

# A Dead End of Modern Philosophy? The Reception of H. Bergson's Philosophy in Czechoslovak Thinking\*

Kateřina Sváčková

Faculty of Humanities Charles University, Prague

katerina.svackova@gmail.com

*“Aller en Bergson’ (and sometimes just taking a peek into his auditorium) was, for a long time, fashionable in Paris – but studying Bergson is, to this day, an imperative for every modern thinking human.”*

Ferdinand Pelikán, Portraits of the Philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>

In 1924, Tomáš Trnka published a book titled *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy (Moderní filosofie ve slepé uličce)*. In it, he tries to describe a crisis of contemporary philosophical thought which, in his opinion, stemmed from the fact that philosophy had reached two of its peaks: one through the sceptical “philosophy of *As If*” of Hans Vaihinger, and the other through the intuitive irrationalism of Henri Bergson. According to Trnka, modern philosophy thus blindly ends up either in an intuitionism of illusion, or a nihilism of scepticism.<sup>2</sup>

The Bergsonian tradition, with its “militant tendency against intellectualism and against materialism”,<sup>3</sup> is heavily reflected in Czechoslovak interwar philosophy: the adherents of Krejčí’s positivism<sup>4</sup> and Masaryk’s realism<sup>5</sup> mostly assume a critical stance towards it,<sup>6</sup> whilst the “young generation”

---

\* This article was made possible thanks to the scholarship provided by the Hus Foundation.

1 Pelikán, F., *The Portraits of Philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Portréty filosofů XX. věku)*. Praha, Jednota československých matematiků a fysiků 1931, p. 47.

2 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy (Moderní filosofie ve slepé uličce)*. Praha, Aventinum 1924, p. 9.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

4 Krejčí, F., *Philosophy in the Last Pre-War Years (Filosofie posledních let před válkou)*. Praha, Jan Laichter 1918; *Positive Ethics (Positivní etika)*. Praha, Jan Laichter 1922.

5 Masaryk, T. G., *The Path of Democracy II (Cesta demokracie II)*. Praha, Ústav T. G. Masaryka 2007. See also Pojar, M., *T. G. Masaryk and the Jewish Question (T. G. Masaryk a židovství)*. Praha, Karolinum 2019, p. 191–192.

6 Emanuel Rádl and Rudolf Malý were amongst those who held an academic admiration, while also directing negative criticism towards Bergson. Rádl, E., *The History of Philosophy II (Dějiny*

associated with the journals *Ruch filosofický* and *Filosofie* draws inspiration from Bergson's irrationalism, intuitivism and his emphasis on the individual.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, we wish to focus on how (or whether at all) Henri Bergson's philosophy is reflected in Czechoslovak philosophy of the period, and how (or whether at all) Trnka's "dead end" manifests itself in it. With regard to Trnka's criticism, we shall try to grasp how the aforementioned aspects of "Bergsonism" were reflected in Czechoslovak philosophy and to subsequently demonstrate this reflection using the example of two other philosophers of the period, František Mareš and Vladimír Hoppe.

### Where Bergsonism Lost Its Way

In the book *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, Trnka attempts to conduct his own critique of Bergson, the philosopher to whom he dedicated his whole life. He shows how both Vaihinger and Bergson began from the right departing point, i.e. the noetics of British Empiricism, ranging from Berkeley and Hume through Kant to a certain type of pragmatism, and how they both eventually deviated from the "right path". Trnka believes that, as a successor of Kant, Hume and Berkeley, Bergson "rightly" concerned himself with the relationship between knowledge and reality in his first two books (*Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*). According to Trnka, Bergson initially analysed the key aspects of his philosophy, i.e. the problem of time, movement and reality, from the position of dualism of knowledge and reality; and in his first two books, he implicitly dismissed this dualism. In his first essay, *Time and Free Will*, Bergson begins to contemplate the temporal flow of consciousness, which he bases on the continuous movement of time, on an indivisible pure duration (*durée pure*).<sup>8</sup> By doing so, he necessarily runs into the problem of causality, which he grasps in a fundamentally different way

---

*filosofie II*). Praha, Votobia 1999, p. 553–556; Malý, R. I., *Seeing Clearly (Jasnýma očima)*. Praha, Alois Srdce 1920, p. 63–88.

7 Of the "younger generation" of philosophers, Karel Vorovka and Ferdinand Pelikán openly professed themselves to drawing inspiration from Bergson's philosophy; see Vorovka, K., *Physics and Philosophy (Fysika a filosofie)*. *Venkov*, 14, 1919, No. 142, 148, 153, p. 2; *Sceptis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession (Skepse a gnóse. Vyznání filosofické)*. Praha, G. Voleský 1921; *The Philosophy of Bergson and Einstein (Filosofie Bergsonova a Einsteinova)*. *Národní listy*, 62, 1922, No. 57, p. 9–10; *Polemos. The Disputes of the Czech Philosophy in 1919–1925 (Polemos. Spory v české filosofii v letech 1919–1925)*. Praha, Sfinx 1926; Pelikán, F., *On Intuition (O intuici)*. Praha, B. Kočí 1920. F. Pelikán also co-worked on the translation of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, where he wrote the preface to Bergson's essay *Life and Consciousness*, published in the journal *Živa* in 1922. Milíč Čapek elaborated a thorough analysis/breakdown of Bergson's philosophy in 1939; see Čapek, M., *Henri Bergson*. Praha, Nakladatelské družstvo Máje 1939.

8 Bergson, H., *Time and free will: an essay on the immediate data of consciousness*. London, George Allen and Unwin 1959.

from his predecessors: in Bergson's approach, no two moments in consciousness are identical, thanks to the flow of time and to our individual memory. What Bergson is trying to say is that each moment is always enriched by its own past, which makes each moment unique and individual. Therefore, it is impossible to talk of the same causes and the same effects in the way causality has been thought about so far.

Thus, from a certain "individualist" position, Bergson substitutes Hume's relationship of causality between two events with the causality of pure duration. In his first essay he analyses the mind in this very way. However, in his second book, *Matter and Memory*, he broadens his focus towards the whole mind-body composition of the human.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, both books consider duration to be reality itself. Thus, an intuitive fusion with pure duration give rise to an identity of the knowing subject and reality, an identity of reality and truth, and an identity of reality and knowledge. As Trnka claims, this early philosophy of Bergson's removes the noetic subject-object dualism, which had been prevalent in philosophy up to that time.

Trnka points out that here Bergson explains the causality of time in a new and striking way. He adds, however, that Bergson did not concern himself in any way with the causality of space, or with the pure duration of spatial relations. Yet again this makes Bergson a dualist in Trnka's eyes: Bergson now creates a dualism between pure duration and space, thus actually returning to a belief in dualism of spirit and matter. Bergson, Trnka thinks, made a mistake when, especially later on, in his book *Creative Evolution*,<sup>10</sup> strayed from his original noetic or noetic-critical path and set out on a metaphysical path. In other words,

"instead of the problem of dualism of knowledge and reality he tries to solve the absurd question of the reality of the body vs. the reality of the spirit",<sup>11</sup>

i.e. spirit vs. matter. According to Trnka, Bergson lost his way because (similarly to the Czechoslovak "young generation" associated with *Ruch filozofický*) he tirelessly fought against intellectualism on the one hand, and materialism on the other. That is how Bergson's metaphysics was conceived: battling against materialism, Bergson begins to ascribe existence to this "pure duration". He attempts to answer the "complex" question of *what time*

---

9 Bergson, H., *Matter and Memory: An Essay on the Relation of Body and Spirit*. New York, Zone Books 1988.

10 Bergson, H., *Creative Evolution*. London, Macmillan 1911.

11 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 53.

and movement is, what the spirit and the body is – a question which, according to Trnka, makes no sense (without considering their mutual relationship). In doing this, Trnka thinks, Bergson is in fact returning to the old belief that it is cognition itself that attains knowledge of reality, and not, as his earlier essays suggested, that cognition and its object are in unity thanks to their being founded in pure duration. Thus, Bergson reaches a dualism of *dual knowledge*.

If we take a look at Bergson's later books, *Creative Evolution* and *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, we can see that he distinguishes two types of cognition: intellectual cognition, linked to space and matter, and intuitive cognition. Here Bergson attributes only a relative noetic capability to intellect or his "cinematographic thinking": we cannot access "pure duration" through intellectual analysis.<sup>12</sup> Bergson therefore searches for a second, opposite pole to intellect, that of *absolute* knowledge. Even though in the beginning Bergson had a tendency to acknowledge one sole source of knowledge (i.e. knowledge that is neither absolute, nor relative, but is reality itself) he now changes his question and, according to Trnka, deviates from his original path and declines into irrationalism and romanticism. This is how Bergson, and subsequently the whole of philosophy based on Bergson, comes to a dead end with no means of escape, to the point where, as Trnka writes, "a collapse transpires".<sup>13</sup>

### Difference of Knowledge as a Dead End of Philosophy

What does Trnka's criticism mean? It is important to note that Bergson's problem, which Trnka tries to outline, does not by any means lie in emphasizing *intuition* itself. On the contrary, Trnka himself was definitely an advocate of intuitivism, in the three areas of noetics, logic, and ethics; he understood intuition as the most active part of philosophical reflection.<sup>14</sup> The problem,

12 Similarly, a certain state of the spirit does not equal the arithmetic total of its elements: it is not the plurality of analytically divisible parts, but the original unity, the "*individuum*". See Jankélévitch, V., *Henri Bergson*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1959, p. 20.

13 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 67. See Trnka, T., *The Movements of Contemporary Philosophy (Proudly v současné filosofii)*. Praha, F. Topič 1924, p. 148–179.

14 In the end, Bergson's struggle between the spirit and matter served Trnka as the basis for his own take on intuitive individualism. Trnka works with the idea of dynamism, or motion, which is the fundament of Bergson's entire philosophy. Trnka understands it as a sort of a *swing* which, constantly under tension, is continuously oscillating fore (in the sense of the spirit, life, creativity) and back (as it is held back by matter). Trnka's approach to the idea of motion thus shows that he, nevertheless, understood Bergson's position (the "question of the body and the spirit" mentioned in the introduction), and I believe correctly, as a *synthesis*, and not in the sense of contradiction and dualism. Therefore, "the core of Bergson's teachings is the mystery, [...] of how the mortal world emerges from the immortal, 'timelessly eternal' absolute; that is why

according to Trnka, lies in the *how* and the *what* of Bergson's philosophical inquiry. In the first two essays, intuition was, although not explicitly mentioned, a method of accessing pure duration, in the sense of Kant's pure a priori intuition. After the *Creative Evolution*, Bergson begins to speak of a dualism of cognition and reality and a dualism of cognition itself. In intuition, he seeks the font of absolute knowledge that could form the grounding for metaphysics – by doing so, Trnka believes, Bergson degrades such intuition to the status of a non-critical romantic notion.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems that precisely through this “deviation from the path”, Bergson gives his successors his perhaps most powerful incentives. Precisely this dualism, or “difference in character”,<sup>16</sup> to borrow Deleuze's term, which gives rise to *intuitive* knowledge in contrast to *intellectual* knowledge, seems to be crucial for many other philosophers of the era, including the Czechoslovak philosophers.<sup>17</sup>

We shall now focus on this gradual deviation from intellectualism to intuitive methods of cognition in connection to Bergson's philosophy. The emphasis on intuition, from various philosophical standpoints, appears in European philosophy around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson especially are prime examples. It is rather difficult to

---

the core of Bergson's philosophy is the concept of 'duration'." This duration, the continuous growth between life and death, accessible only through intuitive insight, is, in the end, the basis of Trnka's approach towards the individual. In Trnka's opinion, the world consists of an amazing plurality of realities, containing things, animals, and individuals in the sense of family or humankind. All these individuals are defined by birth and death. These organisms merge together in the *desire for the individual*, and therefore necessarily also in the *desire for a dissolution* of the individual, for its death. The whole world is therefore a “unique ripple of non-individual individuality” – and individuality is, in its original sense, overcome for the first time. Trnka, T., *The Secret of Death (Tajemství smrti)*. *Naše doba*, 24, 1917, No. 5, p. 358–364.

<sup>15</sup> Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze, G., *Le bergsonisme*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France 1966.

<sup>17</sup> In *Ruch filosofický*, F. Pelikán talks of an “emotional reaction to the universe” aimed against positivism and the reign of matter, which do not allow for the metaphysics of spirit; see Pelikán, F., *The Reign of Democracy in Philosophy (To our Program) – (Vláda demokracie ve filosofii /K našemu programu)*. *Ruch filosofický*, 1, 1920–1921, No. 1, p. 1–5. According to Pelikán, intuition plays an important part in attaining knowledge of the world: it occurs when one is not led by either reason or logic, nevertheless it is not a kind of supernatural form of human cognition – intuition stems from the inner spiritual foundation of the human being. Pelikán tried to grasp the notion of intuition in a number of ways, notably, he understood intuition also as an intellectualized instinct. This was inspired precisely by Bergson's *Creative Evolution* and his claim that intuition is instinct that reflects itself. On the other hand, Karel Vorovka believed that for philosophy to be able to mediate an attempt at attaining knowledge reaching beyond everyday certainty and scientific experience, it must be based on gnosis: Vorovka understands this gnosis in the sense of intuition. Later in his book *Polemos*, rather than theoretically explaining this stance of a philosopher towards the world, he refers to the philosophy of H. Bergson himself. See Vorovka, K., *Sceptis and Gnosis. A Philosophical Confession*; Vorovka, K., *Polemos. The Disputes of the Czech Philosophy in 1919–1925*.

grasp the notion of *intuition* in Bergson's philosophy,<sup>18</sup> as he himself does not offer any definition of it. On the contrary, he sharply distances himself from such requests, since "definitions" fall into the area of intellect and concepts.

Nevertheless, if we attempt to grasp Bergson's intuition conceptually in some way, it will always appear to us as fundamentally *individual*, from the perspective of both the subject and the object. Firstly, Bergson claims that there is always at least one reality which we can all grasp from within by intuition and not by simple analysis, and that is *our own personality* as it is flowing through time, our self which endures.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, our intuition apprehends objects and the world in their pure duration, i.e. in their uniqueness, in an act of merging with their individuality.<sup>20</sup> Let us try to interpret such an approach to "intuition", in Bergson's sense, intuitively, and have a look at this moment, and the various ways it can be overcome, in the works of F. Mareš and V. Hoppe.

### Emotion, Intuition and (Supra)individualism in the Philosophy of F. Mareš

František Mareš was undeniably influenced by Bergson's philosophy, and mentions Bergson explicitly in his work. Common to both is an intellectual tendency towards a certain type of vitalism and an emphasis on the spiritual, creative nature of all life processes. Nevertheless, it deserves to be mentioned that Mareš's article *On "Life" Force (O „životní“ síle)* was published in Masaryk's revue *Athenaeum* already in 1884, i.e. five years before the release of Bergson's first work; not to mention that Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, where he explicitly developed the concept of life force (*élan vital*) for the first time, was not published until 1907.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it is important to

18 Regarding attempts of outlining several forms of intuition in Bergson's philosophy, see Hrdlička, J., *On Intuition in Bergson (O intuici u Bergsona)*. In: Čapek, J. (ed.), *The Philosophy of Henri Bergson (Filosofie Henri Bergsona)*. Praha, Oikoymenth 2003, p. 126–150. Hrdlička especially points out that Bergson understands the term "intuition" very differently from most other authors, and that in Bergson's approach this term has nothing in common with the notions of some kind of vague predictions or anticipations that are often associated with this word. Similarly, Milíč Čapek, who conducted a thorough analysis of Bergson's philosophy in 1939, states: "Bergson's intuition (the term which caused many misunderstandings), [...] conversely means effort of thought." Čapek, M., *Henri Bergson*, p. 12.

19 Bergson, H., *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Transl. T. E. Hulme. New York – London, GP Putnam's Sons 1912, p. 9.

20 "Analysis, on the contrary [when compared to intuition], is an operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects." *Ibid.*, p. 7.

21 Mareš, F., *On "Life" Force (O „životní“ síle)*. *Athenaeum*, 1, 1884, No. 8, p. 234–239. *Time and Free Will*, Bergson's first essay, was not published in Czech until 1947 although the first Czech

emphasise that Mareš's original concept of the spiritual motivating agent of life processes, presented in his work *On "Life" Force* and still used in a cautious and moderate manner, draws inspiration rather from Schopenhauer and precedes Bergson himself.

Mareš was gradually giving more and more precision to his arguments, defending them with greater certainty and could not refrain from referencing Bergson in his later works.<sup>22</sup> Early Mareš, similarly to Bergson, grappled with the noetic question: according to Mareš, life as a creative force is not apprehended by means of the senses, or reason, but is *immediately* lived. In his article *On "Life" Force*, Mareš states that if this force is immaterial, then it is inaccessible to human knowledge. The article ends with a question whether the human spirit can ever attain knowledge of this basis of life at all.<sup>23</sup> Later, for instance in his inauguration lecture titled *Life – A Creative Force (Život – tvůrčí síla)*, Mareš dares to go further: he believes that it is possible to attain knowledge of this force precisely by directing our focus inside ourselves, using intuition.<sup>24</sup> We can thus place Mareš's concept of creative life force, the *vis vitalis*, as historically preceding Bergson's *élan vital*. Nonetheless, Mareš's emphasis on intuitive knowledge is clearly inspired not only by Schopenhauer, but also by Bergson.

Mareš believes that emotion and intuition can lead us to attaining knowledge of this creative essence of life, as well as to the essence of the connection between people as spiritual beings through sympathy,<sup>25</sup> finally leading us to action and thinking according to truth. Here, similarly to Bergson, Mareš deviates from the noetic path; whereas Bergson first turns towards metaphysics, Mareš takes on the problem of truth as a question of ethics. Here too Mareš draws inspiration from the "later" Bergson (and partially Kant), the Bergson who "went astray" in Trnka's opinion. Truth, as Mareš shows in his 1918 book *Truth Over Reality (Pravda nad skutečnost)*, is not identical with reality in the way Bergson suggested in his first two essays building on his concept of pure duration. Truth, according to Mareš, stands above all reality, cannot be achieved using intellect, but is recognised and

---

translation of *Creative Evolution* dates to 1919. Similarly, the works of Hans Driesch, who is considered to be the founder of modern vitalism, were not published until the 1990s.

22 For example, in Vol. IV of Mareš's *Physiology (Fysiologie)*, Bergson's philosophy, this time from a different perspective, is given a considerable amount of space. See Mareš, F., *Physiology, Vol. IV, Part 1. Physiological Psychology. The Foundations, Subject, Feelings and Efforts (Fysiologie. Díl IV. Fysiologická psychologie. Část 1. Základy, subjekt, city, snahy)*. Praha, Jos. Springer 1926.

23 Mareš, F., *On "Life" Force*, p. 234–239.

24 Mareš, F., *Life – A Creative Force (Život – tvůrčí síla)*. Praha, Neklan 1992, p. 37.

25 See H. Bergson: "By intuition, we mean the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible." Bergson, H., *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 7.

evaluated in our minds. Mareš believes that, due to its nature, scientific or intellectual knowledge cannot give answers to all questions, because it is one-sided, conditioned and relative – which is precisely what Bergson’s argument was, as of his third book published in 1903.<sup>26</sup>

Mareš also puts emphasis on emotional and intuitive knowledge in his approach to his ethical standpoint. Although scientific knowledge, he says, uncovers reality, the truth is different from such “reality” – the truth is not only what is, but also what should be,<sup>27</sup> the absolute, the unconditioned, the *supraindividual*.<sup>28</sup> The path towards such truth begins deeply individually: in his book *Truth In Emotion (Pravda v citu)*, Mareš states that the first aspect of truth is consciousness, the second aspect is self-consciousness and the person as an individuality *enduring* without change through the ups and downs of time. Yet, knowledge of the universally valid truth may be attained only through an accord of all thinking beings. Human individuality therefore necessarily develops through its relationship towards other individualities.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, the *individuality of an individual is overcome* and headed towards *knowledge of the supraindividual truth*: there is a certain overlapping of the individualities of both the subject and the object. The path to such truth (be it in Bergson’s metaphysical sense or Mareš’s ethical sense) is, however, always emotional and intuitive knowledge.

### **Beyond Intuition and Beyond Individualism in the Late Works of Vladimír Hoppe**

In a way, Mareš reflects Bergson’s position from the moment which Trnka already labels as a deviation from the path, i.e. from the moment of highlighting intuition as *absolute knowledge*, as opposed to intellectual and scientific knowledge. Mareš builds his own philosophical, noetic-ethical system on or, more accurately, *around* Bergson’s position.

Bergson too faces the problem of ethics, albeit later on. In fact, he continues to be even more “daring” than how Trnka critically presents him – in 1934, eight years after Trnka’s *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy* was published, Bergson publishes *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*,<sup>30</sup> a work

---

26 Ibid.

27 Mareš, F., *Truth Over Reality (Pravda nad skutečnost)*. Praha, Spolek českých mediků 1918, p. 125; *Life and Science (Život a věda)*. *Naše doba*, 23, 1916, No. 8, p. 569. See also Pavličková, H., František Mareš. *From Physiology to Philosophy (František Mareš. Od fyziologie k filosofii)*. Praha, Epoque 2017, p. 149–160.

28 Or “overindividual” as in “going beyond the individual” (translator’s note).

29 Mareš, F., *Truth in Emotion (Pravda v citu)*. Praha, F. Topič 1922, p. 18–24.

30 Bergson, H., *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. New York, Doubleday 1954.



already significantly deflecting from noetics, which dealt with questions of ethics, society, and religion. Its main argument is yet another instance of a “difference in character”: against a static, collective, utilitarian religion, Bergson juxtaposes a dynamic religion, which he understands in the sense of mysticism and individual mystical experiences of exceptional individuals.<sup>31</sup> Always true to its theory, Bergsonian mysticism is attainable only through immediate intuitive perception. Bergson nevertheless still promotes the possibility of collaboration between philosophy and mysticism; a conclusion which Vladimír Hoppe, the last philosopher with whom we are going to concern ourselves here, no longer upholds in the last stage of his philosophical development.

Much like Bergson, Hoppe begins by dealing with pure noetics. Again in accordance with late Bergson, in his first book *The Essence, Scope and Value of the Natural-Scientific Knowledge (Podstata, dosah a hodnota přírodovědeckého poznání)*, Hoppe differentiates between intuitive knowledge and mediated knowledge, dubbing the latter, conceptual kind of knowledge, *cinematographic*<sup>32</sup> (without mentioning that he adopted this name from Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, by the way).<sup>33</sup> According to Hoppe, conceptual thinking is marred by two fundamental errors: firstly, through conceptual thinking, we project our feelings as objects outside the sphere of our own perception and secondly, we endow fictitious and hypostatised objects with properties that are, again, merely our feelings. Hoppe’s early noetics therefore more or less derives from the philosophy of late Bergson and F. Mareš.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, similarly to Bergson, Hoppe progresses in his second book *Nature and Science (Příroda a věda)* from noetic questions to those metaphysical, and he continues to deal with them in each of his later works with a growing tendency towards mystical insight, not dissimilar to Bergson’s understanding of “dynamic religion”.

---

31 Even in this book, focused on the issues and values of society, Bergson does not forget to emphasise the individuality of an individual and his role. This tendency is most evident in the examples of the great figures of mysticism who are worthy of following.

32 Hoppe, V., *The Essence, Scope and Value of the Natural-Scientific Knowledge (Podstata, dosah a hodnota přírodovědeckého poznání)*. Praha, Řivnáč 1914, p. 19.

33 The reason behind the name “cinematographic knowledge” is that intellect tampers with reality much like a cinematographer does, through transcribing the continuous flow of change, or the duration, into rigid images following each other, one by one. In the introduction to his first book Hoppe states that the publication of Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* brought just “mere confirmation of the author’s (Hoppe’s – KS) opinions”. Nevertheless, we do not assume that the usage of the term was random and without inspiration, or that Bergson adopted his terms from Hoppe.

34 We clearly see the influence of Vaihinger’s philosophy “Als ob”. See Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irrationalism (Vladimír Hoppe: příspěvek k historii a kritice iracionalismu)*. Brno, Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně 1970, p. 17–19.

Like Mareš, Hoppe too begins where, according to Trnka, Bergson lost his way – at the dualism of two types of knowledge, at the endeavour to find absolute knowledge as opposed to relative knowledge. Hoppe likewise highlights intuition, which he develops further and takes it far beyond Bergson's mysticism of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. When Hoppe speaks of intuition, he means a wide scope of ideas, ranging from empirical penetration of reality through visual images, bringing him closer to late Bergson, to the possibility of insight into what should or could be, bringing him closer to Mareš's ethics. Late Hoppe understands intuition as a mere momentary perception, inevitable, but insufficient: that is because it still contains seeds of sensualism. In his last two works, Hoppe goes beyond intuition: behind it, he sees an even deeper faculty that reaches beyond reason: contemplation. In his last book, *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith (Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry)*, he is no longer content with intuitive knowledge alone. Here, Hoppe abandons philosophy altogether and states that it is imperative to

“sever any contact with both scientific considerations and reasonable philosophical considerations and walk the path of our own subjective experiences and findings, the path of faith”.<sup>35</sup>

The contemplative and mystical path eventually solves both the noetic and the metaphysical problem for Hoppe. It embodies not only the possibility of reaching the *absolute truth*, but also the possibility of permanent, lasting contact with the absolute.<sup>36</sup> A contemplating being, Hoppe states, descends into the pre-experiential, extra-sensual content of the soul that leads one to an immediate contact with *absolute reality*. In this last phase, the individual is ridded of their consciousness of personality and their consciousness of the world; one's individuality, i.e. the subject, is expanded to encompass the whole universe.

Contemplation is the creator of the *supraindividual* sphere of personality; it is the intuitive method where thinking is identical to being.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in Hoppe's late philosophy, the distinction between the subject and the object disappears, along with the distinction between the knowing subject and the

---

35 Hoppe, V., *The Prerequisites of Spiritual Philosophy and Religious Faith (Předpoklady duchovní filosofie a náboženské víry)*. Praha, Neklan 1922, p. 52.

36 Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irrationalism*, p. 127.

37 Hoppe, V., *The Natural and Spiritual Foundations of the World and Life (Přirozené a duchovní základy světa a života)*. Praha, Miloš Procházka 1925, p. 519–525. See also Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irrationalism*, p. 125, 132.

object of knowledge, because through the act of creation one becomes a participant in the absolute.<sup>38</sup> What thus takes place is not only an *overcoming of the individuality of both the subject and the object*, but also their *fusion*.

### The Noetic Danger of a Dead End?

On the one hand, it seems that late Hoppe goes further than Bergson's philosophy methodically. This happens in two ways. Firstly,

“hats off to Hoppe, bearing in mind his fearless rigour, for going beyond Bergson and for not being afraid to think through in his own philosophy concepts which Bergson merely formulated as an agenda for his philosophical expectation;”<sup>39</sup>

i.e. areas that Bergson merely outlines as a solution in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Secondly, not only does Hoppe leave behind the intellectual analytical method, but the intuitive method as well, along with all of philosophy as such.

On the other hand, it could be said that in a way (not methodically, but somehow noetically) Hoppe returns to the original, early and, for Trnka, revelatory Bergson and his first essay, *Time and Free Will*. In it, Bergson, similarly to Hoppe, erases the dualistic difference between truth and reality, between the knowing subject and the examined object, or simply, between the subject and the object. Truth is identified with reality and knowledge; dualism is rejected. However, the methodical paths of Hoppe and Bergson are different, which raises the question whether Hoppe's philosophy could offer a relevant answer to the problem outlined by Trnka in his book *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, the problem of searching for a new path for philosophy, which had deviated during his lifetime from the “correct”, noetic-critical path.

Trnka's commentary on the state of modern philosophy is plainly evident in the philosophy of František Mareš and Vladimír Hoppe. The concept, the intellectualist idol of positivist science, is recognised as a static symbol, inseparable from the material world, from the rigidity of surface, and from the “successivity” and differentiability of space. For Bergson's (and others') intuitivism, concepts are but rigid cinematographic images, dependent on limited options of expression. This poses a stumbling block in the form of

38 Konečný, R., *Vladimír Hoppe: A Contribution to the History and Critique of Irrationalism*, p. 40.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

the problem of language, words and concepts: human words are either intellectual

“magical boxes meant to conceal the truth, cinematographic symbols, fictions, or mere instrumental clay”.<sup>40</sup>

Irrationalism, as we have seen, shies from words and concepts, and sets out on a path of its own, beginning with an individualistic descent into one's interiority and feelings of empathy with the essence of objects, and ending with supra-individual insight into supra-individual truths and the practice of extra-conceptual contemplation. This is how, according to Trnka, Bergson's dualism means that all modern philosophy ends up in absolute scepticism concerning the possibilities and groundings of human knowledge.<sup>41</sup> Or is this, in the words of Bergson, simply “knowledge of a new kind”?<sup>42</sup>

---

40 Trnka, T., *A Dead End of Modern Philosophy*, p. 67.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

42 Bergson, H., *La Pensée et le Mouvant*. Paris, Flammarion 2014.