

BERGSON Henri Louis—philosopher, author of the theory of duration (*durée réelle*), b. October 18, 1859 in Paris, d. January 4, 1941 in Paris.

Bergson was born in a Jewish family and his father came from Warsaw. After finishing studies in 1881 in the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, he taught philosophy in middle schools; in 1879 he became a professor of the *École Normale Supérieure*, and from 1900 to 1924 he was a professor of the *Collège de France*. In 1914 he was chosen as a member of the French Academy. In 1927 he received the Nobel Prize for literature. His own reflections brought him close to Catholicism toward the end of his life, but he did not receive baptism, saying that in the face of rising anti-Semitism he wants to remain in solidarity with the persecuted Jews.

His theory of duration (*durée réelle*) was contained in four works. He presented the nature of duration in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (P 1889; *O bezpośrednich danych świadomości* [On the immediate data of consciousness], Wwa 1913), and *Matière et mémoire* (P 1896; *Materia i pamięć*, Wwa 1926, 1930²), and he presented the duration of nature in *L'évolution créatrice* (P 1907; *Ewolucja twórcza*, Wwa 1913, 1957²) and *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (P 1934; *Dwa źródła moralności i religii* [Two sources of morality and religion], Kr 1993). He also published two collections of articles: *L'Énergie spirituelle* (P 1919), which discusses the meritorious aspect of the metaphysics of duration, and *La pensée et le mouvant* (P 1934) concerning the methodological aspect of the metaphysics of duration. Minor works include: *Le rire* (P 1900; *Śmiech. Studium o komizmie* [Laughter. Study of Comedy], Lw 1902, Kr 1997); *Durée et simultanéité* (P 1922). A collection of articles in Polish translation, *Mysł i ruch* [Thought and motion] contains *Wstęp to metafizyki* [Introduction to metaphysics], *Intuicja filozoficzna*; [Philosophical intuition], *Postrzeżenie zmiany* [Perception of change], and *Dusza i ciało* [Soul and body]. On the centennial of Bergson's birth a critical edition of his collected works was published (*Oeuvres*, P 1959, 1970³), and his speeches and letters were published in *Écrits et paroles* (I–III, P 1957–1959), and were published again in *Mélanges* (P 1972). Bergson's lectures to students of the Lycées were published posthumously and three volumes have been published to date: *Cours I. Leçons de psychologie et de métaphysique* (P 1990); *Cours II. Leçons d'esthétique. Leçons de morale, psychologie et métaphysique* (P 1992); *Cours III. Leçons de l'histoire de la philosophie moderne. Théorie de l'âme* (P 1995).

Bergson's philosophy, in which he shows that the findings of the mathematical-physical sciences are inadequate in relation to the wealth of reality, was an attempt to rehabilitate metaphysical cognition. According to Bergson, there are two types of cognition: rational, the purest expression of which is mathematical natural science, and intuitive, which shows its specific character most fully in metaphysics. Although in its investigations metaphysics considers the data of science, these data are not for metaphysics the final instance, since by intuition it reaches to the deepest levels of reality.

COGNITION. The starting point in Bergson's doctrine was the critique of rational cognition, which he regarded as necessary in practical terms, but incapable of grasping the real world adequately. The reason, according to Bergson, is primarily a utilitarian tool that serves the human race to find biological direction most effectively in the world surrounding it. There it produces an image of reality useful for predicting events and performing actions that benefit life. Using abstraction and analysis, it breaks down reality into artificially isolated fragments. It immobilizes that is fluid in reality. It interprets motion as the sum of static

states. It reduces the qualitative changes of things to purely quantitative differences. In this way it distorts reality. The result of such cognition is the reification and hypostasis of features as independent beings. Things are grasped in symbols, concepts, namely in that which is not the thing. Reason grasps what is common with other things, not what actually exists as individual, separate, and unrepeatable. The reason grasps reality in order to act. However, a profound, objective, and faithful cognition of reality is possibly by the intellectual power (proper to man alone)—intuition. Intuition is cognition in duration (*intus legere*); it is cognition for the sake of cognition (*contemplatio*). The data gained in intuitive cognition eludes linguistic formulations. It cannot be communicated directly. Therefore it must be communicated by metaphors and the whole treasury of literary types. Thus mathematical-physical cognition cannot claim to be the ultimate explanation of reality. Besides the positive sciences, positive metaphysics is necessary.

REALITY. Bergson pointed to a new source of cognition and corrected the prevailing knowledge about reality. The world, according to him, is not a great mechanism, but rather a living organism permeated by the drive of life (*élan vital*); the world is a constantly evolving and creative duration; this creativity is analogous to the process of artistic creation. The creative process begins with an enormous eruption, the first products of which settle in the heaviest forms as powerless matter. The further course of creative evolution is the constant struggle of the *élan vital* with the powerlessness of matter. The course of evolution cannot be foreseen, since the spontaneous and rapid current of life flows in unforeseeable directions. It is not hindered by any determinism, by any foreseeable teleology. Reality has a psychic nature. Thus it cannot be confined in any rigid schemata or reduced to uniform and qualitatively undifferentiated elements. The central point from which the *élan vital* radiates is God, who created the world, who is the energy of life and becomes the source of life.

From an analysis of Bergson's texts it follows that his views on the nature of God were not precise, for they allow God's nature to be understood in the spirit of pantheism (cf. *Évolution créatrice*), and in the spirit of a certain kind of theism—God as separate and different from creatures (cf. *Deux sources de la morale et de la religion*).

MAN. Ordinary experience always shows man as a body locked in time, limited by space, and mechanically reacting to external influences, and also as a spirit (soul, "I") who transcends the boundary of corporeality and free from any determination. Consciousness is not a function of the body; the mechanism of the brain is truly a condition for psychological operation, but it is not the subject of consciousness. The brain is "the place where the spirit is impressed in matter", but the destruction of the brain does not mean that consciousness is destroyed, for consciousness is immortal. Consciousness, however, cooperates strictly with the body and through the body it introduces changes in the world. Man, who lives in a reality of two elements, is endowed with two kinds of cognition and memory: by rational cognition he is a worker who transforms the world (*homo faber*), and by intuitive knowledge he is a wise man (*homo sapiens*). Mechanical memory makes mechanisms of motion permanent in the brain; memory as pure reminiscence is identified with consciousness. By his nature man is free, but in practice he is subject to the pressure of material conditions and habits resulting from interhuman contacts, which create in him a secondary consciousness—the "superficial self", which is superimposed upon the "deep self" and limits its freedom.

Such conditions of human existence are the source of two kinds of morality and religion. Closed morality and static religion have their social in social conditions: society produces commands and prohibitions to counteract the freedom of individuals and defend itself

against it; open morality and dynamic religion are formed by mystics who overcome the ossification of nature and contribute the most to the perfection of humanity. We encounter perfect mysticism in the great Christian mystics (the Apostle Paul, Francis of Assisi, Theresa of Avila, Joan of Arc) who were imitators of Christ, and Christ continued the work started by the prophets of Israel. Bergson regarded dynamic religion as the highest and noblest manifestation of the spiritual life, and he called the Christian mystics genuine guides and benefactors of mankind.

The popularity of Bergson's philosophy, besides its intrinsic merits, may be explained also by the literary talent of its author who was regarded as a master of French prose. Bergson's philosophy had a lasting influence on Catholic thinkers: A. G. Sertillanges, J. Chevalier, J. Maritain, and M. Blondel. Representatives of modernism (E. Le Roy) referred to Blondel's philosophy, and his philosophical idea of evolution and of mysticism had an influence on P. Teilhard de Chardin's views.

E. Le Roy, *Une philosophie nouvelle*, P 1912; J. Maritain, *La philosophie bergsonienne*, P 1913, 1948⁴; C. Péguy, *Notes sur Bergson et la philosophie bergsonienne*, P 1914, 1922²; A. G. Sertillanges, *Lumières et périls du bergsonisme*, P 1943; J. Maritain, *De Bergson à Thomas d'Aquin*, NY 1944; A. G. Sertillanges, *Henri Bergson et le catholicisme*, P 1944; L. Husson, *L'intellectualisme de Bergson*, P 1947; *Les études bergsoniennes*, I–XI, P 1948–1976; G. Bachelard, *La dialectique de la durée*, P 1950; R. M. Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson éducateur*, P 1955; idem, *Bergson et Plotin*, P 1959; *Bergson et nous. Actes du X^e Congrès de Philosophie de Langue Française*, I–II, P 1959–1960; J. Guittou, *La vocation de Bergson*, P 1960; H. Gouhier, *Bergson et le Christ des Évangiles*, P 1961; R. Ingarden, *Intuicja i intelekt u Henryka Bergsona* [Intuition and intellect in Henri Bergson], in: *Z badań nad filozofią współczesną* [From investigations on contemporary philosophy], Wwa 1963, 9–191; M. Barthélemy-Madaule, *Bergson adversaire de Kant*, P 1966; M. Čapek, *Bergson and Modern Physics*, Bs 1971; J. Milet, *Bergson et le calcul infinitésimal*, P 1974; V. Jankelevitch, *Henri Bergson*, P 1975; M. Cariou, *Bergson et le fait mystique*, P 1976; É. Gilson, *L'individualité dans la philosophie de Bergson*, P 1978, 1985⁵; B. Skarga, *Czas i trwanie. Studia o B.* [Time and duration. Studies on Bergson], Wwa 1982; S. Borzym, *Bergson a przemiany światopoglądowe w Polsce* [Bergson and world-view changes in Poland], P 1984; R. Waszkinel, *Geneza pozytywnej metafizyki B.* [Genesis of Bergson's positive metaphysics], Lb 1986; H. Gouhier, *Bergson dans l'histoire de la pensée occidentale*, P 1989; P. Soulez, *B. politique*, P 1989; H. Hude, *Bergson*, I–II, P 1989–1990; J. L. Vieillard-Baron, *Bergson*, Wwa 1997; P. Soulez, F. Worms, *Bergson (Biographie)*, P 1997; F. Worms, *Introduction à Matière et mémoire de Bergson*, P 1997; J. L. Vieillard-Baron, *Bergson et le bergsonisme*, P 1999.

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