

Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

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Perception and Time-Experience in Merleau-Ponty and Bergson

Abstract

Both Merleau-Ponty and Bergson underlined the significance of perception and temporal aspect of the subject. However, their account significantly differs. For Merleau-Ponty, the present has priority over past and future, as the subject perceives, acts, and exists in the “present”. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the priority of the present depends mostly on his prioritizing of perception and the acting subject. Bergson, on the other hand, considers perception in a relation to memory and present in a relation to duration, thus he emphasizes the possibility of organization and dis-organization of habit-world through varying degrees of repetition of useful memory-images. By showing duration as the condition of possibility for the experience of intuition, Bergson reveals the possibility of reversing habitual way of perceiving things.

Keywords

Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, Duration, Perception, Memory, Intuition.

Introduction

Merleau-Ponty and Bergson strongly emphasized the importance of understanding the time consciousness of the subject. One of the reasons behind this emphasis lies in their dissatisfaction over the insufficiency of traditional intellectualist and empiricist theories to explain the life of subject in terms of a categorical explanation of consciousness, as both philosophers think that understanding perception and time consciousness paves the way for understanding the dynamical aspect of the subjective life (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 28; Bergson 1991: 68). In this sense, in order to shed light on the tension between reflection and perception, body and soul, the determinacy and indeterminacy of perceptual content, an account of temporality is a crucial task for both philosophers. However, their accounts of temporality are significantly different. The difference is that Bergson sticks to a kind of dualism between body and soul, memory and perception, since he interprets such a dualism as a tension between opposing movements, which creates a possibility to go against the direction of habitual perception through intellectual intuition. Such a dualism stems from the conception of memory as an ontological being in Bergson's philosophy, as he thinks memory transcends consciousness and perception. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty gives a phenomenological account of perception; that is, he explains being as it is, in its present existence, and from a more unified perspective, beyond the dualisms of body and soul, memory and perception. In the following, I wish to argue that the lack of dualism in Merleau-Ponty leads him to understand temporality and spatiality through each other and interpret perception and temporality as determined by the spatiality of existence, which results in the determination of consciousness by spatiality.¹ I will argue that such a determination of temporality by spatiality can be confining in the sense that it prevents us from thinking about the multiple possibilities of temporality that a consciousness can experience independent of space; that is, for Merleau-Ponty, bodily presence and temporal presence overlap to the extent that it becomes difficult to think of perception of presence as being alienated from bodily presence. On the other hand, Bergson's distinction in kind between memory and perception makes possible to understand the tension between reflection and spontaneity in perception. In this sense, I hold Bergson's explanation of the dynamical relationship between memory and perception paves the way for creative perception, as it is possible in Bergson's philosophy to violate and reverse the habitual perception through expansion of memory. Moreover, the possibility for the varying degrees of synthesis between memory and perception explains the singularity and subjectivity of temporality and duration in a more efficient way than Merleau-Ponty, as I think, Merleau-Ponty's explanation of temporality as a

¹ As Dorothea Olkowski articulates: "Bergson agrees with Merleau-Ponty that perception tends to divide up matter according to our needs, thereby facilitating action. Yet this would require not a normative equilibrium like that of natural phenomena, not even a structure of behavior, but something else. It requires that perception be continually revised and revisable as our needs and interests change. When we imagine, as Merleau-Ponty does, that there is a normative mode of perception, guaranteed by the spatiality of the body without which there will be no signification, such a view presumes the existence of a spatialized equilibrium which guarantees those norms with respect to both behavior and meaning" (Olkowski 2002: 16).

general structure in relation to spatiality presupposes the same degree of attention to presence, which would lead to the impersonal explanation of temporality, valid for every subject. In this sense, I think, what is impersonal and personal in perception cannot be accounted for in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. On the other hand, for Bergson, presence is actualized in accordance with our attention, as when we perceive, we can tune our attention in varying degrees through the dynamic relationship with memory. There are multiple levels of contraction and expansion of memory. Hence, in order to account for the creativity and subjectivity in perception, it is necessary to distinguish duration from space, since in this way we can understand duration as a creative source, independent of spatiality. Here, my aim will be to shed light on the difference in kind between duration and space in the philosophy of Bergson, a distinction which leads us to understand duration in its own nature, not necessarily in accordance with space and bodily presence.

The Phenomenology of Perception and Temporality

In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty criticizes theories which explain being from a perspective that reduces being to cognition, sexuality, spatiality or any other abstract concept (1962: 410). For this reason, he conceptualizes temporality as one dimension of existence. Just as the subject cannot be reduced to sexuality and spatiality, she cannot be understood merely by temporality as we see in Bergson. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

We can now say about temporality what we said earlier about sexuality and spatiality, for example: existence can have no external or contingent attribute. It cannot be anything—spatial, sexual, temporal— without being so in its entirety, without taking up and carrying forward its ‘attributes’ and making them into so many dimensions of being, with the result that any analysis of any one of them that is at all searching really touches upon subjectivity itself. There are no principal and subordinate problems: all problems are concentric. (Ibid.)

For this reason, as opposed to Bergson, Merleau-Ponty refuses to regard time as a phenomenon distinct from the determination of spatiality and bodily presence. Contrary to Bergson, who shows the irreducible aspect of being in the realm of immanence or duration, Merleau-Ponty draws attention to the togetherness of various dimensions of being, whether cognitive, sexual, spatial or temporal. Thus, rather than explaining being with abstract concepts, Merleau-Ponty attempts to examine the temporal dimension of the subject in her concrete being, that is, in her presence as it is exactly in the presence whereby she is self-consciously² related to her world and existence. In order to give an account of the priority of presence in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, I will explain how Merleau-Ponty explains temporality.

² Merleau-Ponty uses ‘self-consciousness’ in the sense that objects have a meaning for the subject of experience. Thus, the subject is pre-reflectively aware of herself, as she is aware of the meaning of the object for herself.

Merleau-Ponty argues that in order to have a flow of time, there must be a subject who experiences it. If there were no subject, there would not be any observer to define events.

Change presupposes a certain position which I take up and from which I see things in procession before me: there are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality. Time presupposes a view of time (Ibid., 411).

According to Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not a passive recipient and recorder of time; but rather constitution of time necessitates consciousness. Perception of change would be impossible if we were to experience only the flow of time. We perceive the past through the present, that is, through the perception of a change of an object, as I see the change of the state of an object according to the present one. For Merleau-Ponty, the conception of time necessitates a relation to things (Ibid., 412). We have a perception of time as it stems from the change of the objects in their significance for us. Here, Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the subject's understanding of temporality depends on his emphasis that the subject has bodily presence; that is, bodily presence and temporal presence overlap. The consciousness of time is never independent of bodily presence and the world gains a temporal quality due to the subject, as the finite perspective of the subject imposes temporality on the objects which are just 'now' without the temporal perception of the subject. Thus, Merleau-Ponty argues, in order to have a sense of the past and future, there must be a subject who primarily lives the presence (Ibid., 424).

In this manner, for Merleau-Ponty, a lived memory is recalled if it makes sense for the present. The past is not an unconscious past, and it would not exist if the subject did not already have the significance of the past's presence (Ibid., 412). The perception will be new without any need for the synthesis of the present with the past, as opposed to Bergson for whom the past is always present in perception.³ Merleau-Ponty says:

If finally it is conceded that memories do not by themselves project themselves upon sensations but that consciousness compares them with the present data, retaining only those which accord with them, then one is admitting an original text which carries its meaning within itself, and setting it over against that of memories: this original text is perception itself (Ibid., 21).

Although Merleau-Ponty criticizes Husserlian internal-time consciousness as being serial⁴, he sticks to the notion of presence having priority over the past and future

³ As Merleau-Ponty explicates his criticism of Bergson: "To perceive is not to experience a host of impressions accompanied by memories capable of clinching them; it is to see, standing forth from a cluster of data, an immanent significance without which no appeal to memory is possible. To remember is not to bring into the focus of consciousness a self-subsistent picture of the past; it is to thrust deeply into the horizon of the past and take apart step by step the interlocked perspectives until the experiences which it epitomizes are as if relived in their temporal setting. To perceive is not to remember." (1962: 22)

⁴ For Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Husserl's internal time consciousness see Kelly Michael R. (2010) "L'ecart: Merleau-Ponty's separation from Husserl; Or, Absolute Time Constituting

which leads him to stabilize time with bodily presence; that is, the emphasis on the necessary condition of presence in temporality brings about the determination and unification of temporality with bodily presence. He also argues that the priority of presence is necessary in order to think about the possibility of novel experience (Ibid., 84-85). If the past were to snowball upon itself as Bergson claims, there would be no novelty. But the past cannot determine the presence, as presence must be impersonal to a certain extent in order for the subject to be open to novelty.⁵

Merleau-Ponty argues against Bergson that the presupposition of thinking freely in the deepness of memory would be disregarding the distinctions between present, past and future, as all thinking is actualized in the present, and for the present purpose. For Bergson, on the other hand, making distinctions between past, present, and future would be thinking of time as being serial and in terms of space; that is we would be thinking of past, present and future as if they are succeeding each other as the objects in space (1910: 26). However, such a conceptualization of time consciousness would prevent understanding time in its own nature; that is, it is to intuit duration in its intertwined heterogeneous multiplicity (Ibid., 81). In space, objects succeed each other, and we apply this structure of succession of objects to duration. On the other hand, in duration, we do not experience heterogeneous multiplicities as succeeding each other (Ibid., 2). But Merleau-Ponty notes here that such a distinction between the spatial and temporal realms is both insufficient and unnecessary (1962: 415n). It is insufficient, because the distinction of time from the spatial realm does not suggest intuition about the authentic time, and it is unnecessary, since that time should have been differentiated from space by an understanding that space is objective. When we explicate our basic relationship to space, we do not see space as the things arranged in one another. We do not see it as objective (Ibid., 303-304, 415n). If the perspective of the subject is applied to the perception of bodily space, we do not need any longer to make a distinction between objective space and subjective time (Ibid., 415n).

Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the unity of time and space brings us once again to think of temporality and spatiality in terms of each other. In fact, Merleau-Ponty specifically pays attention to the condition of the possibility for raising oneself above the interests of bodily space and bodily presence. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he shows the possibility of acting differently through habitualized bodily acts. For example, Merleau-Ponty gives the example of a patient who cannot move without thinking and representing what he is doing (Ibid., 104). Contrary to the normal subject, when he is engaged in an action, he becomes too busy dealing with the performance of the act to enjoy the action. Having internalized bodily actions, the normal subject can open herself to the possibilities beyond her carnal being and spatial existence. On the

Consciousness." in *Merleau-Ponty at the Limits of Religion, Art, and Perception* edit. Semonovitch Kascha and DeRoo Neal Continuum Publishing.

⁵ Ibid., p. 84 "While I am overcome by some grief and wholly given over to my distress, my eyes already stray in front of me, and are drawn, despite everything, to some shining object, and thereupon resume their autonomous existence. Following upon that minute into which we wanted to compress our whole life, time or at least pre-personal time, begins once more to flow, carrying away, if not our resolution, at least heartfelt emotions which sustained it."

contrary, the patient has firstly to deal with how to actualize and organize bodily actions (Ibid.,105). Thus, it becomes too difficult for her to vary her movements, since contrary to the normal subject, the patient has to build up her movements externally by representing the action to herself. In this way, Merleau-Ponty explains the possibility for creative action on the condition of habitualized acts through embodied bodily space. He does not mention the possibility of the multiplicity of different consciousness, or different temporalities, as he emphasizes understanding temporality through embodied space. As Dorothea Olkowski points out:

nevertheless, this intimacy of the physical and physiological with the psychological and cognitive is built upon an understanding of the nature of the relations between consciousness and nature, or as Freud would say, life and death, which although it seeks to break free of the physiological determinism, remains fettered by precisely the system of ideas (2002: 13).

But how are different ways to be a consciousness possible? In order to understand the dynamism of temporality and multiple ways for consciousness to be, we should understand how Bergson explains the relationship between duration and space as he establishes his conception of perception and memory upon these dichotomies.

Duration and Space in Bergson

It is generally held that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a philosophy of consciousness while the philosophy of Bergson is a philosophy of unconsciousness. The reason for this extreme distinction is that Bergson emphasizes memory, while Merleau-Ponty emphasizes presence and gives a phenomenological account of perception; that is, Merleau-Ponty explains perception as it is, as the subject experiences it. Bergson, on the other hand, is not concerned merely with the explanation of perception of presence. As Bergson himself puts it: "What you have to explain then, is not, how perception arises, but, how it is limited, since it should be the image of the whole, and is in fact reduced to the image of what interests you" (1991: 40).

For Bergson, memory transcends consciousness as it cannot completely be activated in presence. Numerous memories which we never remember are powerless and ineffective (Ibid., 127). However, unconscious memories affect the way we act and shape subjective experience, we are not aware of them. "The whole of our past psychical life conditions our present state, without being its necessary determinant; whole, also, it reveals itself in our character, although none of its past states manifests itself explicitly in character" (Ibid.,148). In this sense, explanation of consciousness is on a par with explanation of what is actual, what is closely known by the subject (Ibid., 145). And, the denial of the unconscious past is like the denial of the existence of what we do not perceive with sense-organs (Ibid., 142).

To show that complex organisms have more possibilities for action, Bergson makes a clear distinction between perception and affection, that is, between transcendence and immanence. He argues that in complex organisms, perception is not merely a reaction to stimulus, but it can perceive possible actions for reaction (Ibid., 56). Through affection, body feels the need to react to the stimulus, but, by perceiving,

body experiences remoteness and nearness of a danger (Ibid.,57). In perception, the subject experiences her body differently from the objects, since she feels the stimulus that is imposed upon her and she has the possibility of response (Ibid., 56). Thus, there is a difference in kind, as there is an opposing direction between inner perception of my body, that is affection, and perception of other objects (Ibid.). Bergson claims that the human body is such a complex organism that it has the possibility to act in varying degrees of slowness, which paves the way for the possibility of reacting contrary to impulses (Ibid., 144, 222). In this sense, the possibility of multiple degrees of slowness also implies the singular temporality of every subject. That is, a lived experience may cause an unexpected response in an organism, which will affect the character of that being (Ibid.,169).

Bergson makes a distinction between homogenous space and heterogeneous duration (1910:85-86)⁶. Homogenous space is the realm of succession of things, while duration is the multiplicity of intertwined qualitative differences (Ibid.,108-109). He claims that when we try to understand time as instants which succeed each other, we understand time in terms of space and such a conceptualization of time reduces the qualitative differences of duration into quantity (Ibid., 89-90). And expression of duration through language will not be adequate to the phenomena and language would fall to grasp qualitative differences of duration (Ibid., 122, 129). However, this does not mean that there is not a better explanation with words; rather it means that concepts and words cannot completely account for multiple aspects of duration; that is, concepts fail to account for the singularity of subjective duration, as Bergson also sees verbal expression as spatialization, since it tends to be repeated, thus embodied and stabilized (Ibid., 130-131). In this sense, a spatial explanation is not sufficient to explain the realm of duration which can only be grasped within through intuition. We observe things, we find the result of the same repetitive actions and we act upon this common sense knowledge. In the same way, we attribute the same causal relationships to the realm of consciousness. For Bergson, the inability and failure of metaphysical or psychological theories in understanding consciousness stem from the fact that they explain consciousness in terms of space (Ibid., 20). We establish causal relationships and disregard what is irreducible and unattended in duration. (Ibid.,199-200). That is, we focus on sameness and establish theories on the repetitive phenomenon, not on the differentiation of duration (Ibid., 202). On the other hand, it is duration which adds a new perspective to a static or determined thought and idea.

⁶ Bergson also mentions of homogeneous time, but homogeneous time is only possible when we think of time in terms of space. Duration is never homogeneous, thus, homogeneous time will be spatialization of time. Then, if we divide time into hours, days, months etc. that will understanding of time in terms of space not in terms of duration. The difference in kind is between homogenous space and heterogeneous duration. As stated in *Time and Free Will*: “It follows from this analysis that space alone is homogeneous, that objects in space form a discrete multiplicity, and that every discrete multiplicity is got by a process of unfolding in space(....)The space employed for this purpose is just that which is called homogeneous time” (1910: 121).

However, when Bergson makes a distinction between heterogeneous multiplicity of duration and homogenous space, between matter and memory or body and spirit, he does this in order to show the difference in kind between these dual movements (1991: 168). This dualism is fruitful in the sense that it allows us to see not only differences of degree, but also differences in kind, that is, the opposing directions of movements. One of the aims of Bergson in *Matter and Memory* is to find a balance between these opposing tendencies, since good sense, which is different from common sense, can be attained through the continuous dynamic relationship between matter and memory (Ibid., 153, 173). Bergson says that neither the man of impulse nor the dreamer has good sense. In this sense, both intellect and intuition are vital aspects of consciousness, but their function and operation are different.

Perception and Memory in Bergson

Having made a distinction between homogenous space and heterogeneous time, Bergson explains his theory of perception and memory in parallel with these conceptions. In perception, the subject is directed to the objects for her interest. She repeats the same useful actions in order to get the same practical results, as she depends on the already known common sense. However, the utilitarian aspect of perception is not the only capability of consciousness (Bergson 1991: 83). Duration transcends perception, so it is possible to enlarge perception towards memory and to be distracted from the interests of the given situation and bodily presence. We can dream or contemplate past memories, distracting ourselves from the utility of objects (Ibid., 162-163). For this reason, memory is essentially spiritual, as when we dream, we are distracted from the useful, practical actions in presence (Ibid., 83).

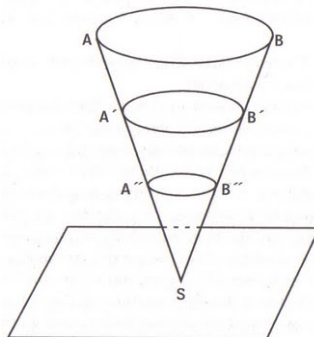
Bergson makes a distinction between two different kinds of memories: the habit memory and recollective memory (Ibid., 79). In perceiving, we act on habit memory as we are concerned with objects for their utility and action (Ibid., 82). The directedness towards objects for utility is a general behavior in the sense that it is habitualized and repeated continuously by the subject. On the other hand, habitualized perception can be surpassed through intuition, which is the knowledge of singularity; that is, it is being “in sympathy with the object” in question. As Bergson claims: “We call intuition here the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible” (2002:161). Contrary to perception, which is interested in objects for their utility, intuition is the continuous effort to reach the knowledge of the singular object beyond utility.⁷ Bergson even says

⁷ Bergson’s intuition as a philosophical method may remind us of the Husserlian Epoche, through which we bracket the natural world in order to turn back to the essences and seek experience at its source. As Hanne Jacobs and Trevor Peri point out: “...for both Bergson and Husserl, true philosophical thought involves a kind of intuitive experience that is only possible once we have put aside habitual interests and the way of thinking that is customary in daily life. For both philosophers, since this experience is intuitive, and not constructive, it is akin to what we normally call seeing. But since both are convinced that this new way of seeing is not natural, they stress that, as philosophers, we must first learn to see differently. So, for example, Husserl writes that ‘the phenomenologist, first of the philosopher, like that of

that intuition is violence to the habitual process of consciousness. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, he says that:

But the truth is that our mind is able to follow the reverse procedure. It can be installed in the mobile reality, adopt its ceaselessly changing direction, in short, grasp it intuitively. But to do that, it must do itself violence, reverse the direction of operation by which it ordinarily thinks, continually upsetting its categories, or rather, recasting them. In so doing it will arrive at fluid concepts, capable of following reality in all its windings and of adopting the very movement of the inner life of things. Only in that way will a progressive philosophy be constituted, freed from the disputes which arise between the schools, capable of resolving problems naturally because it will be rid of the artificial terms chosen in stating them. *To philosophize means to reverse the normal direction of the workings of thought* (2002: 190).

In order to understand how Bergson explicates the condition of the possibility of intuition, we should consider how he understands the flow of duration and perception of presence and examine his cone image to see how he makes a distinction between memory and perception.



If we suppose hypothetically that the subject is in summit S, which is conceptualized as pure perception, she will react in accordance with her interests and apply the associations through which she can carry out acts which are useful (Bergson 1991: 163). This is the tendency of every organism for the sake of survival. The base AB is the realm of pure memory, that is, singular, personal recollections (Ibid., 152). The subject living in the deepness of pure memory is a mere dreamer, as the associations are infinite and limitless (Ibid., 153-155). We can associate every memory with another, as the necessities of life do not define the character of associations in this realm (Ibid., 168). If someone behaves only in accordance with the instantaneous reactions of habitual memory, she will ignore the richness of virtuality in pure memory through which she can intuit difference. On the other hand, if she limits herself to pure recollection, she just becomes a dreamer and cannot attend to the “now” and to life.

the artist, _is precisely to see and to make us see what we do not naturally perceive’ (PM 135/1370). For Husserl, this new way of seeing is the transcendental experience that is facilitated by the transcendental reduction; for Bergson, this seeing is the immediate experience of duration enabled by his method of intuition” (Jacobs & Trevor 2010: 101).

However, Bergson concedes that the normal life of the subject is in neither extreme, but between them (Ibid., 153). These extremes are hypothetical abstractions in order to understand the nature of action and perception. After noting such differences in kind, Bergson shows their difference of degree, as both abstractions, that is, pure memory and pure perception, are in contact with each other. “There is not, in man at least, purely sensori-motor state, any more than there is in him imaginative life without some slight activity beneath it” (Ibid., 168).

Bodily presence makes use of the sensori-motor as it is directed towards action and utilizes useful memory-images for the realization of the present action (1991: 168-169). In this sense, the past is present for utilization by present action. The nearer the AB parts are to the present action, the more they strengthen their repetition. In this way, memory works for presence in its totality (Ibid., 168). It contracts itself to presence, and the useless part is recollected in memory. For this reason, Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Bergson is misleading, as the past does not snowball upon presence completely. It cannot, since for Bergson, duration always transcends presence and consciousness, and as shown in the cone image, presence makes use of past for utility. Thus, memory also appears to itself as being directed towards the situation, while presence utilizes parts of memory related to it. For this reason, we can say that reflection and spontaneity are possible through the varying degrees of association and habitualized acts.

Everything happens, then as though our recollections were repeated an infinite number of times in these many possible reductions of our past life. They take a more common form when memory shrinks most, more personal when it widens out, and they thus enter into an unlimited number of different ‘systematizations’ (Bergson 1991: 169).

Bergson searches for the balance between the two kinds of memories. The perception of presence mostly depends on habitual memory. We usually act spontaneously as we have habitualized and embodied knowledge of things. The spontaneous memory’s actions prolong themselves into reaction to the immediate stimulus. As Lawlor also points out, Bergson asserts that habitual memory is more natural, since the present situation by default requires immediate attention, in which we depend on repetitions.

Bergson explicitly says that the recording of perceptual images happens according to ‘a natural necessity’. So, what is less natural about regressive memory? What is less natural is that I do not pay attention to life when I dream or hallucinate, and not pay attention to life in a sense not only to be dead, but also to be free of life’s necessities, both of which suggest spirit (2003: 34).

In this sense, unlike pure memory, which has the singular, personal and spontaneous memory-images, habit memory is impersonal as it is directed towards learned repeated responses and actions (Bergson 1991: 242). Habitual memory internalizes useful knowledge, and thus it extends practical knowledge into bodily reactions. In fact, it is in this practical realm in which Merleau-Ponty explains perception. In this sense, since Merleau-Ponty defines habitual perception, he does not explain the multiple degrees of tensions between perception and memory.

On the other hand, for Bergson, habitual perception has the possibility to function in different planes of consciousness, that is, in varying tensions between generality and singularity (Ibid., 210). The past stays hidden as we are directed to present action. One can dream about the past, repeating the actions in her mind, trying to remember every detail of it. Or one can distract herself from the past, and focus on the fulfillment of the actions and tasks in the present. The former would be a mere dreamer, Bergson says, and the latter would be a conscious automaton (Ibid., 198). But the normal subject is not at these two extremes. The former focuses on revitalizing and giving life to the differences, by thinking about every detail, while the latter attends to sameness and resemblances and applies general knowledge to action.

But these two extreme states, the one of entirely contemplative memory which apprehends only the singular in its vision, the other of a purely motor memory which stamps the note of generality on its action, are really separate and fully visible only in exceptional cases. In normal life, they are interpenetrating, so that each has to abandon some part of its original purity (Bergson 1991: 155).

In this sense, the subject cannot be equal to her duration, that is, she cannot coincide with duration, as we are naturally directed towards perception and bodily presence. For this reason, I think, Bergson would agree with Merleau-Ponty, in the sense that having a body both presents possibilities as well as it sets limitations.⁸ On the other hand, Bergson's project is to surpass the spatial limitations through actualizing virtual memory, which will be clear in the following part. In *Matter and Memory*, he firstly gives an account of perception, how it is directed towards utility and determined by bodily space, but he deepens his research beyond perception, and looks for the condition of the possibility to go against the direction of utility and practical interests of perception. For him, consciousness is what is active in presence; however, there is more to duration as there are unconscious memories which are not actualized yet. In this sense, the creation will be a novel spatialization, since every creation is an expression, and the expression will again be spatialization as it tends to be repeated, but it can be surpassed in a novel way, as the virtual memory is infinite.

Virtual Memory and Singularity

So far, we have seen how Bergson defines habit memory, through which we acquire bodily dispositions and motor skills. The second memory is virtual memory—which we have called recollective memory in the previous section—which is the deepest memory in the cone that dissociates into multiplicity. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson explains that we pay attention to sameness and repetition in perception, since that it is more practical for survival (1922). But, we are not confined to repetitive memory, as for example artists show there are innumerable novel ways of perceiving.

⁸ Dorothea Olkowski points out that “Phenomenology of Perception can even be considered as rewriting of Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* from the perspective of spatiality and pure perception in order to contest the very existence of an affective life, which Bergson calls duration”(2002:12).

We have to go deeper, from superficial perception, to find out what is hidden, unattended in perception, and to grasp the difference in duration.

How are sameness and abstractions constituted and how can we grasp the difference of the singular through intuition? The capability of abstraction depends on the fact that we can reflect on things with their similar qualities (Bergson 2002: 56). We can focus on the perception of individual differences of objects, and in reflection we can explore the generality behind the perception of the individual.

In one sense, nothing resembles anything, since all objects are different. In another sense everything resembles everything, since one always will find, by climbing high enough on the ladder of generalities, some artificial genus into which different objects taken at random can go (Ibid., 54-55).

In perception, we are neither confined to mere individuals nor to abstract ideas (Bergson 1991: 158). Perception has the possibility of moving between generality and singularity; that is, the subject can rely on impersonal habitual memory or she can realize a more personal perception, trying for a more dynamical relationship between habitual and virtual memory (Ibid., 106). Bergson gives examples from animals and organisms in order to explicate the generality of behavior. He infers that the generality of behavior which is repeated in similar situations depends on resemblance and similarity, and is not capable of grasping difference.

In short, we can follow from the mineral to the plant, from the plant to the simplest conscious beings, from the animal to man, the progress of the operation by which things and beings seize from their surroundings that which attracts them, that which interests them practically, without needing any effort of abstraction, simply because the rest of surroundings takes no hold upon them: this similarity of reaction following actions superficially different is the germ which the human consciousness develops into general ideas (Ibid., 159-160).

Reflecting upon this habitual process would be different from the generality of behavior which is also found in simpler organisms. Thus, actualizing general habitual memory is a different activity of mind than reflecting upon its generality, as we can constitute more differentiated abstractions (Bergson 2002: 56-57). Realizing oneself in accordance with the utility of the situation is different from extracting generalities which may open the path to novelty in perception.

Merleau-Ponty also makes a distinction between concrete movements and abstract movements (1962: 104). For example, the patient he gives as an example, is capable of concrete movements; that is, he can take hold of a thing and move his arm and legs. However, he is not capable of abstract movements, that is, he cannot describe the position of his body, as he cannot objectify it. He performs abstract movements only if he is showed how to do them, and only if he prepares himself and practices the movements (Ibid., 103). When he is told to point to some part of his body, he is capable of pointing only if he touches that part. The capability of touching and inability to point without touching signifies that the patient could not abstract and objectify his movements freely. In order to perform an act, he has to repeat the descriptions to himself, and he needs to practice before performing that action (Ibid., 104). On the other hand, a normal subject does not need to posit what she will do before action, since she

internalizes the actions and is already familiar with the practice of the objects. The normal subject has a phenomenal body, not an objective one, that is, she has an embodied pre-reflective functional knowledge of objects. She does not need to objectify her body and the object before using them, as the objects are in her intentional field (Ibid., 105). The phenomenal field also makes it possible for the normal subject to alienate herself from the object; that is, he can enjoy performing the act, as he can get out of the object's carnal presence and represent it in his imagination. Contrary to the normal subject, the patient has to build up his movements and can only represent how to act and it becomes too difficult to vary his movements. Abstract movement therefore is possible by means of intentionally performed concrete movements. It is in this way possible to get out of spatiality and enter into the realm of possibilities.

Concrete movement is therefore centripetal whereas abstract movement is centrifugal. The former occurs in the realm of being or of the actual, the latter on the other hand in that of the virtual or non-existent; the first adheres to a given background, the second throws out its own background (Ibid.,111).

While Merleau-Ponty explains the capability of abstraction through habitualized bodily actions, Bergson deepens the capability of abstraction through his notion of intuition, which according to Merleau-Ponty is inexpressible, thus meaningless. In this sense, in Merleau-Ponty we see that the normal subject is already equipped with the capabilities of abstract movements. Perception does not demand continuous effort for novel perception, as the temporal subject is in fact already open to the unexpected novelties that the phenomenal field presents. On the other hand, for Bergson, it is through the effort of the subject that habitual memory can be violated, and through virtual memory, consciousness of presence can be expanded and be the source for creative ways of perception. This does not mean that Bergson does not affirm novelty and confrontation with the unexpected in the perceptual field. But in the same way in which he seeks to surpass perception through memory, he seeks the ground for creativity beyond the novelties of the phenomenal field. Novel ways of perception demand continuous effort, as it is difficult to go against the habitual way of perception. Pure perception is general and impersonal. Habitual memory does not demand a continuous effort for its application, as it is embodied, thus more effective in perception. Since habitual memory immediately shapes perception, it is 'more natural'. However, we have unconscious past memories which are not activated in presence. The useful associations are activated for the utility of the situation. In this way they constitute a habit, which becomes general and easily accessible. On the other hand, memories of the unconscious past which are not practical for the present time are still present. They are not connected to a general habit, or an idea, or a concept, and in this sense, they are singular and personal, contrary to the generality of impersonal perception. They can be capricious as Bergson notes, in the sense that they can spontaneously disrupt the fluidity of perception. However, the existence of capricious singular memories which can disturb perception points to the possibility of the interval in perception, the interval between excitation and reaction which paves the way for choice (Bergson 1991:222). To call singular memories for the utility of the present situation demands effort, as it does violence to memorized perception and behavior.

In this way, we can explain the contraction of perception and dilatation of memory in order to show the dynamic movement between matter and memory. For Bergson, the body is the realm where perception and consciousness are actualized. Thus, it is at the summit of the inverted cone. However, we have seen that not every memory is actualized. The duration of the subject includes the unconscious, virtual past. Rather than claiming the primacy of presence and perception, we should note that for Bergson presence is part of the duration which is thick with the infinite past. Memory contracts itself in perception as useful knowledge becomes effective in order to perform an action. Thus perception is action, and it is the contraction of useful memory-images, which constitutes habitual memory.

However, we can violate the natural movement by virtual memory, by expanding consciousness by situating consciousness of presence in the flowing duration which is not ordered for the practicality of the action. This is the turn of experience for Bergson, as we turn our attention from matter and utility to the spirit and to impractical virtual memory (1991: 184)⁹. This reverse direction from perception to duration turns from homogenous spatial succession of things to the interpenetrated multiplicity of duration, that is, it tries to unfold multiple singular memories and psychical states intermingled with each other, which have not been generalized into thoughts, definitions and concepts, and which have not got into the action of perception. It is exactly this unconscious multiple singularity of the past which is the source of novelty and creativity, as the past is the infinite source for what has not been actualized before. Thus, this past is not a static past of definite essences like Plato's ideas, but a virtual source for the future and a movement for multiple ways of perceiving and acting. (See Lawlor 2003: 44)

Intuition

Merleau-Ponty criticism of Bergsonian intuition stems from the bifurcation of two philosophers on the conceptualization of temporality and space. Even though Merleau-Ponty acknowledges the unconscious and irreducible past in his later book *The Visible and the Invisible*, he still criticizes Bergsonian notion of time.¹⁰ One of the

⁹ "experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* where, taking a bias in the direction of utility, it becomes properly *human* experience."

¹⁰ In *Temporality of Life, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and the Immemorial Past*, Alia Al-Saji sheds light on the role of the unconscious in Merleau-Ponty's later work *The Visible and the Invisible* (2007). She holds that *The Visible and the Invisible* has many Bergsonian dimensions in the sense that the past has a constitutive role for the present. However, I think although Merleau-Ponty has the notion of an ontological past which 'has never been present', he does not have the distinct notion of duration which makes possible the interfusion of moments and entering into 'multiple levels of durations. From the Bergsonian perspective, Merleau-Ponty's project is still spatial, as Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the body and his description of reversibility of seeing and being seen, touching and being touched is spatial which does not allow for the possibility of the intuitional experience.

reasons of Merleau-Ponty's criticism is that intuition is inexpressible (1962: 57-58).¹¹ Secondly, due to embodied character of our existence, for Merleau-Ponty coincidence with the object is an impossible phenomenon, while for Bergson such a coincidence with the object is possible through intuition. Merleau-Ponty says:

When I find again the actual world such as it is, under my hands, under my eyes, up against my body, I find much more than an object: a Being of which my vision is a part, a visibility older than my operations or my acts. But this does not mean that there was a fusion or coinciding of me with it: on the contrary, this occurs because a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping and encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things. Our intuition said Bergson is a reflection, and he was right; his intuition shares with the philosophies of reflection a sort of supralapsarian bias: the secret of being is in an integrity that is behind us. Like the philosophies of reflection what Bergson lacks is double reference, the identity of retiring into oneself with leaving of oneself, of the lived through with distance (1969: 123).

In this sense, although Merleau-Ponty's emphasis changes direction to examine the unconscious in *The Visible and the Invisible*, he criticizes the notion of intuition as an impossible integrity between subject and object, a bias which reflective and intellectualist philosophies share. On the other hand, in fact, Bergson criticizes both empiricist and intellectualist theories while explaining the possibility of intuition. According to Bergson, since perception parcels out and reduces the object in accordance with its necessity, the subject perceives less than the object has. Bergson says that duration contracts itself towards matter, which is perception, and this parceling is the activity of the intellect, which tends to perceive the discontinuous and stabilized aspects of the object (2002:36). However, the reverse activity of mind is possible, as consciousness is also able to look within, and grasp the multiplicity of duration through intuition. While intuition is a way to grasp the undivided continuity of duration, intellect is busy with the discontinuous form of matter, ordered knowledge, and clear-cut distinctions (Bergson 2002:35)¹².

¹¹ "The immediate was therefore a lonely, blind and mute life. The return to the phenomenal presents none of these peculiarities. The sensible configuration of an object or a gesture, which the criticism of the constancy hypothesis brings before our eyes, is not grasped in some inexpressible coincidence, it 'is understood' through a sort of act of appropriation which we all experience when we say that we have 'found' the rabbit in the foliage of a puzzle, or that we have 'caught' a slight gesture" (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 57-58).

¹² In this sense, intuition is a creative act beyond stabilized thoughts and clear-cut concepts. For this reason, Bergson says that it is method of philosophy. As Frédéric Worms indicates: "This intuition is indeed the effect of sight or at least the feeling of this will, can only show itself through acts, creations that are themselves new and singular philosophies...In this sense, philosophy is like art or moral and religious creation, 'a simple act': 'the spirit that one will bring back to real duration will already live th eintuitive life and its knowledge will already be philosophy'(TFW 140/1364)" (Worms 2010: 256).

When we are reminded once again of the difference between the heterogeneous multiplicity of duration and the homogenous multiplicity of space, we can reconsider Merleau-Ponty's critique of Bergsonian intuition through coincidence with the object. Coincidence would not make sense if the subject only operated in perception, which is directed towards space and matter, namely, homogenous multiplicity. It could not be meaningful if we think of intuition as coincidence in terms of successive relations of space. However, coincidence is possible if we grasp duration in terms of heterogeneous multiplicity intertwined in itself (Bergson 2002:32). On the other hand, although Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the unconscious and non-existent past, he interprets the unconscious past in terms of visibility. In this sense, his interpretation of the invisible is still in relation to spatiality and for this reason, he still holds on to the phenomenological account of perception. On the other hand, intuition is the effort to situate oneself in the intertwined multiple psychological states of duration. In this sense, contrary to the generality of perception, intuition is the grasp of the singular, a different synthesis which has not been thought before by the subject. However, the condition of the possibility for intuition as coincidence can be conceptualized if the nature of duration is distinguished from that of spatiality.

Conclusion¹³

In this paper, I have tried to compare Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and temporality to that of Bergson, and show that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception mostly operates in the intersection of bodily presence and consciousness, which Bergson explains as the utilitarian aspect of perception. On the other hand, I argued that the natural inclination of habitual memory in perception can be violated or slowed down through the virtual memory and dilatation of consciousness which is the infinite source of novelty. Through virtual memory, the subject has the possibility to reverse the natural inclination of habitual perception, and the subject can expand the temporality of affections. In this sense, contrary to Merleau-Ponty's account of perception which functions in the practical phenomenal field, perception, for Bergson, is thick with memory which allows the subject of experience to realize the infinite possibilities to extend perception towards virtual memory. While Merleau-Ponty explains perceptual experience as it is, Bergson's aims understand more about the possibility of novel way of perceiving things. For this reason, Bergson searches for the genealogy of perception rather than giving the description of the phenomenology of perception. By showing duration as the condition of possibility for the experience of intuition, Bergson shows the possibility of reversing habitual way of perceiving things. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty rather explains impersonal perception, and how it operates in presence. Thus, his explanation of temporality in relation to spatial existence does not suggest violence and reversal of habitual memory. For this reason, his critique of Bergson remains limited to the spatiality of bodily presence.

¹³ I thank to support from Tubitak Project 114K348.

Merleau-Ponty ve Bergson'da Algı ve Zaman Deneyimi

Merleau-Ponty ve Bergson, idealist ve ampirik felsefelerin öznenin hayatını anlamak için yetersiz olduğunu vurgulayarak, bilinci eylemde anlamaya çalışmışlardır. Sabit kategorilerin ötesinde bir özne anlayışı sunmak için özneyi pratik hayatta anlamak ve öznenin zaman bilincini açıklamak iki filozof için de temel bir meseledir. Fakat iki filozofun zaman ve algı kavramları birbirinden farklılık gösterir. Bergson'a göre algı, alışkanlıkların yönettiği bir düzlemdir ve bilinç pratik hayata yönelmekten daha farklı imkanlar da sunar. Bergson'a göre algı hafızanın işe yarayan imgelerinin bir tekrarı olduğu için, bu tekrarı bozmak ve yeniden organize etmek de mümkündür. Bütün organizmalar hayatta kalmak zorundadır; oysa sadece insan pratik olmayanla da ilgilenir ve eylemden kendini geri çekebilir. Bergson'a göre insanın pratik olanla arasına mesafe koyabilmesi hafıza ile mümkündür ve öznenin tinsel yaşamının kaynağıdır. Bu nedenle Bergson hem algı-hafıza, hem de ruh-beden dualizmine bağlı kalır. Zira Bergson bu dualizmleri, alışlageldik algıyı dönüştürmeye imkan veren birbirine zıt hareketlerin gerilimi olarak yorumlar. Merleau-Ponty'ye göre ise bu dualizmler öznenin hayatını tek bir yönden ele almak, onu bir kavrama indirgemek demektir. *Algının Fenomenolojisi* özneyi akla, zamana ya da cinsellik gibi herhangi bir soyut kavrama indirgmeden bütüncül bir perspektiften ele alır. Fakat Merleau-Ponty'nin özneyi algıda nasıl beliriyorsa öyle ele alış, algıyı sadece beden ve mekan üzerinden düşünmeyi gerektirir. Bu makalede Merleau-Ponty'de bu tarz düalizmlere rastlanmayışının, onu zamanı mekana, mekanıysa zamana başvurarak anlamaya sevkettiğini, ve bununsa bilincin mekanla kısıtlanmasından sonucunu doğurduğunu göstereceğim. Merleau-Ponty'nin fenomenolojisi zamanın mekanla birlikteliğinin genel yapısını, mevcudiyete her zaman aynı dikkatin gösterildiği varsayımından hareketle, her özne için geçerli olan, kişisiz bir bilinç olarak ele alır. Bergson'a göre ise algı hafıza ile sürekli iç içe olduğundan, şimdiye yönelirken çeşitli derecelerde hafıza ile ilişki kurmak mümkündür. Algı çevreye uyum gösteren eyleme yönelik bir algı olduğu ölçüde kişisiz ve geneldir; öte yandan, hafızadaki tekil ve kişisel imgelerle kurulan çeşitli sentezler yoluyla farklı seviyelerde yeni algı düzlemleri temin edilebilir. Özel bilincin kapasitesi algıyla ve pratik hayatla sınırlı değildir. Algı hafızanın bir hareketi ise, bu hareketi yönünün tersine çevirmek de mümkündür. Böylelikle Bergson'un felsefesinde alışlageldik algıyı dönüştürmenin imkanı doğar.

Algının Fenomenolojisi'nde Merleau-Ponty özneyi bilişe, cinselliğe, mekansallığa ya da herhangi bir soyut kavrama indirgeyen tüm teorileri eleştirir. Varoluş tek bir perspektiften açıklanamayacak kadar çok yönlüdür ve öznenin yaşamının tüm yönleri eşit derecede önemlidir. Varoluşu bir teoriye indirgemek, onu dışardan bir kavramla tanımlamak, şeyleştirmek olur. Bu yüzden, varoluş zamansallıkla da açıklanamaz. Zaman, öznenin daha temel, ya da onu önceleyen bir şey değildir. Böylelikle, Merleau-Ponty, Bergson'un aksine, zamanı mekandan ve bedensel varoluşundan ayırmaksızın anlamaya çalışır. Bergson *süre* ve hafızanın indirgenemez olduğunu gösterirken, Merleau-Ponty öznenin zamansal yönünü somut varoluşunda, dünyayla ve varoluşla ilişkisi içerisinde inceler. Bu nedenle, Merleau-Ponty'nin "şimdi"ye ve "mevcudiyet"e vurgu yapması kaçınılmaz olacaktır. Bir zaman akışının olması için öncelikle onu deneyimleyen, bu akışın varlığını deneyimleyen bir öznenin olması gerekir. Eğer zaman salt bir akış olarak deneyimlenseydi, zaman akışının varlığı asla anlayamazdık. Değişim kesin bir

pozisyonun bulunmasını ve değişime göre bir konum alınmasını şart koşar. Bilinç edilgen bir alıcı ya da zamanı kaydeden bir cihaz değildir. Bilincin koşulu zaman olamaz, aksine zamanın koşulu bilinçtir. Zaman deneyimi yönelimsel bilinci, dolayısıyla nesnelere ilişkimizi de varsayar. Nesnelere önemli olan değişimlerini gözlemlememizden zaman bilinci doğar. Nesnedeki değişiklikleri görmemse, onu şu an algılamama bağlıdır. Nesnedeki değişiklikleri algılayışım zaman algımı oluşturuyorsa, o haldе zamansallık mekansallıktan ve bedensel varoluşumdan ayrırt edilemez. Zaman bilinci bedensel varoluşumdan ayrı değildir, çünkü dünya özne sayesinde zamansal hale gelir. Özne olmasa nesnelere sadece ‘şimdi’de varolurlardı. Oysa öznenin sonluluğu nesnelere de zamansallık kazandırır. Öyleyse hatırlanmayan ontolojik bir bilinçdışı ya da hafıza da olamaz, çünkü geçmiş ve geleceğin anlamlı olması şu anda deneyimleyen bir özneye bağlıdır. Geçmiş, şimdiki özne için önemini koruduğu sürece vardır. Şimdideki algım geçmişin bir sentezi ya da hafıza imgelerinin bir tekrarı da değildir. Geçmiş Bergson’un dediği gibi bir kartopu gibi ilerleyeydi, şimdi diye bir şey olmaz, yenilik de ortaya çıkmazdı. Oysa şimdinin müstakilliği ve bağımsızlığı özneyi kişiseldi (impersonal) deneyime ve yeni olana da açmasının imkanını sunar. Çünkü “şimdi” öznenin kurduğu, geçmişle belirlenen bir durum değildir. Şimdi tüm zamansal yapıları önceler. Bilincin geçmişi şimdiyle karşılaştırması bile geçmişin zamanında öncelikle anlamlı bir algı olduğunu varsayar. Merleau-Ponty’nin zamansallığın koşulu olarak şimdi ve algıyı öncelemesi zamansallığı bedensellikten ayırmamasına bağlıdır.

Bergson’a göre ise geçmiş, şimdi ve gelecek gibi ayrımlar yapmak zamanın doğasına baştan aykırıdır. Zaman iç içe geçmiş zihinsel durumlardan oluşur ve mekandaki nesnelere art ardalığıyla anlaşılabilir. Mekanda iki somut nesnenin iç içe geçmesi çelişkilidir. Oysa zaman iç içe geçmiş, birbirine özdeş olmayan, tekrarlanamaz, saf bir niteliktir. Bu niteliği ne zaman niceliğe dönüştürmeye çalışsak, bu saf niteliği homojenleştirip mekansallaştırarak düşünmüş oluruz. Zamanı zamanda düşünmekse algıdaki gibi ayrı nesnelere yönelerek olmaz; bu ancak sezgi yoluyla mümkün olabilir. Bergson için heterojen niteliklerin yer aldığı zaman ile homojen niceliklerin belirdiği mekan arasındaki ayrım temel bir ayrımdır.

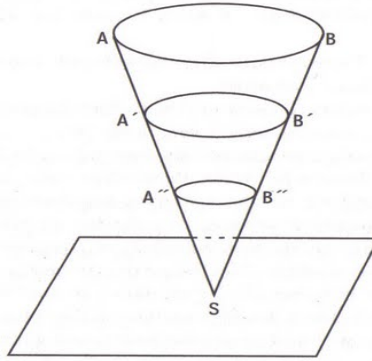
Eğer zamanı mekandaki nesnelere gibi bölemiyorsak, şimdiyi ayrı olarak düşünmenin de bir anlamı kalmaz. Merleau-Ponty algıyı nasılsa öyle, başka bir deyişle öznenin deneyimlediği gibi serimlerken, Bergson şimdinin ve algının nasıl sınırlandığı üzerinde duracaktır. Zaman şimdiden fazlasını kapsar, çünkü şimdiyi ilgilendirmeyen sınırsız sayıda hafıza-imgesini de hafıza da tutarız. Eğer hafıza-imgelerinin sınırsız sayıda olması demek, onların bedene ya da algıya taşıdığımız imgelerden hep daha fazlasını kapsaması demekse — zira tüm hafıza imgelerini algıya taşımak imkansızdır—o zaman hafıza, bedenden ayrı bir ontolojik varoluşa sahiptir. Nasıl ki nesnelere görmediğimiz zaman varolmadıklarını düşünmüyorsak, hafıza ve bilinçdışı da, onları düşünmediğimizde yok olmaz.

Bergson’da ruh ve beden dualizminin temeli, hafıza ve algı dualizmi üstüne kurulur. Fakat bu dualizimler iki ayrı tözün değil, iki ayrı hareketin ikilemidir. Bergson algı ile hafıza arasındaki dinamik ilişkiyi açıklayarak kişiseldi olanla kişisel olanın nasıl iç içe geçtiğini, pratik olanla pratik olmayanın ilişkisini, yaratıcılığın ve yeniliğin kaynağını da açıklayacaktır.

Algı eylemle ve tüm organizmaların yaptığı gibi hayatta kalmayla meşgul olduğu ölçüde genel ve kişiseldi; hafıza algıyı ilgilendirmeyen, pratik değeri olmayan

kişisel hafıza imgelerinin biriktiği ruhun alanıdır. Bu yüzden algı tüm canlılara özgüken, hafıza insana özgüdür. Hayal kurma ya da ‘dalıp gitme’, bizi eylemden, verili durumdaki pratik ilgilerimizden ve bedensel mevcudiyetimizden uzaklaştırır. Bu yüzden, hafızanın temel özelliği tinsel olmasıdır. İnsanın pratik ilgilerini karşılamayan şeylere yönelme yeteneği sadece hayatta kalmaya çalışan bir bedenden ibaret olmadığını gösterir. Öte yandan yaratıcılık algı ile hafızanın ortak ve dinamik ilişkisi sonucunda ortaya çıkar.

Heterojen zaman ve homojen mekan arasında ayırım yaptıktan sonra, Bergson algı-hafıza dualizmini bu ayırım üzerinden geliştirir. Algıda özne nesnelere onlardan faydalanmak üzere yönelir. Pratik amaçlara hizmet eden eylemleri tekrar eder ve ortak akla güvenir. Fakat bilinç faydalı olana yönelmekten daha fazlasını mümkün kılar. Bergson algı ve hafızayı bir koni imgesine benzeterek, algıyı hafıza imgeleriyle genişletmekten ya da eyleme göre daraltmaktan bahseder.



Eğer özneyi S noktasında varsayarsak, özne sadece belli bir çıkara göre eyleme geçer, ve hafıza-imgelerinin sadece eylem için işe yarar kısımlarını kullanır. S noktası bütün organizmaların hayatta kalmak için yapmak zorunda olduğu durumu temsil eder. En üst AB alanı ise tekil, kişisel, saf hafıza-imgelerinin olduğu yerdir. Bu imgeler, birbiriyle bağlantısız, ve sınırsızdır. AB üst noktasında olan öznenin çağrışımlarını pratik eylemler belirlemediği için, saf hafızada çağrışımlar sınırsızdır. S noktasında, sadece hayatta kalmakla meşgul bir organizma tekrarlarla dayanarak makine gibi çalışırken, AB noktasında hafızanın derinliklerinde birbiriyle ilgisiz hafıza imgelerini düşünen biri ise hayalciidir. Oysa ortak akıldan (common sense) farklı olan sağduyu (good sense) algı ve hafıza arasındaki sürekli geliştirilebilen dinamik ilişkinin sonucudur. Bergson, saf algı ve saf hafıza gibi kavramların saf soyutlama ve varsayımsal olduğunu, hiç bir bilincin böylesine saf bir hafıza ya da algı olmadığını belirtir. Eylemde başarılı bir sonucu elde etmek için hafızanın “o an” için faydalı olan imgeleri sıklaşır. Diğer AB alanları S noktasına yaklaştıkça, tekrarlanma sıklıkları da artar. Algı hafızayı faydası için kullanır ve algı için işe yaramayan diğer imgeler geriye çekilir. Algı tekrarlarla dayanıp somutlaşırken, hafıza tekrarlanmayan, birbirine düşünce ya da kavramla bağlanmayan birbirinden farklı kalan imgelerle dolu kalır. Bergson, birbirine bağlanmayan imgelerin toplandığı hafızaya virtüel hafıza derken, algının kullandığı ve tepkilere dönüştürdüğü hafızaya alışkanlık hafızası der. Hafızanın bazı imgeleri sıklaşarak alışkanlık hafızasını oluşturmuştur ve bu hafızada birbirine benzeyen imgeler, bedeninin refleksiyon öncesi kendiliğinden kullandığı tepkilere, hareketlere ve davranışlara dönüşmüştür. Bergson, alışkanlık hafızasına

doğal olan hafıza diyecektir, çünkü “şimdi” herşeyden önce hayatın gerekliliklerine ani tepkiler vermeyi gerektirir. Bu açıdan, alışkanlık hafızası tekrarlarla genelleşmiş eylemlere dayanan kişisiz hafızadır. Merleau-Ponty’nin fenomenolojisi bu pratik alanın fenomenolojisidir. Bergson saf hafızanın mümkün olmadığını, sadece bir soyutlama ve varsayım olduğunu belirterek de aslında Merleau-Ponty’ye katılır. Bergson’a göre de, öncelikli olan pratik hayattır ve hayatta kalmanın gerektirdikleridir. *Madde ve Bellek* öncelikli algı üzerindedir. Çevre organizmaya belli davranışları dayatır, ve organizma da hayatta kalmak için belli tepkiler göstermek zorundadır. Daha sonra Bergson, algının ve fayda odaklı eylemin ötesine geçmenin imkanlarını göstererek araştırmayı genişletir. Çünkü algıda etkin hale gelmeyen bilinçdışı imgeler vardır ve eğer algı ve hafıza arasında dinamik bir ilişki varsa, tek bir algı yapısı düşünmek zorunda değiliz. Bergson’a göre alışkanlık hafızasının genelliği ve virtüel hafızanın tekil imgeleri arasında sayısız şekilde gerçekleşebilecek farklı bilinç ve algı düzlemleri vardır.

Fakat bu tekillik ve genellik tam olarak nasıl gerçekleşir? Algının, sürekli tekrarlarla dayanan öğrenilmiş cevaplara, tepkilere, davranışlara dayandığı ölçüde kişisiz ve genel olduğunu gördük. Fakat algı her zaman hafıza imgeleriyle karışmıştır. Saf algı olmadığı gibi saf genellik de yoktur. Basit organizmalarda saf genellik mümkündür, çünkü bu organizmalar sadece hayatta kalmak için eyleme geçer. Oysa insan bu genel davranışların ötesinde yapay genellemeler de kurabilir. Benzerliklere bakarak kavramları soyutlarız. Fakat algıda her şey hem birbirine benzer ama hem de bir o kadar benzemez. Farklılıkların sonu olmadığı gibi, genellemelerin de sonu yoktur. Bu yüzden, algı ne tam olarak geneldir ne de hiçbir düzenin olmadığı kaotik tekilliğin algısıdır. Algıda biz ne soyut düşüncelere ne de tikel şeylere bağlıyızdır. Aslında Merleau-Ponty de soyut ve somut hareketlere dikkatimizi çeker. Bir hasta üzerinden, somut ve soyut hareket tanımlarını açıklar. Hasta, düşünmeden, öncesinde kafasında neyi nasıl yapacağını tekrarlamadan bedensel hareketleri yapamıyordur. Örneğin, burnuna dokunmadan ona eliyle işaret edemez. Burnuna dokunabilmesi, fakat ona eliyle işaret edememesi somut hareketler yapabildiğini ama hareketlerini özgürce soyutlayamadığını gösterir. Oysa normal bir özne, eylemden önce ne yapacağını düşünmez ve kurgulamasına gerek kalmaz, çünkü nesnelere pratik kullanımını bedensel olarak içselleştirmiştir. Normal bir öznenin fenomenal bir bedeni vardır; nesnelere fonksiyonel bilgisi düşünüm öncesi bedeninde kayıtlıdır. Bedeni kurulması gereken bir nesne gibi objektif değildir. Normal özne kendi fenomenal alanını yabancılaştırma imkanına da sahiptir. Eylemin tadını çıkarabilir, ya da nesnenin maddi varlığından kurtulup hayalinde canlandırabilir. Soyutlamanın imkanı yönelimsel olarak gerçekleşen somut eylemlerle mümkündür. Böylece, Merleau-Ponty bizi algının soyutlamaya, yeniliğin belirmesine imkan veren yönleri üzerinde düşündürür.

Bergson içinse benzerliklere bakılarak yapılan soyutlamalar yine pratik yaşamın bir gereğidir. Algı genellemek zorundadır, çünkü belli durumlara göre belli tepkiler vermek hayatta kalmanın gereğidir. Fakat genelleme yapmak da pratik hayatın zorunluluklarına karşı geliştirdiğimiz bilme türüdür ve bu soyutlama, altında bir sürü nesne toplar ve bize tekil nesnenin bilgisini veremez. Her genelleme dile ve kavramlara dayandığı için nicelikler üzerine kuruludur, homojenleşmiştir. Oysa bilinç, nesneyi genellemelerin ötesinde tekil olarak bilme imkanına sahiptir. Homojen niceliklerin, zamanın heterojen niteliksel çokluğunu yakalayamayacağını gördük. Süre tekindir, çünkü ne hafızayı ne de süreyi kişisel

olandan bağımsızca düşünemeyiz. Her kavramsallaştırma genelleştireceğine göre, sürenin tekilliğini ancak süre içinde sezgi yoluyla yakalayabiliriz. Bergson sezgi deneyimini nesneyle sempati içinde olmak ve nesnenin 'süre'sinin "içine girmek" olarak tanımlar. Merleau-Ponty Bergson'un sezgi deneyimini, dile gelemeyen bir deneyimin anlamsız olacağını söyleyerek eleştirir. Oysa Bergson'un buna cevabı böyle bir eleştirinin mekansal düşünmekten kaynaklandığı şeklinde olacaktır. Bergson nesnelere içine girmeyi mekansal olarak düşünemediğimizden, sezgi deneyiminin anlamsız görünceğini söyler. Oysa 'süre'de başka sürelerin ritmini duyumsayabilir, tüm somutluğuyla yakalayabiliriz. Sezgi deneyimi mistik bir deneyim değil, tekili anlamak için felsefi bir yöntemdir. Nesnede tekil olanı yakalayabilmek için sezgi deneyimi çaba gerektirir. Çünkü algı gibi dil de tekrarlara, genel kavramlara, pratik olana, ve ezbere dayanır. Öyleyse, algının ve dilin pratiğe odaklı genelliğinden tekillere gitmek için alışkanlık hafızasının akışını virtüel hafızaya doğru döndürmek gerekir. Algıyı zorlamak koni imgesinde olduğu gibi hafızadan algıya gelen benzer hafıza imgelerinin akışını algıdan virtüel hafızanın tekil imgelerine doğru çevirmektir. Eğer süre bir ritimse, bu ritim yavaşlatılabilir ve araya farklı imgeler girebilir. Tıpkı pratik bir işle uğraşırken alakasız anıların dikkatimizi dağıtması sırasında gördüğümüz gibi, algı sadece tepkiye yoğunlaşmaz. Kendini eyleme geçmekten geri çekebilir. Bergson dikkatimizi dağıtan, kendiliğinden gidip gelen, "kapsisli" hafıza imgelerinin aslında tinsel yanımızı ortaya çıkardığını söyler. Algı ve hafıza arasında, etki ve tepkilerimiz arasında bir ara, bir açık vardır ve bu boşluktan yeni imgeler algıya eklenebilir ve yeni tekrarlarla farklı algılama düzlemlerinin imkanını oluşturur.

Bergson'daki algı ve hafıza düalizminden alışkanlık hafızasının tekrar organize olabilmemesinin mümkün olduğunu gördük. Böylece, Bergson algıyı olduğu gibi ele almak yerine, sezgi metoduyla nasıl farklılaşabileceğini göstererek algının ötesine geçmenin imkanlarını araştırır. Merleau-Ponty'nin algıya verdiği öncelik ise, özneyi bedeninden ayırmadan ele almasını gerekli kılar. Bergson, algının nasıl oluştuğuna ve nasıl değişebileceğine odaklanırken, Merleau-Ponty, algıyı hiçbir kavrama indirgemeden tüm zenginliği içerisinde fenomenolojisinin tasvirini amaçlar.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, Süre, Algı, Hafıza, Sezgi.

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