

Chapter 2 of *Time and Free Will*: "The Idea of Duration"

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[protevi@lsu.edu](mailto:protevi@lsu.edu) / [www.protevi.com/john/Bergson/TFW2.pdf](http://www.protevi.com/john/Bergson/TFW2.pdf) [revised 29 Jan 08]

I Number and discrete multiplicity [56 / 75]

- A) Number: simple intuition of multiplicity of identical units
  - 1) distinguished by position in ideal space
  - 2) illusion of counting in duration is dispelled: their images are juxtaposed
- B) Manipulation of symbols is not same as reckoning with numbers
  - 1) use of numbers entails recourse to extended images
  - 2) we count moments of duration only via spatial points = lasting traces
- C) All unity is the unity of a simple act of the mind
  - 1) Provisional vs ultimate units is a relative distinction: depends on task at hand
  - 2) Discontinuity of number depends on indivisibility of the unifying act of mind, which is represented as a mathematical point separated by space from others
  - 3) These points have a tendency to form lines when we are distracted, thus forming the continuum
  - 4) [JP: example of objectification of finished product of a mental process]
- D) Subjective and objective elements of number (analyzed by D in *Bergsonism*)
  - 1) Complex feelings have many simple elements; as they become clear by our focusing on them (direct, immediate, pre-reflective awareness), the psychic state is changed; thus they are virtual, and change when actualized; these *indivisible mental processes* are the subjective element of number
  - 2) Mental image of a body already contains everything that can be realized; these *spatialized products* are *divisible*

II Two types of multiplicity: discrete vs. qualitative or confused multiplicity [63 / 85]

- A) Types of multiplicity distinguished by process of counting
  - 1) Material objects are counted immediately in space: discrete multiplicity
  - 2) Psychological processes (confused / qualitative multiplicity) can only be counted via symbolic representation: we count in space, e.g., the space of the objective causes of sensation
    - (a) We can attend to the qualitative differences among a series
    - (b) Or we can count their traces as separated in a homogeneous medium (space) by stripping them of their qualitative differences
- B) This distinction is confirmed by the analysis of the impenetrability of matter
  - 1) Impenetrability of matter is a mere logical necessity: it relates to the connection of number and space
  - 2) Again, we only count psychological states by means of symbolic representation and juxtaposition in space
- C) Spatialized time is to psychic states as intensity (quantitized quality) is to representative sensation
  - 1) We can test this by having consciousness isolate itself from the external world and become itself again by a "vigorous effort of abstraction"
  - 2) We here distinguish between
    - (a) intuition as pre-reflective awareness

- (b) reflective / symbolic / linguistic consciousness
- III Kant, space, and time [68 / 91]
  - A) Initial alternative
    - 1) Is space an aspect of physical qualities (a quality of quality), an abstraction?
    - 2) Or is space self-sufficient, its own type of reality, independent of contents?
  - B) Unacknowledged agreement of psychologists with Kant's assumptions
  - C) Kantian *a priori* form of sensibility
    - 1) = conception of empty homogenous medium
    - 2) = principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation
    - 3) = reality with no quality
- IV Two relations to space and to time [70 / 94]
  - A) Two relations to space: perception of extension and conception of space
    - 1) Animals perceive space with heterogeneous qualities
    - 2) Human conception of an empty homogenous medium is a reaction against our heterogeneous, qualitative, deep experience
      - (a) Not faculty of abstraction; abstraction implies homogenous medium
      - (b) Rather, we have two different realities
        - (i) Qualitative / sensible / heterogeneous
        - (ii) Homogenous / spatial
  - B) We ordinarily conceive time like space as a homogeneous medium
    - 1) But this is just the "trespassing" of idea of space on our field of pure cness
    - 2) Time as homogenous medium is "ghost of space haunting reflective cness"
  - C) Two conceptions of duration (spatialized time vs. pure duration)
    - 1) We accede to pure duration
      - (a) when our ego lets itself live, when it doesn't separate present from anterior
      - (b) when it forms past and present into an organic whole, as in a melody, so that if we stop the rhythm, we experience a qualitative change
      - (c) summary description of pure duration
        - (i) succession w/o distinction
        - (ii) mutual penetration / interconnection and *organization* of elements
        - (iii) each element
          - (i) represents the whole
          - (ii) can only be distinguished by abstract thought
    - 2) But we let the idea of space slip in unnoticed:
      - (a) We project time into space
      - (b) We express duration in terms of extensity
      - (c) Succession
        - (i) becomes a chain of contiguous but not interpenetrating parts
        - (ii) = *order* as simultaneous experience of before and after
- v Movement [76 / 102]
  - A) Thought experiments:
    - 1) A self-conscious moving point
      - (a) Would only form the idea of a traversed line if it had the idea of space
      - (b) Otherwise, its immanent experience would be qualitative duration
    - 2) Oscillations of a pendulum – yields same results
  - B) Scientific measurement of time = counting of simultaneities

- 1) It's hard to think of pure duration bcs of apparent duration of external objects: motion perception and scientific measurement imply objective time really is a homogenous medium
  - 2) But closer examination shows we are only counting simultaneities (the position of a measuring point)
    - (a) Spatial positions don't endure or succeed another; only mutual externality
    - (b) Only synthesizing ego produces succession of positions via juxtaposition in an ideal space
- VI Genesis of mistaken idea of inner homogeneous time via exchange [81 / 109]
- A) Successive phases of inner life correspond to a spatial position of a marker
    - 1) Yields habit of distinguishing really interpenetrating moments of inner life
    - 2) And the oscillations of the marker profit too
      - (a) They are preserved and disposed into a series in our memory
      - (b) We create for them a "4<sup>th</sup> dimension of space," i.e., homogenous time
  - B) Thus we get a symbolical representation of pure duration derived from space
    - 1) Duration thus takes illusory form of homogenous medium
    - 2) Simultaneity is the link; it is the intersection of time and space
  - C) Analysis of motion needs to distinguish process from product
    - 1) Analysis:
      - (a) Series of positions in space [traversed space as a product]
      - (b) Versus mental synthesis that allows us to experience motion as process
    - 2) Exchange: intensive sensation of mobility and extensive representation of traversed space
      - (a) We attribute to motion (qua synthesis) the divisibility of traversed space
      - (b) We project the solidified act (mental synthesis of motion) into space
  - D) Zeno's paradoxes are due to this confusion btw motion and space traversed
    - 1) Motion is an indivisible act
    - 2) While the space traversed is arbitrarily divisible
- VII Time, motion, velocity in astronomy and mechanics: science can only deal with motion by eliminating the qualitative mental synthesis [86 / 115]
- A) Time in mechanics is only measured by counted simultaneities / positions
  - B) Velocity (space traveled / time) yields same results
    - 1) Continuous velocity: equality of traversed space at two noted simultaneities
    - 2) Variable velocity: calculus of the limit: velocity at any instant
  - C) Algebra only deals with something already done: limit = extremity of the interval
  - D) Conclusion of the analysis:
    - 1) Duration / motion
      - (a) mental syntheses:
      - (b) heterogeneous / continuous
      - (c) qualitative multiplicity
    - 2) Space
      - (a) homogenous;
      - (b) objects in space form discrete multiplicity;
      - (c) every discrete multiplicity is formed via unfolding in space
- VIII Language and symbolical representation [90 / 121]
- A) We seem to be trapped:

- 1) It is very hard to express the rich heterogeneous qualitative multiplicity
- 2) Because our language is oriented to “common sense”
- B) But it is only through duration that we form idea of space
  - 1) When we juxtapose things, we assume a homogeneous medium
  - 2) But this is only possible by adding things together, which implies retention
  - 3) Thus we perform a synthesis that is felt qualitatively (3 feels different from 2)
  - 4) Thus “through quality of quantity we form idea of quantity w/o quality”
- C) We thus see two aspects
  - 1) Identity of things compared (space) and difference of things felt (in duration)
  - 2) This is what happens with motion
    - (a) Series of identical terms (“same” moving body)
    - (b) Synthesis by cness (different positions retained and juxtaposed, forming qualitatively different wholes)
  - 3) But the same phenomenon happens with any external series
    - (a) Correlation of inner moments with objective causes
    - (b) Our ego contacts external world at the surface
      - (i) It retains “something of the mutual externality ... of objective causes”
      - (ii) Thus superficial psychic life is imaged as a homogeneous medium
- IX Two selves: superficial and deep [93 / 125]
  - A) The mutual externality of material objects in homogenous space “reverberates and spreads into the depths of cness” thus depriving us of true view of inner life
  - B) Dreams as clue to inner life / instinct
    - 1) Relaxing of organic functions alters communicating surface
    - 2) We no longer measure duration but feel it
    - 3) We are in contact with instinct
      - (a) Capable of errors
      - (b) But also of great skill
  - C) Example of the striking clock
    - 1) Perception of strokes as quality and duration as melting interpenetration; but we are led to substitute symbol for reality (i.e., interpret time via space)
    - 2) This leads us to distinguish
      - (a) 2 forms of multiplicity
      - (b) 2 forms of duration
      - (c) 2 aspects of conscious life
- x Recovery of deep self via analysis of genesis of superficial self from process of solidification of impressions and expression in language [96 / 129]
  - A) Example of walking in city
    - 1) Objects themselves seem to have grown old: they borrow from us
    - 2) Social life / language explain our preference or even desire for the superficial
      - (a) Practical importance of social life
      - (b) Instinct – solidification of impressions – expression in language
  - B) Sensations show the objectification of psychic processes
    - 1) By giving same name to a sensation over time we overlook the way
    - 2) Alteration through repetition of sensations is caused by
      - (a) Perceiving them via causes of sensation
      - (b) And expression in language (abstract / common)

- (i) Makes us falsely believe not only in unchanging sensations
  - (ii) But can also overwhelm the concrete singularity of sensations
- C) Feelings are a striking example of this phenomenon
  - 1) We kill / separate them via analysis and linguistic expression
  - 2) But some forms of writing (e.g., great novels) can cause us to reflect on our alienation and perhaps undertake the effort to get in touch with our inner life
- D) Surface associationism vs deep interpenetration
  - 1) Associationism deals with atomized, separated mental states: “substituting for the interpenetration of the real terms the juxtaposition of their symbols”
  - 2) Our zeal in adopting associationism shows the instincts of the intellect
    - (a) Justifying our deepest beliefs usually fails to match their true genesis
    - (b) We in fact adopt them bcs they resonate with our other beliefs
  - 3) Deep living interpenetration vs floating dead juxtaposition of ideas
    - (a) As we move away from deeper strata, our conscious states spread out and become more impersonal
    - (b) Thus linguistic expression [occurring at surface] expresses only spatialized / juxtaposed thoughts [dealt with by associationism]
    - (c) But if we could penetrate depths into living and organized intelligence
      - (i) We would see interpenetration of ideas
      - (ii) This is parodied in interpenetration of dream images
- XI Conclusion and forecast [102 / 137]
  - A) Two forms of ideas
    - 1) Deep, organized, living, individual, felt, intuited, contradictory [if expressed]
    - 2) Superficial, homogeneous, dead, social, alienated, linguistically expressed
  - B) It seems that the second, superficial, self obscures the first, deep self
    - 1) But in reality, it's the same self which attends either to
      - (a) Products (space, etc.) that then re-enter and obscure the inner life
      - (b) Processes (pure duration) that are our concrete inner life
  - C) Forecast of Ch 3: errors of psychology: using categories of products to deal with processes