Bergsoniana

7 | 2026
Le bergsonisme en dialogue

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Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/bergsoniana/4964
ISSN: 2800-874X

Publisher
Société des amis de Bergson

Electronic reference
Vasily Sesemann, "Henri Bergson", *Bergsoniana* [Online], 7 | 2026, Online since 01 October 2026, connection on 01 October 2026. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/bergsoniana/4964

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1 The general direction of Bergsonian philosophy can be characterised by two features: 1) it is intuitive and 2) in a certain sense, anti-rational. This means that the foundations and methods of philosophical and scientific cognition are different and even contrary: the source of philosophical cognition is intuition, whereas scientific cognition is based on rational-discursive interpretation of external sensory experience. This difference between the two methods of cognition corresponds to the difference in their content (known objects). Philosophical intuition reveals the essence of things, the real existence, whereas an object of scientific cognition is a derivative and relative aspect of the surrounding world, which is conditioned by a person's biological interests, that is, they are of practical importance in a person's activities in life. Bergson's conception of scientific cognition is, in its essence, close to contemporary pragmatism; however, he does not draw positivist conclusions from it but rather creates intuitive metaphysics independent of any pragmatism and positivism. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that Bergson sees nothing in common between intuition and scientific cognition. Their biological basis is one and the same: the *elan vital*, which manifests itself in the organic world as animal instinct. It is an unconscious intuition that serves the biological interests of organisms (self-preservation, reproduction, and so on). This instinctive intuition defines an organism's adaptation to the environment, as well as its capability to orient itself in the environment and respond appropriately to stimuli. As examples of known species (for instance, bees, ants, etc.) show, this instinctive intuition reaches a high degree of perfection, differentiation, and precision. However, this perfection is limited by the environment because intuition remains unconscious and instinctive. The extension of the cognition sphere of the external world is achievable only on the level of consciousness, when analogous discursive thinking develops. Although it grows out of vital instincts, it nevertheless extends far beyond their limits, and human beings assume most of their biological and practical functions. But this does not mean that intuition, with the emergence of consciousness and thought, disappears or loses its importance. On the contrary, it frees itself from serving purely biological interests and acquires independent meaning. This autonomous

intuition now performs the highest function: it can contemplate and perceive real existence, which is not distorted by biological interpretation, and thus becomes the organ of philosophical cognition.[1]

2 What is the essential difference between philosophical cognition (intuition) and ordinary cognition, which serves practical purposes? Firstly, the former differs in terms of *directionality*. Practical cognition is directed towards the external world, and it encompasses the cogniser himself, because, through his body, he belongs to this external world and is attached to its structure. A person's "I" relationship with the external world is primarily defined by the reactions to the influence of the external environment which are related to biological interests. Spatiality and pure quantity are the most significant aspects of practical cognition which is, essentially, the cognition of sensory (material) phenomena: these are the key conditions indispensable for a human being to orient oneself in the surrounding world, foresee the development of events, and use natural laws for practical purposes. Spatiality is the basis of things' discreteness and closeness: it allows one to differentiate one thing from another and to analyse each of them separately. Since space also implies continuity, this feature, alongside discreteness, is a condition for the possibility of quantifiable reality allowing both to be regarded as dimensions with defined quantifiable relationships. Since all material phenomena emerge in time, time is also related to spatial discreteness. It is understood as a chain of events following one another, which allows time to also be interpreted as quantitatively measurable. The division of time into the past, present, and future stems from this and is determined by practical interests, with the present being described as the actual moment, that is, the moment of action. A spatially quantitative interpretation is later applied to mental phenomena, senses, and feelings which differ in their degree of intensity, and are characterised by a certain bodily localization.

3 However, if we refer to the immediate data of consciousness, the view changes fundamentally. These immediate data, which have not yet been distorted by interpretations arising out of our practical relationship with the external world, are revealed to us by intuition, which is directed to our inner world, the world of our authentic experiences. The better we succeed in freeing ourselves from the ordinary spatial-quantitative schemes, the more convinced we become that our experiences (senses, feelings, perceptions, goals, thoughts, acts of will) constitute a unified stream flowing as a pure duration (non-spatial temporality) characterised only by qualitative changes and differences, in which all "moments" or "parts" are internally connected and grow out of one another organically. This uninterrupted connection of experiences is manifest in the fact that they do not merely follow one another, but that each leaves its trace in the consciousness and, in one way or another, affects the next by adding a special qualitative aspect, just as the second experience affects the third one and so on. Schematically, we arrive at the following view: in real mental life, a group of experiences a, b, c, d acquires the shape of a, ba, cba, dabc, and so on. Since all prior experiences continue to exist, in a certain way, within subsequent experiences, a common mental state is formed that unifies all experiences into a single whole, gradually acquiring significance and revealing itself in the transformation of one experience into another.

4 In Bergson's opinion, the stream of experiences lived from this perspective (the flow of authentic experiences) is comparable not to pictures replacing one another, but to a

melody in which each tone defines the qualitative features of the subsequent tone, while each succeeding tone flows into the whole, so that the melody, as a totality of tones realised in time, becomes a living organic unity. Through such an analysis of sensations (both external and organic), Bergson argues that the quantitative side of sensations is illusory; it arises because we interpret their qualitative differences following the analogy with spatial phenomena of the external world. Qualitative differences of pure duration reveal, according to Bergson, the real essence of existence – the creative vitality, which manifests itself as creative evolution, a movement forward and upwards, in a perfectly pure way. In the animal world, where *élan vital* functions unconsciously as an instinct, evolution is, first and foremost, species-specific in character. It acquires the form of individual creation only in human consciousness, in the spheres of morality, artistic creation and theoretical (philosophical) cognition. Consciousness means that the influences of the surrounding world on an organism do not merely pass through it by setting in motion a chain of cause-and-effect relationships, but rather linger in it and emerge as images. This manifests as an increased (qualitatively highest) activity of *élan vital* functioning in a conscious organism, which marks the beginning of individual creativity. Where *élan vital* becomes weaker, evolution halts, and all entities depend on self-protection or seek it; therefore, evolution relates to concrete regularities and is included in the uninterrupted circulation of the same recurring processes, as is especially clearly seen in the case of inanimate matter. But, alongside certain changes, one can observe the same patterns both in organic life and human life. Vitality must overcome this ossification when it reaches its highest tension. In the sphere of morality, these efforts manifest themselves as religious and moral intuitions and the freedom of conscious will. (As regards artistic creation, see further on.)

5 In connection with consciousness, a new kind of memory emerges; individual memory, which Bergson juxtaposes with pragmatic memory. It is an ability to recognise what was perceived earlier and to retrieve the same actions and reactions. Pragmatic memory serves biological interests and is one of the conditions for the purposive behaviour of living organisms. In higher animals and in humans, it is characterised by greater or lesser plasticity, through which it, alongside increasing experience, leads to the development of specific and purposeful skills and habits. The more developed these become, the more automatic they become, that is, they are implemented without the participation of consciousness. This pragmatic memory as a source of skills largely determines the nature and content of our sensory perceptions. The initial basis of cognition consists of sensations which, according to Bergson, are individual, that is, it is through them that the real features of an object are perceived directly. The role of the brain centres is purely selective; they perform the function of an analyser, which allows only those features or characteristics of an object for which it is prepared to pass into consciousness, but does not itself add anything to them. However, it does add to the initial sensations the results or traces of earlier experience and practice. These overlayers created by memory cover the initial sensations to such a degree that one can restore the initial freshness and uniqueness of intuitive perception only through special efforts. The ability to restore this initial sensory intuition is the essence of artistic perception and creation.

6 Since memory is not directly related to action, it does not serve practical interests directly; it is characterised by contemplation, and it restores the temporally localised, particular wholeness and individual character. It is likely that animals also have

pragmatic memory, whereas contemplative memory, as the highest form of memory, is manifest only in higher animals, and then only in a rudimentary form, revealing itself completely only in human beings. Contemplative remembering is far from being a passive state; consciousness is particularly active in it, and this activity can become so intense that the boundary between the past and present is deleted. However, consciousness reaches the highest level of relevance only in creative imagination, which creates new images and reveals their characteristic connections and relationships. In real creation, these images are not merely the fruit of subjective fantasy, in which objective meaning and the revelation of the essential aspects of things and phenomena are freely combined. Since these intuitive images, being individual, are characterised by the same and shared significance, something like the world of Platonic ideas is contemplated in them. However, this highest form of intuition is not limited to the sphere of artistic creation alone. One or another form of intuition is also manifest in the spheres of scientific thinking, philosophy, and morality, in connection with religion. Although scientific thinking is guided by practical interests and does not search for objective truth, in seeking to dominate nature, it must nevertheless adapt in some way to objective truth. Therefore, it is understandable that the great discoveries of theoretical natural sciences and mathematics originate from intuition, which reveals the depth of the world of phenomena that surrounds us and certain moments of its inner structure. According to Bergson, the same occurs with philosophical theories that influence the historical development of humanity's thought. And, in this case, their source is the intuitively captured images and relationships which define the general structure of a given philosophical conception and the direction of thought.

7 Ultimately, all moral-religious teachings, which played the role of a decisive factor in the progress of humanity's spiritual culture such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and others, were born out of the intuition which newly illuminated a human being's spiritual vocation and relationship with the Absolute (the divine beginning). All these intellectual and spiritual intuitions are naturally dynamic, and the forces of that dynamism are fruitful, that is, capable of developing the content contained within them widely and powerfully in both theoretical and practical directions. The dynamic nature of these intuitions is conditioned by the fact that they represent the highest manifestation of *élan vital*, and the latter expresses the primary source and engine of all existence. It is precisely the dynamism of creative vitality that explains the fact that existence, in Bergson's opinion, essentially represents a unified cosmic process of creative evolution, developing from the simplest forms of organisms to the highest and most complex ones.

8 In Bergson's view, the essential factor in the evolution of the organic world is not the external environment, not the fight for existence and natural selection, but rather the inner source characteristic of the entire organic world – *élan vital*. The adaptation of organisms to the external environment, the development of instincts in the animal world, the purposefulness of their functioning and impressive precision – all this is the fruit of creative efforts of *élan vital*. An intuitive moment (the intuitive understanding of a given relevant situation) lies within instinctive actions, but this intuition is unconscious; it is related with the physiological constitution of an organism, which acts not as an individual but as a species-related source.

9 The development of the organic world increasingly branches and evolves in different directions. Thus, for instance, even in the insect world, instinctual life becomes especially complicated and reaches the highest level of conscious organisation (bees, ants), but there are no indications of approaching the semi-consciousness observed among higher animals, which expresses the transitional stage from unconscious to conscious human life. The image of a perceived object is not merely an impulse for a responsive action or transitional moment from irritation to action. It acquires certain independence and can be disassociated from the reaction through movement. Contemplative memory emerges, and a subject's field of vision extends not only spatially, but also temporally, encompassing the past and the present. The subject is not living in the past only; he can return to the past and turn his attention to the future. Intuition is freed from serving merely immediate vital needs. Becoming conscious, it also becomes contemplative and capable of perceiving pure duration, which is not distorted by spatial schemes. It is through philosophical intuition that the essence of things is revealed, or through artistic intuition, which fixes, through specific, and, at the same time, generalised images, the essential aspects and moments of life (artistic intuition, according to Bergson, is closest to what Plato viewed as insight of ideas).

10 Of all the aesthetic ideas, Bergson elaborated in detail only on the theory of the comic (laughter). It is interesting in the sense that, based on a specific example, it reveals very clearly his general philosophical conception. In short, Bergson's theory of the comic can be described in the following way. Each real-life situation encountered by a person, and which requires him to act in some way, requires attention to make the reaction purposeful and for a solution favourable to the person to be found. Attention, or the effort of consciousness, is related to the fact that a person is not guided merely by earlier experience, that is, by how he responded previously in similar situations, but takes into consideration the specific aspects of the situation in question.

11 In such an effort of attention, the dynamism of *élan vital*, its creative capacity to adapt to various circumstances of life and to overcome the most complicated hurdles, is manifest. However, there are moments and cases, when the energy of the *élan vital* is weakened; then, attention paid to a relevant situation of things either disappears completely or significantly decreases. Attention is then replaced by absent-mindedness, resulting in an action that does not adapt to given circumstances and does not achieve its purpose. Such a lack of purposefulness – since it does not pose any danger to a subject's life – provokes laughter. Thus, society reacts to the fact that an individual's life is not given proper attention. Such a reaction serves as a warning to an inattentive individual and, by correcting him, as if punishes him for insufficient inner discipline which is dangerous for society.

12 Therefore, absent-mindedness is one of the main themes of comedy and comic narrative. However, absent-mindedness in the broad sense, as it is understood by Bergson, that is, any weakening of vital attentiveness, evokes another essential feature of a purposeless action: it becomes mechanical. Someone who does not pay attention to individual characteristics of a given situation responds to it with the same formulaic action that suits all similar cases. He acts like a machine, not a human being, and this evokes laughter. Therefore, according to Bergson, the main characteristic of the comic is the replacement of a living, individually specific image of action with an abstract scheme of mechanical behaviour.

13 This mechanical aspect (or automatism) is manifest in most diverse forms: actions, situations, a person's appearance and character, thereby creating various types of the comic. The comic becomes an object of a special intuition; the latter captures not only the explicitly comic but also reveals its aspects in the phenomena, where it is hidden from the ordinary perception (for example, a caricature). But the mechanical side manifests as a weakened *élan vital* not only in human life but also in all other spheres of nature. In this sense, the structure of the so-called "inanimate" non-organic matter, which is governed by unchanging laws of mechanics and recurring phenomena and processes, is, according to Bergson, the outcome of a weakened *élan vital*. In this case, inanimate matter is not the primary state of existence, but rather the secondary one. However, whether the same can be said of materiality in general, is not quite clear in the Bergsonian system, because, conversely, Bergson, in some sense, juxtaposes matter with *élan vital*, since the latter forms and organises the passive source of matter.

14 Bergson's *élan vital* is the striving of existence towards a transition from lower to higher, from simpler to more complex forms of organisms. It is an uninterrupted process of dialectic movement. Such is, from the Buddhist perspective, the law of eternal progress. In Buddhism, there is an inner progress and an external progress (or the progress of the soul and matter). The progress of the soul is metempsychosis, which is governed by the law of causality. The progress of matter is the manifestation of matter's striving towards maintaining composure or [*illegible*]; it is a manifestation of imperfection.

15 Bergson's most important works are *Creative Evolution*, *Matter and Memory* (the Russian translation is available), *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, *Introduction to Metaphysics*. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson argues that there is no quantification in immediate sensations. Everywhere where we apparently see quantitative differences, in fact, there are only qualitative differences which we have become accustomed to interpreting quantitatively, like, for example, the strength and intensity of sensations.

16 Until now, we have viewed intuition as immediate cognition that is opposed to discursive or mediated cognition. But the usual understanding of the term "intuition" adds to the characteristic of immediacy another feature – namely, depth and, thus, the significance and value of cognition. If we regard it as intuition's key characteristic, it is obvious that not all sensory perception and not just any capture of common sources and relationships will be regarded as intuition, but only such sensory and intellectual cognition that discerns the aspects of an object that are invisible to the common eye and even inaccessible through immediate sensory data or captures such common relationships and sources that have remained hidden previously.

17 However, usually, in most cases, the very subject of cognition cannot identify the various bases of his intuition and cannot explain why he discerns specifically these, but not other features in an object. Someone gifted with intuition can only say: "I feel and am convinced that things are such, but I cannot explain exactly why I think or feel so." The capability of intuitive cognition in the mentioned sense presupposes, first and foremost, certain innate sensitivity to the sphere of phenomena towards which intuition is directed. In this case, intuition stems from instinctual and subconscious sources. Intuition, like other instincts of the kind, has a distinctive character and it depends on the layer of reality which is its object.

18 However, this intuition differs from an instinct since, despite originating in the subconscious, it relates to consciousness, and this is not only because it is realised as a conscious act of cognition but also because it is conditioned by previous conscious experience. But, in such a case, where intuition reaches sufficient depth and insight, this experience, alongside innate ability, is its indispensable condition. But this experience also, depending on the nature of intuition, can be very different. It can be merely cognitive (theoretical or practical) experience as an accumulation of knowledge about an object and its various interrelated characteristics. It is intuition directed towards phenomena of the external sensory world as well as towards the spheres of mathematics and logic. But this experience acquires an emotional nature when a person's spiritual world and moral, religious, and aesthetic spheres of existence are the object of intuition. This means that, in this realm, intuition is accessible only to someone who not only has knowledge about an object but has also experienced the feelings and emotions through which and in which the indicated aspects of spiritual existence are manifested, because goodness, beauty, and holiness are perceived not externally, from the outside, but internally, as something that, though objective, is nevertheless realised and manifested through a person and in a person.

19 Moral, religious, and aesthetic intuition is impossible where there is no possibility of moral, religious, and aesthetic emotions, where, in one way or another, the logic of the heart does not act. Here, a merely conscious stance is insufficient. Consciousness must be full of emotions directed towards moral, religious, and aesthetic values (at least in a potential, implicit way). All these emotions (feelings), being directed towards a certain object (value), are not merely passive conditions, but are characterised by a certain impulse or incentive to act in the corresponding sphere of human existence (moral activity, prayer, artistic creation). And where there is an incentive to act, to express emotions externally, the corporeal side of human nature is immediately involved.

20 In any case, the corporeal part participates in emotional states and movements much more significantly than in purely cognitive acts (as was confirmed long ago by the Ancient philosophers Plato and Aristotle). Therefore, it is understandable that, among the conditions that are indispensable for the emergence of true, in-depth intuition in the sphere of spiritual existence, corresponding corporeal conditions also exist. Besides, the role of the corporeal moment can be both negative and positive. This means that, to realise intuition, corporeal life, on the one hand, must be, if not eliminated, then, at least, muted, silenced as much as possible; on the other hand, it must be developed and deepened through another direction which is foreign to daily consciousness.

21 In all religious teachings where spiritual intuition plays a leading role, we encounter an exceptionally focused relationship with a person's corporeal life and more or less detailed instructions regarding its regulation. The purpose of these instructions and exercises aimed at implementing them (asceticism) is that the body and disruptions of spiritual intuition must be transformed into a compliant instrument. Spiritual intuition requires concentration, focus, and the mobilisation of all the spiritual powers of a person. To do this, it is necessary, first and foremost, to eliminate all obstacles that can hinder such concentration in human nature.

22 Primordially, consciousness performs a purely biological function: it serves an organism's orientation in the surrounding world; simultaneously, it satisfies its daily needs (food, safety, sexual relationships, etc.). Therefore, primordially, consciousness is

directed towards the external world, and its development is related to the development and differentiation of external sensory organs. At the same time, the diversity of vital (corporeal) needs and continuous changes in the external environment make consciousness multifaceted and agile, constantly transitioning from one object to another. Here, concentration can be merely relative, limited, and superficial. It cannot be different if corporeal (sensory) needs are given full freedom and they are not regulated by any of the higher elements. The latter delimit these needs by making them merely serving, functional (life-supporting). Such is the purpose of fasting, dietetic recipes, sexual restraint, and other forms of asceticism. In almost all religious teachings, they possess a mystical colouring. Therefore, in Plato's philosophy, temperance and restraint are virtues which must guide the sensory life of a person.

23 True, sometimes asceticism (for instance, in the life of Christian monks) is understood as corporeal mortification, because the body is viewed as the culprit of all evil and sin. However, essentially, mortification is not a way of slow self-destruction; it is only the subjugation of the corporeal nature to the spiritual source. In other words, it is the spiritualisation of the body. Such disciplining of the body is merely a preparation, a key condition for the decisive step leading to an in-depth spiritual intuition. It is consciousness' re-treat from the external world and its turning toward the inner world.

24 Therefore, spiritual intuition is closely related to self-awareness, the knowledge of what a human being is, what his devotion and status in the world are. A person breaks through the sphere of relativity to the perception of the Absolute only through self-awareness. It is the main proposition of the Platonic religious-moral conception (both in the original version in Plato's work and later, in a modified way, in Plotinus' work as well as in the Platonism of the Christian fathers and Medieval mystics influenced by Plotinus).

25 In Platonism, self-awareness is the basis of morality. Therefore, intuition is inseparable from moral life and moral growth. Cognition of the divinity also implies following an example and deification. Knowing and existence, in the ultimate outcome, coincide. Plotinus reveals this situation from the gnoseological perspective. Oneness (the Absolute), giving birth to all entities, first and foremost, manifests itself in the mind – Logos; and, in the sphere of Logos, it doubles into a subject and object (the knowing and the knowable). It is a sphere of pure rational consciousness.

26 Afterwards, from the light of Logos, the sphere of spirituality and other spheres of lower existence develop into materiality. In this process, the light (wisdom) diminishes until it becomes minimal in the material world. A soul bound to the body suffers as if in prison (the Platonic Phaedo theme) and it strives to return to its motherland – the Divine world. In accomplishing this task, it must turn away from the material world and look deeply into oneself. [illegible] – a turn toward the highest spirituality through delving deeply into oneself and self-awareness, which is accompanied by certain corporeal asceticism, as defined above (a restraint in the corporeal sensory sphere).

27 A soul can reach the Logos sphere, that is, the contemplation of the world of ideas where the Logos manifests itself. However, this is not yet a contemplation of the (unified) Logos itself, but merely its reflections in the subject-object duality. Oneness is unreachable for the rational intuition in its characteristic mode of consciousness. One more decisive step is needed to cross the boundaries of the Logos to overcome its characteristic duality of the subject-object and to reach the convergence with the Oneness.

28 Since an individual's consciousness is inseparable from this duality, it loses its discretion on the plane of convergence with Oneness and, in this sense, retreats. Convergence with Oneness is a mystical act which cannot be described rationally. It can only be discussed through hints, images, analogies. It is a state that crosses the boundaries of contemplation. In fact, it can only be experienced, only lived directly. Consciousness dissolves in something that is more than it is.

29 Similar thoughts are expressed by the Christian Church Fathers adhering to Platonism. Cognition of God is immediately related to God's love, and, only because of this, does cognition of God coincide with the deification of the human being. In this sense, they regard wisdom as conscious awareness (sofia) as distinct from any other kind of cognition. Medieval Platonic theologians, like the main representatives of Christian mysticism, develop different variations of the main motifs of Plato's theory (Dionysius the Areopagite and others). Medieval mystics especially highlight the thought about the relationship between cognition of God and rationality of deification in the revelation of the coincidence of opposites (*coincidencia opositorum*) in the nature of the Divine source. It is something like a special method of thinking in searching for the possibilities of knowing God. If we search for them in the external world, then God is nothing and everything at the same time. Neither a phenomenon nor a thing in the external world – because of their finiteness, imperfection, and perishability – have anything that could prove God's image. In this sense, God in the world of things is nothing.

30 On the one hand, if one delves deep into the systematic relationships encompassing phenomenal chains that have neither beginning nor ending, and if one delves deep into the common life which permeates the entire nature, then one becomes clearly convinced that God is in everything and everything is in God. The mysticism of the Medieval Meister Eckhart and St. Francis of Assisi tends towards pantheism (or to be more exact, panentheism). For St. Francis of Assisi, all animals and all living creatures, as God's creation and as carriers of divine life, are brothers and sisters of human beings, and therefore, they deserve equal love from human beings, just like other human beings. But, according to Eckhart, the coincidence of opposites also defines the moral essence of a human being not only in the relationship to the finiteness of their nature and their perishability, but also in the relationship to their imperfection, in which the possibility of self-improvement is embedded.

31 By scrutinising one's inner life, a human being becomes aware of one's total insignificance: one's wishes and goals are insignificant; one's intellectual field of vision, delimited by the trivial interests of one's minor individuality, is insignificant; one is confronted everywhere with dependence on external circumstances and surroundings, as well as with the moral imperfection and sinfulness of one's behaviour. In short, the immediate result of moral self-awareness is one's diminishment and recognition of one's spiritual poverty. However, the moment a human being becomes fully aware of, and experiences, one's insignificance, one suddenly starts feeling, in one's spiritual emptiness and infinite distance from God's perfection, that God is nearby, that God is within oneself, and that the power and ability to become similar to God lie within. Therefore, Eckhart maintains that the intuition of the Divine source is related to the spiritual (moral) transformation of a human being and is conditioned by it.

32 Meanwhile, moral transformation, according to Thomas à Kempis, occurs when Christ's example is followed. This repetition is not limited to following Christ's image and

actions. First and foremost, it is immersion in his spiritual personality, his inner world. Then, through the contemplation of Christ, the path leading to God and the path to overcoming one's innate sinfulness are opened. It must be admitted though that the above-mentioned mystics do not relate immersion into Christ's personality to a special state of consciousness which, in its external characteristics, is essentially different from the usual, normal consciousness.

33 But other mystics also believe that the culmination of spiritual contemplation is an ecstatic state in which absolute indifference to the external world is achieved, and one's attention is specifically focused on the contemplated object (something very similar to hypnosis) (St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross). In some cases, identification with Christ's suffering (the crucifixion) becomes so intense that it encompasses both a mystic's life and is manifest in physiological processes. Such is the phenomenon of receiving the stigmata (the appearance of bleeding wounds in the same spots where the crucified Christ was wounded). In the reception of the stigmata, the impact of an ecstatic consciousness on the physiological human life is directly manifested. In this, it is related, to a certain degree, to the practice of Buddhist yoga, since here the commonly independent processes of corporeal life are also governed by the power of consciousness.

34 However, overall, such phenomena in Christian mysticism are exceptional, and the ascetic practice, which widens and deepens the power of a conscious soul over the body, is not as developed as in Buddhism. Since the primary biological function of consciousness is the regulation of relationships between an organism and the external world, it, first and foremost, guides all corporeal movements and processes through which these are maintained. Inner physiological processes, on the contrary, almost without exception, occur automatically, independently of consciousness, and they reach it only as obscure, poorly differentiated organic sensations.

35 Therefore, the subjugation of corporeal life to consciousness (soul) in ascetic practices is usually implemented not directly, but in a roundabout way – by changing the surrounding environment that interacts with the body and by adapting corporeal life to the most diverse conditions (cold, heat, starvation, wakefulness, pain, etc.). In this way, the body discards its sickly exaggerated sensitivity to environmental phenomena, and its instinctive resistance does not hinder independent spiritual activity.

36 Stoics and Epicureans, seeking to overcome this instinctive corporeal resistance to suffering (firstly, physical pain), created a special method of detachment from suffering: it is a stance of consciousness which views all corporeality, including suffering, as a feature which is foreign, superficial, and irrelevant to the true human essence and, therefore, insignificant for an individual's spiritual life and unable to harm it. The stance of consciousness based on such autosuggestion provides one with the possibility to freely contemplate and to experience the inner freedom of one's autonomous personality.

37 However, the adoption of such a stance merely strengthens the body and dulls its sensitivity to physical suffering; but it does not reveal hidden positive corporeal powers or make them serve the spiritual life. The ascetic yoga practice does precisely this: it widens and strengthens the power of consciousness (soul) over the body, especially over the inner physiological corporeal life, as well as enhances spiritual power over the entire material nature. The miraculous potency of all ascetic practice is rooted in this.

The intuition directed towards inner life transforms directly into insights and actions which are unattainable to an ordinary person.

NOTES

1. The text printed in square brackets further on (the two pages of Sezeman's manuscript that were missing in Sezeman's manuscripts owned by Vilnius University) was reconstructed according to the copy guarded in Dandaron's archive.

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