

HENRY BERGSON'S NOTION OF SELF: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract

The problem of the self in the history of philosophy borders on questions such as these: Does the self exist? Can the self be known? Is the self fixed or continuous? Henri Bergson (1859-1941), among others, believes that the self exists. Self, for him is the 'I', as a reality which each of us seizes from within, by intuition and not by intellect or simple analysis. It is a reality that serves as a window to the wider stream of reality. As a reality, the Self is free and mobile; it is something in the making, not something made; it is changing states, not self-maintained states. The Self, according to Bergson, can only be understood in terms of duration (duree), which stands for a unified flow of time or becoming. The Self, for Bergson, is therefore characterized by pure mobility, free will, unforeseeable novelty and creativity. The main purpose of this discourse is to examine the concept of the Self from Henri Bergson's perspective. Quantitative research method was adopted. Data from these sources were analysed using textual exposition, historical and evaluative methods. The discourse reveals that: Bergson's perspective on the concept of the self could not provide a good account of the self. He wrongly used the word mobility and change interchangeably. He implicitly denies the fact of identity of the self over time. But he should however be commended for championing the revival of speculative metaphysics; and calling man back to his root by showing that life is larger than logic.

Keywords: Self, Duration, Intuition, Analysis and Free will.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of Self is a widely contested phenomenon that has generated myriads of views and literatures in the history of philosophy. While some believe in the existence of self, others claim that the self does not exist. Some of those who believe in the existence of self, claim that self cannot be known; that it can only be postulated, but others believe that it can be known. Some still believe that the self is fixed, while others believe that it is changing.

Henry Bergson is however one of those who hold the view of a changing self. The self is also a fundamental concept in Henry Bergson's metaphysics that links up all its segments. Bergson believes that since metaphysics is the study of reality, it should begin with that reality, which we all, at least, have access to. This reality according to Bergson, is our individual self. For him, "there is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by

intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our personality in its flowing-through time - our self which endures.”¹ Bergson categorized the self into two, namely, the superficial or false self and the deep-seated or true self. The superficial self, for him, is the self of our homogeneous conscious state, which is much adapted to social life. Bergson conceives it as a mere product of the intellect, which according to him, is naturally in the habit of segmenting our conscious states, where each conscious state is presented as separate from the state that succeeds it. The deep-seated self is at the other hand, the true self, which we seize from within through intuition, not intellectual analysis. The intellect, according to Bergson, cannot attain the knowledge of the absolute or the perfect reality for “in seeking to know something, the intellect moves around the outside of the object, captures it in symbols, and only achieves relative perspectives. However, intuition enters into the object of knowledge, does not depend on symbols, and attains the absolute”².

In his *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson claims that the Self is not a thing, but a progress characterized by duration (*duree*). The self can in other words be understood only in terms of duration. Duration, in Bergson's view, is a seamless heterogeneously unified flow of time. Unlike Kant's concept of time, which Bergson understands as space-based or Mathematical time; the real time according to Bergson, has no space. The spaces apparent in external objects are mere fragmentations of the intellect. Duration for Bergson, is the time that characterizes the subjective experience of our conscious moments. Duration is not a succession of discrete conscious moments, but a flowing indivisible/seamless continuum, of which its phases melt into one another and form an organic whole. Duration should be understood as a qualitative multiplicity which consists in temporal heterogeneity, in which “several conscious states are organized into a whole permeate one another (and) gradually gain a richer content.”³ Bergson argues further that our descent into the duration of our Self gives us access to the wider stream of duration, on the model of which we must represent other realities.

2. AN EXPOSITION OF BERGSON'S NOTION OF SELF

2a. Deep-seated Self

The self per se in Bergson's view is the deep seated-self. It is a reality which each of us seizes from within through intuition, not through intellectual analysis. John Malarkey, with reference to Bergson's observes that, “Modern, social and mechanized existence has cleaved our consciousness in two. The mind exists in two layers, one facing outwards and formed after the external, public realm, the other remaining behind in 'profound' seclusion.”⁴ We gain access to our deep-seated self by entering into ourselves and seizing ourselves from within as a form of self-sympathy, which develops into sympathy for others. Bergson writes that “there is at least one reality which each of us seizes from within by intuition and not by simple analysis; it is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves.”⁵ Beneath the fixed superficial self is a deep-seated self in continuous flux, such that there is a succession of states, each of which contains previous states and part of currently unfolding states. These psychic states although multiple, are indivisibly interpenetrating as a unit. Bergson compared the

deep seated self, which is continually coming to the end of its role, with the unrolling of coil. He writes that “it may just be compared to a continual rolling up, like that of a thread on a ball, for our past follows us, it swells incessantly with the present that it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory”⁶ Those moments of conscious beings which denote the self are, for Bergson, multiple, such that no two moments are identical. The reason is that each moment carries with it previous moments alongside the current moment, and over and above the previous moment. In other words, each moment carries with it memory that the preceding moments have bequeathed to it. The memory that goes with consciousness makes this possible. The intellect, according to Bergson, alters the deep-seated self. He argues that “the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a self whose states and changes permeate one another, and undergo a deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another in order to set them out in space.”⁷ Bergson argues that it is the superficial self or psychic state that makes us perceive a homogeneous time; a materialized quantitative time set out in space.

The superficial self, for Bergson, is the shadow of the real self, which the intellect creates by projecting the deep-seated self into homogeneous space. The intellect uses the symbol in place of deep-seated self, and tries to perceive it only through symbol. Such discrete self is, in Bergson's view, more aligned to social life, and especially language. But consciousness perceives something different when it ventures to go below the homogeneous space: “Homogeneous duration, which is the extensive symbol of true duration, a close psychological analysis distinguishes a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined states, a self in which succeeding each other means melting into one another and forming an organic whole.”⁸ We distort our feelings by distinguishing a numerical multiplicity in their confused mass. This separation spreads out time in space, thereby causing our feelings to lose their life. The separated parts become lifeless shadow of self, which can be juxtaposed and translated into words. Our conscious states, according to Bergson, interpenetrate and form part of our true self, and substituting this with the juxtaposition of their symbols is like trying to make duration out of space, which seems impossible. Bergson notes further that ideas which we do not assimilate properly, but still remain in us, and those which are not cherished, are not incorporated in our conscious states.

Henry Bergson believes that we reach our true self through effort of introspection, in which we seize our deep-seated self in its becoming. Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out that our awareness of ourselves is often distorted and incomplete. Such knowledge is a strange absolute knowledge. Our self as conscious state cannot be measured, for states permeate one another in duration, and not in homogeneous space. He argues that the moments at which we grasp ourselves are rare, and that is just why we are rarely free. Greater parts of our lives are lived outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves, but our own ghost, and colourless shadow which we project into homogenous space. Hence, “our lives unfold in space rather than in time; we live for external world,

rather than for ourselves; we speak, rather than think; we are acted, rather than act ourselves. To act freely is to recover possession of ourselves, and get back into pure duration.”⁹ The true self seized through our subjective effort of imagination has its states in constant flux and undistinguished. They can only be separated when the nature must have been changed, and can only be expressed in words when it becomes public property. Garret Barden rightly notes that the deep-seated self is “not a construct. It is also however, not a transcendental ego, it is not a 'metaphysical' self, nor some unchanging substratum of existence. Instead, it is simply oneself as enduring.”¹⁰

Philosophical investigation, according to Bergson, should start from what is taking place within our consciousness. Such knowledge, for him, is vivid, undeniable and intimate, for “just in proportion as we dig below the surface and get down to the real self, do its states of consciousness cease to stand in juxtaposition, and begin to permeate and melt into one another, and each to be tinged with the colouring of all the others.”¹¹ He claims that our self develops in duration and cannot be represented by image, since it is variety of qualities, continuity of progress and unity of direction. It cannot as well be represented by concepts, for “if a man is incapable of getting for himself the intuition of the constitutive duration of his own being, nothing will ever give it to him, concepts no more than images.”¹² Laying of concepts side by side can only give us a reconstruction of self, of which concepts only symbolize general and impersonal aspects. Only intuition as the metaphysical investigation of what is uniquely ourselves can let us seize the absolute within. Bergson believes that if we enter into ourselves through the effort of introspection, we would experience the flow of our deeper consciousness. At this state, we can then compress our whole past into the tension of duration of the present, cutting into the future with each creative act. The more conscious we become of the progress of our duration, the more we feel the different parts of our being interpenetrate each other, and the totality of our personality concentrates in a point. Moving from this level of deep-seated self to the level of superficial self occurs by means of relaxation. The free creative activities of the deep-seated self cannot be understood conceptually as found in the superficial self, but can only be experienced in the flow of our personality through time. The nature of the life of deep-seated self is expressed in pure duration.

The deep-seated self as part of reality is mobility, for reality, according to Bergson, is constantly in the making or changing states: “The consciousness we have of our own self in its continual flux introduces us to the interior of a reality on the model of which we must represent other realities.”¹³ Bergson argues that only through metaphysics can the life of the deep-seated self be seized. Metaphysics for him is the act which consists in placing oneself within the concrete reality. Metaphysics, which Kant mired in thesis and antithesis of the antinomies should, according to Bergson be ignored, since it is dead and fixed in thesis. The only metaphysics that should be considered is that which is living in philosophers. Intuitive metaphysics thus escapes Kant's criticism. When we move into ourselves by the effort of intuition, “¹⁴ in this sense, an inner, absolute knowledge of the duration of self by self is possible. The life of the self that endures is moving, and to seize the moving self from within, we need to reverse the usual working of our intellect, by not

trying to move from concept to things, which characterizes thinking. Bergson states that “what is really important for philosophy is to know exactly what unity, what multiplicity, and what reality superior both to abstract unity and multiplicity, the multiple unity of the self actually is. Now, philosophy will know this only when it recovers possession of the simple intuition of the self by self.”¹⁵ The deep seated self can therefore only be ceased in intuition, for intellectual analysis is cognitively impotent as far as the perfect reality is concerned.

Bergson posits further that the deep-seated self can only be understood in terms of duration, which for him, is a seamless flow of time; an indivisible movement of our consciousness between the past present and future. duration as real time, free from its spatial representation, is a time that characterizes our subjective experiences, which we seize internally. The past is accumulated in duration, survives as memory and constitutes reality. Duration as real time is for Bergson not thought but lived. It is not homogeneous or uniform; but as our internal conscious state, it is fluid and heterogeneous. The spatial view of our conscious states results from importation of measurable space into the flux of duration by the intellect, due to the need to measure time. Merleau-Ponty notes that duration “is not something that I see from outside. From outside I would have only an outline of it, I would not be in the face of generating thrust. Time, then, is myself; I am duration that grasps; duration that grasps itself is in me.”¹⁶ I continuously move forward, carrying with me memories of my experiences, of which each of them shapes me into a new person. As time, I cannot be the person I was the previous moments, since I am continuously flowing towards unforeseeable future self that I will become. My experiences in life are always unique and personal; they cannot be expressed without distorting it through symbolic representations.

2b. Bergson's critique of intellectual analysis

Henri Bergson, in his *An Introduction to Metaphysics* writes that one of the two profound ways of knowing a thing in the history of philosophy is intellectual analysis. To know an object, our intellect, according to Bergson, moves around the object. Knowledge by analysis depends on a point of view and symbol. In this regard, we perceive the object according to the points of view taken, and express ourselves by means of symbol. In other words, while point of view is used to represent the object, symbol is used to translate the object of view. Bergson argues that “a representation taken from certain point of view, a translation made with certain symbols, will always remain imperfect in comparison with the object of which a view has been taken or which the symbols seek to express.”¹⁷ But the absolute, according to Bergson, is what it is, and not the representation or translation. Being dependent on a point of view, knowledge by analysis is a relative knowledge. With regard to symbol, my expression of an object will vary in line with the points of reference to which I relate, or my objects of reference in my translation. Analysing an object reduces it to elements that are already known, which it has in common with other objects. Bergson therefore writes that to analyse is “to express a thing as a function of something other than itself.”¹⁸ In analysis, we try to point out the points of resemblances between

objects we already know and those we are trying to know. In a bid to understand an object, analysis multiplies points of view infinitely without grasping the absolute. Litanies of conceptual explanations can only approximate the absolute, but can never give me the absolute in its originality. The absolute in this sense is regarded by Bergson as the perfect or reality. Concepts abstract by giving us only shadows of the object, and generalize by making a particular property common to all infinity of things, and thus deform the property. Analysis operates on the immobile, “and the element is invariable by definition, being a diagram, a simplified reconstruction, often a mere symbol, in any case a motionless view of the moving reality.”¹⁹

Positive science, in Bergson's view is based on analysis, for it works by symbols: “Even the most concrete of the natural sciences, those concerned with life, confine themselves to the visible form of living beings, their organs and anatomical elements.”²⁰ What they study are mere symbols of life. Through analysis, we know the absolute relatively by looking at it from outside points of view. We use symbolic representation or translation. Analysis is conceptual, and in it, we dissect reality, viewing it from without and arranging it according to conceptual framework. Analysis, thus, provides only relative knowledge, expressed in concepts. By its nature, Analysis according to Bergson can go on indefinitely by multiplying points of view taken without end. It also crystallizes or freezes and immobilizes the fleeting reality. Our minds, which seek for solid points of support, according to Bergson, have for their main function, in the ordinary course of life, that of representing states and things; it takes at long intervals, almost instantaneous the discontinuous, “for motion, stability, for tendency in process of change, a fixed points marking a direction of change and tendency.”²¹ This substitution for Bergson is necessary to common sense, to language, and to practical life.

Bergson argues that such crystallization is as a result of how our intellect works, and our normal and habitual method which is determined by needs and gives relative knowledge. The intellect goes by concepts, and aims at gaining practical equivalent of reality. Intellectual knowledge is not disinterested; not used as knowledge for knowledge sake, “but in order to take sides, to draw profit-in short to satisfy an interest.”²² Intellect fits concepts on object, and is oriented towards many practical directions, and thus may be taken from many points of view. It thus, gathers knowledge through analysis. It divides things according to perspectives and reconstructs things by synthesizing those perspectives. This normal way that our intellect works is, according to Bergson, the reason for the antinomies of concepts and positions which characterized modern philosophy. He argues that we need to go beyond different schools of philosophy like idealism and realism, but does not believe that intellect can take us beyond these schools. He writes that, “the inherent difficulties of metaphysics, the antinomies which it gives rise to, and contradictions into which it falls, the divisions into antagonistic schools, and the irreducible opposition between systems are largely the result of our applying, to the disinterested knowledge of the real, processes which we generally employ for practical ends.”²³ Through

the intellect, scientists gather knowledge of living things, for instance, by dividing them into physical and chemical components. The intellect cannot gain the knowledge of the absolute, since it breaks up the continuous becoming into a series of static states. The intellect cannot grasp the continuous creative movement of life because of its analytic tendency. By reducing becoming to a given element and reconstituting it from those elements, novelty and creation of unforeseeable becomes impossible. Intellect which is concerned with matter can only grasp life by means of translating it into inertia. Analysis, for Bergson, is a conceptual approach to knowledge in which we dissect reality, by taking pictures of it from various external perspectives, and rearrange it according to our conceptual framework. Analysis, according to Bergson, is justified in natural sciences, but not in Metaphysics, since it crystallizes and immobilizes the mobile reality. Intelligence regards objects in a fixed way by conceptualizing it. Intelligence deals with concepts and through the concept, it leads us into seeking realities that would match the concept, thereby distorting reality.

Bergson believes that analysis analyses infinitely, and can never reach the absolute. Objects are divided based on chosen view points, and the fragments are translated into symbols, wherein the spectra of the original can be reconstructed. Symbols do not take cognizance of the uniqueness of the object; instead, they always distort the part of the object represented by them. "A representation taken from a certain points of view, a translation made with certain symbols, will always remain imperfect in comparison with the object of which a view has been taken, or which the symbols seek to express."²⁴ Symbols are always spatial and immobile. In analysis, mobility is translated into a row of immobile points. Intellect, for Bergson, is a mode of thought that analyses its objects and reduces it to its constituent parts. Science is the ultimate expression of intellect. The emergent of life appears to intellect as recombination of existing elements. Intellect cannot apprehend anything novel. The problem with analysis is that by representing its objects in terms of concepts and symbols, it translates reality and replaces it with a representation. Analysis places language and thought between us and reality as intermediaries, thereby creating barrier. Also, in an attempt to capture object in language and concepts, analysis reduces objects to qualities that are universal, thereby falsifying reality by stripping it of its unique concrete features. Analysis, for Bergson, "is an operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects."²⁵ Our inner states of awareness, according to Bergson, should not be subjected to the same type of observational techniques used in gathering accurate information about external objects. The confirmation of our inner state, unlike external fixed, determined and discrete things, are internal, continuous, and interpenetrating free activities. The self that we perceive intellectually for Bergson, is the superficial self.

2c. The superficial self

Bergson believes that the self of our discrete, homogeneous and static conscious states is a superficial self; which for him is not the true self. He believes that at the event of interrupting the intuition of our true self or deep-seated self which crowds our past into the present, our consciousness is segmented, making each conscious state to be separated from the succeeding state. Our past would at this stage be broken up into several recollections,

external to one another. For Bergson, “the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces is much better adapted to the requirement of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self.”²⁶ The superficial self is a product of the intellect, not intuition, for to pass from our deep-seated self to the superficial self is to gradually pass from tension found in pure duration to the extension found in spatialized time. It is represented by the concept of self as succession of states, created by spatializing intelligence: “The true self consisting in a confused multiplicity of psychic states is distorted by language, which represents it as a 'discrete multiplicity' of psychic states, named, separated and juxtaposed.”²⁷ The superficial self, according to Bergson, is the self, studied by analytic psychology. In this regard, we study the self by looking at ourselves externally, as though we are looking at external psychical objects. When the self is conceived as a succession of distinct states in spatialized time, each state would be seen as being caused by the preceding states. The superficial self is thus the conception of the self as determined, not free. As a way of challenging this view, Bergson attacks the determinist's concept of the self and the life of self, which is based on spatialized or geometrical concept of time. A.A. Luce on this note commented that the superficial self is: “that side of our nature which we present to the outside world.”²⁸ as an aspect of our being, it attempts to fit in, to blend with the crowd, Fredrick Burwick and Paul Douglas see it as the “automatic evil twin' of our deeper nature”²⁹

Bergson also described the superficial self as the external projection of the other, which is a mere social representation. This social concept of the self seems to result from the influence of William James on Bergson. James posits that “properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their minds.”³⁰ Bergson's superficial self and James' social self, are both homogeneous multiplicities not unified but divided. We are not free at the level of our superficial selves, for we do not act ourselves, but are acted upon by social pressures. It is a self-evident aspect of our self, constructed by intellect through its internalization and reactions to cultures or popular sentiments. Our behaviours, likes and dislikes, in this regard, are determined. Our identification with our superficial selves cuts us off from our depth, or our deep-seated selves. Change, which Bergson believes to be the very nature of whom we are, is always being resisted by the superficial self. Guerlac, commented in reference to Bergson that: “He suggests that due to the artificial and linguistically based superimposition of the external world unto our inner experience, we typically (and tactically) assume that our consciousness (i.e., *duree*) is structured like the external world, whereas, in reality, it is radically different.”³¹

The superficial self, in Bergson's view, is the self, given to psychologists in intuition, which is always resolved into sensations, feelings, ideas, and so on. Psychologists study these separately, substituting the self, for “a series of elements which form the facts of psychology.”³² Bergson further criticizes the empiricists and rationalists for both falling into the fallacy of taking a part in place of the whole, “for both empiricists and rationalists

are victims of the same fallacy. Both of them mistake partial notations for real parts, thus, confusing the points of view of analysis and of intuition, of science and of metaphysics.”³³ Bergson understands empiricism as the activity of seeking the original in the translation; and rationalism tries to recreate the unity of self by joining psychical states as many fragments detached from an ego that binds them together. The declaration of empiricists that there is nothing else but multiplicity of psychical states is as a result of their inadequate approach to knowledge: “They seek unity of ego in the gaps, as it were between the psychical states, and are led to fill the gaps with other states indefinitely. Rationalism, by making the ego the place where mental states are lodged, is confronted with empty space which constantly grows larger, and tends to lose itself in infinite.”³⁴ Superficial self is represented by the concept of self as a succession of states created by spatializing intellect. While Kant believes that our actions are determined from a point of view and free from a point of view, Bergson argues that even free acts that spring from deep-seated self, when located within spatialized and homogenous time, appears determined. Even though spatialized time is required for practical purposes, the real, for Bergson, can only be seized in duration as un-spatialized heterogeneous time.

EVALUATION OF BERGSON'S NOTION SELF

As we have noted before, Bergson understands the real self not as an entity, but as a progress or change. In his *Creative Evolution*, he claims that “there are no things that become, there are only actions.”³⁵ Also in his *Creative Mind*, he reiterates his point by writing that “there are changes, but there is underneath the change no things that change; change has no need of support. There are movements, but there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile”³⁶. Bergson seem however to confuse the word change with mobility. Little wonder, he often used them interchangeably. The qualitative transformation of the deep seated self should in our opinion be understood as change not mobility. For mobility implies movement from one position to another.

Secondly, we agree with Bergson that the self, constantly transits from one state to another, but disagree with him on the idea that “there are no things which change”. For Bergson to posit a self that undergoes durational change implies that the self is a thing, and not merely a process. He sounds inconsistent in his argument when he added that when we penetrate the duration of our self through the effort of intuition, “an inner absolute knowledge of the duration of self by self is possible.”³⁷ If the self can have absolute knowledge of its duration as Bergson posits, it means that the self which gains the inner absolute knowledge of self, understood in terms of duration, is a thing, and not merely change as Bergson initially claimed. If the real self is not an entity, why could have Bergson believed that the self is a reality? What is it that gains the intuitive knowledge of the self? If Bergson's self is changing, such that at the completion of his *An Introduction to Metaphysics* he is no longer the same person he was when he started writing the Book, how could he have claimed ownership of the work if there is no entity called Bergson that subsists over time amidst the flux of his conscious states? How can I claim to be the person that knows that I am changing

if there is no unchanging thing in me that accounts for my identity as the self that gains the absolute knowledge of myself? That my real self is constantly changing in line with the progress of my conscious moments, presupposes an unchanging entity that retains my identity as me, and not another person. I, therefore, disagree with Bergson's position that change has no need of support. How can Bergson perceive change, if not on things that are changing? If the real self is in the making as Bergson claims, there must be an unchanging or readymade substratum that can account for the identity of the self in changing process. Bergson uses the changing flow of music to buttress his argument concerning the existence of change devoid of changing things. He claims that if we eliminate from flow of music spatial references such as images of notes, written on a piece of paper, the key board and the musicians, then “pure change remains, sufficient unto itself, in no way divided, in no way attached to a thing which changes.”³⁸ A musical melody unfortunately cannot have structure, if it has no content. Again, no melody can be differentiated from others if we do not first consider the content. Music can either be high or low; loud or soft. Also, Bergson's analogy of colour spectrum fails; for colour can only be noticed in a thing; it can only appear when it inheres something. The self cannot be the same as change; rather, change can only be an attribute of self which, in itself, seems to have an unchanging core that should accounts for its identity over time.

Henri Bergson as we have noted before categorized the self into two, namely the superficial self and the deep-seated self. Superficial self, for him, is the self of our homogeneous conscious state, which is much adapted to social life. He argues that, the real self as well as other realities can only be seized from within, not by analysis but by intuition, which directly grasps what is unique and inexpressible in its object. It means that metaphysics which is the study of reality can, in Bergson's view, be possible only through intuition. Bergson should, therefore, be commended for such revolutionary vista he opened in the history of philosophy. Bergson's philosophy represents a revival of speculative metaphysics which have seemingly gone into disrepute in 19th century. Bergson sees the problem that arises as a result of the division of metaphysics into schools as false; he suggested that if metaphysics is to avoid “false problems”, it should not extend the abstract concepts of intelligence to pure speculation, but rather use intuition. Bergson therefore shows us that speculative enterprise like metaphysics can only be possible when we go by means of intuition; and that most of the problems we have so far battled with in the history of philosophy would not have risen had philosophers used only the right method – the method of intuition, which in Bergson's view, transcends materialism, rationalism and idealism.

The real self, according to Bergson, is a self. lived through the subjective experience of our conscious moments. It flows in constant flux, and can only be understood in terms of duration. Bergson's theory of duration places emphasis on human personality or self as the locus of the primary reality. Our real self, according to Bergson, is made up of our conscious moments, of which each of its constituent moments permeates one another as unity and multiplicity. Psychological analysis, according to him, projects the real self into homogeneous space, as numerical multiplicity. But there are “below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined

states, a self in which succeeding each other means melting into one another and forming an organic whole.”³⁹ Realities, for Bergson, are free and not determined. Bergson's philosophy should therefore be commended for, calling the attention of man back to his root; showing that life eludes science, technology and logic. But the method of science is, according to Bergson, not useless; but useful for practical purposes to serve man's physical needs. Through our effort of introspection, we seize our real self in its becoming which, in turn, gives us access to other realities. In other words, “the consciousness we have of our own self in its continual flux introduces us to the interior of reality, on the model of which we must represent other realities.”⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

We have so far attempted an evaluation of Henry Bergson's notion of the self, that is the 'I' which each of us seizes from within, by intuition, not intellectual analysis. The real self for him, is the deep seated self, and can only be known in terms of duration as real time devoid of space. Through our study, we discovered that Bergson's notion of self could not provide good and logically sound account of self, because: first, the flux of the self ought not to be seen as mobility just as Bergson wrongly implied. Second, his view about the nature of self implicitly denies the fact of the identity of self over time. However, Bergson should be commended for his gallant attempt to revive speculative metaphysics, and for calling our attention to the fact that life cannot be consistently subjected to logic, for life transcends logic.

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