

A Chronological Genesis of  
Bergson's Notion of Intuition

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## An Introduction to Bergson's Notion of Intuition

The interest of Bergson's philosophy is to return to a sense of life in our knowledge. Knowledge must coordinate itself with the dynamic thrust of life. Our strongest knowledge is the direct perception of objects. By perception we have a presence of mind different from, but the beginning of, the intellectual process. The intellect's function is to deal with the material and spatial manifestations of life and mind. Intuition reaches the heart of life, and is a direct feeling of life and mind, of inner being.

The controlling purpose of this essay is to pursue Bergson's notion that came about gradually. We will begin with a preliminary presentation of Bergson's main notion of being, duration, and then proceed to Essai Sur Les Données Immédiates De La Conscience where the discussion on intensity and extensity of emotion is interrelated by a faculty of intuition closely resembling Kant's notion of intuition. In Chapter Two, Bergson's essay on Matière et Mémoire will show that the perception of matter and memory supplies new dimensions for observing intuition. Chapter Three of this paper will take up L'Evolution Créatrice which establishes that intuition is a combination of the natural impulse of instinct enlightened by the analytical nature of the intellect. Finally the significance of intuition becomes evident in

Bergson's La Pensée et le Mouvant. The mystery of how man knows an object as real or how he is able to embrace movement takes on definite clarity. By pursuing Bergson's notion of intuition in a chapter analysis of each work, the gradual development of intuition will become more distinct at each stage.

Bergson arrived at an intuitive philosophy of reality in the context of duration. The idea of duration is a common sense notion of a world composed of changing things, which somehow endure through change; that change alone is reality in flux.<sup>1</sup> He conceives of the universe as a continuous flow, a process of evolution. The world is the embodiment of an immanent force of living change, which as it comes into existence, progressively creates the evolving universe. This principle is Bergson's "elan vital."<sup>2</sup> It is necessary therefore to grasp this movement and to see it as the true nature of the universe.

One begins by reflecting on "le temps perdu" to find the intimacy of our own consciousness, which is a purity of being, a duration.

Mais cette durée, que la science élimine, qu'il est difficile de concevoir et d'exprimer, on la sent et on la vit. Si nous cherchions ce qu'elle est? Comment apparaîtrait-elle à une conscience qui ne voudrait que la voir sans la mesurer, qui la saisirait alors sans l'arrêter, qui se prendrait enfin elle-même pour objet, et qui, spectatrice et actrice, spontanée et réfléchie, rapprocherait jusqu'à les faire coïncider ensemble, l'attention qui se fixe et le temps qui fuit? 3

Penetrating the interior life of the self brings about the realization that the conception of the spirit through an association of ideas is insufficient. For Bergson the theories of psychology and philosophy expressed an artificial composition of life, that a living being could no longer be seen significantly as a being of pure movement but only an object whose effects were considered its true nature. However in reflecting on our immediate understanding of consciousness we see "...la durée intérieure toute pure, continuité qui n'est ni unité ni multiplicité, et qui ne rentre dans aucun de nos cadres."<sup>4</sup>

Reflection on being develops into a process of reasoning drawn from these immediate perceptions. Consciousness isolates forms from the material objects in space and by effort takes it into itself. These images convert our attention towards the interior psychic life. Our attention coincides with the interior experience, revealing an interior purity. There is, however, contained in this purity the succession of ideas, feelings and impressions. It is the inclination of the intellect to make these states distinct and separate by a symbolical representation of the world in space and as objects. This view of psychic states gives the appearance of being discontinuous.<sup>5</sup>

According to Bergson our immediate perception of real time is its indivisibility. This indivisible continuity passes through the present and forms with it (undivided) as

a single consciousness.<sup>6</sup> We are able to perceive by the faculty of intuition and see continuous change, that consciousness encures, a change of quality, not quantity.

Je constate d'abord que je passe d'état en état. J'ai chaud ou j'ai froid, je suis gai ou je suis triste, je travaille ou je ne fais rien, je change donc sans cesse. Mais ce n'est pas assez dire. Le changement est bien plus radical qu'on ne le croirait d'abord.<sup>7</sup>

This change in our consciousness is the passing from state to state. Each state passes as a block of time. The states of the soul proceed in time continuing with duration. It is a succession of states each announcing what is to come and continuing with that which precedes. None begin nor finish, but all are prolonged, one into the other. This conception of unity is immanent to the stream of consciousness itself.<sup>8</sup>

Bergson found the pure mobility of one's self in opposition to spatial immobility of matter. Thus the person represents two elements: a superficial ego where multiplicity signifies externality (intelligibility) and a fundamental ego where succession of multiplicity signifies fusion and organization (duration).

Consciousness functions primarily by the perception of objects which we encounter, but it also implicates the past retained in memory. Memory recalls duration extending into the past as an object of contemplation. The spirit of the present in consciousness is formed by the duration of the total past. All of our previous thoughts, wishes and

perceptions are conserved by memory. Consciousness exists as memory accumulating and conserving the past into the present.

Mais toute conscience est anticipation de l'avenir. Considérez la direction de votre esprit à n'importe quel moment: vous trouverez qu'il s'occupe de ce qui est, mais en vue surtout de ce qui va être. L'attention est une attente et il n'y a pas de conscience sans une certaine attention à la vie. L'avenir est là: il nous appelle, ou plutôt il nous tire à lui; cette traction ininterrompue qui nous fait avancer sur la route du temps, est cause aussi que nous agissons continuellement.<sup>9</sup>

What is perceived in the present is the density of duration made of two parts, the immediate past and the immediate future.

Consciousness is that stream of change or becoming with which Bergson identifies reality. If reality is fundamentally change and movement, consciousness is reality, and reality is of the same consciousness. The world, however, consists of a series of more or less static objects occupying space. Consciousness is linked with matter and space, but is a different form of existence. It operates by intellect and observes pure duration through reflection.<sup>10</sup>

What is the real nature of life and how is it able to be understood? Bergson makes the distinction between intellect and intuition to integrate the spatial orientation of the mind with that of real time, duration. Thereby, he arrives at metaphysical truth not in exercising the intellectual apprehension alone but through intuition.

The common sense view that the intellect receives

concerning reality appears as a collection of solid and comparative objects extended in space.<sup>11</sup> The intellect analyzes duration as material objects and separate states of consciousness. These distinctions are designed for action through space and do not actually exist in our psychic duration. The intellect takes the flow of time and divides it into moments through material objects. This division of duration into objects and events by a causal relation is the misleading work of the intellect. The intellect is unable to penetrate through the continuous changes of our consciousness to know its essence..

Bergson regards time as an unbounded medium different from space but of the same origin as space.<sup>12</sup> This is homogeneous time, a mixed state of duration and space. Our understanding of duration as being a homogeneous medium actually consists of unfolding states of consciousness. The intellect abstracts moments from this duration and calls it time. Thus by the concept of space we make time with material objects exterior to one another in a homogeneous medium placed under our psychic duration.

The significance between duration and space is simultaneity, the intersection of time and space.<sup>13</sup> Space which is homogeneous and divisible, is traversed by the indivisible consciousness. Bergson concludes that space alone is homogeneous while duration and succession belong to the conscious mind.<sup>14</sup> That is, homogeneous objects in space form a

multiplicity which is a process of unfolding in space. There is neither duration nor succession in space. Multiplicity is real only for a consciousness that can perceive the externality of objects. Though externality distinguishes things which occupy space, states of consciousness are not essentially external and appear to be so only by being spread out in time. A conscious state that is brought into relation with an object of the external world, as contemporaneous with that object, can be separated from other moments because of this specific confrontation.

When Bergson considers the succession of our conscious states and the form that this succession assumes in the profound ego, he is describing the pure duration of consciousness where the present state is not fundamentally discontinuous with former states. This pure succession is where the states of consciousness can be perceived simultaneously as distinct yet continuous in time. Succession means a before and an after, separated only by the present, "l'instant."<sup>15</sup> Bergson concludes that in the profound ego there is a succession of states without externality; in pure space there is externality without succession. Real duration is this continuous succession of states.

Duration appears as concrete time, yet it is not time but exists in time as the perseverance of being. An object has continuity spatially, containing a certain quantity that is a mixed state of quality and space. This continuing quantity is

time composed of distinct parts only in thought. Time is grasped as the movement of the thing which changes, a pure change which has no attachment to the thing changing. Change is the reality of existence for a living being. Our experience proves that the one thing which we are actually sure of is the constant flux. Our attention to life is not an attention of the intellect but an instinctive faculty for grasping change and movement by which we feel ourselves to be one with reality and enter into the flow of life. This is where intuition distinguishes itself most clearly by direct contact with movement, the reality of life and the spirit of man.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently from the awareness that conceptual thought is incapable of reaching the fountain of human being, Bergson posits a supra-intellectual faculty that he calls intuition. In the first part of his philosophy there needed to be a proper understanding of time, that is duration. Now it is necessary to know what intuition is and what intellect actually means.

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>C.E.M. Joad, Guide to Philosophy, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>PM, p. 4. All citations from the works of Bergson are from editions prior to 1940 except those marked Oeuvres (Edition du Centenaire, P.U.F. 1959). Abbreviations have been employed to facilitate reference to the works of Bergson discussed in this essay.

DI = Essai Sur Les Données Immédiates  
De La Conscience

MM = Matière et Mémoire

EC = L'Evolution Créatrice

PM = La Pensée et le Mouvant

ES = L'Energie Spirituelle

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>5</sup>DI, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>PM, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup>DI, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>9</sup>ES, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Joad, op. cit. p. 547.

<sup>11</sup>EC, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>DI, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 110

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>15</sup>EC, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>François Meyer, La Pensée de Bergson, p. 72.

## CHAPTER I

### The Completed Notion of Bergson's Intuition and the Fundamental Beginning as found in L'Essai sur les Données Immédiates De La Conscience 1889

"Penser intuitivement, c'est penser en durée."<sup>1</sup> These two notions of Bergson's philosophy are integrated to describe the phenomena of knowing directly. Intuition as profound knowledge of the spirit is reflecting on the substance of spirit, duration.

Il y a une réalité au moins que nous saisissons tous du dedans, par intuition et non par simple analyse. C'est notre propre conscience dans son écoulement à travers le temps.... Nous pouvons ne sympathiser intellectuellement, ou plutôt spirituellement, avec aucune autre chose. Mais nous sympathisons sûrement avec nous-même.<sup>2</sup>

Intuition embraces duration, giving to intellectual concepts a wholeness for understanding the continuity of reality.

Intuition yields a metaphysics that pursues the oscillations of the real, embracing the totality of things as a unit.

Intuition depends on the notion of "la durée intérieure." It grasps as one the succession of states, the uninterrupted past as present flowing into the future. There cannot be a juxtaposition of thought because the interior continuity is indivisible. Intuition is in simultaneous movement with immediate consciousness, placing our power of thinking in contact and coinciding with the object. It is consciousness enlightened by the intellect. Intuition is contained

generally in the conscious. Human consciousness is aware of its spirit and duration by intuition.<sup>3</sup>

De ce qui n'est pas abstrait et conventionnel, mais réel et concret, à plus forte raison de ce qui n'est pas reconstituable avec des composantes connues, de la chose qui n'a pas été découpée dans le tout de la réalité par l'entendement ni par le sens commun ni par le langage, on ne peut donner une idée qu'en prenant sur elle des vues multiples complémentaires et non pas équivalentes. 4

There is no simple definition for intuition.

For Bergson, intelligence is the attention that the spirit carries to matter.<sup>5</sup> Intellect represents that which is clearly discontinuous because of its analytic procedure. Intuition represents an attention to movement. The intellect fails to understand movement because it can only grasp instants. The real is moving; we perceive it as a continuity of change. It imposes discontinuity and stability on change. Thus it is not able to grasp duration as continuity. There is a certain opposition between intellect and life. The discrepancy between intellectual and intuitive knowledge is the difference of relative knowledge and absolute knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Soit par exemple le mouvement d'un objet dans l'espace. Je le perçois différemment selon le point de vue, mobile ou immobile, d'où je le regarde. Je l'exprime différemment selon le système d'axes ou de points de repère auquel je le rapporte, c'est-à-dire selon les symboles par lesquels je le traduis. Et je l'appelle relatif pour cette double raison; dans un cas comme dans l'autre, je me place en dehors de l'objet lui-même. 7

The results of intellectual knowledge depends on the position

of the viewer and the symbolization of what is known. Intuitive knowledge by a process of immediate sympathy enters into the object to know its essence. The major difference between intellect and intuition is the absence of space in intuition's operation. The intellect is action-oriented and spatializes duration. Space is the <sup>curx</sup> of the problem. To perceive that which properly constitutes the essence of an object is to know from the outside the interior being of the object.<sup>8</sup> The intellect can only describe and analyze from without which is relative knowledge. To know by intuition is to know absolutely, to be carried somehow within the object. Intellectual analysis would describe an object more by function; it multiplies the points of view but is never able to complete the representation. Intuition reveals an immediate knowledge more perfect than mere description or symbolism.

Truth is found only in intuition, a direct vision. It is absolute knowledge of reality that is non-spatial, not visible, knowledge of the spirit. The nature of intuition is identification of the subject with its object, co-existence, sympathy, unity and totality.

The function of intuition is developed from the natural phenomena of instinct.<sup>9</sup> It was important for Bergson to connect instinct to the rationality of man. Intellect operates externally with the object. The intellect, incapable of responding, causes insitnct to become conscious of itself as intuition. Intuition is different from instinct because it is

reflective and conscious, a conscious disinterested.<sup>10</sup>

Instinct is knowledge different from intelligence. Being sympathetic knowledge, instinct is immediately adapted to its object. To carry the analysis further concerning instinct would be to work only on the idea of the unconscious.<sup>11</sup> Here the interest of the unconscious is where instinct unites with the intellect. Here we find the rhythm of duration and would hope to arrive at intuition. For without intellect it would return to a form of instinct without clarity or precision.

Bergson's intuition is a metaphysics perceiving the purity of existence.<sup>12</sup> It transcends ideas, words, and images in its knowing. Intuition is seen as sympathy with the movement of objects and participates in duration. Movement appears multiple in space. Consciousness appears to be a multiplicity of states as observed from without. But intrinsic knowledge of being through intuition shows an interior unity.

Bergson developed his philosophy against the pretention that experience could be adequately described by words and concepts. Intuition is an effort to turn attention to direct experience, towards duration. Thus intuition was not a vague sentimentalism but an attempt to overcome the intellectual habits of knowing matter only in reference to space.

From the beginning of Bergson there is an awareness of the mind to the reality of change. The operation by which we see ourselves in a state of becoming and through which we are transported to the interior of the essence of things is

called intuition.<sup>13</sup> Intuition does not reason, compose or divide. It is knowledge which penetrates duration, because duration is the true reality.

Intuition transcends intelligence and reason by a sympathy with all of reality through which we communicate absolutely and fully with duration, embracing in a single instant a pure totality.

In developing his notion of duration as found in man's psychological nature and describing the homogeneous medium of space, Bergson presents the fundamental concepts of intuition in DI.

In this work Bergson makes the distinction between extensity, man's outward orientation, and intensity, man's inward perception of being. The concept of intensity describes a process where an image of the present is contracted and capable of being expanded in the future. The image is separated from the context of space, being virtually extended. The intensive is seen in the virtually extended image of the extensive. By the availability of images, our intellect compares two intensities through intuition of the relation between two extensities.<sup>14</sup> The exact method of this knowing power is difficult to determine at this point in Bergson.

What passes from extensity to intensity is qualitative change, sensation. The increasing quality of feeling resolves into many different feelings. Successive intensities correspond to changes occurring in us and the degree of depth of

the psychic which we discern in emotion itself.<sup>15</sup> This same definition of intensity is applied to the superficial efforts as well as to the deep-seated psychic feelings. There is in this continuous feeling an indistinct qualitative progress of increasing complexity. Consciousness in its reference to space focuses attention on a single feeling by effort, contracts it into a distinct state.

When we perceive an object, it is brought before our mind as one unit by the simple act of intuition.<sup>16</sup> The number of units increase as we advance in space and are retained by juxtaposing successive images that Bergson considers a total unit. To count material objects means to think of all these objects perceived in space in a definite relation to one another. The concept of number cannot be formed in the beginning without an intuition of space. Number implies a visual image in space. These units form an aggregate that Bergson terms a multiplicity. Units are extended in space but are seen as unity by a simple act of the mind. The whole that we perceive is a simple and indivisible intuition of the mind, a unity that includes a multiplicity. The idea of number owes its unity to the simplicity of the mental act which perceives it. The unit receives its appearance as indivisible from the ability of the mind to conceive number independently from space.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Bergson has shown that all unity is a process that is drawn from multiplicity by a simple act of the mind. It is one through intuition but multiple in space.

Objects in space are of a discrete multiplicity.<sup>18</sup> There is neither duration nor succession in space as found in human consciousness. Multiplicity is real in the ability of human consciousness to retain, in memory, material objects and set them side by side by externalizing them in relation to one another. These distinct objects in the external world are found in the states of consciousness which permeate one another, organizing themselves into a whole and binding the past to the present. To externalize these states is to perceive them under the form of a discrete multiplicity.

Bergson concludes that there are two types of multiplicity: material objects to which the conception of number applies and the multiplicity of the states of consciousness. Consciousness brings into itself the concept of number by a symbolical representation of intensity.

The simple act that characterizes the ability of the mind to take in two or more sensations together consists essentially in the intuition of an empty homogeneous medium.<sup>19</sup> This medium, space, enables us to distinguish sensations not only in type from one another but even in quality. It is itself, however, without quality. Our consciousness penetrates space not by the faculty of abstraction which assumes distinctions of an externality of objects, but by the ability found in intuition. Bergson now arrives at two basic kinds of reality-- the one he calls heterogeneous of sensible qualities; the other homogeneous space.<sup>20</sup>

The setting out of sensation in space renders the awareness of qualitative multiplicity.<sup>21</sup> The terms qualitative and multiplicity are identical in the blending of movement and matter. It is principally from motion that conscious duration assumes that there is the form of a homogeneous medium. Homogeneous duration is the extended symbol of real duration which by psychological analysis is distinguished from real duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another. These heterogeneous moments are more than a numerical multiplicity of conscious states; they are a qualitative multiplicity. This means that a self with well-defined states is a self with a succession melting into one another, forming an organic whole.

Thus Bergson has penetrated duration to find it a more complex problem of extensive and intensive interaction of consciousness. To understand the intensity of psychic states, the idea of space must be eliminated. Intensity as part of duration preserves a certain unity among the multiplicity of states. The intensity of a state is not quantity but a qualitative sign.<sup>22</sup> Extensity, as related to the concept of multiplicity, begins by an intuition of a homogeneous medium, space. Terms are made distinct from one another in a successive line. Then be a process of permeation and organization these units are dynamically brought together to form a qualitative multiplicity.<sup>23</sup> Consciousness, therefore, appears as a succession of states. In contrast Bergson's number or discrete

multiplicity<sup>24</sup> is the simultaneity of time and space in the external world. This difference for Bergson is precisely stated as follows: "En dehors de nous, extériorité réciproque sans succession: au dedans, succession sans extériorité réciproque."<sup>25</sup>

Kant assumed the existence of a homogeneous medium as space distinct from matter in the external world. Homogeneous space is a form of our sensibility according to Kant.<sup>26</sup> For Kant both time and space were homogeneous mediums; both were thus outside of consciousness and objects were somehow re-drafted through them. Bergson found that to consider time as a homogeneous medium together with space was inconclusive and inadequate if both exist outside our consciousness. Time for Bergson was rather the crossing of our duration with space forming points of reference known as time. But he did agree with Kant that space is a homogeneous medium, but different from duration, true time.

After having expounded the concept of a homogeneous medium, Bergson goes a step further in DI. There is a faculty, peculiar to man, known as intuition which enables him to grasp the homogeneous medium of space and externalize his concepts in relation to one another, revealing the distinctness of the external world from himself.<sup>27</sup> This unique act permits the psychic state, heterogeneous duration, to act in homogeneous space.

As a result the attention of consciousness to homogeneous

space sharply distinguishes external objects and presents them symbolically to ourselves replacing the interpenetration of psychic states with a quantitative multiplicity, a plurality of terms which are distinguished from one another by means of words.<sup>28</sup>

In this process, immediate intuition and discursive thought are united with concrete reality which means that it is more than symbolic representation. Bergson believes that as we project time into space, we base our reasoning on this sort of geometrical figuration. He finds the confusion between time and space--a fundamental error. For him, precise knowledge comes not from reasoning alone but from immediate experience. Thus Bergson has departed from immediate perception of external objects through the intensity that these objects impress on our consciousness as they interact, forming a qualitative multiplicity of conscious states by an intuition of the homogeneous medium of space to bring out of psychic duration the states of the self perceived by attraction to forms of the external world, in other words, a simple separation of intensity and extensity.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>PM, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>9</sup>EC, p. 176.

<sup>10</sup>ES, p. 192.

<sup>11</sup>EC, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup>PM, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>14</sup>DI, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>Henri Bergson, Oeuvres, p. 149.

<sup>26</sup>DI, p. 236.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

The Burgeoning of Intuition in Matière et Memoire,  
Essai sur les Relations du Corps et de L'Esprit, 1897

The intuition developed in DI is immediate intuition, which perceives movements deparate from space in duration. This psychological duration indicates the profound unity of our being. The unity of this duration is peculiar to man's psychic as a qualitative multiplicity, a multiplicity which has somehow been impressed upon our consciousness by the external world of objects. In MM a new process of intuition becomes clear. Bergson turns decisively toward the immediate as important to know an object in itself as it is. Intuition becomes a supra-intellectual function of consciousness to ground the theory of knowledge directly into the external. The proper subject of MM concern<sup>s</sup> the problem of the relation between soul and body, which is the context for what Bergson actually says about intuition.

The psychical state gives us the impression of being immensely wider than the mechanical function of the cerebral states. The mind or soul functions at a more complex level than could be attained by the physical operations of the brain. The brain is capable of translating movement into the body, but the mind grasps movement immediately as seen in physical reality and apart from it as found in duration. The mind not

only perceives immediately, but it retains this perception of movement as an image in the faculty of memory. If it is possible to understand how representative forms of physical objects can be recalled from the past, it will tell us something of the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. "Memory is the intersection of mind and matter."<sup>1</sup>

Perception of matter Bergson calls the aggregate of images that refer to eventual action. To change the objects of perception or to modify their position in relation to the body causes changes in the interior perception.<sup>2</sup> The exact nature of matter is unable to be discerned by our mental image of it but is somehow conveyed to us in direct experience. For Bergson, movements of matter are received as images but only a partial representation. Images indicate the movement of objects and formulate for the body virtual acts. Virtual action (unresolved sensation) is held in consciousness along with real action (resolved sensation).<sup>3</sup> The brain analyzes and selects the images of movement it receives and makes the selection of the movement to be executed. But even these powers are limited in themselves. The nervous system cannot prepare representations. It functions by receiving stimuli and providing the appropriate motor responses.<sup>4</sup> Perception is directed toward action.

Perception describes consciousness as being internal movement. Movement is grasped as indivisible and qualitative, heterogeneous to matter. Perception is continuous with

duration and involves an effort of memory contracting a number of external movements into a single internal movement. Perception begins the analytical speculation of the intellect. There is behind perception the compulsion to know and to evaluate. The question is not how perception arises but how it is limited and reduced to the image formed by the object that interests the brain.<sup>5</sup> It is a process of exclusion.<sup>6</sup>

Why is perception attracted to a definite object?

Bergson chooses to call it attention. Attention renders perception more intense and determines the focus of the mind. Attention is first the adaptation of the body which brings out more the awareness in the attitude of consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Attention is the term to describe the more intense alertness of consciousness to what is going on in the present. Memory-images add to the perception of the past that identifies with the present experience, strengthening and enriching it. Attentive perception reflects on the present objects and draws images to it from the past so that attention itself becomes a process of evaluation.<sup>8</sup> A greater relationship develops between the mind and its objects. The present greatly determines the direction of the mind. It remains that the primordial act whereby we place ourselves into the essence of matter constitutes intuition. Our utilitative acts are a sign that immediate intuition is a fact. By intuition we are placed outside ourselves and touch the reality of an object in the present moment.<sup>9</sup>

Consciousness coordinates visual and auditory sensations to perceive the indivisibility of movement. In response to the action, memory narrows its attention to become one with movement. In a single operation, the mind chooses a level of perceiving the immediate cause. Stimulation of senses arouses the cerebral processes to find complimentary images to the action.

The intellect accumulates a multitude of images and becomes a center for sense representation. The process passes from perception, to memories, to forming an idea. This is more than a theory of association which could dissect the movement of consciousness into phases, identifying one set of elements in perception with another set through memory in a continual inter-relationship. Images pass by a dynamic progress into perception where the image becomes actual. Otherwise memory would be virtual, if images were not actualized by the perception which attracts them. Although an image retains this sensation and as such is in a virtual state, Bergson contends that no trace of an image remains in the substance of the brain.

All that we know from common sense tells us that there is a material world distinct from sensation. Common sense shows the object as it exists in itself. But somehow the image of the <sup>bj</sup> object remains in our mind after the physical object has been removed from our sight. To block all past images of memory from entering into the act of perceiving

constitutes a pure perception. In this experiment, Bergson is forced to recognize that no image exists in the mind without the presence of the object.<sup>10</sup> The object's presence is reflected in an intercerebral process. But perception contains a view of all these functions and therefore is neither in the sense receivers nor the motor reflexes.

How images survive is the question that Bergson takes up in Chapter III of MM in order to discern the substance of the mind and how it operates. As we have seen perception is more than a mere contact of the mind with the object present. Perception is filled with memory-images which complete and direct its attention. Attention is the invitation to act in the present, a succession of instants, where the past is removed from the direct context to act. The present is a unique simultaneous union of sensation and movements in space. Sensation is extended and rooted in the material object perceived. Pure memory on the other hand exists in the consciousness essentially removed from the present. It retains the ability to produce sensation only when the image is brought in contact with the present.

The perceiving mind has an unextensive quality in distinction to the extended quality of what is perceived. In this difference there is a basic unity of the mind as it stands against matter. We perceive the heterogeneous qualities in matter and its ability to be divided into multiple parts. Perception then gets into the heart of the object by extension.<sup>11</sup>

This philosophy based on immediate intuition is more complete in comparison with other doctrines. Empiricism is not satisfactory, because it cannot become fully conscious of itself as actor. What Bergson calls dogmatism, that is, putting perception of separate and discontinuous phenomena into a synthesis, does not adequately explain our ability to know. Bergson opposes those who argue that we cannot have absolute knowledge such as the relative philosopher who believes the ultimate nature of things is inaccessible to the mind.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to all these, Bergson restores to philosophy the principle that we do have absolute knowledge of material objects through intuition. The intellect perceives and analyzes matter for the purpose of action. Intuition evaluates the unity of the object and establishes it as part of duration. In reflecting on the nature of duration we see it as movement, the continuity of states.

Bergson states that movement is absolutely indivisible, but the body in movement being divisible.<sup>13</sup> Movement crosses through the medium of space which is infinitely divisible from one point to the next. Symbols cannot express change adequately because they only express distance. Movement is more than change of distance; it is qualitative change. The sensation of movement is a qualitative embrace of the reality within the psychic as a change of state.<sup>14</sup> Movement is characterized by its continuity, which means that while there is change, something still remains. This permanence seems to be

derived from material bodies and change from the medium of space which is itself continuous.

The theory of matter contains more than the common sense views of immediate intuition. According to our own needs we have a natural tendency to divide things and decompose objects into parts in order to suit our actions. Solids are bodies which attract our attention into the external world; as a result, these become the termination of our actions.<sup>15</sup> This artificial division of matter is opposite to what Bergson considers immediate intuition.

Real movement as seen in matter or as a quality perceived against matter is of a different origin, heterogeneous. Bergson's definition of motion as quality is heterogeneous to matter.<sup>16</sup> The confrontation between matter and motion is received in consciousness as sensation. Movement is interposed with matter. Although movement is a phenomena that occurs also independently of our own consciousness in space, it is unique that we are able to perceive it. Sensible quality appears to have a more divine substratum than a multiplicity of movements.<sup>17</sup> Thus movement is brought into our own duration. Duration is one with successive movements which pass through divisible space. Perception condenses these movements into an intense inner life as images.

For Bergson, matter resolves into a continuous series of stimuli called vibrations that are the ultimate concept of matter. Sensation is the evaluation of vibration.<sup>18</sup> Memory

provides the continuity in these sensible qualities as the past flows into the present perceptions. In immediate reality there is no distinction between perception and the things perceived. Bergson finds perception continuous with past intuitions, with memory by a unity of duration in a single intuition. The act of perception pertains to pure movement and hence is undivided; the object, however, is infinitely divisible. In this way consciousness interacts with matter.

Bergson's hypothesis follows:

De là l'hypothèse d'une conscience avec des sensations inextensives, placée en face d'une multiplicité étendue. Mais si la divisibilité de la matière est tout entière relative à notre action sur elle... La matière étendue, ...offre véritablement l'indivisibilité de notre perception; de sorte qu'inversement nous pouvons, ...attribuer à la perception quelque chose de l'étendue de la matière. ...la sensation reconquiert l'extension, l'étendue concrète reprend sa continuité et son indivisibilité naturelles. 19

The problem of extension is lessened by the intensity of contact between the mind and the object. This pure perception is the coinciding of subject and object, of two durations.<sup>20</sup>

Memory affects the perception of subject by increasing its intensity of past experiences. According to Bergson, these possible intensities of memory come from the degrees of sensation in matter. Matter is a continual action from the past, but the mind evolves freely by the power of choice and continually creates into the new.

Perception extends through space to matter interpreted by

memory. Space is that by which we know matter as opposed to duration. Immediate intuition is so intermingled with perception that it is not apparent in experience but is only brought out in reviewing the past.

Movement in the ego is of a profound unity, that is directional.<sup>21</sup> Intuition, perception and memory are all in truth the powers of man's indivisible being. This inner tension spans the difference between quantity and quality, extension and sensation. Spirit is intrinsically one, and it draws from matter the perception upon which is founded the potential for action and knowledge on intuition.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II

- <sup>1</sup>MM, p. xii.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 34.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 36.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 120.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 124.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 70.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 198.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 240.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 246.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 288.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 263.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 267.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 271.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>19</sup>Henri Bergson, Oeuvres, p. 353.

<sup>20</sup>MM, p. 294.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 309.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Merging of Intuition in L'Évolution Créatrice, 1907

The idea of intuition in MM has thus been linked with perception because in the development of Bergson's philosophy, matter is properly the work of intellect. In short, the intellect thinks matter, basing its logic on solids in a geometrical fashion. This impotence of logical thought to present the true nature of life Bergson discusses in EC. The categories of unity, multiplicity, causality, and finality are the terminology of conceptual thought.<sup>1</sup> In the symbolism of words the essence of life escapes us. To embrace life is a much more dynamic process. Life is development and creation. Creation implies "une croyance latente à la spontanéité de la nature."<sup>2</sup> Life transcends the intellect because the intellect can only reflect on the past. The essential function of intellect as fashioned by evolution is to enlighten our actions in the present by association with past experiences and to foresee possible actions. This foreknowledge of action is what Bergson calls common sense.<sup>3</sup>

The nature of this knowing power is indistinct but it has the intellect as the receiver of its knowledge. This power of awareness, intuition, focuses our attention to action not only

on the external but the internal as well. In order to grasp vital activity, intuition accompanies our intellectual representation. By intuition we know that the essence of an object goes beyond representation.<sup>4</sup> The intellect can present an infinitude of perspectives, but only in intuition can movement be known indivisibly, a simple vision.

Life is movement in the profoundest sense. The directions that Bergson distinguishes are torpor, intelligence, and instinct in chapter two of EC. The significance of intuition will be built upon the distinction found basically herein:

C'est une création qui se poursuit sans fin en vertu d'un mouvement initial. Ce mouvement fait l'unité du monde organisé, unité féconde, d'une richesse infinie, supérieure à ce qu'aucune intelligence pourrait rêver, puisque l'intelligence n'est qu'un de ses aspects ou de ses produits. 5

Bergson prefers to call the elementary directions of life tendencies.<sup>6</sup> These tendencies are not distinct as objects in space, mutually exclusive, but more like duration, conscious states of being. Intellect and instinct are presented as evolved functions, but they are of interest to us only as the merging of intuition and not the supposition of evolution.

The vital impulse manifested in instinct and intelligence. Although intelligence is superior to and opposite instinct, both are complimentary and have some common origin in being.<sup>7</sup> Invention is the essential feature of intelligence. The intellect fashions artificial objects for the purpose of action. Instinct means natural ability. Bergson finds the

essential difference between instinct and intelligence in the following:

...l'instinct achevé est une faculté d'utiliser et même de construire des instruments organisés; l'intelligence achevée est la faculté de fabriquer et d'employer des instruments inorganisés.<sup>8</sup>

Instinct as a natural instrument is a specialized function. Intelligence has advantages over instinct in being able to function in any form necessary for action. Instinct as found in lower forms of life is definitely limited, but in man it forms the basis of physical activity and combines with the ability of intellect to act.

Instinct and intelligence represent two different kinds of knowledge. Instinct is more or less conscious.<sup>9</sup> For an act to be conscious there has to be representative knowledge of it in the mind prior to being acted. Consciousness is the ability to measure the interval between representation and action, the difference of virtual and real activity. Consciousness enlightens the object to which instinct attracts us. The knowledge of instinct is acted and conscious, while the knowledge of intellect is thought and conscious of itself.<sup>10</sup>

Instinct in Bergson's analysis is the same as innate knowledge of objects. The intellect also has innate knowledge of relations such as theories of cause and effect. In both cases, innate knowledge acts primarily on objects and then on relations such as the theories of cause and effect.<sup>11</sup>

Matter and form expresses these distinctions, matter being the perceptive faculties of the object, form, the relations

between objects. Intelligence has the knowledge of form, instinct the knowledge of matter.<sup>12</sup>

Instinct as a naturally refined function is properly innate, while intellect, the faculty of fabrication looks for the means to utilize objects in the conscious. The intellect is innate in so far as it tends to establish relations. This relational knowledge of the intellect has a greater advantage over the material knowledge of instinct. The intellect enables man to transcend his own instincts or natural tendencies.<sup>13</sup>

Il y a des choses que l'intelligence seule est capable de chercher, mais que, par elle-même, elle ne trouvera jamais. Ces choses, l'instinct seul les trouverait; mais il ne les cherchera jamais.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to remember that instinct and intellect are from the same principle of life.

The intellect is a faculty for speculation whose function is to establish relations in phenomena, to synthesize the whole from the parts. Here Bergson has arrived at a higher understanding of intellect than the divisive nature of intelligence in MM. The intellect fabricates matter equally decomposing it. Intellectual knowledge is dependent on external reality. Otherwise the intellect would be absolute, and knowledge would become relative. The intellect does not deal with movement directly but only with points of space through which it passes. Movement is the reality whose essence escapes the intellect. The intellect forms a clear idea of immobility

alone. The intellect marks our action on matter and from it forms distinct concepts. "Plus la conscience s'intellectualise, plus la matière se spatialise."<sup>15</sup>

In chapter one of this essay it has been demonstrated that by space we are able to differentiate matter from movement. This homogeneous medium, infinitely divisible lends itself to any mode of decomposition, the foreplan of action. The intellect is governed by our common sense and through it transforms matter into an instrument of action. The intellect follows the natural movement of life through the senses, but it is unable to engage in it directly. Our knowledge of life is basically sympathetic and then intellectual. The importance of instinctive knowledge is that it is wholly sympathetic to life.

Instinct is formed to and intimately involved in life on an unconscious level. There are primary instincts in man that Bergson calls vital processes, only conscious at the outset of action.<sup>16</sup> Secondary instincts are varieties of primary instincts. Instinct is the phenomena of feeling, an unreflecting sympathy that goes beyond the limits of the intellect. Sympathy has become the key word in understanding instinct.

In Bergson's philosophy instinct has the potential for being more than sympathy. By it we indistinctly perceive élan vital. If instinct could extend into the object and reflect upon itself, we would have intimate knowledge of the

vital process. Intellect delivers up to us the physical operations of life, but it is not able to enter into it. Thus Bergson comes to posit intuition as the faculty uniting both insitnct and intellect movements of life.

Mais c'est à l'intérieur même de la vie que nous conduirait l'intuition, je veux dire l'instinct devenu désintéressé, conscient de lui-même, capable de réfléchir sur son objet et de l'élargir indéfiniment. 17

By the effort of intuition we are able to cross the barrier of space and enter into sympathy with the object. Intelligence enlightens our consciousness, instinct purified by intuition guides it. Intuition supplements intelligence and gives a vague feeling of direction where the intellect does not comprehend. Intuition forces the intellect to recognize that life is not definable into categories. It expands the view of consciousness and transcends intelligence. However, without the intellect, intuition would remain in the form of instinct.<sup>18</sup>

To Kant intuition was intra-intellectual, that is from the empirical senses. But sensuous intuition is only relative to the objects perceived. There is no real distinction made in Kant's sense knowledge and true knowledge of the vital. He does not conceive of time properly to have a complete understanding of intuition which embraces duration.<sup>19</sup>

Different from Kant, Bergson attributed to duration an absolute posture. Kant placed time (duration) on the same level with space. Consequently, in Bergson, the mind is

rooted in the flow of duration, transcends the intellect in that it is a more integrated philosophy of reality. Intellect is a function of the mind which is attracted to matter. The importance of matter heightens the problem of space in which we know matter as multiplicity. Space is the medium for intellectual functions such as induction and deduction, logic, geometry. All these mental processes are grounded by intuition. Order has been established between the mind and matter allowing free activity or willed activity as opposed to automatic. The vital essence of creation is manifested in this order of reality. The existence of disorder Bergson analyzes as the absence of habitual order.<sup>20</sup>

Consciousness penetrates matter as a multiplicity of elements and fixes its attention on movement in the form of intellect and intuition. Intuition and intellect are opposite directions of consciousness. Bergson's theory of knowledge takes in both intellect and intuition which is bringing the knowledge of matter and life into the consciousness. He concludes that this double form of knowledge is due to the double form of reality and as a result, the theory of knowledge is dependent upon intuition of the immediate as the source of agreement between the intellect and reality.

The more intuition is observed the more it is known as the mind itself. Intuition has the same unity and freedom of the mind<sup>21</sup> and is a philosophy of the spirit. By intuition we see the mind perpetually becoming. The intellect is merely

able to take select views of movement and consequently project a mechanistic illusion of reality. The intellect speculates in an endless chain of space and time, where intuition seizes truth at the moment. To intellect has been added intuition as a method of thought rather than a doctrine, and should thus compliment the work of science.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>EC, p. x.

<sup>2</sup>Henri Bergson, Oeuvres, p. 533.

<sup>3</sup>EC, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>Oeuvres, p. 584.

<sup>6</sup>EC, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>8</sup>Oeuvres, p. 614.

<sup>9</sup>EC, p. 143.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>14</sup>Oeuvres, p. 623.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 653.

<sup>16</sup>EC, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Blossoming of Bergson's Notion of Intuition in La Pensée et Le Mouvant, 1934

PM is the blossoming work of Bergson's philosophy drawing together all that has gone before into a philosophy of intuition.

By Bergson's studies of time and space we saw the nature and function of this faculty of knowing the real, intuition. Bergson started with the work of the intellect which comprises most of our consciousness. The intellect projects into duration intervals between our actions and the objects that occupy movement.<sup>1</sup>

Restituons au mouvement sa mobilité, au changement sa fluidité, au temps sa durée. Qui sait les «grand problèmes» insolubles ne resteront pas sur la pellicule? Ils ne concernaient ne le mouvement ni le changement ni le temps, mais seulement l'enveloppe conceptuelle que nous prenions faussement pour eux ou pour leur équivalent. La métaphysique deviendra alors l'expérience même. La durée se révélera telle qu'elle est, création continuelle, jaillissement interrompu de nouveauté.<sup>2</sup>

Action is truly indivisible and free from matter although the states of the material world are reflected in our consciousness. These remnants of the past testify to our interior duration into the present where action through space is the true cause of our knowledge.

Intuition grasps reality in mobility which is intuition's essence. It gives to the intellect a concept of the living:

"la substance, le Moi, l'Idee, la Volonte,"<sup>3</sup> Intuition embraces the totality of experience, the unity of the world. Intuition pervades the consciousness and depends on interior duration for viewing the spirit as one succession. Intuition is in agreement with immediate consciousness.

C'est ensuite de la conscience élargie, pressant sur le bord d'un inconscient qui cède et qui résiste, qui se rend et qui se reprend: à travers des alternances rapides d'obscurité et de lumière, elle nous fait constater que l'inconscient est là; contre la stricte logique elle affirme que le psychologique a beau être du conscient, il y a néanmoins un inconscient psychologique.<sup>4</sup>

Intuition is sympathy between our consciousness and what it comes in contact with, pure change, duration and spirit. Here is where Bergson makes the fundamental statement in PM,

"Penser intuitivement est penser en durée." For intuition the essential is change, for the intellect it is the stable.

Metaphors and abstractions always represent the external world in terms of space and not in view of the spirit. These ideas of the spirit then are modeled on matter as they are expressed by the metaphor. The term abstract is derived from space and attempts to express movement of the spirit. The metaphysical truth is revealed by dropping the process of conceptualization and returning to experience. Bergson states that the essence of what is felt in the ego, duration, "creation nouveauté" cannot be equated with what is perceived in things. The descriptions of objects can render nothing but a mechanism. The absolute cannot be limited by definition.

Truth is to know immediately from experience. Experience as the perception of a material object would take the name of intuition. Intuition is explication of the metaphysical act, and can be the entrance to the mystical. Our views of movement are taken from the solidity of matter whose change is perceived as quality. Movement can only be known in matter perceived as a change in quality. Our duration is substantial and of pure change which expresses itself in the diverse functions of memory, associations, abstractions, generalization, interpretation and attention.<sup>5</sup>

The brain is the mediary for sensations and perceptions projected outside to the consciousness and receives in some fashion the external objects.

Ce n'est pas en nous, c'est en eux que nous percevons les objets; c'est du moins en eux que nous les percevrions si notre perception «pure». 6

The brain brings the attention of the spirit to exterior objects and to itself. Bergson proposes that this faculty might be developed into a science of the spirit, a true metaphysics. Without Bergson's notion of intuition in duration any other metaphysics is the work of the intellect eliminating time.<sup>7</sup> Together intuition and intellect render a precise knowledge.

Bergson began his inquiry into the spirit with DI, describing the relations of intensity and extensity. In MM, he discusses the faculties of consciousness inabling it to

know matter, the burgeoining of intuition. EC brings out the natural function of instinct merged with the intellect to give the feeling known as intuition. PM was the blossoming of these ideas into a philosophy of intuition, a metaphysics.

Perception grasps an infinite number of variables and contracts them into sensations. By the attention of our actions to the multiplicity of objects represented, a general idea takes form establishing stable relations with past objects. The intellect merely touches the surface of the absolute, enlarging itself by sympathy with the effort of nature. Language cannot express all that is found in perception. There is a unity of experience of real substance that cannot be described by words.

There are two ways of expression, concept and image. Philosophical systems are developed through concepts. Images are designed by the intellect as the interpretation for the spirit. The impression of images is from the same perception but different from the concept. Images, like concepts, will survive the procession of thought. Moreover, they are in direct contact with intuition.<sup>8</sup> Images lose their intuitive sense of connection the further removed they become. The true experience is more than words. It is a feeling "qui est moins une chose pensée qu'un mouvement de pensée, moins un mouvement qu'une direction."<sup>9</sup>

The problem that metaphysics touches, élan vital, is described by substance and force. These words are opaque and

only an indication of what the perception of God means. In the context of metaphysics matter is considered the language of God turning our attention on the feeling of embracing the divine. This is the doctrine of creative intuition. The force of life as we feel it in ourselves and in all things is brought forth.

Metaphysics rests upon explaining the relation of time and change with our feelings and consciousness, bearing on perception at its origin.

It is not possible to see change as change. We speak about change and know it to exist in objects and ourselves. Our knowledge is unclear and an artificial speculation. But we have a natural feeling for change that Bergson calls intuition. It is the undetermined feeling of consciousness that relates to both spirit and matter.<sup>10</sup>

The faculty of conceiving eliminates from the real a great number of qualitative differences that come from our perceptions. Conception theorizes and attempts to unify perception. Only intuition is able to bring the divisions of the intellect into a common over-all perspective. Thus common direction of intuition is due to the degrees of intensity that the spirit brings. Discontinuous moments are perceived as "fluidité" in real time, which is indivisible. The embracing of reality by intuition discloses a continuous and indivisible basis.

Bergson's notion of intuition in PM is beyond what Kant

called intellectual intuition. Intuition is a perception of metaphysical experience. In speculation insoluble contradictions arise because of the lack of understanding time. From this point metaphysicians work to reintegrate time. Time accounts for the change in the immediate objects, of our feelings and conceptions, transcending the effort of the intellect. One must grasp change in its origin. "Nous nous représenterons tout changement, tout mouvement, comme absolument indivisible."<sup>11</sup>

Reality is change. It is continuous and indivisible as experienced by the profound ego. Perception is constantly modified by change. We perceive change in objects as well as change in ourselves.

Il y a des changements, mais il n'y a pas, sous le changement, de choses qui changent: le changement n'a pas besoin d'un support. Il y a des mouvements mais il n'y a pas d'object inerte, invariable, qui se meuve; le mouvement n'implique pas un mobile.<sup>12</sup>

Change is the joining of unity and multiplicity. It is an adding to and keeping of past elements. Conscious existence is an interior continuity. Part of our consciousness is attuned to the present, and part of it reflects. It is important to state that reality is change, that change is indivisible, but it is also important to realize that the material past remains with the present.

This feeling that Bergson calls intuition projects into the absolute. To understand the nature of intuition one must distinguish between intuition and analysis. Bergson calls

intuition the sympathy by which we are transported to the interior of the object. In analysis we express a thing in terms of its function. Analytical symbols are developed to represent the point of view taken by contact with the object. Analysis is a continuous multiplying of viewpoints whereas intuition is a simple act. The abstract symbol attempts to place the absolute knowledge into an indifferent form. This symbolic translation takes the place of intuitive knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Metaphysics uses this same analysis to express itself. "La métaphysique est donc la science qui prétend se passer de symbols."<sup>14</sup>

Action is never divisible, only its path through space. Movement itself expresses tension, extension and pure mobility. Duration is a unity of movement of a multiplicity of states. The interior life is all the time a variety of qualities, a unity of direction. We came to this qualitative difference of spirit by the objects which it attaches itself to and from which it draws its images. Images can only delineate action and guide our consciousness by physical presence but they (images) will never be able to replace intuition. Duration is presented directly to us by intuition, suggested indirectly by images. It cannot be enclosed in a conceptual representation. The unity of the spirit is not abstract; it is more than a multiplicity.

Metaphysics as found in PM must use intuition, if intuition is the faculty for embracing movement and psychological duration. Nature of duration has about it the characters

"essentiellement actif de l'intuition metaphysique."<sup>15</sup> This method of metaphysics affirms the co-existence of objects. And it becomes clear by observation that intuition is not a unique act but a series of intuitive acts.

Truth is known from experience as ceaseless change through intuition. Intuition reaches for the absolute. Symbolic knowledge becomes relative because of its lack of containing intuitive experience. Intuitive knowledge embraces the movement of life. The true philosophy of intuition is a science of metaphysics. Bergson believed Kant's intellectual intuition to be more a science of relations than a metaphysics.

The method of knowing movement is a simple act which puts analysis into action. This is a quasi-definition of intuition by Bergson. Metaphysical intuition begins here. It is the metaphysical act of bringing together observations and experiences into a reflection on the spirit. Intuition is not worked for but is a natural sympathy of the spirit which gains interior awareness, "le contact direct du moi avec le moi."<sup>16</sup> The effort of intuition is distinctly able to arrive at material knowledge without a synthesis. Intuition is the impulse that distinguishes movement as tension. The metaphysics arrived at by Bergson is defined as "l'experience integrale."

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>PM, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion then, élan vital as found in consciousness reveals that our knowledge of life must be an instinctive type, a sympathetic knowledge. Most of our conscious knowledge is received through the power of the intellect, and part of it from material impulse or instinct. Bergson develops from this basis a deep power of insight that pervades our consciousness as a supra-intellectual act whereby we place ourselves into the heart of the object. Intuition is knowledge of movement duration and spirit. We perceive the unity of duration by intuition.

Bergson makes the distinction between the intellect and intuition to integrate the spatial orientation of the mind with that of duration. He observes the nature and function of intuition in reference to time and space. Space is the medium for intellectual analysis, while time is of fundamental importance to understand the essence of life. Intuition follows the movement of life; the intellect analyzes the immobility of matter. Movement is grasped as indivisible and qualitative, heterogeneous to matter. The intellect is unable to engage in the movement of life but enlightens instinct as conscious of itself--intuition.

A philosophy of intuition is an effort to surpass the modern views of the absurd that project a non-coherence

between intellect and what the intellect knows as reality. Intuition embraces in a simple "glance" the pure totality of existence.

Two noted French authors concerned with the meaning of man's existence are Sartre and Camus. In their approach to the philosophical question of life, they avoid the discussion of essence, matter, and the absolute. They describe human existence as a condition of the absurd. For Camus the absurd is the absence of congruity between the mind's need for coherence and the incoherence of the world which the mind experiences. Sartre's view of the absurd is the meaninglessness of existence. Man's existence is absurd because his contingency finds no external justification. Camus' absurd is merely a lack of coherence, while Sartre's view has no foundation for order whatsoever. Without crediting man with intuitive knowledge of existence these intellectual analyses would be logically correct. Even to posit relative knowledge as does Alfred Jules Ayer, gives no account for our awareness of the true. Common sense, as stated by Ayer, is just describing, in another way, intuition at a minimum level. Pure abstraction and pure intellectuality is incoherent to reality if it does not have the insight of intuition; knowledge of the profound movement of life.

Bergson's philosophy is not an anti-rationalism but a continuing belief in the inherent intelligibility of existence. Bergson claims that existence can be known; however, the

intellect by itself cannot encompass reality. Reality can be known by other means. Bergson's notion of intuition asserts the existence and explores the possibility of a method of contact between the individual and reality. It is at this point that the rigidity of contemporary views of the absurd emerge. Contemporary philosophers of the absurd not only claim that reality is unknown, but that it is unknowable. They refuse to admit the intelligibility of reality; that contact can be ultimately made either by reason or intuition.

The scope of this essay has been not only to pursue the chronological development of the notion of intuition but also to establish what intuition is according to Bergson. In review, DI discusses the relations of extensity and intensity. MM, the burgeoing of intuition, observes the faculties of consciousness in knowing matter. EC indicates the emergence of the natural impulse of insitnct with intellect to give the feeling of intuition. PM is the blossoming of these ideas into a philosophy of intuition, a metaphysics.

Metaphysics rests upon explaining the relation of time and change with our feelings and consciousness, bearing on perception at its origin. It is not possible to see change as change. We have a natural feeling for change that Bergson calls intuition. It is a feeling of consciousness that relates both to matter and spirit. Intuition embraces metaphysical reality.

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