

THE CONCEPT OF FUTURE IN BERGSON AND HEIDEGGER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The concept of future is important in any philosophy of time. A study of this concept in the philosophies of Bergson and Heidegger throws light on several aspects not only of future but also of time. These two philosophers are studied in this paper as there is much in common in their views in spite of their holding two fundamentally different views of time. They have both something important to say on future.

Bergson's view of time:

Bergson holds that there are two notions of time. (1) Pure time; and (2) alloyed time (time alloyed with space). He writes, "There are, indeed, two possible conceptions of time, the one free from all alloy, the other, surreptitiously bringing in the idea of space."¹

Pure time is the time understood by itself. It is a product of mental synthesis. "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains separating its present state from its former states."² It is an indivisible, irreversible continuity. "The indivisible continuity of change is precisely what constitutes true duration."³

Alloyed time is the ordinary notion of time. This is what we mean by minutes, hours, years etc. It is a quantity and measurable. This is made possible by spatialising time and making it static. When "We project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity,"⁴ and we get the spatialised or alloyed time. This is the time of the mathematician and the physicist. Bergson is of the view that alloyed time does not give us the real nature of time and characterises it as the 'ghost' of time.

Time is neither an abstract notion nor a disputable fact for Bergson. Time is concrete, real and effective.

Heidegger's view of time:

According to Heidegger also there are two possible notions of time — (i) Authentic, and (ii) Inauthentic. Authentic time is Dasein's time and is also called as the primordial time. It is real. Like Bergson, Heidegger also is of the view that the real time cannot be quantified. He writes, "Half an hour is not thirty minutes but a duration (Dauer) which has no 'length' at all in the sense of a quantitative stretch."⁵ Heidegger explains time as basic for Dasein and in so doing finds time to be finite, whole, and having a structure of its own. Past, present and future are the structural parts which together as a whole constitute time. They correspond to 'facticity', 'existence' and 'falling' of Dasein respectively.

Inauthentic time is the ordinary notion of time as a quantity of duration. It is understood in terms of the present or the now. It is infinite and is derived from the finite time of Dasein.

In order to understand the distinction between authentic and inauthentic times, we should know the distinction which Heidegger makes between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. Authentic life of a person is that which is based upon a correct understanding of human condition. In authentic existence the self is in search of its own most being. To be authentic is to be "something of its own".⁶ Inauthentic life is that of an ordinary man who attends to his daily activities without any uniqueness about himself. Such a life is lost in the world and the individual becomes a 'nobody' by merging himself in the world. Dasein is inauthentic "when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment."⁷

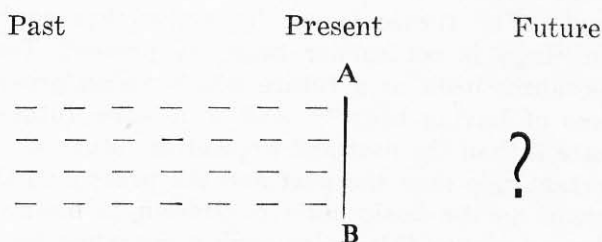
Authentic time and inauthentic time are derived from authentic Dasein and inauthentic Dasein respectively. Dasein has a beginning (birth) and end (death) and thus is finite. The basic state of Dasein is care. Care is not anxiety but the desire for authentic living which constitutes the present. Authentic time which is finite is based on the authentic self.

Inauthentic Dasein lives in the 'present' or 'now' only without any care. Now, now and now go on infinitely. There is no concern for future which would consequently be indefinite leading to the notion of infinite time and that is the ordinary conception of time.

The concept of Future in the philosophy of Bergson:

Bergson recognises the distinction of past, present and future in the *Duree*. He writes, "the pure present" is "the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future".⁸ There is a continuation of the past into the present and *Duree* is the fusion of the past with the present leading to the future. In his book 'Creative Evolution' Bergson says, "The evolution of the living being, like that of the embryo, implies a continual recording of duration, a persistence of the past in the present." While distinguishing between the past, present and future, Bergson expounds the view that future is something entirely new. Reality is a process and it is a process of creative evolution. Creation implies novelty and thus future is new, unpredictable and unknown. To quote Bergson, "The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new."

Bergson's notion of future may be represented by the following diagram.



The line AB represents the present; the dotted lines to the left of it indicate the past and the future is indicated by the question mark.

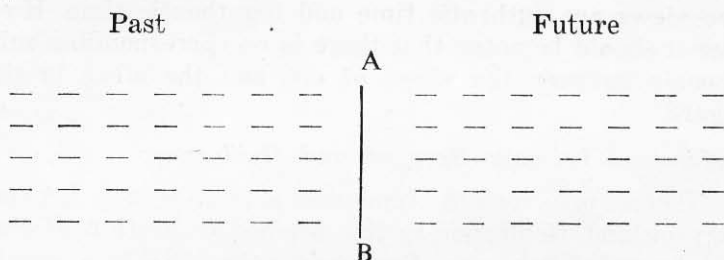
The concept of future in the philosophy of Heidegger:

Heidegger does not accept the ordinary notion of future as the not-yet. He writes, "By the term 'futural' we do not here have in view a 'now' which has not yet become 'actual' and which sometime will be for the first time. We have in view the coming which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, comes towards itself."¹⁰ In Heidegger's philosophy, as time has its origin and basis in Dasein, future also has to be understood with reference to Dasein. Dasein is a whole with birth, death and care in between. Dasein always looks 'ahead-of-itself' and such a 'looking-ahead-of-itself' is the primary item of care. Care is concern for the future. The individual is going towards future and is governed by the future. Thus future is very authentic for Heidegger. "Anticipation makes Dasein authentically futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so far as Dasein, as being, is always coming towards itself — that is to say, in so far as it is futural in its Being in general".¹¹

Future determines the present. The individual acts and behaves in the present as required by the future. The present is dominated by the future and is to serve the purposes of future. "The character of 'having been' arises from the future, and in such a way that the future which 'has been' (or better, which 'is in the process of having been') releases from itself the present".¹² Dasein is a being-towards future. Thus future is as real as the past and present. "The future is not later than having been, and having been is not earlier than the present. Temporality temporalizes itself as a future which makes present in the process of having been."¹³ And in a sense future is more important than the past and present as future plays a more important role than the past and the present in the life of a person as the basic state of Dasein is mainly futural. Heidegger makes this point very clear when he says, "In enumerating the ecstases, we have always mentioned the future first. We have done this to indicate that the future has a priority in the ecstatic unity of primordial and authentic temporality."¹⁴

The concept of guilt also illustrates the importance of future. A sense of guilt arises from the fact that one could have been otherwise. It is a consequence of retrospective estimation of the past in the future. Dasein's feeling of a sense of guilt is a fact and as such a feeling arises only out of future, it is evident that future is very important in the philosophy of Heidegger.

Heidegger's notion of future may be diagrammatically represented as follows.



The line AB represents the present. Past and future are indicated by the dotted lines to the left and the right of the line AB respectively.

Agreement between Bergson and Heidegger:

For both Bergson and Heidegger time is self-generic. Bergson holds that "wherever there is any thing living there is inscribed somewhere a register where time is inscribed". Living organism is an individual self whose beginning and end are marked by birth and death. A living organism stands as a whole and may be characterised by the term 'self', though 'self' is ordinarily understood with reference to a human being. 'Dasein' of Heidegger corresponds to the self of Bergson. Though 'Dasein' also in general applies to anything which is 'being-there', Heidegger in particular applies that term to man. The authentic and inauthentic existence refer to the types of human living. The structural whole of authentic time is derived from Dasein whose essence is 'care' and "care is that which forms the totality of Dasein's structural whole". Thus for Bergson as well as for Heidegger self is the source for time.

The mortal blow which Einstein has given to the Newtonian theory of absolute time from the standpoint of physics is further hammered by Bergson and Heidegger from a metaphysical point of view by expounding a theory of time with reference to the self. Both Bergson and Heidegger do not accept the absolute notion of time.

Bergson as well as Heidegger hold that there can be two possible conceptions of time. Bergson distinguished between pure time and the alloyed time; and Heidegger's two views are authentic time and inauthentic time. However it should be noted that there is no corresponding relationship between the views of one and the other in this regard.

Differences between Bergson and Heidegger:

There are certain fundamental differences between Bergson and Heidegger in the detailed exposition of time and temporal concepts. Bergson's pure time is a mental synthesis of conscious states and alloyed time is an artificial solidification or quantification of pure time. There is nothing like such a conception of time in Heidegger's thought. Bergson's philosophy of time is far removed from the authentic and inauthentic notions of Heidegger.

Though time is self-generic in both the philosophies, the *Duree* of Bergson is a process of continuity which is never a completed whole, whereas the authentic time of Heidegger is finite corresponding to Dasein's life.

According to Bergson continuity of the living organism registers and reveals the *Duree*. Heidegger speaks specifically of Dasein (man) and not of any living organism; and time has to be understood as basic for Dasein. Bergson's view is that the very living of a living organism gives time, whereas Heidegger's view is that the (authentic) time is given by the way Dasein lives.

Bergson in his book 'Creative Evolution', goes to the extent of defying time and says that time is "a vehicle of creation".¹⁵ Heidegger is not concerned with such view of time.

A very important point of difference between the two is with regard to the future. Future for Bergson is open, infinite and indefinite. According to Heidegger future is limited, finite and definite. This difference arises from the fact that Bergson thinks on the lines of creative evolution whereas Heidegger thinks on the basis of the life of authentic Dasein (an individual self).

Conclusion:

The above consideration of the views of Bergson and Heidegger shows that there can be more than one conception of time and of future. Nature of time and future depends upon the point of view which one takes. Bergson looks at time from the standpoint of creative evolution, whereas the standpoint of Heidegger is from that of the structure of *Dasein*. Bergson attempts to explain the nature of the ultimate reality and looks at time from a metaphysical point of view. Heidegger concerns himself with Dasein (the individual self) in his endeavour to know the Being and tries to understand time from an existential standpoint. Bergson's notion of time arises from his conception of Reality as a creative process. Heidegger's view of time arises from his distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence of man; and time is viewed as a possibility of understanding the Being in all its manifestations.

It is clear that there is a possibility of holding different views on time and future. If the theory of creative evolution is accepted, time is conceived as being creative and consequently future does not exist. Future will be the not-yet. On the other hand if the individual human self in authentic living is the basis for an understanding of time, the question of time as being creative does not arise at all. It follows from the authentic Dasein that time is finite as the individual self is finite and that future is not the not-yet but what is already existing along with past and the present.

Time is not an entity but is a notion which would depend upon the particular point of view which one takes. Consequently the problem of time which seems so puzzling and enigmatic disappears as there is nothing like time to be

puzzled about. 'Future' also depends upon the point of view which one adopts. The question which point of view is more reasonable and appropriate does not arise.

There are various theories of time and future, and two of the important views are studied in this paper. The most enigmatic part of time is future and this study has attempted to make it clear that there is an equipossibility of various views and that the question regarding the relative merits of different views is a *pseudo* question. In order to understand any particular view of future it is important to know the basic standpoint of the given author regarding time.

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NOTES

1. Bergson, Time and Freewill, Tr. F. L. Pogson, London, p. 100.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The Creative Mind, Tr. M. L. Andison, New York, p. 176.
4. Time and Free will *op. cit.*, p. 101.
5. Heidegger, Being and time, Tr. John Mecquarrie and Edward Robinson, London, p. 140.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
7. Heidegger, Being and Time, Tr. John Mecquarrie and Edward Robinson, London, p. 68.
8. Bergson, Matter and Memory, Tr. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, London, p. 194.
9. Creative Evolution, Tr. A. Mitchell, London, p. 20.
10. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
11. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
15. Bergson, The Creative Mind, Tr. Mabelle L. Andison, New York, p. 110.

THE INTRINSIC GOOD AND THE UNCONDITIONAL GOOD

It is generally accepted that ethics is concerned with goodness of conduct. This has led people to suppose that one should first decide what goodness-in-itself is and then get a clearer notion regarding where exactly goodness in conduct lies. Thus, G. E. Moore in section 2 of his *Principia Ethica* writes "Ethics is undoubtedly concerned with the question what good conduct is. . . . 'good conduct' is a complex notion: all conduct is not good. . . And on the other hand, other things, besides conduct, may be good; . . ." This means that good conduct is a species of good in general. Therefore, Moore tells us that ethics cannot make a start at the beginning unless it tells us 'what is good as well as what is conduct'.

This approach to Ethics is not confined to ethical intuitionists like Moore. Even R. M. Hare, who belongs to the school of Linguistic Analysis, says in chapter 9 of his *The Language of Morals* that "'good' in the moral sense has the same logical behaviour" as it has in other departments of valuation.

I have my misgivings about this approach to ethics. 'Good conduct' is grammatically a complex expression. But goodness of conduct may conceivably be a logically simple notion. The way to know what is goodness of conduct may not be first to know what is good and then to know what is conduct. In other words, ethical goodness may not be a species of good in general or good simply. I think it is arguable that ethical good is a primary notion and that the goodness we become aware of, in other good things, for example, in the experience of listening to a musical melody is a pale reflection of the goodness we apprehend in the moral sphere.

The form of my argument will be: An X without qualification (or, an unconditional X) is logically prior to an X with qualifications (or, a conditional X) and the latter will derive its meaning from the former. The ethical good is good