree, and everything else is left to experience."[127] To put it differently, the concept of intensive magnitude is applicable to the abundance of a quality; however, since the quality itself is an empirical datum, it cannot be cognised *a priori*. What can be cognised *a priori*, on the other hand, is simply the "property of having a degree," i.e., that the

[121] Here, Kant resorts to the concept of intensive magnitude to contest the commonplace that "the real in appearance [i.e., sensation] is always equal in degree and differs only in aggregation and its extensive magnitude." CPR, B216.
[122] CPR, B209. W. H. Walsh, in his brilliant exegesis of Kant's first *Critique*, points out to a certain ambiguity in the discussion of the intensity of sensations in the *Anticipations of Perception*. He reminds us of Kant's distinction between objective and subjective sensations in the third *Critique*, and raises the intriguing question of whether the concept of intensive magnitude is applicable to both types. Walsh regards as implausible the notion that subjective sensations should admit of degrees within the transcendental system; but he concedes that Kant is not clear on this point. *See* Walsh 1997, 119-121 for further discussion.
[123] CPR, B211.
[124] CPR, A170.
[125] CPR, B211. The boundaries defined by points of space and instants of time are thus considered processes in time. On this basis, the magnitudes that they determine are called *flowing/continuous* magnitudes. *See* CPR, A170/B212.
[126] CPR, B212. Kant purports that this explains the continuity of alteration as well (or, as Bergson calls it, that of movement). *See* CPR, A171/B213.
[127] CPR, B218.

sensation in question *will* have *some* intensive magnitude, regardless of the exact measure thereof.[128]

6. Bergson's Response to Kant

After these preliminary remarks, it is now time to expound on how Bergson reacts to Kant's attempt to assign magnitudes, albeit of the intensive kind, to sensations. The former expresses his strong disapproval of this kind of mathematization of psychic states in the early pages of *Time and Free Will*. Think back to the example of the bedside lamp. In comparing lesser and greater degrees of the brightness of light coming out of it, we presume, by the very use of the words "lesser" and "greater", that different intensities of brightness can be quantified and described in terms of magnitudes, which, according to Bergson, "offers us the image of a container and a contained."[129] For him, the concept of magnitude automatically implies extension; therefore, the very concept of intensive magnitude leads to a contradiction. This is a result of representing the intensity of a sensation as virtually extended in imagination. The brighter the light, the more contracted it is imagined to be in space, so to speak. Of course, one might appeal to the explanation, as is usually done, that the magnitude assigned to the intensity of a sensation is determined by the extensity (or, the number) of the objective causes which bring it about.[130] However, Bergson finds this solution unsatisfactory. For he thinks that it is seldom we decide the intensity of the effect on the basis of the magnitude of its cause.[131] In fact, if it were not for the intensity of the effect, it would make no sense to think of the cause, *qua* cause, as having a lesser or greater magnitude.[132] This is further evidenced by the fact that we often compare the intensities of sensations whose objective causes are of utterly disparate natures, such as the pain caused by the pulling out of a tooth and of a hair.[133] As he proceeds, Bergson addresses yet another hypothesis that is intended to make intelligible the concept of intensive magnitude, but he dispenses with it as soon as he is done explaining it. According to this hypothesis, whenever a sensation is perceived,

[128] CPR, B217.
[129] TFW, 3-4.
[130] TFW, 4.
[131] Bear in mind that Bergson is not denying that there *is* a relation between the intensity of a sensation and the magnitude of its cause; what he claims is instead that this by itself does not license us to assign a magnitude to the former. *See* TFW, 20. In this connection, he says that "there is nothing in common […] between superposable magnitudes such as, for example, vibration-amplitudes, and sensations which do not occupy space." TFW, 32-33.
[132] TFW, 5. Curiously, Paul Guyer takes Kant to be arguing for a similar position in that "at the most fundamental level of physical theory extensive magnitude really reduces to intensive magnitude, even if the opposite seems to be the case at some more superficial level." Guyer 1987, 201.
[133] *Ibid*.

the internal movements of the organism, especially those in its cerebral system, undergo a number of changes which may be more or less complicated, and this is actually how we determine whether the sensation is more or less intense.[134] This conflicts with what Bergson takes to be a self-evident truth, namely, that it is the specific sensation itself that has the last word on the determination of its intensity, but not any external cause associated with it. For it is not the mechanical work of the organism, but the sensation itself that is immediately given in consciousness.[135]

The gist of Bergson's argument is therefore this, that the confusion is rooted in the presupposition that different intensities of a certain sensation occupy different positions in a spatial representation. To see what exactly this means, let me revisit once more the example of the bedside lamp. As I turn the dimmer switch upward, the sensation of the brightness of light is thought to increase in intensity. What happens here is that I assign an arbitrary magnitude, *n*, to the previous phase of the sensation of brightness, and another magnitude, *n+1*, to the subsequent phase thereof. In so doing, I imagine these two phases to be distinct from each other as though they are lined up side by side in a virtual space, when in reality the transition from the one to the other takes place successively in time.[136] And the succession of the different phases of a sensation cannot be treated as though it is merely the juxtaposition of discrete elements.[137] For what we ordinarily call different phases of the same sensation actually refer to completely different sensations of their own.[138] Bergson explains this by drawing attention to the nature of change involved in the transition from a phase to another; he interprets it as "a change of quality rather than of magnitude."[139] This claim

[134] TFW, 6.
[135] TFW, 7.
[136] TFW, 10.
[137] Importantly, Kant acknowledges that an individual sensation of a given quality, which I call here a phase of a sensation (e.g. the light emanating from the lamp when the dimmer switch is at a certain position), is not apprehended through a successive synthesis of many smaller sensations, but rather instantaneously. However, the transition from a phase to another (e.g. the change of the brightness of light as I turn the dimmer switch upwards or downwards), in his view, takes place gradually, that is, in time, and it is on this basis that we can assign a determinate magnitude to a sensation. *See* CPR, B210. In an attempt to make sense of Kant's argument, Paul Guyer argues that "the length of the temporal duration it would take to reach the given degree of sensation when traversing such a series would represent the intensity of the particular instance of the sensation which is actually given in an instant." He points out, however, that the argument lacks *a priori* justification contrary to Kant's assumption. In fact, by supposing that a sensation may undergo a step-by-step increase or diminution while retaining its specific quality, Kant commits to the mistake of confusing a difference in kind with a difference in degree. *See* Guyer 1987, 203. Note that this is precisely what Bergson accuses the proponents of the concept of intensive magnitude of doing. Similarly, as Guyer also points out, to attribute a degree to a sensation on account of its occurrence within a period of time comes down to saying that "it has intensive magnitude because it has *extensive* magnitude." Guyer 1987, 205.
[138] TFW, 17.
[139] TFW, 9.

is closely connected to, and a direct consequence of, Bergson's conception of time as duration in which succession is considered unquantifiable. For each moment of duration permeates one another, just as each phase of the sensation, if we are still allowed to speak of phases, penetrates the entire consciousness.[140]

Why is it, then, that whenever we think of the intensity of a sensation, we feel compelled to represent it in terms of a magnitude which supposedly enables us to compare it with a lesser or a greater intensity? Now, if we recall Bergson's account of the origin of space, which involves the notion of interest as a central theme, we discover that quantifying intensities is likewise a natural function of the intellect, whose operations, to reiterate, are never disinterested. Bergson writes in this regard that "we estimate the intensity of a pain by the larger or smaller part of the organism which takes interest in it."[141] In the same way that the intellect represents reality as a collection of individual things in space which reflect our possible actions upon matter, the intensity of a sensation is reduced in representation to the consciousness of the involuntary movements, i.e., actions, which unfold within that sensation.[142] In other words, since spatial representations amount to virtual actions as we have seen earlier, the intensity of a sensation, when translated into a magnitude, thus situated in space, stands for the action that we are prompted to execute as a reaction to the sensation in question. It appears as though Bergson anticipates his action-centred epistemology, especially with regard to the nature of sensations, early on in *Time and Free Will* where we read: "…differences of quality are at once interpreted as differences of quantity, because of their affective character and the more or less pronounced movements of reaction, pleasure of repugnance, which they suggest to us."[143]

Bergson's claim that the concept of magnitude necessarily involves a container-contained relation is met with strong resistance by critics, however. A. R. Lacey, who seems rather perplexed at Bergson's inability to conceive of a magnitude without calling to mind a container-contained relation, asks the following: "Is [Bergson] saying more than that intensive magnitudes are not extensive ones?"[144] Moreover, one of Bergson's most formidable contemporaries, Bertrand Russell, charges him with the same offence, namely that he offers no argument whatsoever in favour of his view that the concept of intensive magnitude leads to a contradiction.[145] However, these

[140] TFW, 10.
[141] TFW, 35.
[142] *Ibid*.
[143] TFW, 39.
[144] Lacey 1999, 8.
[145] Russell 1912, 334.

criticisms are grounded in the assumption that Bergson rejects the notion of ordinality altogether. In that vein, Florian Vermeiren propounds to have spotted an internal incoherence in Bergson's position on ordinality in that, in other parts of his philosophical *oeuvre*, Bergson actually employs the concept of ordinality himself, e.g., when he speaks of degrees of freedom.[146] In fact, Vermeiren maintains that Bergson's conception of quality actually resembles very closely what is usually understood by the concept of intensive magnitude.[147] He contends that the latter concept is utilised precisely to show that reality cannot be described purely quantitatively, which is tantamount to the Bergsonian principle that qualities are not reducible to quantities.[148] And is this not also the reason as to why Kant introduces this concept in the first place? Against the metaphysical presupposition that the fundamental units of appearance are "everywhere one and the same, and can be differentiated only according to [their] extensive magnitude[s], i.e., amount[s],"[149] he proposes that equal spaces can actually be filled with varying qualities, as it were. This also serves as a response to those philosophers who, according to Kant, know no other way of accounting for the differences in density of appearances than to measure the amount of void within them.[150] In this picture, the qualitative aspect of reality, to which Kant refers as the real in appearance, is ignored; and it seems that a sort of quantitative atomism is responsible for this. To counter it, Kant develops the concept of intensive magnitude which is non-reducible to quantities; and, as Vermeiren notes, "this notion of non-reducible magnitudes allows us to understand the individuality of things –as intensive magnitudes are irreducible– without neglecting their relationship with each other –as intensities are ordered with regards to each other."[151] Here, again, it is the notion of ordinality that comes up at the most crucial point.

The assumption that Bergson is rejecting every possible conception of ordinality with his critique of intensive magnitudes may be too bold, however. For his main target is rather the idea of exteriority that is at work in such conceptions, because he thinks that, as long as the phases of a sensation are conceived of as distinct elements

[146] Vermeiren 2020, 4. Vermeiren argues that Bergson's notion of qualitative multiplicity and the concept of intensive magnitude are actually both intended to overcome the same distinction between quality and quantity. *See* Vermeiren 2020, 5.
[147] Gilles Deleuze, who is largely credited for the revival of Bergsonism in the second half of the twentieth century, writes in a later work that "Bergson […] attributed to quality everything that belongs to intensive quantities." Deleuze 2001, 239.
[148] Vermeiren 2020, 7.
[149] CPR, B215.
[150] CPR, B216.
[151] Vermeiren 2020, 7.

given in a determinate order, that is, as external to each other, we cannot escape the image of space. And the Kantian conception seems to suggest exactly this. I take it that to give justice to Bergson's critique, then, we must take into account the immediate background of his discussion, namely, Kant's *Analogies of Experience* in which the ordered nature of succession is explained through the notion of causal necessity. Significantly, Kant takes cognisance of the fact that the succession of representations is not the same as the representation of succession. Like Bergson, he is convinced that we cannot represent succession merely by virtue of the juxtaposition of simultaneities. However, unlike Bergson, he maintains that the former can be derived from the latter by means of the correct synthesis of the mind which involves the addition of a rule in accordance with which appearances are supposed to follow one another in time. And not only that; Kant accounts for the notion of simultaneous appearances in a similar fashion, i.e., that they must interact with each other for us to be able to say that they are indeed simultaneous. In the former case, Kant regards time as a *temporal series*, and in the latter case, he has in mind a *temporal domain*.[152] Importantly, both presuppose, in his theory, the notion of a persisting substance which he discusses in the *First Analogy*. For a better understanding of Bergson's stern criticism of what he calls spatialised time, then, the main argument in the *Analogies of Experience* needs some unpacking, and this is what I shall do next.

7. Time and Causality

In this section of the first *Critique*, Kant is primarily concerned with the representation of an objective temporal order in which appearances are assigned determinate positions within a single system of time.[153] Recall that, in his transcendental system, time is taken to be the form of sensible intuition, and as a result, it cannot be perceived itself.[154] Therefore, we must turn to appearances to deduce its characteristic features. We cannot do this by analysing individual appearances in isolation, however; because appearances considered by themselves do not reveal where they belong in the time-series. When I perceive some object, for example, I do not automatically discover its specific position within the objective temporal order.[155]

[152] CPR, A182, fn*d*.
[153] W. H. Walsh emphasises this point in his commentary. *See* Walsh 1997, 124 in particular.
[154] CPR, B225.
[155] Note that even if I perceive it as belonging in a certain segment of time, I cannot say anything of the specific place of that segment in the overarching time-series, as it were. As Arthur Melnick notes, "though the parts of time are numerically distinct in virtue of being located 'outside' each other in the single time, there is nothing internal (monadic) about the parts of time by themselves […] that determines what their specific relation is to other parts of time." Melnick 1973, 60.

For that, I need to reflect on the relations (of succession and simultaneity) that it enters with other appearances. And that it belongs in one and the same time-series as other appearances, i.e., that there is only a single system of time of which it can participate, is shown through the permanence of "the substratum of the empirical representation of time itself."[156] There is much to take in in these remarks; but the main point is that, through the relations of appearances, Kant aims to explicate the nature of time itself in its three modes: persistence, succession, and simultaneity.[157]

For Kant, succession and simultaneity are represented as the determinations of a unitary time which itself is not subject to change.[158] Otherwise, what seem to be two successive appearances could equally be thought of as independent from each other in the sense that one ceasing to exist and the other popping into existence in a sequence would not suffice to yield a representation of a genuine succession. For it is conceivable that they belong to disparate timelines which do not touch each other at any point, so to speak. Furthermore, that I perceive them in a given order is not a reliable indicator of how they are ordered objectively.[159] Thus, a persisting substance, of which every appearance is considered a determination, must be posited.[160] The nature of this substance is open to dispute, however. For instance, Henry E. Allison illustrates a typical way to think about it, and he calls it the "backdrop thesis."[161] According to this thesis, "an enduring, perceivable object (or objects) is required to provide the backdrop or frame of reference by means of which the succession, simultaneity, and duration of appearances in a common time can be determined."[162] W. H. Walsh, on the other hand, warns us that the permanent is not actually perceived, but presupposed as a principle.[163] In any case, it is clear that the permanent refers to time in general as represented through what persists in the alteration of appearances, and succession and simultaneity are only modifications of it. Crucially, in this context, the concept of substance functions not as the underlying matter beneath phenomena which persists throughout all change, but as the empirical representation of time itself. This is because, as I have repeatedly stated so far, time cannot be perceived itself, and the representation of it is possible only through appearances. And while succession, as one of the modes of time, is represented through the alteration of appearances, time in

[156] CPR, A183.
[157] CPR, A177.
[158] CPR, B225.
[159] *See* Allison 2004, 231 for further discussion on this point.
[160] CPR, B225.
[161] Allison 2004, 239.
[162] *Ibid*.
[163] Walsh 1997, 131.

general is represented through their permanence.[164] Thus, Kant's central assumption in the *Analogies of Experience* comes down to this, that it is only through what is permanent that change can be perceived.[165] This suggests that change presupposes permanence, which is the complete opposite of Bergson's view as we have seen.

Representing time through the relations of appearances which are taken as distinct from each other results in a conception of time in which time itself is regarded as divisible into distinct parts, and this is presumably what Kant means when he says that "all change is only the division of time."[166] In this picture, the perception of change of a certain appearance A, which transforms into B in the process, reflects the succession from a segment of time to another, e.g., from t_1 to t_2. In order to demonstrate that the sequence t_1-t_2 follows the objective temporal order and that it is irreversible, then, Kant needs to establish a necessary connection between A and B. Only in this way can he show that the sequence is derived from the succession from A to B, rather than a random combination of the representations of A and B taken separately. And he maintains that "this connection must […] consist in the order of the manifold of appearance in accordance with which the apprehension of one thing (that which happens) follows that of the other (which precedes) in accordance with a rule."[167] Here, the mind synthesises distinct appearances by putting them in a relation of cause and effect.[168] Given that time cannot be perceived itself, and that appearances do not come with time-stamps on them, the objective temporal order cannot be represented without this synthesis. Importantly, however, we do not first perceive appearances individually and place them in a necessary temporal order afterwards. The original intuition that we have of appearances is itself temporal in the sense that, whenever we perceive an appearance, we always already perceive it as succeeding another appearance.[169] In this connection, Kant writes:

> Now if it is a necessary law of our sensibility, thus a formal condition of all perceptions, that the preceding time necessarily determines the following time […], then it is also an indispensable law of the empirical representation of the temporal series that the appearances of the past time determine every existence in the following time, and that these, as occurrences, do not take place except insofar as the former determine their existence in time, i.e., establish it in accordance with a

[164] As Paul Guyer notes, "permanence is introduced […] not as a property or determination of any *objects* in time, but of *time itself*." Guyer 1987, 217.
[165] CPR, A182, fn*c*. And this amounts to saying that it is through time that change is perceived.
[166] *Ibid*.
[167] CPR, A193.
[168] CPR, B234.
[169] CPR, A195.

> rule. For only in the appearances can we empirically cognize this continuity in the connection of times.[170]

In this way, the advance of time is described as "a necessary succession of states of substance."[171] For it is not given in the intuition of time itself, but must be found in "the dynamical relations of appearances."[172] In other words, the advance of time is represented through the necessary connection between appearances via the law of causality. Furthermore, since Kant rules out the possibility of perceiving time directly, the advance of time cannot be represented as being carried out by time itself either.[173] The efficacy of time is thus denied; or, rather, it is replaced by the relation of cause and effect that is involved in the determinations of time.

In Bergson's theory of duration, on the other hand, the advance of time is not explained by reference to the relations of appearances.[174] Instead, it is sought in the intuition of time itself. Therefore, there is no need to posit a persisting substance in appearances; and without such a substance, the division of time becomes illegitimate. Bergson's strategy is to restore the primacy of time, along with that of movement, and to regard appearances as immobile images taken as snapshots on a mobility which is time itself. And since, in his view, time-determinations do not derive from the relations of appearances, the advance of time need not be subject to the law of causality governing such relations. In fact, Bergson contends that the successive appearances A and B cannot be thought of as completely distinct from each other. For, in pure duration, there is no juxtaposition, extension, and most importantly, reciprocal exteriority.[175] And if there is no reciprocal exteriority, that is, if the moments of time are really not external to each other,[176] how can we locate a cause in one and an effect in the other? As Bergson writes, pure duration consists of "a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines […]."[177] This means that the moments of time are heterogenous,[178] and that they cannot be enumerated as though they are distinct entities. Or, rather, when they are enumerated for practical purposes, they cease to be the moments of real time, i.e., duration. In that vein, Bergson asserts that "*real duration* is what we have always called *time*, but time

[170] CPR, A199.
[171] Melnick 2006, 174.
[172] *Ibid*, 178.
[173] *Ibid*, 172.
[174] Or things, as the equivalent term in Bergson's terminology.
[175] CM, 138.
[176] TFW, 120. *See* also TFW, 226.
[177] TFW, 104.
[178] TFW, 110.

perceived as indivisible."[179] But how is it exactly that we perceive time as indivisible? Or, to put the question in different words, what is pure duration?

8. The Limits of Language

Admittedly, Bergson's arguments apropos the nature of time are mostly negative. This is due to his contention that we are destined to represent time spatially if we are to describe it by means of the language of understanding whose primordial function is to enable communication for the purpose of cooperation.[180] Bergson says in this regard that "the things that language describes have been cut out of reality by human perception in view of human work to be done," and that "the properties which it indicates are the calls made by the thing to a human activity."[181] If not by language, however, how can we describe time? Added to this is Bergson's radical view that both deduction and induction are the functions of the intellect, and that, consequently, they presuppose a spatial intuition, excluding time in their operations.[182] And is it not also Bergson who proclaims that "our logic is […] the logic of solids?"[183] For want of another method to establish what time truly consists in, then, Bergson must introduce the notion of intuition, and this doubtless proves to be a pivotal moment in his entire philosophy. However, before coming to that, let me illustrate briefly how time is spatialised in representation when described in language.

Now, think about the present moment, and then think about a moment earlier. The reason as to why we imagine that they are distinct from each other is that, in thinking of the earlier moment, for instance, we picture to ourselves something that we have *left behind*, as it were. And it is this picture that makes us think that we could *go back* in time if only we had the means to do so. However, the expressions "leaving behind" and "going back" clearly conjure up in imagination a spatial representation. In truth, we cannot go back in time, nor can we go towards a future, as though we are walking on a path. Since time as a perpetual movement is indivisible, the earlier moment must be considered one with the present moment.[184] That present endures indicates this.[185] As Bergson puts it, in pure duration, "the past becomes identical with the present and continuously creates it."[186] However, it would be a serious error to

[179] CM, 124.
[180] CE, 62.
[181] CE, 63.
[182] CE, 211-216.
[183] CE, ix.
[184] CM, 130.
[185] CM, 127.
[186] CM, 131. And duration is this "continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances." CE, 4.

suppose that a previous moment creates a subsequent moment; because, in that case, the moments of time would have to be taken as distinct from each other as individual things; when, in reality, they are mutually penetrating processes. And it is through this interpenetration that new forms are unceasingly created. To recapitulate, in Bergson's metaphysics, creation is not a relation between "*things* which are created and a *thing* which creates."[187] It is prior to the existence of things in the same way as movement is prior to the existence of movable objects. And real time, that is, duration, is nothing other than this creation.[188] In this way, Bergson characterises it as "the uninterrupted up-surge of novelty."[189] Yet the intellect cannot perceive in time unforeseeable novelty, since its essential function is to foresee. Similarly, in representation, time is bound to be spatialised, and thus subjected to the laws of causality. In other words, duration "cannot […] be enclosed in a conceptual representation."[190] Then how can we grasp it? Bergson argues that to gain knowledge of duration, we must employ the philosophical method of intuition; only then can we perceive in time "uninterrupted continuity of unforeseeable novelty,"[191] and only by it can we see reality as creation.[192]

III. Intuition

1. Historical Context

Throughout the entire Bergsonian corpus, intuition is consistently associated with the familiar philosophical concepts of the immediate and the absolute.[193] Careful examination shows that, in addition to these, Bergson brings up the concept of intuition usually in tandem with the concepts of time and life as well, which, as has been indicated in the previous chapter, hold crucial importance for his metaphysics in general. In a word, Bergson's frequent appeal to the authority of intuitive knowledge as the unique way of grasping the true nature of reality can hardly be overlooked. For instance, in *Matter and Memory*, we are informed that the tension between realism and idealism can be eased, and the problems that come with it resolved, only by the method of intuition.[194] In this respect, intuition seems to function almost like a magical wand capable of dissolving any metaphysical quarrel that we may possibly encounter.

[187] CE, 248.
[188] CE, 343.
[189] CE, 7.
[190] CM, 141.
[191] CM, 22.
[192] *Ibid*.
[193] For example, *see* MM, 183, 244; CM, 20 for the immediate and CM, 135, 142, 162 for the absolute in relation to the concept of intuition.
[194] MM, 69.

The nature of this *deus ex machina*, which Bergson often puts in contradistinction to the intellect, is taken to be inexplicable within language, however.[195] This means that Bergson must find another way to convince the reader that intuitive knowledge is indeed possible, i.e., that it is not a mere fantasy of the mind. Of course, it is not peculiar to him to avail of intuition in order to explain what is otherwise assumed to be unexplainable by the usual means of philosophical reasoning. In fact, the urge to postulate a higher faculty of the mind which allegedly transcends ordinary understanding and is thus adequate to the task of unravelling the most puzzling enigmas in philosophy can be found in the works of many great philosophers of both the ancient and the modern era. Bergson himself mentions a few names who likewise invoke the concept of intuition in their doctrines to this end, although his conception of it differs from theirs in many ways. Nevertheless, I find it necessary to situate it in its proper historical context for a clearer understanding. For the sake of relevance and brevity, I shall restrict my exposition of the history of the concept of intuition to the immediate background of Bergson's metaphysical endeavour; namely, Kant.[196] I do not propose, however, that all of these philosophers have the same thing in mind when they employ the term intuition in their discussions. Nonetheless, I take it that the evolution of this concept must be elucidated for the purpose of bringing to light what exactly Bergson means by it.

2. Kant's *Anschauung* as Intuition

Intuition has a broader meaning in Kant's philosophy. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, it refers to the mode of apprehension through which the subject comes into immediate contact with the object. It is not intuition in general, then, but a specific type thereof, namely, *intellectual intuition*, that is widely thought to be the precursor of the Bergsonian intuition. In fact, Bergson himself writes in this regard that Kant "definitively established that, if metaphysics is possible, it can be so only through an effort of intuition."[197] Yet, he continues, "having proved that intuition alone would be capable of giving us a metaphysics, [Kant] added: this intuition is impossible."[198] It

[195] Note that, for Bergson, "only the understanding has a language." CE, 258. And, in this context, the term "understanding" refers to the faculty of the intellect.
[196] In particular, *see* Thilly 1913 for some of the similarities between Bergson's anti-intellectualism and Schelling's romanticism.
[197] CM, 116.
[198] *Ibid*. On the basis of his interpretation of Kant as exemplified in this remark, it seems reasonable to me to assume that Bergson has in mind not the concept of intuition in general, but that of intellectual intuition as Kant conceives of it. For the latter merely rejects the possibility of a non-sensible intuition for us, and not the possibility of intuition in general. On the contrary, intuition as a general concept plays a central role in Kant's epistemology as I will demonstrate shortly.

makes sense, then, to begin by asking how and why Kant came to this gloomy conclusion. And to answer that question, we must have a vivid understanding of what function intuition serves in Kant's critical project.

The original German word that is commonly translated into English as "intuition" in the context of Kant's epistemology is *Anschauung*. Even though there have been disputes over how exactly to translate it, the standard procedure seems to work pretty well, especially considering the fact that Kant himself opted for the Latin term *intuitus* to refer to the same concept in his *Dissertation* which was written entirely in Latin.[199] On the other hand, the visual connotation of the German word *Anschauung* (as the root verb *schauen* literally means "to view") led some to believe that it would be better, or at any rate more faithful to the meaning of the original word, to translate it as "perception."[200] This cannot be true, however, for Kant takes perception to be a distinct concept[201] which, though related in a number of ways to intuition (and might perhaps be indistinguishable from the more specific concept of *sensible intuition*), is not exactly a perfect substitute for it as the latter has a highly technical use in his transcendental philosophy. In this connection, Hintikka suggests that the false analogy that is set between an act of intuiting and an act of perceiving is due to a common feature that these two acts share, namely, *immediacy*.[202] In fact, if we carefully study the fundamental characteristics of intuition as depicted by Kant, we discover that it is primarily defined in terms of this common feature.[203] For example, in the opening passage of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, we read the following statement: "In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed

[199] *See* Hintikka 1969, 40.
[200] Jaakko Hintikka points out that Kant took the term not from the ordinary usage of his time, but from the philosophical jargon current in Germany in the eighteenth century to which it was initially introduced by Christian Wolff as the translation of the medieval Latin term *intuitus*. *See* Hintikka 1969, 40. Furthermore, in his lecture series on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Dan Robinson tells us that if a native German speaker wished to learn what another person's "worldview" was, he or she would have to ask what their *Weltanschauung* is, that is, how they *consider* the world, and that this entails, in spite of its visual connotation, that the term "intuition" must have been employed with a broader meaning in Kant's philosophy. *See* Robinson 2011, 18:00.
[201] Gardner 1999, 44.
[202] Hintikka 1969, 41.
[203] Note that there are some other features (e.g., singularity) which too are taken to be descriptive of the concept of intuition in Kant's system, and that many commentators have attempted to examine these features both in isolation and in relation to each other. However, for my purpose in this section, I shall focus mainly on the feature of immediacy, for I take it that it is what Bergson focused on when he discussed Kant's treatment of the concept. *See* Hintikka 1969; Thompson 1972; Howell 1973; Wilson 1975; Parsons 2005 for further discussion.

as an end, is intuition."[204] In other words, intuition is that component of cognition through which objects are immediately given. Yet, unless the object of intuition is subsumed under a concept, which must be provided by the understanding, no cognition may arise. What happens, according to Kant, when we cognise a particular object is therefore this: (a) We receive, through the senses, a manifold of representations in intuition, viz., the raw material of sensible impressions, which is merely an unorganized flux when considered by itself, and, (b) through the understanding, unify these representations under a single concept which enables us to recognise the manifold as a particular object with a certain set of determinations. This is essentially how we acquire objective knowledge of the world. Neither (a) nor (b) by themselves prove to be sufficient for cognition in Kant's system, and this is indicative of his rejection of both empiricism and rationalism, which, in his view, attribute the genesis of cognition either to (a) or to (b) separately, but not to their joint operation.[205] For him, even though the faculties that are responsible for bringing about (a) and (b) (namely, the sensibility in its receptivity and the understanding in its spontaneity) are distinct, both (a) and (b) are necessary steps in cognition. Here, Kant's concerns are strictly epistemological. For he admits that the sensibility and the understanding may actually spring from a common root; yet he insists that we do not and cannot have objective knowledge of it.[206] In Kant's view, (i) that we intuit objects through the sensibility and (ii) that we think objects through the understanding (that is, in accordance with rules), together, constitute the conditions of human knowledge. Now, (i) requires special attention for my purposes in the present thesis, because it is precisely this claim that Bergson attacks when he addresses Kant's analysis of intuition (or, more specifically, of intellectual intuition). However, to understand why Kant excludes the possibility of a non-sensible intuition upon which Bergson's entire metaphysics is built, we need to answer the following questions: (1) Why is it that Kant divides the cognitive powers of the mind into the sensibility and the understanding? (2) And if he really must divide them in this way, why does he insist that there must nevertheless be a cooperation between them in cognition? Without venturing deep into the details of Kant's epistemology, which would lead to a lengthy digression from

[204] CPR, A19/B34. I will use the terms cognition and knowledge interchangeably hereafter. For a possible distinction between them, which I shall ignore, *see* Willaschek and Watkins 2020.
[205] In this regard, Kant writes: "Leibniz intellectualized the appearances, just as Locke totally sensitivized the concepts of understanding […] Instead of seeking two entirely different sources of representation in the understanding and the sensibility, which could judge about things with objective validity only in conjunction, each of these great men holds on only to one of them." CPR, A271/B327.
[206] CPR, B29.

the focal point of this chapter, it is hard even to make sense of these questions, let alone coming up with satisfactory answers. For this reason, I will briefly discuss, before proceeding any further, the general aspects of Kant's epistemology, some familiarity of which I take to be a prerequisite for a firm grasp of the reasons as to why, according to him, the cognitive powers of the mind must be divided into the sensibility and the understanding which must yet cooperate for the possibility of human cognition.

3. Sensibility and Understanding

Pre-Kantian philosophy, whether it is rationalist or empiricist, or indeed of any other kind, has been founded upon the key premise that it is one thing for an object (1) *to be known* and quite another for it (2) *to exist*.[207] For Kant, this poses a major problem, for he thinks that the transition from (1) to (2) remains a mystery in most, if not all, philosophical systems preceding his. In other words, the question of how we can have knowledge of objects whose existence is independent of us (i.e., objects as *transcendently real entities*)[208] has not been met with a convincing answer. This is where Kant's *Copernican Revolution* takes place: He reverses the viewpoint taken up by his predecessors by advancing the startling claim that, in the cognition of objects, it is the objects that conform to cognition, and not cognition that conforms to the objects.[209] And with this bold move, as Sebastian Gardner explains, "philosophical concern focuses on the task of explicating the concept of an *object-for-us*, that is, defining the class of knowable objects."[210] Thus, by defining objecthood in terms of knowability, Kant abandons the pursuit of objects as transcendently real entities. Instead, the enquiry turns to the possibility of objects as *empirically real entities*.

Now, if objecthood is defined in terms of knowability, objects, or *objects-for-us* for that matter, must ultimately be subjective in character. That they conform to cognition rather than vice versa indicates this. And this is further evidenced by Kant's definition of an object as "that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united."[211] For this definition involves intuitions and concepts as essential ingredients which, as we have seen earlier, must be provided by the mind through the sensibility and the understanding. And how could it be otherwise? Recall that Kant

[207] Hence the traditional separation of epistemology and ontology.
[208] A transcendently real entity can be defined as some entity whose possibility of cognition lies beyond the limits of experience, thus is inaccessible to us. Kant contends that it is nonetheless derived from our common-sense conception of a real entity. *See* CPR, A296/B352 for a definition of the transcendent.
[209] I adopt Frank Thilly's formulation with a slight modification. *See* Thilly 1925, 337.
[210] Gardner 1999, 25.
[211] CPR, B137. Kant presses this point further when he says of objects-for-us that "as appearances they constitute an object that is merely in us, since a mere modification of our sensibility is not to be encountered outside us at all." CPR, A129.

regards space and time as the forms imposed by the mind on the sensibility. And, similarly, he takes the understanding to be responsible for the spontaneous acts of the mind through which, by dint of synthesis, the manifold of sensible representations is to be united. Consequently, the product of this joint operation, that is, the object of cognition, is ultimately dependent on the mind. In other words, it has an intrinsically subjective aspect. However, if objects-for-us are really subjective in their constitution, how can we discern reality from illusion? How can we say, for instance, that what we perceive is not a sheer illusion, i.e., a mere creation of the mind, but actually real?

Too much subjectivism can result in solipsism, and Kant anticipates this worry. And to counter it, he draws a sharp contrast between what is subjective and what is objective with respect to empirical reality. For he maintains that, in the absence of this contrast, there would be absolutely no way for us to decide whether the object of a possible perception corresponds to a real object existing in the world. And the division of the cognitive powers of the mind into the sensibility and the understanding plays a vital role in the making of this decision.[212] For instance, to decide if my judgment about my perception of a pen is objectively valid, and that I am not under the influence of a vicious illusion, I need both the intuition and the concept of the pen at my disposal. This is because, even though I can think the concept of a pen through the understanding, I cannot cognise the particular pen unless I am also able to prove its real possibility, as opposed to its logical possibility,[213] which requires that I be able to ascribe objective reality to its concept, and I can do this only if a corresponding intuition, which contains the impression of the pen upon me, is given through the sensibility.[214] And Kant argues that this intuition must be "dependent on the existence of the object; thus it is possible only insofar as the representational capacity of the subject is affected through that."[215] In short, the givenness of the object through intuition is taken to be the mark of its existence in this picture. We can try to specify the concept as much as we like, so that its determinations apply exclusively to a single

[212] Eric Watkins informs us that, according to the orthodox view, "Kant has no argument for the distinction [between the sensibility and the understanding] and […] it is thus a fundamental, un-argued-for assumption of the first *Critique*." Watkins 2017, 9, fn2. I follow Watkins in thinking that Kant *does* present at least two indirect arguments for it, however subtle they may be. One of them concerns the notion of existence, and the other the distinction between possibility and actuality. I will sketch out both arguments in what follows.

[213] *See* LM, 28:557 for Kant's definition of "real possibility" as "the agreement with the conditions of a possible experience."

[214] CPR, Bxxvi, fn1.

[215] CPR, B72. *See* also Prol, 4:282. Andrea Kern submits that the term "affecting" as it is used in this context stands for a causal relation, and on this basis she goes on to claim that, according to Kant, a sensible intuition "causally depends on the object." Kern 2006, 148.

object; yet, without the accompanying intuition, the concept fails to refer to a real object. Dostoevsky's description of every single detail of Raskolnikov's dramatic persona and physical appearance is not enough to make Raskolnikov into a real object. He remains simply ideal as a fictional character. In this connection, Kant writes:

> In the mere concept of a thing no characteristic of its existence can be encountered at all. For even if this concept is so complete that it lacks nothing required for thinking of a thing with all of its determinations, still existence has nothing in the least with all of this, but only with the question of whether such a thing is given to us in such a way that the perception of it could in any case precede the concept. For that the concept precedes the perception signifies its mere possibility; but perception, which yields the material for the concept, is the sole characteristic of actuality.[216]

The last sentence in this quote reveals that, along with the distinction between existence and non-existence, the distinction between the possibility and the actuality of things, which Kant considers absolutely necessary for the human understanding,[217] also turns on the division of the cognitive powers of the mind into the sensibility and the understanding.[218] Revisiting the earlier example, then, when the understanding thinks the pen, it is represented as merely possible; and when the understanding becomes conscious of it as given in intuition through the sensibility, it is represented as actual.[219] Thus, the distinction between the possible and the actual, according to Kant, "rests on the fact that the former signifies only the position of the representation of a thing with respect to our concept and, in general, our faculty for thinking, while the latter signifies the positing of the thing in itself (apart from this concept)."[220] This means that, simply by thinking of something, I can represent it as possible, without determining further whether there is a corresponding intuition given to me through the sensibility which, if it is present, would thereby give me license to ascribe actuality to its concept. In this way, the separation of the sensibility and the understanding allows for a potential disconnect between reality and thought. Crucially, however, the distinction between the possible and the actual is applicable only within the

[216] CPR, B272-3/A225-6. That such a complete concept would refer to a single object might be taken to contradict the thesis that singularity is a distinctive feature of intuition, but not of concepts. However, even in that case, what is singular is not the nature of the concept, but its *use*. *See* JL, 91 on this point.
[217] CPJ, 5:401.
[218] *Ibid*.
[219] CPJ, 5:402.
[220] *Ibid*. Watkins draws a contrast between what he calls *relative positing* and *absolute positing*. In his view, the former occurs "when one attributes a predicate concept to a subject in a judgment," thereby establishing a merely logical relation, whereas the latter posits "that an actual object corresponds to the subject concept." Thus, Watkins concludes that, in Kant's system, the absolute positing of objects is possible only through sensible intuition. *See* Watkins 2017, 13.

boundaries of empirical reality, since it is "merely subjectively valid for the human understanding."[221] Is it logically possible, then, that there should exist a non-human understanding for which this distinction does not obtain? In other words, could there be such a non-human understanding for which the cognitive powers are not divided into the sensibility and the understanding, so that knowledge stems from a single source for it? Kant considers this possibility, and it is precisely at this point of the discussion that he brings up the notion of intellectual intuition to which I shall turn.

4. Intellectual Intuition

The joint operation of the sensibility and the understanding as described in the foregoing characterises the dual role that the human mind plays in cognition, which is exhibited in the passivity and the activity of the mind in receiving representations in intuition and thinking them by means of concepts, respectively. In fact, Kant's contention that intuition is never other than sensible for us indicates this, that the human mind is always passive when it intuits. The object must be given to it from without, as it were, for it cannot give itself the object. Accordingly, Kant defines the sensibility as "the capacity of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way."[222] Notice that the ways in which the mind can be so affected are not specified. For Kant, that it is affected at all is sufficient to suggest that some object is given in intuition, i.e., that the mind is called upon to play its passive role.[223] In contrast, through the understanding, it plays an active role of synthesising the manifold of representations given in intuition by subsuming them under a concept. The reason as to why sensible intuition by itself cannot lead to knowledge is that, for Kant, objective knowledge is self-conscious knowledge by definition, and this requires that the subject comprehend the manifold of representations as combined in one consciousness so as to be able to call them his or her representations.[224] Without the combination of the manifold of representations in this way, even the unity of the subject himself/herself cannot be secured. And since the combination of the manifold of representations cannot be given through the object,[225] but calls for an act of spontaneity which the understanding alone can undertake, it falls upon the subject as an active agent to accomplish this task. Kant's definition of the understanding as "the

[221] CPJ, 5:402.
[222] CPR, A51/B75.
[223] In his *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant writes that "the *intuition* […] of our mind is always *passive*. It is, accordingly, only possible in so far as it is possible for something to affect our sense." ID, 2:397.
[224] CPR, B134.
[225] CPR, B129-130.

faculty of combining *a priori* and bringing the manifold of given representations under unity of apperception"[226] confirms this. His fundamental dictum that knowledge *begins* with experience, but does not *arise* from it,[227] is supposed to mean in this context that, although the object of knowledge must be initially given through the affection of the senses, that is, in sensible intuition, an act of combination, or of synthesis for that matter, on the part of the understanding of the subject is nevertheless needed for objective knowledge. Andrea Kern summarises this point perfectly in the following words: "Although every act of knowledge *begins* with a receptive act, no act of knowledge *exhausts* itself in an act of receptivity."[228]

Now, if the cognitive powers of the mind were not divided into the sensibility and the understanding, but knowledge stemmed from a single source, then the dual role that the mind plays in cognition would be completely undermined. For, in that case, both the passivity and the activity of the mind in cognition would have to be attributed to a single capacity. As a result, we would have what Kant calls an *intuitive understanding* which does not receive its intuitions from without, but actively produces them.[229] And an intuition which is produced in this manner would be appropriately named an "intellectual intuition"[230] which, according to Kant, is absolutely impossible for us.[231] He forbids it on several grounds, one of which is that the distinction between the possible and the actual vanishes for a being who is in possession of it, as indicated above. It is extremely important to note, however, that Kant assigns multiple functions to intellectual intuition, each of which may or may not be the logical consequence of the others.[232] In this regard, Moltke Gram identifies it with (a) "an intellect that knows things in themselves independently of any conditions of sensibility," (b) "an intellect

[226] CPR, B135. *See* also CPR, B75 for a side-by-side comparison of the receptivity of the sensibility and the spontaneity of the understanding.
[227] CPR, B1.
[228] Kern 2006, 145.
[229] *See* CPR, B135, B138-9, B145. Other names by which Kant refers to it include the *divine understanding*, the *archetypical understanding*, and the *original understanding*.
[230] Note that some commentators, most notably Eckart Förster, argue that a distinction must be drawn between the concept of intuitive understanding and that of intellectual intuition. Others, including Jessica Leech, maintain on the other hand that the concepts of intuitive understanding and intellectual intuition are actually "two sides of the same coin for Kant." I side with Leech on this matter, for it seems abundantly clear to me that the textual support for Bergson's interpretation of Kant's intellectual intuition comes from passages in which Kant discusses both the concept of intuitive understanding and intellectual intuition without making a clear differentiation between them. *See* Förster 2008 and Leech 2014 for further discussion.
[231] CPR, B72.
[232] For instance, Moltke Gram argues that intellectual intuition has three different and logically independent meanings within Kant's epistemology. Jessica Leech, on the other hand, despite conceding that these meanings are indeed logically independent from one another, holds that they are nevertheless aspects of a single notion of intellectual intuition. *See* Gram 1981 and Leech 2014 for contrasting yet extremely illuminating interpretations of Kant's notion of intellectual intuition.

that would intuit the sum total of all phenomena," and (c) "a kind of intellectual intuition in which the intellect would create its own object."[233] Here, the definitions in (a) and (c) need no further commentary as they follow naturally from my analyses of the nature of the sensibility and the distinction between existence and non-existence as far as empirical reality is concerned, respectively. The definition in (b), on the other hand, is a curious one. In the remainder of this section, I will be concerned chiefly with (b), for I think that Bergson's affirmation of that kind of intuition for us is based upon his conviction that, through the method of intuition, we can grasp reality in its entirety at one stroke, instead of grasping it by means of a synthesis of the parts. This stands in diametric opposition to Kant's view that in cognition, the human understanding, which is non-intuitive, must always go "from the analytical universal (of concepts) to the particular (of the given empirical intuition)."[234] An intuitive understanding, in contrast, would go "from the synthetically universal (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts"[235] which is exactly what Bergson pursues.

Bear in mind that, according to Kant, the human understanding is strictly *discursive*, meaning that it can cognise only by means of concepts. In other words, it is "a faculty of concepts."[236] And since it must be provided by the sensibility with the matter of experience, so to speak, which it can then conceptualise for cognition, it is also said to be *contingent*. For it can always think how things could have been, notwithstanding how they actually are. And it determines how things actually are on the basis of the representations that it receives in sensible intuition. For an intuitive understanding, on the other hand, there can be no difference between how things actually are and how they could have been; because, as we have hitherto established, the distinction between the possible and the actual has absolutely no application for it, which is really the defining feature of discursivity in general. This is why Kant defines intuitive understanding negatively, that is, merely as "not discursive."[237] He holds that it is "a faculty of a complete spontaneity of intuition"[238] for which the possibility of the whole is not represented as depending upon the parts, but rather, the possibility of the

[233] Gram 1981, 288.
[234] CPJ, 5:407.
[235] *Ibid*.
[236] CPJ, 5:406; Prol, 4:355. *See* also Prol, 4:333, [A68/B93]; JL, 58. Note that Kant associates discursive cognition with philosophical certainty, whereas, for him, intuitive cognition warrants mathematical certainty. This suggests that, despite rebranding it in his philosophical system, Kant still regards intuitive cognition as yielding apodictic certainty as many of his predecessors did. *See* VL, 857.
[237] CPJ, 5:406.
[238] *Ibid*.

parts is represented as depending upon the whole.[239] The question is this: Why is it that Kant denies the possibility of a non-discursive,[240] and specifically intuitive, understanding for us which could bring about the intuition of the whole?

Kant's repeated emphasis on the contingency of a discursive understanding such as we possess is not without a reason, of course. It has to do with the relation between concepts as universal representations and intuitions as particular representations. Recall that a concept by itself contains merely the possibility of some object, and that a corresponding intuition must be supplied to it for the object to be properly cognised, i.e., to become actual. For example, when I think the concept of a pen, I do not thereby cognise every particular pen in existence. If I cognise any particular pen at all, it must have been given to me in intuition at the same time. For no particular pen is determined by the mere concept of it. The latter simply refers to the common mark that can be found in each and every particular object that one may legitimately call a pen. And I can always conceive of a brand-new pen whose specific features do not become known to me through its concept alone. For many different particulars can be subsumed under a single concept through a common characteristic. Thus, the contingency of our discursive understanding lies in the particular which, to reiterate, is never determined by the universal. Consequently, the universal cannot be derived from the particular either.[241] Simply by inspecting a particular pen, and none other, one cannot come to understand the concept of a pen.

Here, the relation of the parts to the whole ought to be viewed in the same vein as the relation of the particular to the universal. Then, similarly, we can say that the parts are never determined by the whole, for the representation of the whole presupposes a prior determination of the parts. This is because, according to Kant, "in experience one goes from the parts to the whole by successive synthesis."[242] And he urges that "the representation of the whole as it necessarily precedes the determination of the parts" is a mere idea which can never amount to empirical reality.[243] For the constitution of our discursive understanding makes it necessary that "a real whole of nature […] be regarded only as the effect of the concurrent moving forces of the parts."[244] In other words, the parts come prior to the whole as far as their empirical

[239] CPJ, 5:407.
[240] That is to say, a non-conceptual understanding, if we adopt Bergson's nomenclature.
[241] *Ibid*.
[242] Reflection 1244, quoted from Gram 1981, 293.
[243] *Ibid*.
[244] CPJ, 5:407.

reality is concerned. And the act of synthesis through which we go from the parts to the whole is subject to the formal condition of inner sense, namely, time. Kant writes:

> Wherever our representations may arise, whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originated *a priori* or empirically as appearances – as modifications of the mind they nevertheless belong to inner sense, and as such all of our cognitions are in the end subjected to the formal condition of inner sense, namely time, as that in which they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relations.[245]

It is evident from this remark that, in Kant's transcendental philosophy, time is taken to be the medium through which the representations of particulars given in intuition are combined in one consciousness for the cognition of the whole. The latter cannot be intuited itself, for the human mind apprehends what is given to it by means of a synthesis of the parts of what it apprehends. The synthesis of apprehension in conceptualisation in this way, which is indispensable for the human understanding, is successive, by which Kant means that it occurs in time. And when Kant speaks of time, he has in mind a time-series as I have demonstrated in the first chapter. It is a natural conclusion of his position, then, that a real whole of nature, which contains everything at all times, cannot be intuited as such at one stroke. Unless, of course, one possesses a capacity for intellectual intuition through which one is able to step beyond the boundaries of space and time, so to speak. According to Kant, however, such a capacity can only pertain to the original being, namely, God.[246]

5. Bergson on Intellect and Intuition

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson inherits the customary division of knowledge into two kinds, namely, the relative and the absolute.[247] He assigns the former to the intellect, and according to him, it is this kind of knowledge with which Kant is primarily concerned in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. An early commentator notes in this connection that Bergson is not sceptical in the slightest regarding "Kant's epistemological teaching that perception and conception must unite to give us knowledge of the objects of experience."[248] He insists, however, that knowledge of the objects of experience that is acquired in this way is always relative, and never absolute. Importantly, Kant never denies this. In fact, the entire *Critique of Pure Reason* might be interpreted as Kant's attempt to explain how knowledge as relative to the human

[245] CPR, A99.
[246] CPR, B72.
[247] CM, 133.
[248] Landes 1924, 458.

standpoint arises. For Bergson, on the other hand, it is precisely the task of philosophy to "go beyond the human [standpoint]"[249] and arrive at absolute knowledge. This is why he feels an irresistible urge to introduce in his epistemology the method of intuition by which we are supposed to achieve this goal. However, without a full grasp of how the intellect gives us relative knowledge, and in what ways Bergson's account differs from that of Kant on this point, it is premature to try to understand the nature of the Bergsonian intuition and how it can possibly lead to absolute knowledge. The question comes down to this: In what sense knowledge as a product of the intellect is relative to the human standpoint? In short, wherein lies its relativity?

That knowledge of a certain kind is relative to the human standpoint means that its object is determined, at least partially, by the constitution of the human mind. This much is easy to understand. What we need to clarify is how, and in what sense, the constitution of the human mind can determine the object of knowledge. As I have noted earlier, Kant calls the object of relative knowledge appearance which he puts in opposition to the thing-in-itself, i.e., that which the former is the appearance *of*. And that it is a mere appearance is in turn explained by the fact that the object to be known is filtered through the senses and the understanding before entering into the consciousness. It is in this way that it becomes an object-for-us. In other words, it is because we perceive objects in accordance with the structure of the senses, and because we conceptualise them on the framework of the understanding, that objects appear to us in the way they do. Thus, in Kant's epistemology, the object as appearance is defined in terms of the combination of the impression that it leaves on the mind through the sensibility and the conceptual work that the mind puts into it through the understanding. This is the sense in which the object of knowledge is determined by the constitution of the human mind in Kant's account. And this is the sense in which the knowledge of it is regarded as relative to the human standpoint.

On the other hand, since the concept of the thing-in-itself has no place in Bergson's philosophy, the object of relative knowledge for him cannot be the appearance thereof. He accepts the Kantian position that the object is filtered through the senses and the understanding, which in combination he names the intellect; however, in his view, they are essentially mobilised for a practical end. When Bergson asks why it is that the human mind perceives and conceives objects in the way it is accustomed to, he finds but one answer. It is because the body has to find its way

[249] CM, 163.

around the world of action, and the mind gives it the necessary guidance by providing it with individual objects by means of perception and conception. On this account, the object of relative knowledge as a product of the intellect is first and foremost defined in terms of its utility. And it is in this sense that Bergson may be labelled a pragmatist, for he characterises objects of ordinary experience with reference to the actions that they suggest to us. Thus, Kant's thesis that we perceive objects in a way that is peculiar to the human mind is changed with Bergson into the notion that our perception measures our virtual action on objects.[250] Here, the constitution of objects is taken to be in conformity not with the constitution of the human mind as such, but above all with the possible actions that the body may exert upon them.[251] In this picture, the perception of a pen amounts to the perception of an object with which, for instance, I can write a master's thesis. In intellectual representation, therefore, the phenomenal character of the object becomes paramount. For perception is always turned toward action,[252] and this means that perception of an individual object is nothing other than the carving out of the totality of matter a possible course of action.[253] Similarly, the purpose of conceptualisation is to determine what kind of action that the object presents us with.[254] Thus, by means of the collaboration of perception and conception, the intellect gives us knowledge as relative to the needs of action.[255] In that vein, Bergson contends that its primary function is "to reside over actions,"[256] and that it is "destined first of all to prepare and bear upon our action on things."[257] In other words, the work of the intellect, in affording us knowledge, is never disinterested. Bergson emphasises this feature of perception, through which the intellect identifies individual objects with distinct outlines, as follows: "The auxiliary of action, it isolates that part of reality as a whole that interests us; it shows us less the things themselves than the use we can make of them."[258] Now, in light of my discussion of the notion of interest in Bergson's philosophy in II.2, we can see that the concepts of nothingness and existence are likewise concerned with the utility in terms of which objects are

[250] MM, 179.
[251] MM, 21. Note that, by this move, Bergson manages to keep in place the subjective aspect of perception in relative knowledge, thus remaining faithful to the Kantian doctrine in this regard.
[252] MM, 227-228.
[253] MM, 229. *See* also CE, 11, 96.
[254] CM, 149.
[255] CE, 152.
[256] CE, 299.
[257] CM, 5.
[258] CM, 114.

defined.[259] In this context, nothingness signifies the absence of a possible action. And, by contrast, that something exists means that it is representative of a virtual action.

So far, so good. Yet Bergson does not stop here, for he is not a full-blown pragmatist like William James with whom he exchanged a number of letters during his lifetime in which they displayed great respect and admiration of the work of each other.[260] Bergson grants the pragmatist that knowledge as it is produced by the intellect is indeed practical in essence. In fact, he finds inspiration in the writings of James apropos the latter's theory of truth in which the traditional definition of truth as correspondence between thought and reality is called into question.[261] Following James, Bergson seeks the truth of a proposition in its possible verification, that is, "in an *action* to be performed."[262] However, he departs from the pragmatist camp on the ground that their conception of truth applies solely to the products of the intellect.[263] Thus, it is not an absolute, but, if it is permitted to speak of such a concept, a relative truth. Just as he affirms Einstein's theory of relativity in describing time merely as the fourth dimension of space as far as reality is viewed from the perspective of the intellect, Bergson maintains that the pragmatist is right about his conception of truth only insofar as truth is confined to the intellectual sphere. However, as I have indicated in the beginning of this section, what he is really after is the absolute, and the means by which we can reach it cannot be ascribed with a fundamentally practical purpose. In other words, no interest can be meddled in the faculty through which absolute knowledge is to be attained. And with this, we derive the first criterion of absolute knowledge, namely, that it must be disinterested.

Bergson faces a pressing problem, however. As we have seen in II.2, he defines consciousness in terms of its practical utility too. This is amply evident in his portrayal of it as "the light that plays around the zone of possible actions."[264] And his depiction of consciousness in this way is not limited to such parabolical descriptions either, for he proclaims in a very straightforward manner that "consciousness means virtual action,"[265] and in evolutionary terms, he suggests that its fundamental role for us, who as humans have bodily functions, is "to preside over action and to enlighten choice."[266]

[259] CE, 297.
[260] *See* M, 357-365; James 1920, 178-179, 183-184, 290-293, 308-309, 315.
[261] *See* François 2019, 14.
[262] *Ibid*, 15.
[263] Bergson goes even further and asserts that the concept of truth, as it is entertained by the intellect, is "a human invention whose effect is to utilise reality." CM, 185. *See* also CM, 183.
[264] CE, 144.
[265] MM, 50.
[266] MM, 141.

Therefore, as viewed from this perspective, the work of consciousness is always interested. Then, how can Bergson maintain that knowledge, which must enter into the consciousness to become knowledge proper, can ever be disinterested as in the case of absolute knowledge which, in his view, is to be attained through intuition? Is Bergson saying that what intuition yields is not knowledge, but feeling? Or is he outright rejecting the Kantian premise that all knowledge is self-conscious knowledge by definition? He answers the first question in the negative, and he is far from hiding his disappointment with the allegation that his intuition is feeling.[267] He insists that it is not, and that it is instead "reflection."[268] And it seems reasonably clear that a reflective state cannot be non-conscious (or, unconscious) by definition; hence, Bergson cannot be answering the second question in the affirmative either. If he is to be consistent, then, he must differentiate between at least two different meanings of consciousness. And, thankfully, he does just that when he writes:

> …if consciousness has thus split up into intuition and intelligence, it is because of the need it had to apply itself to matter at the same time as it had to follow the stream of life. The double form of consciousness is then due to the double form of the real, and theory of knowledge must be dependent upon metaphysics.[269] […] Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter.[270]

Bergson's vitalism manifests itself in these remarks. As he indicates, the epistemological distinction between intuition and intelligence turns on the metaphysical distinction between two forms of reality, one consisting in the dynamism of life and the other in the inertia of matter, respectively. Consciousness as a function of the brain belongs to the latter, whereas it pertains to the former in the form of a "supra-consciousness" which is equivalent to "a *need of creation*."[271] It is indeed a need of creation inasmuch as it is located "at the origin of life." And Bergson has to locate it there, for he thinks that life is guided by creative evolution, and as a consequence, the immediate consciousness of life, which is dubbed as "supra-consciousness," must be of creation itself. It is marked first and foremost by its feature of immediacy in grasping reality in terms of life and creation; and on this basis, Bergson identifies it with intuition which he describes as "a vision which is scarcely distinguishable from the

[267] CM, 69.
[268] CM, 70.
[269] CE, 178.
[270] CE, 267.
[271] CE, 261.

object seen, a knowledge which is contact and even coincidence."[272] It is to live the object, but not to think it, so to speak. For the original purpose of thought is "to organize the work of men in space,"[273] thereby serving a practical end, while intuition is necessarily devoid of any interested work whatsoever. It is concerned with life itself as a dynamical process, but not with inert matter. Thus, in Bergson's philosophy, the immediate consciousness that is obtained through intuition is regarded as the complete opposite of consciousness as viewed from the perspective of the intellect which seeks clean-cut distinctions and symbols as "the translation of life in terms of inertia."[274] The intellect is bound to view life in this way, for it is essentially "*the faculty of manufacturing artificial objects, especially tools to make tools, and of indefinitely varying the manufacture*."[275] This is why it is inclined to proceed "*by solid perceptions on the one hand, and by stable conceptions on the other*."[276] Bergson's definition of man as *homo faber*[277] is also based on this practical function of the intellect whose incessant drive to always create a new need which it then tries to satisfy fuels the technological development of mankind.[278] And since it cannot create matter, it creates new forms by introducing varying relations into matter. It is in this sense that Bergson defines intellectual knowledge as "*the knowledge of a* form"[279] which has as its object *relations* rather than *things*.[280] Therefore, it is not capable of seeing through the interior of the object, as it were, and coinciding with "what there is unique in it."[281] Instead, it represents the object always in relation to other objects with which it shares a common feature. In other words, the intellect operates through concepts, and consequently, it never gets into immediate contact with matter so as to acquire absolute knowledge of it.

This is to be expected, however. For objects of ordinary experience among which the intellect establishes relations are turned into individual objects originally in order to partake in, that is, to become the terms of, those relations. And as the terms of those relations, they must be fixed and stable, for which only the solid objects of the

[272] CM, 20. Note that the immediacy of Kant's intellectual intuition is expressed, in the context of Bergson's intuition, by such phenomenological terms as contact and coincidence.
[273] CM, 63.
[274] TFW, 9, 128; CE, 176.
[275] CE, 139.
[276] CM, 159.
[277] CE, 139. By this phrase, he means that "man is essentially a manufacturer." CM, 45. *See* also CM, 61 and CE, 182 on the relation between intelligence and fabrication.
[278] CE, 141.
[279] CE, 149.
[280] CE, 148.
[281] CM, 135.

intellect qualify.[282]And if there were no relations among objects, it would be impossible to conceive of objects in their individuality. In other words, as far as their individuality is concerned, objects would cease to exist for us. This reveals to us the double aspect of the intellect: It represents relations in terms of the individual objects which participate in them, and it represents individual objects in terms of the relations in which they participate. However, neither individual objects nor relations can be comprehended by themselves by means of it, and in this consists the mediate character of intellectual knowledge. By contrast, the ultimate object of immediate knowledge is taken to be life as a dynamical process. It is neither fixed nor stable, and this is why the intellect cannot catch sight of it. In that vein, Bergson declares that "*the intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life*."[283] What it can do is simply take snapshots of this dynamical process, as it were, and turn them into static representations of individual objects.[284] The dynamism of life is exhibited in the organism through another faculty that the vital impetus endows it with. Bergson calls it instinct which, according to him, "carries out further the work by which life organizes matter."[285] For it is "molded on the very form of life."[286]

6. Intuition as Disinterested Instinct

A breakthrough in science may prompt philosophers to adjust their doctrines and adapt them to the results of the emergent scientific theory. Alternatively, they may question the legitimacy of the theory on philosophical grounds. For Kant, it was the developments in the theoretical physics of his day that prompted him to conduct a philosophical investigation of space and time. What he did was not question the legitimacy of the results of scientific experiments, but come up with a novel and philosophically rich interpretation of them. Similarly, Bergson's philosophy cannot be thought in isolation from the dominant scientific theory of his day, namely, the theory of evolution, which has been subjected ever since to various competing interpretations under the rubrics of Darwinism and Lamarckism.[287] It is for this reason that Bergson, in his early years, engaged extensively with Herbert Spencer's philosophy in which

[282] In this regard, Bergson writes of the intellect that it "cut[s] up all progress into *phases* and afterwards […] solidif[ies] these *phases* into things." MM, 125. It is in this sense that Bergson employs the notion of solidification in his epistemology, and he claims that "our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids." CE, ix. For, in his view, processes cannot be analysed in logic unless they are solidified.
[283] CE, 165.
[284] CM, 22.
[285] CE, 165.
[286] *Ibid*.
[287] *See* Marrati 2005, 1105 for further discussion on Bergson's rejection of both mechanism and finalism involved in neo-Darwinist and neo-Lamarckist accounts of evolution, respectively.

the latter endeavoured to explain how evolution ought to be understood in philosophical terms. In the end, however, Bergson was not satisfied with Spencer's explanations.[288] Consequently, he began to develop his own philosophical account of evolution in which the notion of duration played a central role. He thought that the analysis of time in Spencer's explanations was limited to the scientific concept of time which did not *endure*.[289] Of course, this was inevitable, since Spencer viewed evolution from the perspective of the intellect, and this led him to adopt a mechanistic approach to what is essentially a dynamic process. According to Bergson, this was a grave mistake, for how evolution works cannot be understood unless a dynamic conception of time is accommodated in the theory. Thus, what is needed is exactly the conception of time as duration as he envisages it, absent which we find ourselves at a loss to penetrate into the organising work of living matter that is life itself. The question is this: If the intellect fails to provide us with the means to penetrate into life in this way, how else can we do it? To put it differently, how can we get back in duration? Here, Bergson's examination of a biological phenomenon, namely instinct, comes to our rescue. It is manifested to the highest degree in those organisms which for the most part lack intelligence. They act, but they do not think. As a result, their actions follow the uninterrupted flow of life perfectly. For what they do is simply live. In fact, Bergson maintains that "there is no sharp line of demarcation between the instinct of the animal and the organizing work of living matter."[290] In a word, instinct is life *lived*.

Hence, in contradistinction to the intellect which involves indirect action on unorganised matter which it utilises for fabrication, Bergson introduces the faculty of instinct to which he attributes a natural ability to effect direct action on organised matter.[291] Its action is direct in the sense that the organism acts through itself. In other words, it uses organic instruments which "form part of its bodily structure" or at any rate "are organically connected with it."[292] By contrast, the intellect gives us inorganic instruments which it artificially produces. Ultimately, however, instinct shares with the intellect the same practical purpose. Both are designed for survival, and herein lies their practicality. And this should come as no surprise, because "life demands that we make use of matter," and this we can do either by means of instinct which operates

[288] *See* CE, 363-370 for Bergson's discussion of the evolutionism of Spencer.
[289] *See* Delitz 2021, 17 on this point and Bergson's letter to James in which the former expresses his astonishment when he found out about this.
[290] CE, 140. In this connection, Bergson maintains that "we cannot say […] where organization ends and where instinct begins." CE, 165.
[291] CE, 140, 142.
[292] Carr 1909-10, 99.

through our organs, or by means of the intellect which operates through what may be referred to as artificial organs, that is, inorganic instruments.[293] In this regard, Bergson contends that instinct and intelligence represent "*two divergent solutions, equally fitting, of one and the same problem*."[294] And the reason as to why they are considered divergent solutions is this: Intelligence is conscious and thought, whereas instinct is unconscious and acted.[295] For example, when a fly encounters a frog, it acts instinctively and flies away. To an external observer, it may look like that the fly is following a specific plan in the execution of this action, and every step of this plan might seem to contribute to a specific end, viz., to escape a brutal death. This indicates that the instinct of a fly in its encounter with a frog serves a practical purpose, meaning that its work has a vital interest. However, that the fly actually knows what it is doing in this situation is hard to justify. As Wildon Carr points out, in thinking that "the creature must be guided in its activities by knowledge," we are "consciously anthropomorphic."[296] For how can an unconscious instinct be knowledge? If it is not thought but simply acted, how comes it that it can pretend to knowledge of any kind whatsoever?

Bergson's claim is modest: "The knowledge, if knowledge there be, is only implicit. It is reflected outwardly in exact movements instead of being reflected inwardly in consciousness."[297] The fly does not know what it is doing in the sense in which an entomologist would know what it is doing.[298] The kind of knowledge which it has of its own activity is better described as *sympathy* through which the fly and the frog are considered "no longer as two organisms, but as two activities" whose relation to each other is thereby expressed in a concrete form.[299] However, unless this sympathy "extend[s] its object and also reflect[s] upon itself," it cannot constitute a reflective state. It is true that instinct retains the dynamism of life, and on that basis, it is taken to be better reflective of life compared to the intellect; however, by itself, it cannot lay the foundations of speculation which is integral to metaphysics. In this regard, Bergson famously writes: "*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 will never seek them*."[300] It is this conundrum which motivates Bergson's appeal to the notion of intuition as that which both seeks and is able to find these things. Accordingly, he defines intuition as "instinct

[293] CM, 25.
[294] CE, 143.
[295] CE, 145.
[296] Carr 1909-10, 111.
[297] CE, 147.
[298] *See* CE, 173.
[299] CE, 174.
[300] CE, 151.

that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely."[301] And, curiously, he assigns the intellect with the role of elevating intuition to this reflective state. Without the intellect, Bergson says, intuition "would have remained in the form of instinct, riveted to the special object of its practical interest, and turned outward by it into movements of locomotion."[302] Importantly, by placing instinct in-between intelligence and intuition in this way, Bergson's account of the genesis of intuition avoids a potential charge of subjectivism. For if intuition were not regarded in his philosophy originally as instinct, but simply as a subjective mode of comprehending life that is accessible only to oneself, psychologism would be the inescapable result. On the other hand, by defining intuition as instinct that has become disinterested, Bergson manages to show that, as a biological phenomenon, it is a natural product of evolution that is common to all.

One question remains, however. Is Bergson's intuition merely a necessary postulate of philosophy, such as Reinhold's fact of consciousness or Fichte's act of consciousness? Or is it something that we can actually attain by following a certain path of reasoning, as it were? Arthur Lovejoy says that there are essentially two strategies by which the proponent of intuitionism may try to convince us of the validity of this notion without using clear verbal descriptions: "…he should either tell us what we must do to get this experience, or […] should *point* to those moments or phases of experience in which it is exemplified."[303] In the context of Bergson's intuitionism, the first strategy involves the concept of a philosophical method, while the second leads us to the intuition of duration.

7. Intuition as Method

In his *Letter to Harald Höffding*, Bergson writes that his theory of intuition as the general method of philosophy emerged long after he developed his conception of time as duration, and that the former is derived from, and can only be understood through, the latter.[304] On the other hand, throughout his writings, he insists that time can be grasped as duration only by "an effort of intuition."[305] There appears to be a tension between these two positions, and how it can be resolved is not obvious. Which one comes first, duration or intuition? Or do they come together? Moreover, as Mark Sinclair notes in his brilliant commentary, Bergson's identification of intuition as the

[301] CE, 176.
[302] CE, 178.
[303] Lovejoy 2019, 64.
[304] M, 367.
[305] CM, 156.

general method of philosophy raises further problems.[306] For how can intuition, which Bergson describes pre-eminently as a non-conceptual and direct apprehension of reality, be nonetheless methodological? A method involves mediation by definition, whereas what Bergson demands of intuition is the immediate knowledge of the absolute.[307] Can intuition really be a method, then, or is it something else altogether? Bergson's contention that a simple and geometrical definition of intuition cannot be given may be taken as a hint at this point. He challenges Höffding's fourfold definition of this notion on the ground that many more can be provided, for it is necessary that one take multiple and complementary views of it in order to form an idea as to its meaning.[308] Nevertheless, Bergson expresses what he takes to be the fundamental meaning of intuition by the following slogan: "To think intuitively is to think in duration."[309] This seems to suggest that, to grasp the meaning of intuition, one must already possess it in the form of the intuition of duration. For how else can one know how to think in duration? Now, we have to be careful here. Do we mean, in this question, that someone who is in possession of this intuition can know *intuitively* how to think in duration? Or do we mean, alternatively, that he can know *intellectually* how to do so? The former is the case if he already thinks in duration,[310] whereas the latter refers to his grasping the meaning of intuition as thinking in duration. Thinking in duration, however, is not the same as grasping the meaning of intuition as thinking in duration. The latter requires the labour of the intellect which represents its objects in a conceptual form. Although it cannot present us directly with the intuition itself, it can point us toward it by dint of a variety of images. Bergson elaborates as follows:

> 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.[311]

These images are supposed to lead to the intuition, yet the intuition itself cannot be given in them as they are necessarily represented in a conceptual form. Thus, it is not that a variety of images lead to a further image which is the intuition itself, but that they suggest to us something which differs from them in kind, but something which

[306] Sinclair 2020, 162. Cf. Lapoujade 2018, 39-58 where David Lapoujade differentiates between intuition and sympathy, and alleges that, although intuition is prior to sympathy, "it receives from sympathy the extension that allows it to become a general method."
[307] CM, 162.
[308] CM, 22.
[309] *Ibid*.
[310] In this connection, Deleuze says that "duration would remain purely intuitive, in the ordinary sense of the word, if intuition […] were not there as method." Deleuze 2018, 14.
[311] CM, 139.

they can nevertheless indicate. And if we wish to communicate this intuition to others, we have to do so through the intellect which is the sole medium of communication. To this end, the intellect makes use of comparisons and metaphors, and it utilises ideas as conveyance, so that what cannot be expressed directly in language becomes expressible, at least vaguely, by these means.[312] In the end, however, to someone "who is not capable of giving himself the intuition of the duration constitutive of his being, nothing will ever give it, neither their concepts nor images."[313] In other words, it comes down ultimately to the person to discover for himself the intuition of duration. This is what Bergson means by effort. No matter how many explanations are offered to the person as he tries to grasp the meaning of the intuition of duration, unless he actually thinks in duration for himself by the kind of effort by which the mind reverses "the direction of the operation by which it ordinarily thinks,"[314] he cannot accomplish what he sets himself to accomplish. It is for this reason that, when we reflect on duration and the intuition of duration, they become virtually indistinguishable from each other. For they differ in this sole respect, that the former concerns metaphysics whilst the latter belongs to the theory of knowledge. Here, we must recall Bergson's statement that the theory of knowledge depends on metaphysics. He thinks that the reverse is also true, viz., that metaphysics depends on the theory of knowledge.[315] The interdependence between the theory of knowledge and metaphysics thus entails a mutual correspondence between their objects. For instance, Bergson's theory of knowledge introduces two radically different kinds of knowledge, namely, the intellectual and the intuitive. Similarly, his metaphysics affirms two disparate ways of grasping reality; it can be grasped either as immobility or as movement. If we match the kind of knowledge with the particular way of grasping reality, whereby the theory of knowledge and metaphysics coincide, we arrive at the following formula: Immobility is the object of intellectual knowledge, whereas intuitive knowledge concerns itself with movement. And the conception of reality as movement is precisely what Bergson means by duration.

Bergson is not impartial, however. Even though he occasionally admits that both are important and necessary for us,[316] he seems to give greater weight to the intuitive knowledge of duration in terms of its metaphysical value. This is especially

[312] CM, 29.
[313] *Ibid*.
[314] CM, 160.
[315] CE, 178.
[316] *See* CE, 344; CM, 25 for example.

evident from his frequent use of glorifying adjectives such as "true" and "real" in connection with the objects of intuition.[317] The reason is clear: Intuition gives us immediate knowledge, whereas the work of the intellect is always mediated. And who does not favour the immediate over the mediated? That the intuition of duration originally arises for, and is to be found within, oneself suggests that the certitude, or the immediacy for that matter, of inner duration ought to be taken as the starting point of any metaphysical inquiry. On the general principle of starting from what is certain, then, Bergson is in agreement with the common sense view. Similarly, he grants that the existence of which one is unquestionably certain is indeed one's own. However, what Bergson demands explanation for is what exactly we mean by existence here. He invites the reader to reflect on himself and attend to what he experiences. There, Bergson says, "I find, first of all, that I pass from state to state."[318] He puts special emphasis on the continuity between the states that one passes through, warning against the tendency of the mind to regard them as distinct and discontinuous elements. It is the act of attention that is responsible for this artificial division, and it is attention, again, which "is obliged next to reunite [distinct and discontinuous elements] by an artificial bond."[319] Originally, however, the mind is in immediate contact with itself in duration. It is on this basis that Bergson defines intuition first and foremost as "the direct vision of the mind by the mind."[320] In a limited sense, a unique idealism may be attributed to Bergson, especially as regards his early work. On the other hand, his engagement with the theory of evolution, which culminated in his extremely novel and profound interpretation of it as presented in *Creative Evolution*, enabled him to shift his initial position and, by masterfully utilising the concepts of creation and life,[321] to connect the intuition of inner duration to the intuition of reality in its entirety.[322] The result was this: Duration, which manifests itself as consciousness in us, manifests itself as life in nature. Bergson contends that even material objects

[317] We find in the Bergsonian parlance terms of this sort, for example, *real time*, *the fundamental self*, etc.
[318] CE, 1.
[319] CE, 3.
[320] CM, 20, 29.
[321] Bergson's philosophy is surely influenced by the theory of evolution. As a scientific theory of biology, it gives us the intellectual knowledge of the chronological succession of species. Combined with the intuitive knowledge of reality as movement, it gestures toward a dynamic conception of nature. *See* O'Connor 1937, 25.
[322] CE, 179. This expansion to his initial theory may suggest a parallel with Kant's intellectual intuition as it is conceived in Gram's definition in (b) as I have reproduced in III.4. However, Bergson's intuition is not the intuition of the totality of things, if from the totality of things is understood a collection of immobilities. For him, the intuition of reality is not equivalent to the intuition of the totality of things considered thus, since the latter presupposes the systematic unity of the world that is artificially constructed by the intellect. According to Bergson, the intuition of reality refers to the apprehension of reality as movement. *See* CM, 19.

participate in duration, for "succession is an undeniable fact, even in the material world."[323] Then, if reality is no longer viewed as immobility, but instead as movement, neither idealism nor dogmatism makes any sense. The notion that there is the self as a subject, and the external world is opposed to it as the object, loses its meaning. My inner duration and the duration of reality cannot be put side by side and compared to each other as if they were mere things. For their difference lies in their "rhythms," as it were, and the former reveals the latter through this difference.[324]

Thus, Bergson criticises both idealism and dogmatism for adopting a flawed picture of reality in which everything is reified for analysis. In fact, he rejects reification in metaphysics altogether, arguing that it is essentially a practical operation, and that it can be extremely misleading when it is falsely applied to the subject matter of metaphysics. This is Bergson's "true empiricism" which, equipped with the method of intuition, "sees itself obliged to make an absolutely new effort for each new object it studies."[325] Bergson thinks that failing to do so leads to irredeemable confusions which, in general, stem from the mistake of applying our habitual ways of thinking through the intellect, which is originally designed for action, to speculation.[326] He accuses philosophers of repeatedly committing this error,[327] thereby finding themselves against irresolvable antinomies which result from "an automatic transfer to speculation of habits contracted in action."[328] As we shall see next, the error is ultimately rooted in the blurring of the boundaries between science and metaphysics.

8. Bergson on Science and Metaphysics

In the French philosophy of the 19th century, the dominant school of thought was the positivism of August Comte which restricted the scope of knowledge to the scientific alone. Of course, there were some opposing voices too, among whom were the likes of Augustin Cournot, Claude Bernard, and above all, Charles Renouvier. These latter figures agreed in drawing a line of demarcation between the legitimate domain of positive science and the legitimate domain of metaphysics. They valued the import of scientific investigation nonetheless, but they criticised the tendency of science to cross the line into a domain that is foreign to it. Importantly, they admitted that this was a natural tendency, for the method of science, which consists in

[323] CE, 9.
[324] *See* CE, 9-10 for Bergson's example of the melting of a sugar in a glass of water which serves to illuminate this point.
[325] CM, 147.
[326] CM, 56, 119-120; MM, 199; CE, 273.
[327] CE, 155.
[328] CM, 54.

accumulating particular observable facts, is incapable of giving us the entirety of reality which is really what we want to know. For instance, as Bergson demonstrates, the scientific method fails to account for the reality of movement without analysing it in terms of immobilities, thereby making our knowledge of it merely relative. However, we seek absolute knowledge by nature. We try to reach it even if we know intellectually that it is out of our reach. This irrepressible desire to attain the absolute reasserts itself in science too,[329] causing it to step outside its legitimate domain and enter into the domain of metaphysics.

Bergson adopted the stance of the opposition in this regard, and he insisted likewise that the methods of science and metaphysics must be carefully distinguished from one another. In particular, he followed in the footsteps of Maine de Biran in holding that "there are hidden meanings to life that escapes detection by our laboratory instruments, but which, nevertheless, can be known with certitude."[330] For Bergson, this certitude was to be sought in metaphysics to which he assigned a task that science could not perform. This shows that, as far as his metaphysics is concerned, Bergson belonged to the tradition of French spiritualism. On the other hand, as has been indicated throughout this thesis, his theory of knowledge revolved around discussions which largely occupied the discourse of German idealism of the 19th century. And, finally, his unique contribution to philosophy, namely the notion of creative evolution, was a consequence of his close engagement with British philosophy broadly and Herbert Spencer specifically. In the remainder of this chapter, I will address the central aspect of the first of these influences, i.e., the distinction between metaphysics and science in terms of their exclusive methods. This is especially important for my purpose in this thesis, for I take it that the problem of freedom can be solved only if it is taken as a problem of metaphysics rather than a problem of science as Bergson conceives of these terms.

Now, in Bergson's view, analysis is the principal method of science. He writes:

> Analysis […] is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, common to that object and to others. Analyzing then consist in expressing a thing in terms of what is not it. All analysis is thus a translation, a development into symbols […].[331]

As products of analysis, therefore, objects of science are regarded as mere symbols. It is in this way that the language of science can accommodate them. And as symbols,

[329] O'Connor 1937, 4.
[330] *Ibid*, 5-6.
[331] CM, 135-136.

they must be fixed and stable. Consequently, they can never represent movement. For they are really so many immobile views taken on a mobility that is reality. In this way, analysis provides us with immobilities out of which it expects us to reconstruct a mobility by means of synthesis.[332] However, what synthesis can give us in the name of mobility is simply a collection of immobilities that are juxtaposed in what is essentially a spatial representation. These immobilities cannot constitute a mobility by merely gathering together, for a mobility is more than the sum of its parts considered thus. Immobilities are the creations of science through the intellect; they are abstractions. And it is futile to attempt to reconstruct a single concrete reality out of indefinitely many abstractions. In that vein, Bergson says that "with immobility set beside immobility, even endlessly, we could never make movement."[333] And to make his case even more palpable, he draws a striking analogy between the method of science and the method of a cinematograph on which a few words are now in order.

Think of the experience of watching a film in cinema, and think of how the moving picture is generated on screen. The audience see movement, for instance, in the scene in which the *Titanic* sinks in the ocean. They are not looking for individual frames. If individual frames were presented to them side by side all at once, but not successively in a forward motion, that would not give them the experience of watching a film; for then the sinking of the Titanic would have been replaced by a mere collection of snapshots taken on it. What the cinematograph does is install a successive movement in the collection of snapshots in a certain order by means of his apparatus through which the film unrolls. In other words, the movement is in this apparatus. Bergson contends that the method of science, as analysis, is exactly the same as the method of the cinematograph. Bergson explains:

> We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing 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. Whether we would think becoming, or express it, or even perceive it, we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us.[334]

Bergson notes the practical character of the operation of the cinematograph.[335] And the operation of the scientist is practical too.[336] In this way, analysis replaces qualities with

[332] CM, 152.
[333] CE, 305.
[334] CE, 306.
[335] *Ibid*.
[336] CE, 329; CM, 196.

quantities so as to be able to compare and reconstruct them in combinations afterwards.[337] In analysis, therefore, reality is quantified, or at any rate quantifiable. And since reality as movement involves qualitative multiplicity as we have seen in II.2, objects of science in contrast are necessarily treated as motionless entities. It is as if "time does not bite into them."[338] Evidently, this is a direct consequence of the practical function of science which consists in composing "a world for us in which we can, for the convenience of action, ignore the effect of time."[339] This is why science cannot represent time as passing. What it can represent is time as already passed.[340] Even the present and the future must be represented by science in the form of the past, that is, as "already given."[341] This is because the apparatus of science, namely the intellect, can form a clear idea only of the discontinuous and the immobile.[342] We can see this if we observe, *à la* Bergson, that "the intellect is at home in the presence of unorganized matter."[343] For instance, science has no difficulty in representing the spatial relations among multiple solids. It is when it comes to representing a dynamical process, however, that it runs into numerous troubles. As I have shown in II.3, Zeno's paradoxes constitute a perfect example of this.

By the same token, it is more convenient for science to represent the inert than the living. The complexities of the theory of evolution are a testament to this. It becomes impossible to understand how life can follow divergent paths in evolution if we treat those paths as if they are given in advance, as it were. We ask, for example, how it is that a species can be evolved through indefinitely many intermediary stages. And even if we were to identify each and every single individual organism of a certain ancestral line such that we can trace the evolution of the species individual by individual, that would not give us evolution as evolving. For that, we would have to reflect on evolution in duration rather than analyse it in terms of the evolutionary stages between two species. In science, the latter is the method. On the other hand, Bergson urges that a living being is not comparable to the solid objects of science.[344] And for this reason, he demands a different method for the examination of the living.[345]

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[337] CM, 110.
[338] CE, 8. *See* also CE, 337.
[339] CM, 4. *See* CE, 329 on the practical function of science.
[340] CM, 3.
[341] *See* CE, 345 for Bergson's discussion of the cinematographical method by which both the metaphysics of the ancients and the physics of the moderns presuppose in their analyses that "all is given."
[342] CE, 154, 155.
[343] CE, 195-196.
[344] CE, 15.
[345] CE, 198.

This is where intuition comes in. After analysis divides up reality as movement into indefinitely many immobilities, it falls upon intuition to restore it in its original mobility. As method, it consists of an indefinite series of acts through which one takes a leap into the immediate consciousness of reality in duration. This requires effort, of course, since it takes the reversal of our habitual ways of thinking.

In this respect, Bergson associates metaphysics with intuition as opposed to analysis. According him, speculation is always disinterested; therefore, being the auxiliary of action, analysis cannot be its method. It strives for absolute knowledge, which is really to "strive to see in order to see, and no longer to see in order to act."[346] The habit of the intellect is "to think the moving by means of the unmovable."[347] This means that the knowledge of the moving is mediated by the unmovable when the intellect is at work. By contrast, intuition leads to the immediate consciousness of the moving. The superiority of metaphysics to science thus lies in its method. It is based on, for instance, the fact that mobility cannot be constructed out of indefinitely many immobilities whilst immobilities can indeed be constructed from a mobility of which they are merely the snapshots, as I quoted Bergson. In that vein,

> …fixed concepts can be extracted by our thought from the mobile reality; but there is no means whatever of reconstituting with the fixity of concepts the mobility of the real. Dogmatism, as the constructor of systems, has nevertheless always attempted this reconstitution. […] The demonstrations which have been given of the relativity of our knowledge […] assume, like the dogmatism they attack, that all knowledge must necessarily start from rigidly defined concepts in order to grasp by their means the flowing reality.[348]

To insist on the fixity of concepts is the method of science. The method of metaphysics, on the other hand, which consists in "*revers[ing] the normal direction of the working of thought*," provides one with "fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very moment of the inner life of things."[349] By utilising these concepts, which enables us to see all things *sub specie durationis* through intuition, the problems which initially appear to be insoluble are automatically solved. Or, as Bergson prefers to say, they are dissolved.[350] For instance, it is the scientific concept of freedom, but not the metaphysical concept thereof, that leads to the problem of

[346] CE, 298. *See* also CM, 196.
[347] CE, 299.
[348] CM, 160. That to construct immobilities out of a mobility is possible but the reverse is not finds another expression in Bergson's succinct remark that "from intuition one can pass on to analysis, but not from analysis to intuition." CM, 152.
[349] CM, 160.
[350] CM, 23.

freedom which philosophers went to great pains to solve. Bergson maintains that the former is an empty concept as it is transported outside its legitimate domain. And this transportation results in the metaphysical problem of freedom.

IV. Freedom

1. The Problem

What exactly is the problem of freedom? Of course, there may be not only one, but variously many *problems* of freedom. The sheer number of different theories intended to demonstrate either the possibility or the impossibility of freedom indicates this. Although Bergson may be seen, especially in his *Time and Free Will*, as addressing only one of these problems which is really the problem of predetermination of events in time, he acknowledges that the problem of freedom can be posed in other terms too, depending on which a ready-made solution is then given alongside it. Nevertheless, he contends that no matter how it is posed, the problem of freedom, insofar as it remains a metaphysical problem, comes down to the problem of change[351] in general. It would be a mistake to suppose, then, that simply because Bergson poses the problem of freedom specifically in relation to the notion of predetermination of events in time, his solution would consist merely in showing that events in time are not thus determined. There is much more to his solution than that. In fact, his is not so much a solution as the restating of the problem in terms of duration. For Bergson maintains that metaphysical problems arise when we undermine the efficacy of time by encapsulating it in a static image through the intellect. This amounts to reducing time to nothing,[352] and, as we have seen, reducing time to nothing in this way results in the metaphysically illegitimate conception of reality as immobility. In Bergson's view, the problem of freedom is rooted precisely in that conception.

This is the crux of the matter. Bergson's conception of time as duration leads to a radically different conception of reality, i.e., the conception of reality as movement which we can grasp only through intuition. Then, we can say, accordingly, that the problem of freedom stems not only from the intellectual conception of time as the mathematical time of physics, but ultimately from the intellectual conception of reality as immobility. Therefore, the solution must lie in reworking the latter along with the former. And with this done, not only the particular version of the problem of freedom

[351] Or the problem of movement as it manifests itself, for example, in Zeno's paradoxes. In this regard, Bergson traces the origin of the problem of freedom to "the illusion through which we confuse succession and simultaneity, duration and extensity, quality and quantity." TFW, 240.
[352] CE, 39.

as it relates to the notion of predetermination of events in time, but also the problem of freedom in any form is supposed to be dissolved. For it is not that, in this refined picture, events can no longer be regarded as predetermined in time in the sense that a prior event has no effect on a posterior event, but that time, along with reality itself, is redefined in such a way that the very notion of predetermination makes no sense in relation to it. For the concept of a discrete event in time which can be juxtaposed alongside, and compared with, other discrete events loses its meaning in duration.

At this junction, it is important to note that Bergson's discussion of the problem of freedom in *Time and Free Will* represents only one case among many toward which the same approach can be taken. In his preface to this book, he writes:

> …it may be asked whether the insurmountable difficulties presented by certain philosophical problems do not arise from our placing side by side in space phenomena which do not occupy space […] When an illegitimate translation of the unextended into the extended, of quality into quantity, has introduced contradiction into the very heart of the question, contradiction must, of course, recur in the answer.[353]

It is in the question, or the problem for that matter, that we must find the contradiction and, hopefully, eliminate it. And it is in this sense that Bergson describes the first step of solving a metaphysical problem as the restating of it in duration.[354] Importantly, restating a problem in duration requires more than just rearranging its terms in a different order. For it is the mistake of working with pre-given terms that leads to the problem in the first place. Metaphysical problems do not have ready-made solutions; and problem-solving in metaphysics calls for a certain effort. Bergson identifies this effort with intuition. Without it, we are left with fixed concepts. Yet, reality demands of us the use of fluid concepts. The fixed concept of mathematical time makes freedom impossible, or even incomprehensible, for instance, whereas the fluid concept of duration welcomes it.[355] In his *Letter to Floris Delattre*, Bergson elaborates:

> I call an *amateur*, in philosophy, someone who accepts wholesale the terms of a common problem, considers it definitively posed, and limits himself to choosing from the apparent solutions to this problem, which necessarily pre-exist his choice. […] in this matter really to do philosophy consists in *creating* the position of the problem in *creating* the solution. How could it be otherwise? Is it not evident that if a problem has been posed for a long time and not yet been resolved, it is because it comprises, in the form of it is posed, two or several equally possible solutions, which are mutually exclusive? The philosopher

[353] TFW, xix.
[354] *See* Deleuze 2018, 14 in particular where the restating of the problem in this manner is identified as the first rule of the method of intuition.
[355] On Bergson's "anti-positivism" which "fundamentally protests against a static, non-problematic view of *concepts*," *see* During 2004.

> properly called cannot, must not, stop at this point. I thus call an *amateur* someone who chooses between ready-made solutions […] And I call a *philosopher* someone who creates the solution, which is then necessarily unique, of the problem that he has newly posed, through the very fact of having made the effort to resolve it.[356]

Evidently, Bergson shifts focus from solutions onto problems. For him, as Elie During notes, "problems […] are the genetic element in the development of thought."[357] In fact, Bergson iterates multiple times throughout his writings that the stating of the problem has primacy over its solution, since "a speculative problem is solved as soon as it is properly stated."[358] What he sets out to do in *Time and Free Will* is precisely this. "Instead of seeking to solve the question," Bergson writes, "we shall show the mistake of those who ask it."[359] And by showing the mistake of those who ask it, i.e., by demonstrating that the problem is badly stated, we indicate a correct way of restating it. Now, the question is this: How do we restate the problem in the correct way?

According to Bergson, we must be guided by the goal of precision in the restating of the problem.[360] This means that we must strive to provide a solution that is unique to the reality in which we live. If the solution is equally applicable to other possible realities that are entirely different from the actual reality, then it cannot be satisfactory. For such a solution would be concerned solely with the abstraction of reality rather than reality in the concrete. On the other hand, Bergson's true empiricism accepts as satisfactory only that solution "which fits tightly to its object, with no space between them, no crevice in which any other [solution] might equally well be lodged; one which fits the object only and to which alone the object lends itself."[361] In that fashion, then, we must restate the problem of freedom in a way in which it corresponds exactly to the reality of which it can be posed as a problem. Therefore, before even attempting to solve the problem of freedom, we must determine the kind of reality in which freedom becomes a relevant concept.

2. Redefining Reality

The idea that everything is in a state of constant movement can be traced back to Heraclitus. It finds many different expressions throughout the history of philosophy, whether in the works of the ancients or in the works of the moderns. And with this in the background, it is easy to mistake Bergson's conception of reality as

[356] M, 370-371.
[357] During 2004, 4.
[358] CM, 36-37.
[359] TFW, 74.
[360] CM, 1.
[361] *Ibid*.

movement for a mere restatement of the Heraclitan dictum. This would indeed be a mistake, however, for Bergson is not saying that everything is in a state of constant movement. What he is saying is instead that movement is reality itself.[362] That reality consists of things which are in a state of constant movement cannot be his position, then, for it contradicts his central claim that "*there are movements, but there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile*."[363] The Heraclitan view, on the other hand, lacks this insight. Even though it regards movement as the fundamental aspect of reality, it seems nonetheless to superadd it to a pre-given reality comprising immobile things. Bergson concedes that this is a natural tendency, for immobility is the prerequisite for action, and therefore, "nothing is more legitimate in practice."[364] And this tendency is so deeply ingrained in our nature that,

> All our ways of speaking, thinking, perceiving imply in effect that immobility and immutability are there by right, that movement and change are superadded, like accidents, to things which, by themselves, do not move and, in themselves, do not change.[365]

The alternative view is that there is a persistent substance underneath all movement, but that this substance itself does not move.[366] It may appear at first glance that this is opposed to the Heraclitan view, for it posits at least one entity, namely substance, which is not in a state of constant movement. However, both views are based on the same presupposition. They both start with immobility and try to account for the reality of movement only afterwards, viz., by the addition of something else. In this respect, they follow the procedure of the intellect.[367] Consequently, they fail to recognise the primacy of movement over immobility on which Bergson's doctrine of duration is based.[368] To recognise it, then, we need to change our perspective on reality altogether. And this can be done, to recall, by thinking in duration.

But why not keep dividing movement into immobilities *ad infinitum* and embrace the conception of reality as immobility? To put it differently, why think that there is more to reality than that? To these questions, Bergson provides multiple answers. First of all, he says that reality appears to "immediate intuition" in the form of movement,[369] and that "the senses, left to themselves, present to us the real

[362] CM, 119, 158-159; CE, 302.
[363] CM, 122. *See* also CM, 125.
[364] CM, 119.
[365] CM, 53.
[366] CM, 55.
[367] CM, 22.
[368] CM, 154.
[369] MM, 183.

movement […] as a solid and undivided whole."[370] In his view, immobilities are not parts, but merely views taken of a movement which, while ongoing, is absolutely indivisible.[371] And we can recognise this in two different phenomena: (i) When we act and attend to what we are doing, almost in a Fichtean fashion, we discover that we pass from state to state, i.e., we endure. In other words, we move along with the moving reality.[372] It is when our action comes to a halt that we can abstract it out from our inner movement. In this way, we pause our inner movement, as it were, and take a snapshot of the current state that we are in. That is to say, we single out a psychic state and solidify it, thereby turning it into a thing. Yet, originally, we experience our psychic states immediately in a continuous movement. This is the sense in which movement is prior to immobility. And it is the same story with the movement of life. (ii) As Bergson puts it in rather simple terms, "life is a continually growing action."[373] This is the lesson that the theory of evolution ought to teach us: Life is really the exemplification of movement in nature.[374] It is for this reason that evolutionary processes cannot be defined, for instance. In this regard, Bergson urges that "a perfect definition applies only to a *completed* reality."[375] Neither our inner movement nor the movement of reality is completed. For a movement is an act in progress by definition.[376] And when we consider it completed, we replace it with a symbol, and it is of this symbol that we give a definition. On the other hand, when the movement is still ongoing, it eludes definitions. For whenever we try to define it, it becomes something new. In this sense, reality as movement is nothing other than a "perpetual becoming."[377] It is given immediately to the mind through intuition, and in it, "there do not exist *things* made, but only things in the making."[378]

3. Redefining Freedom

If the conception of reality as immobility is abandoned, and if, consequently, determinism is no longer a threat to the possibility of freedom, how can we distinguish a free act from a non-free act in duration? This is the seminal question that Bergson must answer. For what good is it if every act is considered absolutely free? In that case, the very concept of freedom would bear no significance for us. That I am free has

[370] MM, 189.
[371] CM, 152, 154.
[372] CM, 160.
[373] CE, 129.
[374] CE, 128.
[375] CE, 13.
[376] CE, 309.
[377] CE, 272.
[378] CM, 158.

meaning only insofar as I can imagine cases in which I am not free. Of course, Bergson's description of such cases cannot involve the idea of necessary determination, nor can his description of cases in which I am free involve the idea of sensible spontaneity. As we have seen, these ideas become empty once we conceive of reality as movement. Therefore, Bergson needs to find another way of differentiating between free and non-free acts. And by finding this differentia, he can finally explain what a free act really consists in.

To begin with, Bergson acknowledges that the moments in which we are truly free are indeed rare.[379] Often we find ourselves caught up in repetitions. In daily life, we do not usually pay attention to what we are doing. Instead, we follow routines. It is as if we are stuck in the present moment and we lose track of who we are as a person with a specific history. In those moments, we become deprived of our freedom, for we do not see *ourselves* in the actions that we perform. If the actions that we perform could have equally been performed by others, then they cannot really be *our* actions. For this means that, in their performance, we are guided "not so much by our [conscious states] themselves, which are constantly changing, as by the unchanging images with which these [conscious states] are bound up."[380] Although others cannot have the same conscious states as we do, they can have conscious states which are associated with the same unchanging images. And if we do not make an effort to seize our conscious states in their unique identity, which is to say in their intrinsic relation to our whole personality, we cannot attain true freedom. In this connection, Bergson challenges the proponents of the theory of associationism by arguing that "there is no need to associate a number of conscious states in order to rebuild the person, for the whole personality is in a single one of them."[381] Note that this is a necessary consequence of his doctrine of duration, along with his conception of reality as movement. To recall, in duration, there are no mutually external moments; and in reality, there are no distinct things, neither material nor conscious. Thus, as Bergson explains at length in *Time and Free Will*, conscious states cannot be regarded as distinct things either. They cannot be juxtaposed in space, for they reside in time.

In this way, Bergson describes freedom as follows:

[379] TFW, 231.
[380] TFW, 167-168. I have replaced the term "feelings" in the original quote with the term "conscious states" for the sake of generality.
[381] TFW, 165.

> In short, we are free when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express it, when they have that indefinable resemblance to it which one sometimes finds between the artist and his work.[382]

Bergson's conception of freedom is expressivistic. I use this term with caution, however. For it is not as if free acts merely express the character of the person who himself may be determined in other ways. There is no other way of determination in duration. Bergson is very clear on this point: "Freedom must be sought in a certain shade or quality of the action itself."[383]

Importantly, Bergson rejects the notion of absolute freedom. For him, freedom comes in degrees.[384] This may sound odd, especially considering his antagonism against the concept of differences in degree when it is applied to qualities. Can we really say that a person is fully free when his action expresses his whole personality, but that he is only partially free when his action expresses some percentage of his personality? Of course, it cannot be a matter of percentages in the case of freedom. For freedom cannot be measured in terms of magnitudes. Then, Bergson must mean something different by the degrees of freedom. In fact, he says that "the act will be so much the freer the more the dynamic series with which it is connected tends to be the fundamental self."[385] This means that the act is freer when the person who acts seizes more of his personality in duration when he acts.

V. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to present a holistic approach to Bergson's theory of freedom by covering a wide range of interconnected concepts that he utilises in the development of his epistemology and metaphysics. I find it necessary to elucidate these concepts before analysing his unique conception of freedom, for he chooses the problem of freedom simply as a case of how the intuition of duration may help us solve, or dissolve, metaphysical problems in general. Furthermore, I have emphasised the close connection between his epistemology and metaphysics as it is manifested in his conceptions of knowledge as intuition and reality as movement, respectively. I have tried to show that Bergson's conception of freedom presupposes a conception of reality as movement, and that knowledge of it requires the method of intuition. Since Bergson himself refrains from giving a positive definition of freedom on the ground that it would necessarily lead to the victory of determinism, I could not

[382] TFW, 172.
[383] TFW, 182.
[384] TFW, 166.
[385] TFW, 167.

provide one either. For this reason, I have opted to indicate, through a comparison of free and non-free acts, what freedom consists in according to Bergson.

The order in which I have presented the development of Bergson's thought in this thesis is intended to be instructive. After a lengthy introduction, in II, I have tried to expound upon Bergson's doctrine of duration. I have identified as the starting point of this exposition his discussion of nothingness in which he addresses the famous philosophical question of "why there is something rather than nothing." I have included this for the purpose of clarifying the function of the notion of interest in Bergson's epistemology. The conclusions that I have arrived at in II.1 and II.2 have proven especially helpful for my later analysis of Bergson's theory of intuition in III. Moreover, in II.4 and II.5, I have detailed the aspects of Kant's epistemology pertaining to the concepts of extensive and intensive magnitudes, along with his discussions of time and space, the familiarity of which I take to be essential for a better understanding of Bergson's doctrine of duration. For Bergson responds primarily to Kant in developing his conception of time as duration as I have shown in II.6. In the remainder of II, I have clarified the relation between time and causality in Bergson's theory, and the limits of language in expressing what duration really means.

In III, I have begun by providing the historical context for Bergson's doctrine of intuition. This meant, again, that I spent some time explicating Kant's ideas with respect to the concept of intuition, and specifically, that of intellectual intuition. After that, I have proceeded with Bergson's refined version of it. In III.5, I have compared the concepts of intelligence and intuition in Bergson's epistemology. In III.6, I have shown how Bergson describes intuition as disinterested instinct, and what exactly this means. In III.7, I have examined further the concept of intuition as a philosophical method. Lastly, I have connected what I have said in the foregoing sections to Bergson's distinction between science and metaphysics which I think is extremely important to understand.

Finally, in IV, I have come back to the question that I had started with: Are we essentially free? To show how Bergson responds to the problem of freedom, I have first explained how he understands it as a problem. For this, in IV.1, I have discussed his approach to problematisation in general. Then, I have proceeded to show how, in light of what had been hitherto said, Bergson redefines reality. And finally, I have demonstrated that, by redefining reality, he redefines the notion of freedom too.

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