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## BERGSON'S NOTION OF DURATION AS DRIVE

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**Abstract:** A renewed interest into the philosophy of Bergson in the last decades brings his central notion duration to the fore of lively discussions. This renewed interest certainly has its source in Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, where he declared Bergson's philosophy as an alternative to phenomenology that dominated the philosophical discussions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Deleuze's attempt to put Bergson as an alternative to phenomenology was a protest against the phenomenological tradition, which denounced Bergson's analysis of duration as it is first developed in *Time and Free Will* as remaining within the confines of psychological realism and reducing time to a flowing, fluid thing that resides in consciousness. In an attempt to contribute to the Deleuzian interpretation that defends Bergson's notion of duration against its phenomenological criticisms, I argue in the present study that the notion of duration as developed by Bergson in *Time and Free Will* can be best interpreted in terms of a Leibnizian notion of force. Following Bergson's criticism of reduction of time to a homogeneous medium in the work of Kant, I introduce Bergson's analysis of duration as a drive that prolongs the past of consciousness into its present. In doing this I take a detour through Heidegger's interpretation of Leibniz's *vis activa* as *drive*.

**Keywords:** Duration, Homogeneous Multiplicity, Heterogeneous Multiplicity, Drive, Past

## İTKİ OLARAK BERGSON'UN SÜRE KAVRAMI

**Öz:** Son yıllarda Bergson'un felsefesine yönelik yeniden canlanan bir ilgiyle birlikte felsefesinin temel kavramı olan sürenin canlı bir tartışma konusu olmasına tanık oluyoruz. Bu yenilenen ilginin kaynağında Deleuze'ün *Bergsonculuk* adlı eserinde Bergson felsefesini 20. Yüzyıl boyunca tüm felsefi tartışmaları belirlemiş olan fenomenolojinin karşısına bir alternatif olarak koyması var. Deleuze'ün Bergson'u fenomenolojiye alternatif farklı bir felsefi yaklaşım olarak koymasının altında Bergson'un *Zaman ve Özgür İrade* adlı eserinde geliştirmiş olduğu süre kavramını psikolojik gerçekçiliğin sınırları içinde kalmak ve zamanı bilincin içkinliğinde kendiliğinden akan akıcı bir şeye dönüştürmekle eleştiren fenomenolojik geleneğe yönelik bir protesto yatıyor. Bu çalışmada fenomenoloji alanından eleştirilere karşı Bergson'un süre kavramını savunan Deleuzcü bir okumaya katkı olarak, Bergson'un *Zaman ve Özgür İrade* adlı eserinde geliştirdiği süre kavramının Leibnizci kuvvet kavramı etrafında bir yorumunu

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geliştirmeye çalışıyorum. Bergson'un Kant'ın zamanı homojen bir ortam olarak ele almasına yönelik eleştirilerini takiben, süre kavramını geçmiş şimdinin içine temdit eden bir itki, bir kuvvet olarak yorumluyorum. Bunu yaparken Heidegger'in Leibniz'in vis activa kavramını itki olarak yorumlamasından yararlanıyorum.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Süre, Homojen Çokluk, Heterojen Çokluk, İtki, Geçmiş

## 1. Introduction

A renewed interest into the philosophy of Bergson in the last decades brings his central notion, that is, duration to the fore of lively discussions again. This renewed interest certainly has its source in Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, where he declared Bergson's philosophy as an alternative to phenomenology that dominated the philosophical discussions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Deleuze, 1998). Deleuze's attempt to put Bergson as an alternative to phenomenology was a protest against the phenomenological tradition, which denounced Bergson's analysis of duration as it is first developed in *Time and Free Will* as remaining within the confines of psychological realism and reducing time to a flowing, fluid thing that resides in consciousness (Sartre, 1948; Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Heidegger 1992). The main criticism of the phenomenological tradition against Bergson was the same brought to any philosopher before Husserl, namely, its failure to discover the intentionality, the transcending character of consciousness and therefore failing to uncover the original meaning of the being of consciousness. Bergson's description of duration in his first work as a continuous and indivisible interpenetration of a heterogeneous multiplicity without any recourse to an act of consciousness that temporalizes and unifies both its contents and of itself is the source of these criticisms. In what follows, I argue that the duration as an indivisible interpenetration of multiplicity of conscious states is itself one continuous act, and the being of consciousness, far from being reduced to the fluidity of its content, is described in terms of this act, which I propose to interpret in terms of a Leibnizian force, vis activa.

Bergson's return to the "immediate data" of consciousness in order to reveal the true nature of time in *Time and Free Will* remains in line with THE modern conception of time that incorporates time in the inwardness of consciousness in a twofold embedment of "time in consciousness" and "consciousness in time". In this subjective turn, empiricism relied on an unquestioned assumption of the mere givenness of sensations in an inherently temporal order and deduced the idea of time from the succession of ideas, while it was mainly Kant who carried this subjectivization of time further by reducing it to a form of human sensibility that makes the successive apprehension of representations possible. Kant's Copernican Revolution consisted in the discovery of a synthetic act of consciousness that unites its sensations as successive under the form of inner sense. However, despite the revolutionary character of Kant's recourse to the act of synthesis as the capacity of consciousness to temporalize its representations, Bergson believes that Kant assimilated time to space and concealed an underlying duration of consciousness and the immediate unity it achieves in its own

flowing. Bergson's return to immediate data of consciousness is to discover this durational being of consciousness itself that was concealed by the Kantian critique. Bergson criticizes Kant for thinking time as a homogeneous medium in which the manifold of the senses is first apprehended as a "manifold" through its differentiation into discrete elements, and subsequently as successive by the addition of one to the other through the reproductive synthesis of imagination. For Bergson, this synthetic activity of consciousness under the form of homogeneous time as assumed by Kant takes place only after the fact and is carried out by a reflective consciousness. Before this reflective gaze, consciousness unifies its states through an interpenetration of one into the other without apprehending these states as discrete. The multiplicity of conscious states therefore forms a heterogeneous multiplicity in which each element continuously and indivisibly melts into each other. In describing this unification achieved at a deeper, passive level of consciousness Bergson makes no recourse to an act of imagination and its capacity to synthesize. However, the interpenetration of a multiplicity, each indivisibly going into the other, contrary to the criticisms brought about by the early phenomenologists, is not described by Bergson as simply happening by itself. This interpenetration cannot happen in the lack of a force driving the multiplicity into each other and holding them indivisibly in a state of tension, which I think, can at best be described in terms of a Leibzian notion of force. In what follows, I will first present Bergson's criticism of treatment of time in terms of homogeneous medium, as a criticism mainly directed towards Kant. I will then introduce Bergson's description of duration in terms of continuous integration of a heterogeneous multiplicity. I will argue that this integration can be understood in terms of a Leibnizian force, interpreted by Heidegger as drive. Following a short presentation of Heidegger's reading of Leibniz's *vis activa* in terms of drive, I will argue that Bergson's description of duration can be interpreted in terms of a driven consciousness prolonging its past into the present.

## **2. Bergson's Criticism of Quantification of Conscious States under the form of Homogeneous Multiplicity**

What is mostly retained from Bergson's first work is the distinction he makes between two forms of multiplicity; homogeneous multiplicity and heterogeneous multiplicity. This distinction however is preceded by a long discussion and criticism of quantification of conscious states in terms of intensive magnitudes. He sees a reduction at work in the attempts to measure the intensity of conscious states in terms of magnitudes in the psycho-physical studies of his time. Bergson argues that this treatment of intensities in terms of quantity, although they are actually pure qualities in themselves, results from a certain infusion of extensive magnitudes into the intensive and therefore a confusion of quality with quantity. He describes in detail how this translation of magnitudes into intensities takes place by confusing the intensities of internal states with the accompanying bodily movements, being executed or stopped or with the muscular efforts. Here the real fallacy consists in treating extensity in terms of quantitative magnitude that can be measured, and this treatment is possible on the basis of a representation of space as a homogeneous medium. The long detour that the

first chapter of *Time and Free Will* takes in order to reveal the pure qualitative nature of conscious states is not only to defend the irreducibility of consciousness against its materialisation and therefore to attack the psycho-physical studies of his time, but also to attack the whole philosophical tradition which lies behind and encourages the psycho-physical studies of consciousness. Bergson argues that there is a whole philosophical tradition that treats qualities in terms of intensive magnitudes, and he considers this a direct result of conceiving time and the succession of states of consciousness in terms of an empty medium built on the basis of an idea of a homogeneous space. In the empiricist tradition, Hume who conceived impressions in terms of a felt vivacity and described ideas as faint copies or images of these impressions in their "lessening", "weakening", "decreasing" intensity. The initially felt quality of an impression was reduced to a decreasing intensity in its fading away. It is on the basis of this treatment of quality and qualitative changes in terms of magnitudes, -that are not measurable-, but at least admitting of degrees that empiricism defined the past and therefore the representation of time in terms of this decreasing or weakening intensity of a sensation. However, Bergson's main target in *Time and Free Will* seems to be Kant, who openly declared in the "Anticipations of Perception" that "[i]n all the appearances, the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, that is, a degree" (Kant, 1980, p. 201).

In a Kantian context, sensation is that element in an empirical intuition that corresponds to its matter, that is, the real received through the affection of the subject. Kant claims that in all appearances, every sensation and the real that corresponds to it in the object has a certain degree, which is nothing else than the degree of the influence on the senses. He calls this degree of a sensation an intensive magnitude in its distinction from an extensive magnitude. An extensive magnitude is generated by a successive synthesis of different sensations, "proceeding from parts to the whole representation" (Kant, 1980, p. 203). An intensive magnitude, on the other hand corresponds with the degree of what is given at an instant in an act of apprehension. Kant claims that what is given at an instant does have a degree in so far as what corresponds to sensation in an empirical intuition is "reality" and what corresponds to its absence is its negation=0, which is to mean that every sensation is capable of diminution; it can decrease and gradually vanish. It is also possible to generate a certain magnitude of a sensation in the act of apprehension, "whereby the empirical consciousness of it can in a certain time increase from nothing=0 to the given measure" (Kant, 1980, p. 202). How can something that is apprehended at an instant have a certain degree, which can gradually be generated or can diminish? Kant's answer concerns the very nature of time, and it is his conception of time that Bergson attacks as being nothing other than homogeneous space. Kant claims that "[b]etween the reality in the field of appearance and negation there is therefore a continuity of many possible intermediate sensations, the difference between any of two of which is always smaller than the difference between the given sensation and zero or complete negation" (Kant, 1980, p. 203). Kant repeats the same when he says that [e]very colour, as for instance red, has a degree which, however small it may be, is never the smallest" (Kant, 1980, p.

204). This is to say that what is apprehended at an instant as a unity of a simple intuition is only a provisional unity, which can be divided into further smaller parts.

Bergson takes issue with the concept of the manifold that Kant works with in his description of intensive magnitude. The reception of the real with a certain intensive magnitude requires an act of apprehension that differentiates a manifold as he lays out in his exposition of the three-fold synthesis in the A-Edition of the Transcendental Deduction. Kant starts his analysis by saying that every representation as a modification of the mind belongs to inner sense, and therefore is subject to time. The act of apprehension consists in differentiation of a manifold as successive and at the same time its apprehension under a single intuition. So, Kant can claim that each sensation does have a degree as what is given in an act of apprehension at a single instant or under a single representation, which already contains a manifold that remains distinguishable and therefore lends itself to further division. He says nothing else when he writes: "A magnitude which is apprehended only as unity, and in which multiplicity can be represented only through approximation to negation=0, I entitle an intensive magnitude" (Kant, 1980, p. 204). It is through this concept of manifold or of multiplicity, which Bergson calls homogeneous, that Kant defines space and time as "quanta continua": "The property of magnitudes by which no part of them is the smallest possible, that is, by which no part is simple, is called their continuity" (Kant, 1980, p. 204). It is in this sense that time and space are continuous quantities that admit of degree, in so far as points and instants are not the simple building blocks that make up time and space, but are limitations that enclose a part of time or space, which are always again in time and space. Points and instants can further be divided into finer points and instants, or can be synthesized into "extensive magnitudes", whereby "the representations of a determinate space or time generated, that is through combination of the homogeneous manifold and consciousness of its unity (Kant, 1980, p. 198). Kant claims that this generation is achieved through the successive, additive synthesis of productive imagination, as "a progress in time", and calls these continuous quantities also "flowing" as long as "the continuity of time is ordinarily designated by the term flowing or flowing away" (Kant, 1980, p. 204).

However, it is exactly this point that Bergson strongly rejects, as he claims that this synthesis, which Kant takes as a synthesis taking place in time as a successive generation of continuous quantities, or as "extensive magnitudes" as he calls them, actually takes place in space and not in time, and nothing flows here. This is why it comes as no surprise that the second chapter of *Time and Free Will* opens with a discussion of number, which is taken by Kant as the schema, i.e. the transcendental determination of time that corresponds to the concept of magnitude or of quantity. Kant claims that the successive apprehension of an object in intuition takes place through a successive addition of the manifold: "Number is therefore simply the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in general, a unity due to my generating of time itself in the apprehension of the intuition" (Kant, 1980, p. 184). The unity of an object, which necessarily occupies a certain determinate time-magnitude is then generated as a process of addition of part to part, and is nothing other than the sum total of its parts, brought about "as aggregates, as complexes of

previously given parts" (Kant, 1980, p. 199). The greatest mistake of Kant according to Bergson is that Kant believes that this synthesis takes place in time, as a "successive advance from one moment to another" (Kant, 1980, p. 198). Kant is very much aware that this process of successive advance from one moment to another requires a homogeneous medium, in which a homogeneous manifold unfolds itself as following one another. Bergson repeats only Kant when he argues that the unity of number involves a multiplicity of identical units, which must at the same time be somehow distinct from each other. However, Bergson questions what brings this distinction between the identical units, and argues that it is only space as a homogeneous medium that can bring this differentiation through externalizing the units from each other by means of inserting intervals between them. Bergson argues that the units, taken as the moments of time, are in fact nothing other than points occupying different positions in space. This is why he contends that the synthesis of number, of successive addition of one unit to the other, takes place in space rather than in time, as these discrete units can only be brought together as discrete when they are juxtaposed alongside each other in space: "Space is what enables us to distinguish a number of identical and simultaneous sensations from one another; it is thus a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation, and consequently it is a reality with no quality" (Bergson, 2005, p. 95). The synthesis of number is then nothing other than setting side by side the reproduced successive units and perceiving them simultaneously. What Kant assumed to be the synthesis of reproductive imagination in time is in fact a synthesis that takes place in space as a homogeneous medium, as the synthesis of number is not possible without the externalization of the units, which are discretely added to each other.

### **3. Duration as a Continuity of Heterogeneous Multiplicity**

Whereas Bergson's aim in *Time and Free Will* is to reveal the true nature of duration within the immediacy of consciousness, he now argues that its treatment in terms of homogeneous medium which ends up in its fragmentation into discrete units and therefore in its quantification should be put out of play. Bergson argues that this quantitative differentiation of conscious states is carried out by reflective consciousness, which "rises above" the flowing continuity of consciousness and turns its regard on it by an act of attention that singles out its states as discrete and sets them side by side: "The apparent discontinuity of the psychical life is then due to our attention being fixed on it by a series of separate acts" (Bergson, 1912, p. 3). It is then this reflective gaze, which already assumes the form of homogeneous space in order to distance itself from the immediate, pure qualitative field, that must be suspended to lay bare the meaning of duration<sup>1</sup>. The duration is revealed when consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the prior assumption of space in the attentive act that separates, Bergson writes: "But how can they fail to notice that, in order to perceive a line as a line, it is necessary to take up a position outside it, to take account of the void which surrounds it, and consequently to think a space of three dimensions? If our conscious point A does not yet possess the idea of space-and this is the hypothesis which we have agreed to adopt- the succession of states through which it passes cannot assume for it the form of line..." (Bergson, 2005, p. 103). Worms also warns that the act of separation here cannot be merely conceived as a psychological act, but is "based on a 'pure' principle, space..." (Worms, F.,2010, p. 251). "Consciousness or

refrains from gazing at itself and returns to itself; when it lets itself live and feel itself from within without the mediation of symbolic representations; when it feels the effect of its own qualitative change:

Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. For this purpose it need not be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea; for then, on the contrary, it would no longer *endure* (Bergson, 2005, p. 100).

We have to note at the very outset that duration in this passage is described as manifesting itself in the form of a lived agency. This may very well be called “pre-reflective consciousness”, that is, consciousness feeling itself from within through its self-affection, through its qualitative change. But, what is equally important and which also directly follows is that it is about the self, a deep-seated self as Bergson calls it. As will become clearer, duration sustains the unity and the continuity of the self. This continuous unity of the self is sustained in and through duration in its self-differentiation and growth, and makes up “the continuous evolution of a free person” (Bergson, 2005, p. 229).

Leaving aside for the time being the discussion of how duration concerns the self, and therefore the continuity of consciousness in its entire past, it must be stressed that duration, “restored to its original purity” in this return to lived immediacy will appear as “a wholly qualitative multiplicity” of elements that melt into each other without being separated (Bergson, 2005, p. 229). Following his first introduction of duration in *Time and Free Will* in the above quoted passage, Bergson immediately gives the example of hearing successive notes of a tune, in which the past and former states melt into one another forming a single, organic whole. In this hearing, any dwelling on one of the notes longer than is right, will not only single out that note and change its nature in its attended, “exaggerated” length, but will also interrupt the dynamic organization of the rhythm and lead to a qualitative change in the whole musical phrase (Bergson, 2005, p. 101). Without such an attentive regard that interrupts and tears apart, duration is then the dynamic organization of the “inner phenomena in their developing” (Bergson, 2005, p. 229). Bergson gives a more a detailed description of it in a compact way:

We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it by abstract thought. Such is the account of duration which would be given by a being who was ever the same and ever changing, and who had no idea of space” (Bergson, 2005, p. 101).

Bergson will add a couple of pages later that duration is “nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another...: it would be pure heterogeneity” (Bergson, 2005, p. 104). These passages describe duration as a

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Life? Bergson between Phenomenology and Metaphysics”, in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael R. Kelly, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

succession without distinction; as a mutual penetration of elements; as a succession of qualitative changes; as a pure heterogeneity; as a dynamic organization into a whole in which each element represents the whole; as consciousness which ever remains the same, and at the same time ever changes. In all these phrases, Bergson describes a unification of a multiplicity which admits of no distinction or divisibility in terms of discrete units, but which consists in a successive qualitative change or a continuous differentiation.

It is astonishing that Bergson insists on defining duration almost each time in terms of succession, given the overloaded meaning of the term in the history of philosophy as well as in the studies of time at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was first Locke who set the problem of time in terms of the perception of succession after assuming successive givenness of ideas as discrete units. Duration was then defined by him as dependent on succession as the distance between two successive parts. Beginning from Locke, all studies on time were guided by a conviction that "the succession of perceptions is not yet the perception of succession", and attempted to describe a synthetic act of consciousness that gives the perception of succession. Bergson however, does not bother himself with the question of how succession of a manifold is perceived as successive. This is not only because Bergson ruled out in advance conceiving succession in terms of a discrete manifold, one element of which follows another in his criticism of the description of time in terms of a homogeneous multiplicity. He also does not make a difference between the perception of succession and the succession of perceptions or of states of consciousness. After clarifying that the assumed succession of discrete multiplicity as following one another is actually nothing but simultaneous juxtaposition, Bergson restores the original meaning of succession as denoting the irreversibility of the flow of time. True succession, or pure succession as Bergson sometimes calls it, is then not a succession of a discrete manifold following one another, but a succession of a multiplicity as melting into another, without admitting distinction so that the relation of succession among this multiplicity generates itself dynamically as an internal relation, which not only remains irreversible, but also prevents any of them from recurring. Succession denotes for Bergson the internal, irreversible and dynamic relation amongst the multiplicity of duration.

If succession denotes irreversible internal relation amongst the multiplicity of conscious states, then there is no need to make a difference between duration and succession. Duration would then be continuous, uninterrupted transition from one state to the other, where it will be impossible to perceive where one starts and the other ends. This is what Bergson means when he says that the multiplicity of conscious states melts into each other, without admitting of distinctions. However, this continuity or smooth transition should not be considered as an undifferentiated continuity or unity, otherwise there would be no reason to call it successive. In fact, what Bergson showed through a long discussion of homogeneous multiplicity is that an undifferentiated continuity is nothing else than a linear mathematical continuity of identical and discrete elements. But in such a continuity, which admits of infinite divisibility, a transition is not possible as it would require an external principle of unification. Duration, on the contrary, is an internal unification of a multiplicity, which permeates



into each other, “without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one other” (Bergson, 2005, p. 104). If this multiplicity is not homogeneous, then it should be not discretely fragmented multiplicity but a qualitatively diverse multiplicity. It must be heterogeneous. However, duration is not simply melting into each other of a qualitative multiplicity, but it is itself a continuous, indivisible process of qualitative change or differentiation.

Bergson describes duration in *Time and Free Will* by putting emphasis on heterogeneous multiplicity in its continuous qualitative change in order to distinguish it from the homogeneous multiplicity of space. Our habit of thinking time in terms of homogeneous multiplicity and separating our states from one another is so resilient that Bergson strategically opposes heterogeneous, qualitative, continuous multiplicity to homogeneous, discrete, quantitative multiplicity. His repeated description of duration as a continuous qualitative change in terms of “melting”, “permeating”, “intermingling”, “encroachment” of successive states into each other is also strategically emphasized. He repeatedly stresses in his examples that the dynamic organization of this interpenetrating multiplicity produces a rhythmic continuity resembling that of a melody, or a phrase of a melody. However, Bergson hardly talks about the past in *Time and Free Will*, although he suggests that the melting of conscious states into each other, the qualitative differentiation at each moment is possible by the retention of the past moments- not in the sense that the past is juxtaposed to the present, but in the sense that it melts into the present. It is through this “melting into” of past into the present that duration becomes a dynamic unification of a multiplicity into an organic whole, and a continuous, indivisible, qualitative differentiation.

#### 4. Duration as Drive

Bergson doesn't clarify a detailed structure of this unification and this lack of a clear analysis is the source of criticisms mentioned in the Introduction. I believe that a concept of force was in effect from the very beginning of Bergson's description of duration as the dynamic unification of a multiplicity into an organic whole. The clue in reading Bergson's duration with reference to Leibniz's concept of force is provided by Heidegger's reading of the Leibnizian monad in terms of drive,<sup>2</sup> which Heidegger interprets both as a principle of unification and as “pressing toward”, in his Marburg lectures of 1928, published in English in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. In emphasising the unifying and pressing character of drive, Heidegger describes the Leibnizian drive as the source of time. It is no surprise that the lecture-notes include one of the rare passages where Heidegger credits Bergson's analyses to be among “the most intense analyses of time that we possess,” (Heidegger, 1992, p. 203) while at the

<sup>2</sup> This clue is also provided by Bernet's works, in which Heidegger's reading of Leibnizian concept of force is further developed. See, Rudolf Bernet, (2007) “Drive: A Psychoanalytical or Metaphysical Concept? On the Philosophical Foundation of the Pleasure Principle”, trans. Basil Vasilicos, *Philosophy Today*, Spem Supplement, pp. 107-118; Bernet, (2020) *Force, Drive, Desire*, trans. Sarah Allen, Northwestern University Press, Illionis. Bernet provides an interpretation of consciousness and life in Bergson in terms of a driven force in Bernet, (2010) “Bergson on the Driven Force of Consciousness and Life”, in *Bergson and Phenomenology*, ed. Michael Kelly, pp. 42-62.

same time he remains critical of Bergson, accusing him of not seeing the ecstatic nature of temporality. Heidegger's interpretation of the Leibnizian drive is very much determined by his own understanding of transcendence defined in terms of "stepping out of itself" or "being a-head of itself", in the sense of approaching oneself or meeting one's unity in advance in the form of expecting "one's capacity-for-being" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 206). In interpreting Bergsonian duration in terms of drive, following Heidegger's own understanding of temporality is not particularly useful, simply because Bergson takes a very different route, to which Heidegger probably did not pay much attention. I nonetheless find Heidegger's presentation of drive helpful for outlining the basis for my reading of Bergson.

Heidegger opens his reading of Leibniz's monadology by reminding that Leibniz's aim in introducing drive as the essence of substance is to come with a positive definition of the nature, that is, "the substantiality of the substance" that applies to all beings. The question of the substantiality of the substance thus belongs to a general metaphysics in an Aristotelian sense, which concerns the being of all beings or what is common to all beings, that is, to all material beings, living beings and the soul or spirit as well as God. Heidegger argues that the definition of substance given by Leibniz's predecessors falls short of satisfying Leibniz's quest for a positive definition of substance. Heidegger refers to Descartes and Spinoza, who both defined substance in terms of autonomous existence, as that which does not need something else to exist, and therefore that which exists in itself; or, "what remains in itself." Heidegger argues that in this manner, they define substance only negatively, and embrace nothing positive about it. Leibniz wants to provide a positive definition of substance, based on the way in which it exists or subsists. Heidegger argues that this substantiality of the substance consists in its being a "true unity", which is not in need of something else to unify itself. He interprets Leibniz's substance as that which simply and originally unifies, as self-unifying. Bernet adds that this definition of substance as self-unifying is in line with an Aristotelian definition of being in terms of movement and change, being as "being-in-movement (and in-change)" (Bernet, 2020, p. 50). Heidegger argues that as general metaphysics is oriented towards the being of all beings, a certain domain of beings was used by Leibniz as a "guiding clue" for accessing the nature of substance in general. And as the question of both the organic and inorganic, material beings of nature and their movements was the burning question of Leibniz's era, the guiding clue for Leibniz was the being of physical nature, defined by the Cartesians as "res corporea".

Leibniz searches for a positive principle, for the true unities that are not divisible as he defines them, and states that it is this search that made him "rehabilitate the substantial forms", which, he says, must be conceived "on the model of the notion we have of souls" (Leibniz, 1989, p. 139). He offers a positive definition of these "substantial forms", that he calls *entelechies* with reference to Aristotle: "I call them, perhaps more intelligibly, *primitive forces*, which contain not only act or the completion of possibility, but also an original *activity*" (Leibniz, 1989, p. 139). True or real unities are then unities which have in themselves the force of their unification as well as their activity. Leibniz further calls these substantial unities metaphysical points animated by the substantial

form or soul. Heidegger's reading of Leibniz's notion of primitive force as drive mainly focuses on the active primitive force as the positive, internal principle of unification. He starts with asking "[W]hat does it mean to say that every independent being is endowed with force?" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 77) Per Heidegger, this question can be answered by clarifying the internal connection between the characteristic of force and the unity of substance (Heidegger, 1992, p. 80). Heidegger first refers to how Leibniz contrasted his concept of active force to the Scholastic concept of *potentia activa*, the active power. Leibniz himself defines the active power of the Scholastics as an "approximate possibility of acting, which needs an external excitation or stimulus, as it were, to be transferred into action," while his notion of active force contains a certain act, which is "thus midway between the faculty of acting and the act itself and involves a conatus" (Quoted by Heidegger, 1992, p. 82). Defined in this way, the Scholastic concept of *potentia activa* designates a disposition to act or a possibility of action that needs an external stimulus to result in action. In contrast, the *vis activa* of Leibniz, according to Heidegger, is:

[a] certain activity and, nevertheless not activity in its accomplishment. It is a capability, but not a capability at rest. We call what Leibniz means here "to tend towards..." or, better yet, in order to bring out the specific, already somewhat actual moment of activity: to press or drive towards, *drive* (Heidegger, 1992, p. 82).

Heidegger thinks that the concept of drive, *Drang*, is more appropriate for describing *vis activa*, as it better expresses its dynamic nature, which "characteristically leads into activity, not just occasionally but essentially:" "The phenomenon of drive not only brings along with it, as it were, the cause, in the sense of release, but drive as such is as such already released. It is triggered, however in such a way that it is still always charged, still tensed" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 82). After describing *vis activa* as drive inherent in every substance and as that from which "some accomplishing or carrying out continually arises," (Heidegger, 1992, p. 84) Heidegger turns back to his initial question and asks how something like drive can be unity-conferring (Heidegger, 1992, p. 85). As far as this unity-conferring function of the drive is an original unification, Heidegger argues that the drive "must itself be simple;" that it cannot have parts "in the sense of aggregate or collection;" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 89) and therefore as a "*primum constitutum*" it "must be an indivisible unity" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 89). At this point, Heidegger immediately reminds his readers that the problem of unification would be senseless if drive did not have an essential relation to a manifold that is to be unified. Drive as "simply unifying" however, cannot be distinct or external to what it unifies, meaning that it "carries within itself the manifold." The manifold is intrinsic to the drive so that the manifold itself "must have the character of drive, must have movement as such" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 89). He adds:

But the manifold in motion is changeable and that which changes. The manifold within drive must have the characteristic of being compressed [Gedrängte]. What is compressed is something pressed upon [Be-drängte]. But in drive it is drive which is pressed on. There is thus in drive itself a self-surpassing; there is change, alteration, movement. This means that drive is what itself changes in driving on; drive is what is pressed onward [Ge-drängte] (Heidegger, 1992, pp. 89-90).

To reiterate, Heidegger defines the manifold that the drive unifies as internal to the drive; therefore as itself having the character of drive, which means nothing less than that it is subject to a continuous change. Hence, the unification of this manifold is also subject to a continuous change; as Bernet summarizes: "Even though the work of the monad always consists in a self-unification, the resulting unity and the multiplicity that it unites are continuously transforming themselves" (Bernet, 2020, p. 82). For one thing, Heidegger attributes this continuous change to the pressing onward character of the drive. He describes it as "self-surpassing" as "a trend towards transition, a tendency to overcome any momentary stage" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 92). It is through this self-surpassing character, or by way of having "a trend towards transition", that Heidegger links the notion of drive to temporality, although this link is very much coloured by his own understanding of primordial temporality as ecstatic. He argues that the drive as "original organizing unification" must be prior to "that which is subject to possible unification," which he explains in terms of "reaching beforehand toward something from which every manifold has already received its unity," or to "gripping in advance in such a way that the entire manifold is already made manifold in the encircling reach" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 90). Heidegger claims that it is because the drive is that which originally simply unifies that it must be *pre-hensive*, taking the form of "a pre-unifying of the manifold in the simple" in the reaching out in advance (Heidegger, 1992, p. 91) and further links this pre-hensive character of the drive to a perceptive striving through a rather quick discussion of perceptio and appetitus in Leibniz (Heidegger, 1992, p. 91). It is only after establishing the link between the original unifying function of the drive and its "trend towards transition" through its "pre-hending" character that Heidegger quotes one of Leibniz's letters to the Cartesian De Volder from 1703 to expound on the relation between drive and temporality. After repeating his main thesis at the beginning of the quoted passage saying that "[I]f nothing is active by its own nature, there will be nothing active at all," Leibniz continues:

But since every action contains change, we must have in it precisely what you would seem to deny it, namely a tendency toward internal change and a temporal succession following internal change, and a temporal succession following from the nature of the thing (Heidegger, 1992, p. 92; Leibniz, 1989a, p. 534).

Heidegger thinks that this passage from Leibniz clearly links the driving activity of the monad as primordially unifying to its character as drive toward change and states:

Drive delivers itself, as drive, to manifold succession-not as if to something other than itself, for it is that which itself as drive seeks to press. Drive submits itself to temporal succession, not as if to something alien to it, but it is this manifold itself. From drive itself arises time (Heidegger, 1992, p. 92).

For one thing, when Heidegger sets drive as the source of time in terms of drive's delivering itself to temporal succession, he sees an originary temporalization in this driving process, which primarily temporalizes itself out of the future. As long as driving, pressing on, signifies stepping out and becomes pre-hensive "it must already anticipate every possible multiplicity, must be able to deal with every multiplicity in its

possibility" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 91). It is through its anticipatory character, or ek-static expectancy, that the drive not only bears the multiplicity in itself and allows it to be born in the driving (Heidegger, 1992, p. 91), but it also unifies it in advance. The primordial unification takes the form of temporalization, which mainly temporalizes itself out of the future, but also primordially unifies itself in the "self-unifying unity of expectancy, retention and making present" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 204) as far as the temporalization of the future stretches out immediately into the "having-been" and temporalizes it as having been in each case in relation to the respective future (Heidegger, 1992, p. 206), while making present "first temporalizes itself in the ecstatic unity of future and having-been-ness" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 207). The details of Heidegger's understanding of primordial temporality in terms of a driven movement of temporalization as a "self-unifying ecstatic unity in ecstatic temporalization" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 205) are not relevant to the purposes of this paper, however his interpretation of Leibnizian *vis activa* in terms of drive and as well as the immediate link he establishes to time provides the necessary clues in interpreting Bergsonian duration in terms of an act, which can best be described in terms of drive.

Heidegger summarizes three key characteristics of drive towards the end of his discussion of its structure, and I believe that these three intrinsic features of drive can serve as those clues in interpreting Bergsonian duration: 1) Drive is *primordially unifying*; it is not a conglomeration of what is unified, 2) Drive comprises a manifold which is itself already involved in drive and originates from it; drive is *pressing on*, 3) As pressing on drive is *a transition tendency*; has an internal tendency to change (Heidegger, 1992, p. 94). Interpretation of duration in terms of drive as outlined by Heidegger must obviously focus on Bergson's description of interweaving of a heterogeneous multiplicity in its continuous qualitative change and its organization or unification into an organic whole, which is itself also subject to continuous change.

To begin, we can draw a certain similarity between the starting points of Leibniz and Bergson. Leibniz's point of departure consisted in a criticism of the Cartesian understanding of material bodies in terms of extension alone, for the simple reason that something which remains infinitely divisible or discrete cannot sustain a unity of itself and therefore cannot explain movement. Whereas Leibniz's solution to this conundrum was to ascribe to these bodies an internal force that would explain their substantial unity and movement, he likened this unity to the soul. Heidegger argued that while Leibniz's starting point concerned initially the being of nature as a guiding clue towards the question of the being of beings, he soon provided the soul, the ego, or one's own being as the model of the unity that he attributed to every being as the most familiar and accessible being, insofar as "our very own being is a concern for us" (Heidegger, 1992, p. 85). On the other hand, Bergson's starting point in *Time and Free Will* was already consciousness or the self in his criticism of its consideration in terms of homogeneous multiplicity of its states. Although Bergson was criticized for remaining within the confines of a realist psychology in *Time and Free Will* in so far as he defined duration as lived time, but even after broadening the use of duration to describe being in general, he maintained in a number of his later texts that the duration of our inner lives is that which we are most familiar with, and therefore provides us

with a general clue to access it through an effort of intuition (Bergson, 1912, p. 1; Bergson, 2002, p.13; p.148; p.162).

When Bergson “delved deep into the inner life,” he developed a similar criticism against Cartesianism in a similar vein to Leibniz, namely that an infinitely divisible multiplicity thought in terms of extension could neither explain change nor bring about a true unity. Yet, Bergson never formulated the problem of the being of consciousness, or the nature of its being, in terms of its unity when he objected to the reduction of consciousness to its spatial representation, and therefore its objectification and quantification. Instead, he reset the problem in terms of its unique multiplicity. For Bergson, as long as the nature of the multiplicity that the conscious states assume was not first questioned, the question of unity remained superfluous and gave rise to opposing philosophical theories around falsely formulated problems. In *Time and Free Will*, he mainly targets two dominant theories of his time: the associationist view of the mind on the one hand and Kantianism on the other. Despite their differences, both schools fail to account for the concrete experience of temporality and therefore the continuity and the unity of consciousness or of the self, as they assume that the multiplicity of conscious states are given as a homogeneous, discrete multiplicity through the sensibility. Associationist theories, mainly empiricism, generally reduce the states of consciousness to the sensations assumed to be given as discrete, atomistic states and considered the unity and the continuity of the self over time in terms of a bundle brought about by imaginative associations. Kant, on the other hand, described sensations as apprehended as a homogeneous, discrete manifold, brought under the form of time through the productive synthesis of imagination but ultimately unified under an a-temporal Transcendental Ego as “my representations”. Bergson argues that in both cases, the unity brought about remains external and superadded to the manifold it unifies; and they thus render the temporal, living, concrete self to causal determination, and therefore fail to account for its freedom. At this point, Bergson insists that the problem is not how unity is thought, but mainly concerns the nature of the multiplicity that is supposed to be unified.<sup>3</sup> Against these theories, Bergson describes—by going back to the concrete experience in the immediacy of consciousness—an indivisible unity of the self or of consciousness sustained—without a supervening synthesis—from within the immediacy of consciousness in terms of a dynamic organization of a heterogeneous multiplicity.

Following Leibniz's introduction of *vis activa* as a positive and an internal force and Heidegger's interpretation of it in terms of drive, I think that it can be legitimately argued that Bergsonian duration as a continuous and self-differentiating organization

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<sup>3</sup> In “The Perception of Change” Bergson argues that the theories of personality assume “on the one hand, a series of distinct psychological states, each one invariable, ... and on the other hand an ego, no less invariable, which would serve as a support for them” and asks “How could this unity and this multiplicity meet? How, without either of them having duration—the first because change is superadded, the second because it is made up of elements which do not change—how could they constitute an ego which endures?” He states that “there is neither a rigid, immovable stratum nor distinct states passing over it like actors on a stage”, but only the “indivisible continuity of change”, which makes up our personality and which constitutes true duration. (Bergson, 2002, p. 149)

of a heterogeneous multiplicity sustains a dynamic unity by being driven from within itself; by being “drive”. If drive is that which primordially unifies, and is not external to the manifold that it unites but “carries within itself the multiplicity”, then this unification in Bergson is nothing other than the dynamic integration, interweaving of an indivisible multiplicity. As long as the multiplicity remains indivisible in this dynamic organization, its unity is simple and is subject to continuous change, as it cannot be separated from the multiplicity it unifies; the multiplicity itself has the character of drive as well, as made clear by Heidegger’s elucidation. Bergson himself clarifies the issue in his own, ever simple terminology:

Let us therefore admit that, if there is a multiplicity here, this multiplicity resembles no other. Shall we say then that this duration has unity? Undoubtedly a continuity of elements prolonged into one another partakes of unity as much as it does of multiplicity, but this moving, changing, colored and living unity scarcely resembles the abstract unity, empty and motionless, which the concept of pure unity circumscribes (Bergson, 2002, p. 169).

Bergson defines in this passage the unity in terms of the continuity of the elements prolonged into each other, or in terms of the internal relation of the multiplicity. It is neither an empty, immutable unity prior to that which it unifies nor posterior to it as a sum total of the parts; but a dynamically organized whole, which can at best be called “contemporary” with the multiplicity it unifies. If Bergson never formulates the problem of the being of consciousness in terms of its unity but formulates it in terms of its unique multiplicity, this is because its unity is organically, internally organized and ordered in a dynamic progress, and is therefore subject to continuous transformation. The Bergsonian definition of the self as a being “which ever remains the same and ever changing” gains its meaning in this context, as Bergson defines the self or the ego as immersed in this durational continuity of consciousness and therefore as being nothing outside of the organization of its states into a dynamic, organic whole (Breur, 2001). It is an enduring, living, changing self. Bergson describes this sameness and ever-changing character of the self in terms of the indivisibility of change, being definitive of duration. As long as it is the same, indivisible dynamic progress that prolongs all the states of consciousness into each other and at the same time unifies them into a simple, organic whole, it ever remains itself in the sense that it does not need anything else to sustain its unity. Bergson calls this durational existence substantial: “Its duration is substantial, indivisible insofar as it is pure duration” (Bergson, 2002, p. 75). Obviously, this substantial, indivisible continuity is nothing else than the prolongation of the past into the present: “inward experience in the pure state, in giving us a ‘substance’ whose very essence is to endure and consequently continually to prolong into the present and indestructible past...” (Bergson, 2002, p. 74) For Bergson, what is substantial—also that which remains itself, or primordially unifying to use the Heideggerian term—is the indivisibility of change, which he equates with the continuous prolongation of the past into the present: “the preservation of the past in the present is nothing else than the indivisibility of change.” (Bergson, 2002, p. 155). On the one hand, the self in its durational existence or the self as this durational existence remains the same (or identical with itself) as it is the endurance of its whole past in its continuity: “Of course,

if we shut our eyes to the indivisibility of change, to the fact that our most distant past adheres to our present and constitutes with it a single and identical uninterrupted change, it seems that the past is normally what is abolished" (Bergson, 2002, p. 153). The past is not abolished; it endures as a dynamic whole by prolonging itself into the present, thereby entails growth, maturation and makes up a character, while ruling out a self-loss through forgetting. On the other hand, the past prolongs itself into the present by undergoing a constant differentiation in its totality; in each stage, with the participation of a new element the whole is dynamically reorganised. Each stage, each moment consists of this alteration, differentiation of the whole of past. There is certainly a transcendence, self-surpassing in this differentiation of the whole that can never be given all at once in its indivisible singularity: "it is single and it cannot have already been perceived, since it concentrates in its indivisibility all that has been perceived and what the present is adding to it besides. It is an original moment of a no less original history." (Bergson, 1912, p. 7) As being indivisibly simple and that "which has never been perceived", it is not only new at each moment, but is also necessarily unforeseeable (Bergson, 1912, p. 7). Thus the future remains open.

At this point, we have to note a basic difference between Bergson's understanding of duration and a phenomenological description of an originary temporality. The transcendence, or self-surpassing, inherent in duration does not take the form of being ahead of itself or unifying itself in advance by projecting its own possibilities in the mode of expectancy, to speak in Heideggerian terms. The future is open in Bergson, but not because there is a striving to overcome itself by projecting itself—or in Husserl's parlance, a striving for ever-new fulfilments by protending in advance its further retentional modifications—which for both thinkers takes the form of a coming towards itself; coming towards or approaching oneself by means of protending one's own possibilities or further fulfilments. This coming to oneself through approximating fulfilments, which must continuously be renewed, entails a constant concern for its own unity.

I think that it is this concern for self-unity which precisely lacks in Bergson's understanding of duration, therefore giving rise to different conceptions of the future. The future is open in Bergson, not because it is protended and striven for, but because it is unforeseen and undeterminable. It is open, because the whole, which is defined exclusively in terms of the dynamic organisation of the past - is open.<sup>4</sup> Bergson makes this point clear when he writes: "For to foresee consists of projecting into the future what has been perceived in the past, or of imagining for a later time a new grouping, in a new order, of elements already perceived. But that which has never been perceived, and which is at the same time simple, is necessarily unforeseeable" (Bergson, 1912, p. 6-7). Bergson further thinks this openness in terms of creation or creativity. He argues that even the artist could not foresee the portrait as it implies a self-defeating

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<sup>4</sup> Deleuze stresses this openness of the whole in Bergson: if the whole is not giveable, it is because it is the Open, and because its nature is to change constantly, or to give rise to something new, in short to endure (Deleuze, 1997, p. 9). He adds in a footnote that the only resemblance between Heidegger and Bergson is that "both base the specificity of time on a conception of the open. p. 219n.



hypothesis that “to predict it would have been to produce it before it was produced,” while it is constantly modified, created in the work itself. He argues that the same holds even “with regard to the moments of our life, of which we are the artisans. Each of them is a kind of creation” (Bergson, 1912, p. 7). He talks about “creation of self by self” as “each of our states, at the moment of its issue, modifies our personality, being indeed the new form that we are just assuming” (Bergson, 1912, p. 7).

In so far as Bergson describes duration, the indivisible continuity of change as the prolongation of the past into the present, the past becomes the general element of the durational conception of time so that its drive character, not only its unity in terms of an organic whole, but its pressing on, its tensed character as well as its tendency for transition and striving, must be primarily described in terms of the past. Yet, if duration is an act, understood now in terms of drive, we must still further specify in what this act consists. Duration as drive, primordially unifying the multiplicity through the prolonging of elements into each other, entails a holding together in a certain tense way. As one commentator puts it clearly: “A unity that holds an indistinct, indivisible multiplicity is by definition tension (Kebede, 2019, p. 65). The continuous merging of past states into the present requires that they are compressed into each other with a certain tension or rhythm, “without having any tendency to externalise themselves in relation to one another” (Bergson, 2005, p. 141). Bergson calls this tense merging of multiplicity “contraction” or “condensation” later in *Matter and Memory*, a discussion of which remains out of the scope of the present study. I must conclude by stressing some essential points here. For Bergson, this contraction of the multiplicity, firstly, is the act itself, which cannot be separated from the contents it contracts. Secondly, the direction that affects this contraction is not from the present to the past as described in the phenomenological theories of temporalisation in terms of inclusionary retentive modifications, but on the contrary, it is from the past towards the present: It is the past that is prolonged into the present, which cannot be separated as an instant, but can only be thought as already past since the past continuously presses on and contracts itself into the “present”. Thirdly, it is the entire past, not only the immediate past relative to the living present that is pushed and contracted into the present. We can already observe what is uniquely Bergsonian here; not only in its difference from any associationist theories, but also from the phenomenological accounts of time and time-consciousness. For Bergson the past is not preserved through the conscious modification that takes the form of reiterated-reproduced (or retentive in Husserl’s parlance) modifications, which pushes away what is retained more and more into the past relative to the actual present, nor is the transition to a next phase effectuated with the expectation of the new or a greater fullness, or of its own possibilities. The past in Bergson preserves itself by being this very act of contraction, or by being drive, and future remains indeterminate.

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