

Intuition: A Theory of Knowledge to Grasp Reality

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Abstract

One of the most fundamental problems of philosophy is the discrimination of the basic methods of inquiry into the nature of the ultimate reality. From the ancient times until the present, intuition is discussed in both western and non-western philosophical writings. Traditionally, the western and non-western Hindu philosophical schools of thought have taken intuition to be non-discursive form or independent way of gaining knowledge. In western philosophy we find intuition from the ancient period of Greek Philosophy, namely, Plato in his book 'Phaedo'. Modern philosophers have taken 'intuition' to mean 'immediate apprehension' by the mind without the intervention of any reasoning process, a particular act of such apprehension. They mean by 'immediate' direct that is not mediate by reasoning process. So, modern philosophers usually mean by 'immediate apprehension' a mental group which is not mediated by the reasoning process. Among the most recent philosophers we find that one of the famous accounts of intuition has been furnished by Bergson, 1955. To him intuition is the only organ of grasping reality which is dynamic. He holds that humans can only know reality, as a process only via intuition. Bergson took intuition to be non-mediate "seeing into" by an entering into the flow of consciousness. Sense-experience and intellect cannot apprehend the nature of reality. It is only the intuitive experience on which philosophy must build its conception of original reality.

Keywords: Reality, Intellect, Intuition, Immediate Apprehension

Introduction

In the history of philosophical enquiry different ways of knowing have been recognized. Sense-experience, discursive intellect and intuitive apprehension are the three important ways of knowing, each of which finds its relative place in the context of a philosophical effort to comprehend the nature of reality as a whole. In recent times philosopher's interest in 'intuition' seems to have increased with tremendous pace. However in the history of philosophy we come across many philosophers who regard intuition alone as capable of apprehending the exact nature of the reality.

Plato's view: Though from the Philosophical point of view Plato is a rationalistic philosopher in the realization of his ultimate goal of highest 'Good' he adopts a concept of intuition. Plato denying that knowledge originates in sense experience does not explain the origin of knowledge very satisfactorily. The basic idea according to Plato just as there are objects which senses experience, so there are objects which the mind experiences and they will be called ideas or forms. The mind may be said to experience these ideas or forms through a process which has subsequently been called intuition. 'Intuition' will be used as a proper name to refer to this special faculty of the mind invoked by Plato to explain knowledge of ideas.

Descartes's view: In the Modern period Descartes accepts intuition in the self-certitude of the thinking ego. For him this clear and distinct perception is the direct vision or intuition which an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so clearly and distinctly that we are wholly free from doubt about that which we understand. By 'intuition' he says, "I understand not the fluctuating testimony of the senses nor the fallible judgment of a faultily constructive imagination, but a conception which arises so readily and distinctly in an

untroubled and attentive mind, that hence forward there can be no doubt concerning the object of our understanding."

2. Methodology: The study is completely based on original books, journals and internet surfing.

3. Result and discussion :

3.1. An Approach to Intuition to Grasp Reality: One of the most fundamental problems of philosophy is the discrimination of the basic methods of enquiry into the nature of the ultimate reality. All the methods adopted so far may be brought under two main headings – (a) Intellectual and (b) Intuitional. While for the advocates of the former method, thoughts or intellect is the highest court of appeal, the intuitionists hold that discursive intellect gives only a superficial view of the reality. The method of intuition rests on the assumption that man has a natural capacity for acquiring knowledge, provided that he exercises this capacity properly.

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Richard Rorty in the Encyclopedia of philosophy, said that the broadest definition of the word 'intuition' is immediate apprehension. The scholastic philosophers took 'intuition' to mean immediate knowledge to grasp reality'.

3.2 Bergson's view: Intuitionism has received great popularity in and outside the world of philosophy in present day, from the French philosopher Henri Bergson. His conception of Reality

is vitally connected with his theory of 'Intuition'. He conceives Reality as an uninterrupted movement, unimpeded flow (Bergson, 1946)¹. In his book "Time and Free-will" (Bergson, 1910)² he indentifies it with Time and in his "Creative Evolution" (Bergson, 1964)³ he calls it the *elan vital*, the vital urge which goes on rushing, like a river in full flood, carrying everything before it, unhampered by any boundaries. He states that the evolution of the world is possible due to a common living force which is striving to express itself along divergent paths and striving constantly for balance and harmony. This force he calls the vital impetus, *elan-vital* and this *elan-vital* is identical with the basic reality. Thus, real time or duration is nothing but the *elan vital* itself. Change is the reality of the existence of a living being; our actual experience of which we are completely sure, is a constant flow which Bergson calls duration. This duration is not a mere succession of instants.

Real duration appears as a "wholly qualitative multiplicity, an absolute heterogeneity of elements which pass over into one another" (Bergson, 1911)⁴. Such a time cannot be measured by clocks or dials but only by conscious beings for "it is the very stuff of which life and consciousness are made." Intellect does not grasp Real time or intellect is unable to give a complete view of reality. The only way to grasp reality is called by Bergson (1955) 'intuition', which reveals a living dynamic world of constant change and novelty. The creative nature of the world is altogether lost in conceptual knowledge and only the intuitional experience gives a true knowledge of it. By intuition is meant "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, 1955)⁵.

Bergson stated that knowledge acquired by intelligence is relative and maintains that while it may be limited knowledge, it brings us in a very true sense, into touch with the "absolute". If we understand by that term no more than reality in some one of its windings. Bergson insists on the limitations of intelligence as a faculty of knowledge. Life and spirit cannot be brought within the grasp of intelligence. In virtue of its very nature it is incapable of seeing the meaning of life. In short no multiplication of the conceptions of intelligence will ever bring us into closer touch with life and spirit. Intelligence is characterized by a native inability to comprehend life. Its work is to reconstitute and to re-constitute with readymade conceptions, so what is new each moment of a history escapes it, and still more the process itself from movement to movement is beyond its grasp.

Then mind and life will be unknowable realities. Is life in its creative activity incomprehensible? Must he despair of entering into the sanctuary in which life shows itself in the making? Truly if intelligence were his only faculty of knowledge, and if intelligence were such as Bergson holds it to be, the way of the knowledge of life would be closed, and its secret remain hidden from human eyes. But this is not the tragic condition of Bergson's Philosophy. Life may be stubbornly refuse to yield up its secret to intelligence, but it can be known by a second faculty which man possesses in germ, and which he may develop - the faculty of 'Intuition' - "The act or faculty of knowing directly, without the use of rational processes" (Goldberg, 1938)⁷. Thus, by 'intuition' Bergson

means the immediate consciousness or direct awareness of reality.

Bergson's intuition is fundamentally experience - a special experience, which consists of a great effort on our part to press our individuality or personality to the centre of the reality whose true knowledge is our aim. "Philosophy consists precisely in this, that by an effort of intuition one place oneself within the concrete reality" (Seshagiri, 1932)⁸. This placing oneself within the concrete Reality which Bergson refers to as 'intuition'.

Bergson holds that through intuition man can apprehend the very movement of life itself and be freed from the contradictions from the point of view of intelligence. Intuition gives us a glimpse of concrete Reality which is duration, but not of more degree of reality. It does not attempt to minimize the value of science, no triumph over the limitations of science. Science is a discovery of law. It cannot comprehend freedom, the fact of life that exists through duration, which intuition alone can comprehend. Thus, if we realize our life as it is being lived, we get an intuition of reality which is not a thought of it or a conception of it, but a conscious experience of the actual life as we live it.

4. Conclusion: From the above discussion it can be maintained that though intuition is the only way to grasp reality still we cannot completely 'ignore intellect as both are complementary to each other. Both intellect and intuition must be reconciled in the ultimate experience of the Absolute. Thus, man has the capacity of lifting himself higher in the ladder of ontological impulsion, and this is possible not through logic and linguistic analysis but through unificatory spiritual experience in which all dualisms are transcended and all antinomies get reconciled.

5. REFERENCES:

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