

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF HENRI BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY OF TIME AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Rosemary Olanma Alozie* & Stephen Oshiomah Aigbonoga (Ph.D)**

Abstract

Time and Consciousness are paramount aspect of our existence which shapes our perception of reality and defines our sense of self. This project work critically examines the concept of Time and Consciousness, particularly through the lens of philosopher Henri Bergson. The problem statement of this study revolves around the significant risks and challenges that can endanger our existence and interactions with the world due to the absence of a comprehensive understanding of Time and Consciousness. The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to ongoing discussions on Time and Consciousness, advancing scholarship and efforts to promote personal growth and positive societal change. This project adopts the Analytical Method of research. Through the application of this method, the work finds that while Bergson's ideas offer valuable insights into the dynamic nature of Time and Consciousness, the implications of his philosophy contribute to the notion of Freewill for the human agency in the society. In conclusion, this work advocates for a continued exploration and application of Bergson's ideas as a means to foster personal growth, creativity, and a more profound engagement with the complexities of human existence.

Introduction

The intertwined concepts of "Time and Consciousness" are foundational elements of human existence that play a pivotal role in shaping the understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live. Time, as a measure of change and progression, provides a framework for organising our experiences and perceptions as it dictates the sequence of events, allowing us to make sense of the past, present, and future. Consciousness, on the other hand, is the faculty by which we are aware of ourselves and our surroundings, enabling us to perceive, think, and make sense of the world. Time and Consciousness as essential elements, intersect to form the foundation of human experience and cognition. In this sense, it portrays that our awareness of the present moment, recollection of past events, and anticipation of future outcomes are all elements of consciousness that are influenced by our perception of time. In turn, our conceptualisation of time is shaped by our conscious experience and inner reflections.

However, the relationship between time and consciousness is a subject of great complexity and multidimensionality that has sparked significant discussion and debate among scholars in both the realms of philosophy and science. While philosophy delves into the metaphysical, religious and existential implications of this relationship, science aims to understand the mechanisms behind the relationship between time and consciousness. Despite the substantial amount of investigation and inquiry dedicated to this topic, contrasting views and perspectives persist among experts which makes it a mystery that continues to be actively researched throughout history till the prevalent contemporary era.

Consequently, this study hinges on the significant risks and challenges that can endanger our existence and interactions with the world due to the absence of a comprehensive understanding of Time and Consciousness. This lack of comprehension can lead to a variety of negative consequences that can impact not only the present but also the future trajectory of humanity and the planet as a whole. Without a deep understanding of Time and Consciousness, individuals and societies may struggle to perceive and interpret reality accurately. This can lead to a distorted view of the world, where events, actions, and consequences are misunderstood or misrepresented. However, Misinterpretations of reality can result in misguided decision-making processes, leading to detrimental outcomes for individuals, societies, and even the planet. When individuals lack a profound understanding of Time and Consciousness, they may

struggle to find meaning and purpose in their lives. This can result in a sense of disconnection, apathy, and existential crisis, leading to a lack of motivation, fulfillment, and overall well-being. Societies that are affected by this erosion of meaning and purpose may experience a decline in collective values, cohesion, and resilience, posing serious risks to social stability and progress. On a global scale, the consequences of not understanding time and consciousness are far-reaching. The exploitation of natural resources, the perpetuation of social injustices, and the proliferation of conflict are all rooted in a fragmented understanding of the world and our place within it. It is crucial for individuals, communities, and global institutions to deepen their understanding of these fundamental aspects of life in order to navigate challenges, promote well-being, and create a more sustainable and harmonious future for all.

It is for this reason we found Bergson's work on the nature of time and consciousness useful, for it served as a bridge between the realms of philosophy and science, offering unique insights into these complex and interconnected concepts. His ideas challenged traditional views and opened up new avenues of exploration that continue to influence contemporary thought on the subject. Bergson's contributions have helped to deepen our understanding of the nature of, and relationship between, time and consciousness, shedding light on profound mysteries that continue to captivate both philosophers and scientists today.

Worms, Frédéric demonstrates a deep understanding of the philosophical concepts posited by Bergson in his article entitled *Consciousness or Life? Bergson between Phenomenology and Metaphysics*. Worms aligns with Bergson in underscoring the necessity of elucidating the role of consciousness within the human experience. Both Worms and Bergson engaged in the exploration of life's significance as encompassed by consciousness, and the pivotal function it assumes in shaping our existence, with the shared objective of discerning a harmonious connection between the two domains (Worms 245).

Barnard, William, in his book entitled, *Living Consciousness: The Metaphysical Vision of Henri Bergson* agrees with Bergson in his philosophical framework, highlighting the interconnectedness and continuity between consciousness, time, and duration. However, they both emphasise that time is not external but intrinsic to our subjective experience, rejecting the static notion of time. Their shared perspective underscores the dynamic connection between consciousness and the unfolding of time within our experiences, emphasising that time is integral to our being. This mutual understanding illuminates the complexities of human existence and the profound impact of these concepts on our lived reality (Bernard 29).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, in the scholarly work entitled *Phenomenology of Perception* aligns with Bergson in recognising the essential role of the continuity of time as a core component of human experience. Merleau-Ponty further concurs with Bergson's assertion regarding the importance of this temporal continuity in shaping our understanding of the world. Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty takes a step further in his elucidation of this continuum to deepen our comprehension of the intricate nature of temporality, as expounded in his work (Merleau-Ponty 444).

In *The Times are Many*, Carlo Rovelli's perspectives align with those of Henri Bergson concerning the nature of time as a subjective experience, diverging from the objective temporal framework commonly defined in elementary physics. Central to this alignment is their mutual belief in the significance of the perceptible flow of time as a fundamental and substantial element of human existence. Both Rovelli and Bergson challenge the prevalent notion that time's essence is illusory, contending that it holds genuine importance and impact in shaping our understanding of the world (Rovelli 5).

Life, Work and Influences of Henri Bergson

Henri-Louis Bergson was born in Paris on October 18, 1859, to a mixed nationality Jewish family. His mother, Katherine Levison, was from England, and his father, Michael Bergson, was from Poland and

was a composer, musician, and teacher. Henri-Louis was the second of seven children and attended the Lycée Condorcet from 1868 to 1878, achieving academic success in rhetoric and mathematics. He enrolled in the École Normale Supérieure in 1878, where he was influenced by neo-Kantian teachers like Émile Boutroux and Jules Lachelier, leading him to focus on the arts and humanities rather than science. He dedicated his first book to these influential mentors (Massey n.pag.).

Bergson passed the agrégation in philosophy in 1881 and taught at lycées in Angers and Clermont-Ferrand before returning to Paris in 1888. He worked at Collège Rollin, Lycée Louis-le-Grand, and Lycée Henri. In 1889, he earned a doctorate from the University of Paris with a thesis on *immédiates de la conscience* (later published in English as *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*). On January 7, 1891, Bergson married Louise Neuberger, Marcel Proust serving as best man. They had a daughter named Jeanne who became an artist. Bergson published *Matter and Memory* in 1896, joined the École Normale in 1898, and later the Collège de France in 1900. His reputation grew with *Creative Evolution* in 1907 and lecture tours in England in 1911 and the United States in 1913 (Massey n.pag.).

Bergson died on January 3, 1941, from a respiratory illness he contracted while waiting in the cold to register as a Jew under Vichy government laws. Despite being exempt, he stood in line. In his 1937 will, he confirmed his Jewish identity and revealed he had considered converting to Catholicism but decided to stay true to his Jewish roots due to rising anti-Semitism. He directed for his papers to be destroyed in his will, leaving his published works as his main legacy (Massey n.pag.).

Henri Bergson's Philosophy of Time

Bergson, through a critical analysis of prevalent theories like the Scientific, Radical Mechanistic, and Radical Finalism interpretations of time, pointed out deficiencies in the prevailing theories of time to establish a foundation for his own conception of time as a dynamic and interwoven element within existence. In Bergson's view, the scientific conception of time is a mechanistic and mathematical understanding that oversimplifies time as a linear progression of discrete moments. Bergson contends that while science excels in precision and exactitude, it is restricted to analysing phenomena that can be repeated or replicated, effectively isolating them from the flow of irreversible and irreducible time that characterises lived experience (Bergson 27). This perspective, as presented by Bergson, views reality as fixed and complete.

Bergson rejects Radical Mechanistic and Radical Finalist views of time because he believes they do not align with our true lived experience of time. He argues that these perspectives, which view the world as either purely mechanistic or purposefully predetermined, fail to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of time as we experience it, with its sense of change and continuity. Bergson sees these extreme views as limiting and constraining, denying the richness and complexity of the universe by reducing time to a fixed and predetermined framework. In essence, Bergson rejects these views because they do not account for the fluidity and creativity inherent in our experience of time (Bergson 32).

After critiquing the prevailing notions of time, Bergson introduced his concept of "Real Time." He posited that time is not merely a mental construct but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Bergson believed that real time cannot be fully grasped through rational analysis; rather, it is something actively experienced and integrated into our lives. Real time, according to Bergson, is not a series of discrete moments or quantifiable units, but a living, vibrant force that underpins the constant flux and transformation of reality (Bergson 36).

Bergson's notion of time is characterised by our subjective experiences and not the notion of time as a linear and mathematical entity, in which we could count distinct intervals. Bergson argues that time is not something external to us that we merely observe, but rather something we experience and participate in.

therefore, Real Time is characterised by a sense of duration, a continuous and unbroken flow that encompasses past, present, and future within the indivisible unity of the present moment (Bergson 249). In this sense, real time is not a theoretical concept to be pondered in isolation, but a dynamic and ever-changing reality that we are constantly immersed in. Bergson *moreso*, signifies that time is a tangible and distinct phenomenon, imbued with an inherent efficacy, characterised by a dynamic power of tendency and change (Bergson 249).

Time, for Bergson, is an invention that is deeply intertwined with the ever-changing whole of reality, constantly putting on new forms and communicating novelty to the events within it (Bergson 248). Bergson suggests that time has equal significance and reality for a living being as it does for an hourglass. The imagery of the hourglass, with the top part emptying as the lower part fills, symbolises the passage and cyclical nature of time. Just as turning an hourglass upside down returns the sand to where it was before, the cycle of time repeats itself for both living beings and inanimate objects (Bergson 20). However, Henri Bergson's exploration of time revolutionised philosophical thought by offering a transformative perspective that challenges conventional boundaries and calls for a reevaluation of our understanding of temporality.

More so, in his philosophical exploration of time, Bergson introduced the concept of Duration (*durée*) as a pivotal element in capturing the intrinsic nature of time. By situating duration at the core of his temporal philosophy, Bergson seeks to capture the intrinsic, subjective, and qualitative essence of time, in contrast to traditional, spatially-oriented perceptions. Bergson's concept of duration (*durée*) posits the idea that time is a qualitative, subjective experience of continuous, heterogeneous, and irreversible flow. Duration is the lived, immediate experience of time, characterised by a dynamic, ceaseless succession of states, where the past, present, and future are inextricably intertwined. In this framework, the past is not forgotten or lost, but preserved and integrated into the ongoing course of time, continually expanding and influencing the present moment (Bergson 13).

Bergson also emphasised on the nature of duration, according to him, real duration emphasises a continuous process where new forms emerge from preceding ones. He uses the example of boiling water to illustrate this idea, showing a sequence of inevitable events unfolding over time. Real duration signifies interconnected events that foster creativity and complexity in the flow of time (Bergson 263). Bergson suggests that duration is a personal aspect of human existence, leading to moments of self-revelation. "Pure duration" is marked by heightened self-awareness and unity, enhancing understanding of inner interconnectedness (Bergson 144). Bergson also discusses the dual nature of duration, differentiated as internal and external. Internal duration is a qualitative multiplicity characterised by organic evolution, while external duration is defined by the present moment (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 227). Bergson's insights offer a deep understanding of time, consciousness, and human experience within the evolving stream of duration.

Furthermore, Bergson grounded his philosophical standpoint on the concept of Intuition to establish the credibility of his theories on Time, Duration, and Consciousness. His central critique was directed towards scientific methodologies of understanding, arguing that they fell short in capturing the true essence of phenomena. Intuition according to Bergson, serves as a potent tool for transcending the limitations of intellect in grasping the essence of duration as an ever-flowing, indivisible, and qualitative aspect of time. Through its capacity to establish a sympathetic connection with living beings and expand consciousness, intuition immerses individuals in the ever-evolving realm of reciprocal interpenetration and continuous creation that defines life itself (Bergson 126). Bergson emphasises that the nuanced interplay between intuition and intellect plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of Time and Consciousness. Failure to establish a clear distinction between these two faculties can lead to insurmountable difficulties, giving rise to illusory ideas and elusive problems that hinder true understanding (Bergson 126).

Henri Bergson's Philosophy of Consciousness

Consciousness, as expounded by Bergson, is a complex phenomenon that incorporates elements of both intellect and intuition. According to him, consciousness in man is predominantly associated with intellect, which is characterised by rational thought, analysis, and reasoning. However, Bergson posits that consciousness could have also embodied intuition – a direct, non-conceptual understanding that aligns more closely with the vital impulse of life. Intuition and intellect are depicted as divergent paths of conscious activity: intuition moves in harmony with the flow of life, while intellect moves in a counter-direction, aligning with the material world. Bergson suggests that the ideal state of consciousness would encompass the harmonious coexistence and integration of these two modes of conscious activity (Bergson 192). His argument is that consciousness acts as the driving force behind evolution and distinguishes humans from other conscious beings not merely by degree, but by a fundamental qualitative disparity.

Bergson distinguishes between the absence of consciousness (total lack of consciousness) and the nullification of consciousness (consciousness is present but neutralised by action). In the former scenario, consciousness is entirely lacking, akin to the unconscious descent of a stone devoid of any subjective sensation. Conversely, when instinctual behaviour verges into the realm of unconscious enactment, there exists a peculiar dynamic where consciousness is not absent but rather neutralised by the seamless correspondence between mental representation and physical action (Bergson 101).

Furthermore, Bergson suggests that consciousness remains dormant in situations where life is mechanistic and devoid of choice. For him, consciousness is essentially free, representing freedom itself. He argues that by reabsorbing intellect into intuition, individuals can feel less isolated in humanity, as humanity no longer appears isolated in the nature it dominates (Bergson 189). In essence, Bergson's elucidation of consciousness departs significantly from traditional paradigms, offering a profound insight into the intricate workings of human cognition. His exploration underscores the intricate interplay between intellect and intuition, shaping the way individuals perceive and act upon the world around them. By staunchly refuting the mechanistic conceptualisation of consciousness influenced by external stimuli, Bergson advocates for a more nuanced understanding of conscious activity, marked by its dynamic and adaptive nature.

Bergson's concept of *Élan Vital*, which translates to "vital impulse", refers to the idea of an underlying energy or force that drives the evolutionary process of life. Bergson believed that this vital impulse is responsible for the continuous development and adaptation of living organisms, guiding them towards greater complexity and diversity. The *Élan Vital* is considered to be an immanent, creative force that propels life towards higher forms of organisation and consciousness. This vital impulse is not something that can be fully understood or explained through traditional scientific methods, but rather constantly in motion, bringing about new forms of life and consciousness (Bergson 87).

In Bergson's framework, the connection between consciousness and *Élan vital* lies in the idea that consciousness is a manifestation of the vital force that permeates all living things. He argued that consciousness is an emergent property of the interaction between the physical body and the vital impetus that drives life. This vital impetus underlies not only the processes of life but also the subjective experience of consciousness. Overall, in Bergson's philosophy, consciousness and *Élan vital* are intimately connected, with consciousness emerging as a result of the vital impetus that shapes the evolution of life (Bergson 87).

The relationship between Time and Consciousness in Bergson's Philosophy

In Bergson's philosophy, the relationship between time and consciousness is a central theme. Bergson rejected the notion of time as a linear, measurable succession of moments, and instead argued for a more intuitive understanding of time as a continuous, fluid flow of duration. He believed that the experience of

time was inseparable from consciousness, as it is through consciousness that we perceive and interact with the world.

Bergson saw consciousness as dynamic and constantly evolving, mirroring the continuous flow of time. He argued that our perception of time is not simply a reflection of external events, but is shaped by our own subjective experiences and interpretations (Bergson 16). Therefore, our understanding of time is intimately tied to our consciousness and its ability to engage with the world in a meaningful way. In Bergson's philosophy, the relationship between time and consciousness is not one of strict causality, but rather a mutual influence. Time is a crucial component of consciousness, as it provides the context and framework within which our experiences unfold. At the same time, consciousness shapes our perception of time, influencing how we understand and engage with the world around us (Bergson 192).

The intertwined concept of time and consciousness according to Bergson, is a fundamental aspect of his concept of duration. Consciousness, according to Bergson, is intimately connected to this duration and experiences time as a vital and inseparable aspect of our being. Unlike artificial or mathematical systems, which may apply only to specific endpoints or states, the experience of duration in consciousness is dynamic and ongoing. It is not something that can be easily quantified or reduced to a systematic framework (Bergson 13).

He suggests that our conscious experiences are not simply passive observers of time but active participants in the creation and interpretation of the unfolding reality. Our consciousness engages with the dynamic flow of time, shaping our understanding of the world and ourselves in the process. He believed that the lived experience of duration, as perceived by consciousness, provides a deeper insight into the nature of reality and the interconnectedness of time and existence. Overall, Bergson's philosophy emphasises the dynamic and interconnected nature of time and consciousness, highlighting Time as a dynamic and continuous flow that is intimately connected to our subjective experiences and consciousness, and consciousness being deeply intertwined with this process of inscribing time.

Implications of Bergson's philosophy of Time and Consciousness on the notion of "Free Will"

In the scholarly analyses of Henri Bergson's oeuvre, a discernible evolution is observed in his philosophical trajectory, transitioning from abstract theoretical frameworks towards a more pragmatic, applied philosophical stance. Of particular significance is Bergson's examination of the concept of freedom, specifically in the form of "Free Will," and its tangible implications for human agency. Initially, the notion of free will is intricately linked with the concept of determinism. In the contemporary milieu, the ongoing discourse and analysis of the dichotomy between free will and determinism persist as significant points of consideration. Free will is the innate ability of individuals to make conscious choices without excessive external influence, ensuring autonomous decision-making (Weaver n.pag). Determinism, on the other hand, argues that true free will is impossible as it maintains that choices are predetermined by past events, questioning the authenticity of independent decision-making (Weaver n.pag).

Bergson, from his perspective, offers a nuanced analysis of the contrasting perspectives held by defenders and opponents of free will. According to him, proponents of free will argue that the essence of free choice lies in the recognition that when an individual acts freely, multiple alternative actions are equally conceivable. Conversely, determinists uphold the belief that within a framework of determinate conditions and causal sequences, there exists only one predetermined course of action (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 174).

Bergson's concept of free will is rooted in the idea that true freedom and agency manifest within the context of duration, or real continuity, where individuals can authentically express their selves. He posits

that duration, characterised by a sense of ongoing flow and temporal richness, is essential for the exercise of free will, as it transcends the confines of causal necessity. Bergson argues that wherever causal necessity dominates, there is a lack of true duration, and consequently, a limitation on the capacity for genuine freedom (Shateri and Nave 1586).

He attributes the prevalence of determinism to misconceptions stemming from materialistic, mechanistic worldviews, reliance on spatial time, intellectual biases, and linguistic inaccuracies; Bergson posits that individuals subscribing to determinism tend to adopt a mechanistic interpretation of the self (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 173). He contends that a comprehensive grasp of time as duration serves to disavow deterministic perspectives and unveil the true essence of freedom. Moreover, Bergson posits that his concept of freedom is best understood through intuitive apprehension rather than reliance on intellectual or linguistic frameworks (Anabarsooz and Nozohoor 102). For Bergson, the essence of free will lies in the alignment of one's actions with their authentic self. When an individual acts in accordance with their true self, they experience a sense of liberation and empowerment. This notion of free will is not simply about making choices, but about being in tune with one's deepest desires and motivations (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 172).

In essence, according to Bergson, true freedom is achieved when individuals act in accordance with their knowledge of duration and intuition. This knowledge allows individuals to move away from deterministic actions and towards a more free and conscious way of living. By tapping into our inner selves and away from the superficial public realm, we can access a deeper understanding of time and make decisions that are more in line with our true essence. The essence of the knowledge of duration and intuition lies in the ability to connect with the true nature of time and existence. This knowledge is not obtained through intellect or instrumental means, but rather through a deeper intuitive understanding of the world around us. By embracing this knowledge, individuals can achieve a higher degree of freedom in their actions and live more authentically in accordance with their true selves (Anabarsooz and Nozohoor 105).

Practical Implications of Bergson's Notion of Freewill for Human agency within societal context

Bergson contends that genuine freedom affords individuals the opportunity to reassert authority over their own beings and engage in a deep connection with the unadulterated passage of time. Through the exercise of free will, individuals are empowered to liberate themselves from external limitations and societal pressures, thereby fostering an environment conducive to wholehearted engagement with the present instant and a more authentic experience of existence (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 172).

By embracing true freedom, individuals are able to transcend the confines imposed by external influences and societal norms. This emancipation enables individuals to act in accordance with their innermost desires and instincts, facilitating a more profound and meaningful way of being. Through a state of complete presence and active participation in the unfolding of life, individuals can develop a heightened awareness and appreciation for the intricacies and beauty of the world around them (Bergson, *Time and Freewill* 172). In the practical realm of societal dynamics, the predominant result of this approach is the potential for open morality and fluid religious beliefs to supersede entrenched moral codes and static religious doctrines. Such a shift embodies the essence of personal liberation that free-minded individuals aspire to achieve, with the acknowledgment that freedom must first be recognised as a fundamental principle before it can be effectively implemented. (Anabarsooz and Nozohoor 107).

The encroachment of societal norms aiming for efficiency and conformity poses a profound threat to the essential fabric of human existence by stifling individual freedom. This restriction of personal autonomy carries the perilous potential of reducing human life to a rigid and insipid state. Bergson, in light of this, emphasises the critical importance of maintaining an acute awareness of the present moment and adapting to the ever-evolving circumstances of existence. A failure to cultivate mental flexibility and adaptability

can lead to cognitive deficits, societal disarray, and ultimately, upheaval within the societal framework (Gunn 51).

Society necessitates more than mere survival; it demands active engagement in authentic living. This active participation entails an intuitive comprehension of one's surroundings, a profound immersion in the continuous flow of lived experience, a steadfast avoidance of conformity and insincerity, and a resolute rejection of the allure of automated and mechanised living. Bergson's notion of freedom holds practical relevance for human agency in society by advocating for the preservation and cultivation of individual autonomy, the embracing of spontaneity and creativity, and a wholehearted commitment to living life in its purest form (Gunn 51). By adhering to Bergson's philosophy of freedom, individuals can liberate themselves from the shackles of societal pressures and expectations, reclaiming agency over their own lives and fostering a deeper connection with the essence of their being.

Critiques of Bergson's Concept of Time and Consciousness

Henri Bergson's philosophy of Time and Consciousness has made a profound impact on contemporary philosophical thought and discourse, influencing numerous philosophical perspectives and contributing to changing systems of thought. Additionally, his ideas have practical implications for individuals in their daily lives. Despite his significant influence, Bergson's philosophy has faced criticisms from various viewpoints, with scholars providing diverse critiques of his theories.

Bertrand Russell criticised Bergson's notion of Space and Time in connection to the workings of the intellect. According to Russell, it is evident that Bergson's critique of the intellect is rooted in a personal idiosyncrasy rather than a universal necessity of thought. His idea that successions are visualised as spread out on a line appears to be a product of his individual perspective rather than a fundamental truth. Russell went further in his critique to state that, One detrimental consequence of an anti-intellectual philosophy, such as that espoused by Bergson, is its tendency to thrive on the misunderstandings and confusions inherent in intellectual processes. Consequently, it leads to a preference for flawed thinking over sound reasoning, deeming any temporary difficulty as insurmountable and viewing each foolish mistake as a demonstration of the bankruptcy of intellect in favor of intuition (Russell 16). Through this criticism, Russell was able to draw our attention to the fallibility of Bergson's anti-intellectual stance and the inadequacies in his understanding of temporal reality. Russell's thorough examination reveals the limitations of Bergson's philosophical framework, showcasing the need for a more comprehensive and coherent approach to these fundamental concepts.

Bachelard's critique of Bergson's concept of duration is very apt as it involves a fundamental disagreement with the idea that duration is continuous and free from contradiction. His criticism hinged on the dialectic of duration which challenges Bergson's notion by reducing it to the discontinuous time found in physics. This critique goes beyond a simple correction of Bergsonism; it represents a complete negation of its principles (Bachelard 3). Bachelard's critique of Bergson's concept of duration centers around the idea that true duration necessitates an immersion in rhythms, characterised by systems of discrete instants. He contends that the essence of duration lies in its ability to continuously renew itself, drawing attention to the pivotal role of rhythm as the fundamental concept of time (Bernard 38). Bachelard's critical analysis of Henri Bergson's concepts of duration, intuition, and creative evolution illuminates a profound philosophical discourse surrounding the nature of time, knowledge acquisition, and human agency. Through his meticulous examination and divergent perspectives, Bachelard challenges foundational aspects of Bergson's philosophy, advocating for a more structured and rational approach to understanding the complexities of existence.

In his critique of Bergson's notion of intuition, Burns raises important questions regarding the coherence and consistency of Bergson's philosophy. Burns contends that while Bergson posits the concept of a

continuous stream of life or conscious experience, he fails to adequately address the role of material entities within this framework. By emphasising the crucial point that Bergson does not elucidate how material things, such as matter, are integrated into the evolutionary process, Burns exposes a significant gap in Bergson's argument (Burns 368). Bergson's assertion that all aspects of reality are merely phases within the stream of creative evolution was equally challenged by Burn. By highlighting the lack of explanation provided for the interaction between the initial impulse and brute matter, Burns questions the coherence of Bergson's theory. His argument is that the introduction of matter as an external force acting upon life without undergoing its own development undermines the central tenets of Bergson's philosophy (Burns 368).

We agree with Burns that the philosopher's task is to provide a consistent view of the universe that is applicable in everyday life. Bergson observably falls short in this regard. His philosophical framework lacks the coherence and practicality required to offer a comprehensive understanding of reality. By failing to present a clear and consistent view of the universe that can be readily applied in normal circumstances, it implies that Bergson's philosophical pursuits are incomplete and ultimately unsatisfactory (Burns 369).

Evaluation

Henri Bergson's philosophy of Time and Consciousness stands as a seminal and provocative philosophical viewpoint that challenges orthodox scientific interpretations of reality and human cognition. One of the strengths of Bergson's philosophy lies in his exploration of qualities within individuals that surpass mundane experiences. While practical concerns often require individuals to engage with objects in the physical world and understand their relationships, Bergson contends that man's nature extends beyond mere physicality. By acknowledging the value inherent in human nature and subjective experiences, Bergson invites individuals to transcend the transient aspects of their surroundings. This recognition of inherent worth enables individuals to embrace the potential for personal growth and development, even amidst the uncertainties of the external world. Bergson's philosophy empowers individuals to seek values beyond the purely scientific, challenging materialistic and naturalistic perspectives.

Moreover, Bergson's critique of the scientific and mechanistic perspective on reality, favoring subjective experience, may indicate an appreciation for the intrinsic value of human nature. However, it is evident that this emphasis on subjectivity fails to offer a consistent and practical view of the universe that can be readily applied in everyday life. It could also be argued that, Bergson's reliance on intuition may fall short in facilitating logical reasoning, and may not lead to the discovery of objective truth, which could potentially impede intellectual development. Furthermore, notably in Bergson's philosophy is the lack of precision and coherence that arises from his extensive exploration of diverse fields and concepts. While interdisciplinary inquiry can enrich philosophical discourse, Bergson's approach may lead to a lack of clarity and consistency in his arguments and conclusions, posing challenges for readers seeking to engage with his ideas in a systematic manner.

Conclusion

The exploration of Henri Bergson's philosophy offers profound insights into the intricacies of human nature and the experiences of time and consciousness. We however acknowledge and support the engagement with Bergson's philosophy to uncover the true value of human nature in relation to time, consciousness, and reality. By delving into Bergson's concepts, individuals have the opportunity to explore and embrace creativity, novelty, and freedom, leading to a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Of utmost importance, the criticisms pointed out in this work do not diminish the enduring significance of Bergson's theories in contemporary times. The enduring relevance and significance of Bergson's

philosophy lie not only in its theoretical contributions but also in its ability to provoke thought and stimulate intellectual curiosity. His groundbreaking record of philosophical inquiry serves as a testament to the enduring power of ideas and their capacity to shape our understanding of the world. In a world marked by rapid change and uncertainty, Bergson's timeless wisdom offers a guiding light for those seeking to navigate the complexities of contemporary existence with depth and insight.

Henri Bergson's philosophical ideas have left a lasting impact on the intellectual landscape, cementing his reputation as a pioneering thinker of the 20th century. His innovative concepts have not only redefined traditional philosophical paradigms but have also influenced a generation of contemporary philosophers, including luminaries such as William James, Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Valdimir Jankelevitch.

***ROSEMARY OLANMA ALOZIE**
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ALEX EKWUEME FEDERAL UNIVERSITY,
NDUFU-ALIKE
roxygold66@gmail.com
07065530230

&

****STEPHEN OSHIOMAH AIGBONOGA (Ph.D)**
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
ALEX EKWUEME FEDERAL UNIVERSITY,
NDUFU-ALIKE
excelstev01@yahoo.com
07039873569

Work Cited

- Anbarsooz, Mohammed and Nozohoor Yoosef. "Bergson's Freedom: A Dualistic Interpretation". *The Journal of Ethical Reflections* 1(2), 2020: 93-108. Print.
- Barnard, G. Williams. *Living Consciousness: The Metaphysical Vision of Henri Bergson*. U.S.A: State U. of New York P., 2011. Print.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Dialectic of Duration*. Trans. Jones, M. Mary. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., 2000. Print.
- Bergson, Henry. *Time and Freewill: An Essay on Immediate Data of Consciousness*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2001. Print.
-Creative Evolution. Trans. Mitchell Arthur. New York: Camelot Press, 1991. Print.
- Burns, c. Delisle." Bergson: A Criticism of His Philosophy". *The North America Review* 197(688), 1913: 364-370. Print.
- Gunn, J. Alexander. *Bergson and His Philosophy*. Liverpool: N.p, 2002. Print.

Massey, Heath. *Bergson, Henri*. Bloombusry Publishing Plc., N.d. N.p. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Landes, A. Donald. U.S.A.: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Rovelli, Carlo. "The Times are Many". *Einstein vs Bergson: An Enduring Quarrel on Time*. Ed. Campo, Alessandra and Gozzano Simeone. Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. 5-11. Print.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Philosophy of Bergson*. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1914. Print.

Shateri, Goodarz and Nave, S. Asghar. "An Analysis of the Problem of Freewill in Henri Bergson's Philosophy". *Medwell Journals* 12(9), 2017: 1585-1590. Print.

Worms, Frédéric. "Consciousness or Life? Bergson between Phenomenology and Metaphysics". *Bergson and Phenomenology*. Ed. Kelly R. Michael. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 245-257. Print.

Weaver, Tobias. *Freewill vs Determinism*. Orionphilosophy.com. 30 November 2022. Web. 30 Aug. 2024.