

Notes towards a Pedagogy of Movement: on will and education in Henri Bergson

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ABSTRACT – Notes towards a Pedagogy of Movement: on will and education in Henri Bergson. This paper aims to introduce readers to a few considerations regarding education found in the philosophy of Henri Bergson, especially in his posthumously published courses, conferences and addresses. At its core is the idea that the will corresponds to the moving aspect of our consciousness through which we learn and think. In this sense, learning difficulties imply the presence of obstacles to the will, which must be removed by pedagogical effort so the movement of learning and thought can be reestablished. Finally, from this is drawn a pedagogy of movement whose task is to enable thought and learning to flow freely towards the unknown, the new, the future.

Keywords: Will. Learning. Education. Thought. Henri Bergson.

RESUMO – Notas para uma Pedagogia do Movente: sobre vontade e educação em Henri Bergson. Este artigo pretende trazer ao público algumas considerações sobre educação e vontade presentes na filosofia de Henri Bergson, sobretudo em seus cursos, conferências e discursos publicados postumamente. Em seu cerne, vigora a ideia de que a vontade corresponde ao aspecto movente da nossa consciência pelo qual aprendemos e pensamos. Nesta via, as dificuldades de aprendizagem implicam a presença de obstáculos frente à vontade, sobre os quais o ato pedagógico deve operar um esforço de remoção para que o movimento do aprender e do pensar possa ser restabelecido. Por fim, depreende-se daí uma pedagogia do movente, cuja tarefa visa desimpedir a livre corrente do pensamento e o impulso da aprendizagem em direção ao desconhecido, ao novo, ao porvir.

Palavras-chave: Vontade. Aprendizagem. Educação. Pensamento. Henri Bergson.

Introduction

Education and will do not feature as privileged subjects in Henri Bergson's main body of work¹, but are rather dispersedly addressed in texts of award speeches, *Collège de France* courses and conferences in foreign universities². The goal of this paper is therefore to highlight his considerations on the notions of will and education, developed through the issue of learning, to propose a unique way of reflecting on educational practices in all moments of life, which may pave the way to a pedagogical ethics that favors learning and thought.

The pedagogy of the movement of thought and continuous learning which we aim to draw from Bergson's philosophy does not correspond to any spontaneous-like attempt to make people think or learn; nor does it concern a search for inspiration to perform such activities; even less does it shed light on forms of consciousness and intelligence to make them access any thought or knowledge hitherto obscured by ignorance; finally, it does not offer a new technique or set of techniques that make it possible to effectively achieve dynamic learning or complex thought. Therefore, it is not about spontaneity, enlightenment or technicism; on the contrary, it is a pedagogy of problematics, of intellectual work, of effort. Its first operation is not to bestow, but to remove, extract, unplug what prevents or hinders the movement of thought and learning.

This does not result in newly acquired knowledge and enhanced intelligence, but in the recovery of the processualism of thought towards what is new, what has not yet been thought, the recreation of what has been learnt, self-becoming. Education thus becomes a creative process by restoring to thought the innovative movement of ideas, perceptions and feelings that daily life and domesticating education insist on paralyzing through conformity and automatism. It is in this sense that the teaching of this pedagogy addresses the will rather than intelligence, since the former expresses the very movement that impels us into the unknown, the original, the future. Finally, it is less a matter of transmitting knowledge or a rule of action, whatever its complexity, than to release the free flow of thought and the curious impulse of learning towards what is not yet known, what has not yet been thought, what has not yet become. Here we have an education geared to the future, driven by the desire to invent other forms of thinking, feeling, seeing and acting in the world, and which as such invests its practices in the exercise of the will.

Will and Action

In Bergson, the notion of will is directly related to the concept of *élan vital*. If *Creative Evolution* (1907) shows how this force of differentiation runs through the life of all living beings, in human beings specifically it is expressed in their consciousness as will. In a series of conferences on personality in 1914 at the University of Edinburgh in the

United States, Bergson states that our self-consciousness is formed by both the feeling of the past and a forward-looking *élan*, and that “[...] in this *élan* is particularly seen what we call Will” (Bergson, 1972g, p.1082, emphasis in the original)³. This *élan* or will, as expressed in our consciousness, is constituted as a forward driving force, directed towards the future. Also at those conferences, Bergson (1972, p. 1083, emphasis in the original) clarifies his idea by saying that when referring the will, “[...] it would be more accurate to speak of an *inner élan (impetus)*. The *élan* towards the future is an essential element of the human person”.

As an impetus, the will is firstly manifested as a kind of *spiritual energy* whose forward movement would ultimately lead to an *action*. In this sense, all action is related to a will or desire, so that the will becomes the main element of the spirit. Thus, through action, the will prevails over other *aspects* of consciousness, especially memory and intelligence, which is emphasized by Bergson in his 1913 course at Columbia University in the United States:

This becomes clearer if we recall that our memories are first and foremost the helpers of action. If a situation we experience demands immediate action and the recollection of certain names or specific faces to make the action effective, they come to us suddenly. Thus, intelligence or memory is a function of the will (Bergson, 1972c, p. 982).

As the spiritual *élan* of our consciousness, the will corresponds to a power of differentiation that is renovated through creative actions in the world. Corresponding to the very notion of spirit, Bergson (1972b, p. 1203) says, at a 1916 conference in Madrid on the human soul, that “[...] the will is thus defined: a force capable of self-development [...] In the will lies the wonderful virtue of self-growth.” The will is therefore a creative force, whose expansion or growth does not depend on any element inserted from outside, it is the deep source of all energy of the spirit, even intellectual. Thus, in that same conference, Bergson (1972b, p. 1203) states that “[...] with a little will one makes more will, one makes a lot of will, with the ability to desire one can learn to desire.” That is, a minimum of will suffices to attain *extra* will and, strictly speaking, indefinitely, maximum will. The will is an ability to self-multiply, the creative capacity *par excellence*.

Spiritual power is a force capable of extracting from itself more than it contains[...] . It is a special power destined to extend creative action, whose destiny is to introduce in the world, in which everything would be calculable and predictable if there were only matter, something absolutely new, a true creation (Bergson, 1972b, p. 1203).

In Bergson's more important works the notion of will is addressed in a more indirect way, not so much corresponding to the broader dimension of the spiritual but closer to our psychological life as a whole. In this view, a theory of the will can be deduced from *duration*, a key concept of Bergson's philosophy. Thus, for Arnauld François (2008, p.

48), alongside the idea of heterogeneity, the will consists of the “[...] conception of a continuity between all states of consciousness,” to which one could hardly give a status of autonomous faculty, separated from other faculties (memory, intelligence, attention, etc.).

In *Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), Bergson describes the will as a kind of tension or impulse that our psychological life can adopt as a whole, and more precisely when it gives rise to a free act or action. In this work Bergson (1948, p. 128) relates the notion of will to the idea of freedom through action resulting from our psychological tension, so that “[...] the action which has been performed [...] agrees with the whole of our most intimate feelings, thoughts and aspirations.” Free action would therefore be one in which we are most in agreement with the whole of our psychological life, that is, in which all our psychological states are strained for the sake of a single act. However, for Bergson (1948, p. 125), freedom “[...] admits of degrees,” degrees of tension in which we merge our states of consciousness to drive them into action. These degrees of freedom hence correspond to the degrees of the will as it tenses. Inversely, a kind of *counter-will* is considered by Bergson to be *inertia*, *sluggishness*, a *weakness* or relaxation of this tension, from which no degree of freedom of action could result, and even a guided action could hardly come about.

Tension therefore produces a synthesis, whether between the states of consciousness, through which our will is expressed, or between the successive moments in which time is constituted for us. In both are shown the main characteristics of duration, heterogeneity and continuity of states of consciousness and of successive instants. From the temporal synthesis is born or unfolds the present, the past and the future in the forms of that which has just been and that which is about to happen. Tension therefore brings together past and future in the continuity of the present in the form of the passage of time, but at the same time in which from that present they unfold as such. This synthesis of past and future in the present may also come about according to varying degrees of tension, now leaning towards more or less distant pasts from the present, now towards the future, in experiences through which we feel time flow more slowly or faster in the present of perception.

This way of addressing the issue of time led Bergson to distinguish perception from memory. In *Matter and Memory* (1896), the philosopher makes us reflect on the distinction and relationship between body (which is always in the present and consists of the material support of perception) and spirit (which expresses the power to make the past survive and the ability to retrieve it in the form of memory). The insertion of the spirit in the body leans towards the future and enables the performance of an action, or creation, which will bring to the world a new gesture or a new *thing*. In this work, the concept of memory consists of an unfolding of the notion of duration presented in the *Essay*, now comprising levels of tension more or less closer to action. Thus Bergson (1965, p. 7, emphasis in the original) states in the introduction: “[...] there are different tones of mental life and our psychological life may be

lived at different heights, now nearer to action, now further away from it, according to the degree of our *attention to life*." In this view, attention is the act that expresses the degree of will or psychological tension (between the levels of our past and present) present at each moment in which we act. Duration, in the form of memory, is presented in this text as a plurality of acts or rhythms that correspond to the varying degrees of temporal tension of our psychological life, that is: "[...] in reality, there is no single rhythm of duration; one may imagine many different rhythms which, slower or faster, measure the degree of tension or relaxation of different kinds of consciousness" (Bergson, 1965, p. 232).

Although memory allows our consciousness to extend and reach towards the past, running through many degrees of tension of all our memories, it is not in that sense that it spiritually serves the body. According to Bergson, the ability to remember must be in the service of the body's future actions, for we remember in order to act and action leans towards the future, so that memory is defined in this paper as a "[...] synthesis of past and present with a view to the future" (Bergson 1965, p. 248). Thus, it is in the memory, that is, in the past, that one finds the condition by which the future (an action) unfolds from the present, that is, it is from the past of life that its *élan*, its movement towards the future, is released. For the sake of illustration, memory is like an arc of the will, which, the more it is tensed towards the past, the further the arrow of our present action will reach into the future.

In this sense, the term *élan* represents in itself this relationship of life (more precisely of our psychological life) with the future, the unknown, what has not yet been created, thought and felt. If, on the one hand, memory helps give consistency to or even preserve something once it is created, on the other it provides us with elements to go beyond what we are, to recreate ourselves, to be different from what we once were, to become other versions of ourselves. In any case, memory is always expressed through some kind of tension, whether by contracting the heterogeneous data of experience and merging them with each other in an indivisible continuity, or by contracting memory elements (which are immanent to memory itself) in the experience that happens in the present and tends towards the future. At any rate, tension is the actual condition of all action and all creation. In our psychological life it comprises varying degrees and that tension is what Bergson calls will.

Obstacles to Learning

However, as early as in the aforementioned 1914 conference on personality at the University of Edinburgh in the United States, Bergson (1972, pp. 1083) stresses that "[...] the *élan* may decrease or even stop almost completely," interrupting the forward movement that brings together the totality of our past and creates our future. Therefore, one must understand that variation in the degree of tension also implies the decrease or weakening of the actual will. The reduced tone of our psychological life therefore generates a kind of *inertia* that precludes our

ability to extend ourselves towards both the past and the future, consequently, to act, and to act in an unpredictable or new way. The loss of tension reduces our will to a minimum and isolates our psychological life in the immediate present which resumes incessantly at every moment, that is, in Bergson's own words (1972g, p. 1083): "[...] in cases in which this impulse is insufficient, this results in an adherence to the present and an inability to open within it a path to action." We are then afflicted by *disorders of doubt* and become incapable of acting in the world, of dealing with new situations that require adaptive learning, or rather the invention of solutions to problems posed by the world in the context in which we are inserted.

In this sense, acts of learning depend on the power of the will that impels us into the future and allows us to embrace the new in us. Consequently, if we can learn more or less, if we can grasp the real to a greater or lesser degree it is because our will is momentarily more or less tense, or more or less relaxed. Thus, the relaxation of our will is an obstacle to our ability to learn.

We find this kind of impediment to learning everywhere, in all of us, every time *laziness* prevails. As a manifestation of the insufficiency of the will, Jean Lombard, in commenting the issue of education in Bergson, states that "[...] laziness is the extreme evil, because it is ignorance of the creative *élan*" (Lombard, 1997, p. 81). However, laziness, or weakness of the will, is not the only obstacle to learning.

Still according to Lombard (1997), there is *passivity* in the presence of ready-made ideas, received or borrowed, of inherited feelings towards specific situations and experiences and of the set of conventions offered by society. These previously drawn routes over which we passively allow ourselves to be guided are a hindrance to thought and learning, which relate to the aspiration for the movement of the will rather than to obedience to *rules* that prevent us from desiring.

Alongside passivity, Lombard (1997) also views *conformity* to knowledge and beliefs previously consolidated in us as a serious obstacle to our will which must be overcome to keep up with the movement by which we think and learn. The predominance of *utilitarianism* in forms of perceiving, thinking and acting is also mentioned by Lombard (1997) as one of the problems pointed out by Bergson as a type of impediment to the movement of thinking what has not been thought and learning what is not yet known. In the wake of passivity, conformity and utilitarianism, Bergson states in a 1895 address on *Good Sense and Classical Studies* that *everyday habits*, or the *spirit of routine*, are other obstacles to the creative processes of thought and learning, since "[...] daily life requires from each of us very clear solutions and very fast decisions" (Bergson, 1972d, p. 361). Finally, Lombard (1997) mentions *automatism* of thought – which intelligence constitutes from its adaptive operations through which we *learn* to recognize and control the aspects of the world with which we relate – as a recurrent obstacle to the processes of learning and thought. Intellectual automatism organizes our

experience of the real, but at the cost of paralyzing its movement, by operating fixed selections, contrary to its very nature, which is change.

According to Bergson, language is a powerful assistant of intelligence in this operation of immobilizing the spirit and the real in the form of automatisms. In the *Essay* he already warns against the dangers of language, stating that the word “[...] of well-defined contours [...] which stores what is stable, common and therefore impersonal in humanity’s impressions, crushes or at least overlays the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness” (Bergson, 1948, 98); and even those we forge to express a unique and original impression of our experience “[...] turn against the feeling that gave them birth, and invented to bear witness that the feeling is unstable, impose on it their own stability” (Bergson, 1948, p. 98). In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson (1957, p. 128) conclusively considers that “[...] the most vibrant thought is frozen in the formula which expresses it. The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit.” Finally, in the aforementioned address given at the Sorbonne in 1895 titled *Common Sense and Classical Studies*, the philosopher states:

We were saying that one of the greatest obstacles to the freedom of the spirit is the ideas which language gives us ready-made, and which we breathe, so to speak, in the environment around us; [...] incapable of taking part in the life of the spirit they persevere, as truly dead ideas, in their rigidity and immobility [...] Each word represents a portion of reality, but a portion roughly trimmed, as if humanity had carved it out according to its convenience and needs instead of following the interactions of the real (Bergson, 1972d, p. 366-367).

Therefore, these are obstacles that in some way take part in constituting our actual spiritual life and which, paradoxically, end up being erected in trends that act against the *élan* that gave them birth. In the face of all these hurdles that hinder the free movement of the will, how could one understand that new ideas, perceptions, actions, kinds of knowledge and feelings may have a place in the processes of thought and learning?

Confronted with this power play between competing trends, Bergson conceives a notion that expresses the power of the spirit and whose intensity determines the predominance of the creating *élan* of the will or of laziness, conformity, utilitarianism and automatism. Thus, the scope of our will’s action in the face of such impediments will depend on an *effort* required by our spirit in each situation to re-establish the movement of the creation of thought and learning.

Effort and Creation

Intimately linked to the will, the notion of effort is what allows us to understand the variation of the *thousand tones* of our psychological life, the innumerable degrees of intensity of our spirit in the face of the

reality that surrounds us at each moment. In this way, the processes of learning and thought require our spirit to make an effort to go beyond itself, that is, to surpass what is already known, thought and felt and reach out into the future, the unknown, to create and recreate itself at each new effort.

In several passages of his work, Bergson addresses this notion in a distinctive way. Thus, for example, in a reflection on the process by which we articulate ideas into varying degrees of complexity, the notion appears in *Spiritual Energy* (1919) as *intellectual effort*, “[...] that which we make to understand and interpret” (Bergson, 1967, p. 167). In *Matter and Memory*, in addressing the form of attentive recognition, it appears as *effort of attention*; or, in indicating the process by which we seek to retrieve a memory and actualize it in our consciousness, it expresses an *effort to recall or actualize*. In the *Essays*, Bergson defines duration itself as an *effort of contraction or retention* whereby time is constituted as a heterogeneous continuity. In *Creative Evolution*, life is expressed as a *creative effort* present from the protoplasm to the human organism, producing in the latter the creative personality. In *Good Sense and Classical Studies*, spiritual work, or effort, against the beliefs and opinions incorporated and shared by us is called *Good Sense*. Finally, in the *Conferences on Personality*, the philosopher attributes to the human person an *effort of will* whereby it can recreate itself.

In all these manifestations, the notion of effort is present as a tension against the obstacles that restrain the movement of the will. Thus, for Bergson, effort is the very condition of creation without which we cannot withdraw from laziness, escape conformity, resist utilitarianism and depart from automatism, which prevent us from thinking what has not been thought and learning what is not known.

Thus, as Henri Gouhier (1989) emphasizes, the effort of creation relates to invention rather than discovery, it is directed at the will rather than intelligence, it is itself “a challenge to intelligence” (Gouhier, p. 124). This criticism of intelligence present in Bergsonism does not propose that man repudiate his rationality, but aims to affirm his irreducibility to reason. It is in this sense that Bergson offers the distinction between *discovery* and *invention*, dear to the human being. This distinction is present in *The Creative Mind* (1934), which reads: “[...] discovery has to do with what already exists, actually or virtually; therefore, it was sure to happen sooner or later. Invention gives being to what did not exist, to what might never have happened” (Bergson, 1966, p. 52).

In one case the spirit works with what already exists, with what it assumes has a hidden existence; in the other it must make an effort to draw from itself more than it has in order to “[...] enhance itself from within, to create or recreate itself incessantly” (Bergson 1972a, p. 887). From the point of view of intelligence and reason, discovery is mere determinism, explained by a relationship of cause and effect; while, from the point of view of invention, creation brings in its realization unpredictability and novelty, whose reality has no rational explanation. The operation of rationalization that intelligence forces onto invention

therefore consists in eliminating what is irrational in the notion of creation, that is, in Bergsonian terms, the fact of *giving being to what did not exist*. Thus, insofar as it always starts out from something already supposedly given, intelligence understands this Bergsonian proposition as a kind of creation that is made from nothing. However, nothing could be further from Bergsonism than this idea of creation *ex nihilo*. For Bergson, on the contrary, creation must be understood as continuation, as creative evolution, and he questions the procedure that understanding ascribes to this process:

Everything is obscure in the idea of creation if we think of *things* that are created and a *thing* that creates, as we usually do, as understanding cannot help doing [...] . Things and states are just views taken by our spirit regarding becoming (Bergson, 1957, p. 249, emphasis in the original).

It is from this point on that Bergson delimits the sense that distinguishes intelligence (and even memory) from will, for while the former work with what already exists, in terms of present and past, the will works with what does not yet exist, actually or virtually, or better, with the future. From this distinction stems the scope of extension and variation, that is, of creation, which each of those faculties has. In this sense, Bergson (1972a, p. 887) states that “[...] with a little intelligence, one can make more intelligence; with a little memory, more memory; with a little will, a lot of will, and also a lot of many other things.” In this way, the will is the very creation that shies away from the determinism of reason, and it may vary from a minimum to a maximum in its expansion through an act of effort which differs from person to person and situation. In his lecture on personality, Bergson addresses these issues directly when he states:

The human person is a being capable of drawing from itself more than it actually has[...] . By a slight effort of will we can draw much in this way; by a great effort of will we can draw indefinitely. It is the person's power to extend, increase, and even, partly, create oneself (Bergson, 1972g, p. 1081).

From this point of view of creation proposed by Bergson, it is no longer a matter of speaking of intelligence or understanding, but of *experience*. Creation is, therefore, an act of the spirit when the latter brings in its realization unpredictability and novelty, by means of which it escapes the determinism of intelligence. In this sense, for Bergson there are two movements of the spirit: one by which we are led to obey the demands of intelligence and society; and another by which we make an effort to follow the movement of the creative will which enables us to expand and create.

Thus, in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932), Bergson stresses that the demands of closed society and static religion pressure our spirit into obeying their determinations. However, this *pressure* must be understood in a different way than usual. Far from being an ef-

fort, Bergson says that the pressure here is to *go along*, and that the obligations are like routes or paths traced by society that are always open to our spirit to be followed with no difficulty or effort. The same is true of intelligence, whose operation makes the spirit “[...] cold-work, combining together ideas long since cast into words, which society provides in a solid state” (Bergson, 2000, p. 43), from a minimum effort.

In another sense, Bergson views creation as the movement of a singular will, whereby the closed circuit of ordinary morality and religiosity is breached by an effort. Bergson calls *aspiration* this movement that demands an ever greater effort of the spirit and which opposes mere obedience. To aspire is, therefore, to make the will follow paths previously untraveled, chart new routes, create the new, what has not yet been followed, made, known: it is an experience without points of reference, whose necessary psychological effort allows us to *draw from ourselves more than we have*; or rather, it allows us to think what has not yet been thought, to create what has not yet been created, in short, to learn to grasp the new and thus become someone else.

Now is the moment to situate educational practices in the light of these movements or trends that act on the will. Traditionally, education favors the insertion of children and young people in mainstream social and cultural life by transmitting the set of previously agreed rules, values and knowledge. However, traditional education works on expanding our will up to certain point to favor learning and thinking processes with a view to acquiring and consolidating knowledge and problem-solving skills. The limit of this process therefore consists in the constitution of obstacles in the form of utilitarianism and conformity to learning and automatisms that prevent thought from leaning to what has not been thought without subjecting it to the already known.

In line with the suggestions proposed by Bergson, we believe it is in the interest of education to follow such processes, but without stopping at the point in which its task is paralyzed by self-produced obstacles and the unfavorable context in which its practices are inserted. The ultimate question is how education can relate to the will to restore the movement of learning and thought which allows the subjects of educational practices to achieve the creation of themselves. In this sense, according to Lombard (1997, p. 37), the educational ideal proposed by Bergson aims at “[...] leading children and adolescents to self-possession that becomes self-creation” by triggering their wills.

Education and Will: Towards a Pedagogy of Movement

In *Good Sense and Classical Studies*, Bergson explicitly states that the initial task of education consists of a *negative* attitude, i.e., that “[...] education must intervene most often not so much to foster an *élan* as to remove obstacles, to lift a veil rather than to shed light” (Bergson, 1972d, p. 366). Hence the notion of effort being so necessary to education as a tool to free the creative *élan* of our will from the impediments that re-

strain it. Therefore, there is no learning and thought without an effort that allows our will to rid itself of laziness, conformity, utilitarianism, automatism and go beyond what one already knows and already is.

Following the direction of becoming, education is, according to Bergson, a creative process. However, its creative nature is paradoxical since it depends on an activity of destruction that poses an impediment to the will. Therefore, it is about selectively destroying the obstacles to the awakening of attention and the movement of the will in order to free ourselves from the tendency to perceive and think in utilitarian and automatic terms. In this way, Bergson (1972d, p. 368) thinks that education must have “[...] always the same general goal, which is to remove our thought from automatism, release it from forms and formulas, restore the free circulation of life within it.” To this end, according to the philosopher, it should demand “[...] an effort to break the ice of words and rediscover underneath the free stream of thought; [...] and invite one to think the actual ideas, regardless of the words” (Bergson, 1972d, p. 368).

Therefore, a pedagogy of movement shall be based on the notion of effort and aim to remove the tutelage of ready-made ideas that the spirit accepts passively until the will is sufficiently asserted to allow us to regain control of ourselves and reestablish the creative élan of our thought. Through the work of the spirit, a pedagogy of movement enables us to “[...] take each problem as new and do it the honor of a new effort. It requires from us the sometimes painful sacrifice of the opinions we had made and the solutions we had ready” (Bergson, 1972d, 362). It is therefore about eliminating ideas that are *ready-made* and congealed by language to make room for ideas that *are made* in the heat and mobility of life.

In this sense, such a pedagogy calls for an active attitude of the spirit, an effort directed towards the life of thought, which entails the sacrifice, elimination or suspension of what we believe, know or believe we know. From this perspective, its practice emerges as a pedagogical ethics whose actions must evaluate, select and eliminate everything that constitutes an obstacle to the awakening of the will in education. At school, this exercise of the will would aim to eliminate the lazy habits that favor automatism while favoring the acquisition of mechanisms or habits that ensure the creation of new skills to enable other kinds of progress. Thus, the educational activities we cherish as the most modest, such as reading, listening, memorizing, answering questions, paying attention, etc., are the first school exercises aimed at developing the will with a view to achieving more ambitious goals.

This ambition or aspiration of education, based Bergson’s ideas, does not merely aim to make children and young people more intelligent, but rather to awaken their spirits to continuously renewed learning and thought. In this way, no school activity can dispense with effort or even with a continuity of effort whereby each learning moment, despite its specific goals, ends up also teaching to learn. That is, the effort does not aim to merely impart practical knowledge to students but to assure them an aptitude for learning, a continuous ability to create

new knowledge and consequently renew themselves as students at all times. Such an ambition is related to a broader purpose of education, the problem of human development. In a 1922 speech titled *Greek and Latin Studies and the Reform of Secondary Education*, Bergson (1972e: 1378) addresses what kind of man education should cultivate: “[...] let us educate a man with an open spirit, capable of developing in more than one direction. We want him to be provided with indispensable knowledge and be capable of acquiring others, of learning to learn.” In this respect, educational practices should not be considered merely as the result of a pedagogical method that assumes knowledge as something to be transmitted, but an activity that views knowledge as something to be *created* from one’s own experience, from oneself and from the objects in the world. Thus, it is not so much a set of teaching and learning techniques as an *attitude of the spirit* identified with the need to create, or rather, in the philosopher’s own words from a 1937 lecture, “[...] to engender through thought the object to be studied rather than accepting it already made” (Bergson, 1972f, p. 1577).

This stance assumed by Bergson leads us to think that, from the perspective of a pedagogy of movement, paradoxically, education is a refusal of education itself insofar as it seeks to be free from the socialized thought, old habits, prior knowledge and established conventions that hinder it. In this sense, creative education is that in which, through its subjects and activities, the liberating dimension prevails over the urgency of knowledge. Finally, if Bergson considers life as a type of enduring creation, we may think of education is its first school, the one which allows the *élan* to prevail over *bad habits*, automatism, conformity and utilitarianism.

Received on October 19, 2017
Approved on October 9, 2018

Notes

- 1 We refer to Bergson’s four major books in which his philosophy is consolidated: *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Creative Evolution* (1907) and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932).
- 2 All of these works are gathered and published in the volume edited by André Robinet: Bergson (1972h). A critical and modified reprint of this set of texts appeared recently under the title *Écrits Philosophiques* (Bergson, 2011).
- 3 All translations in this paper are of our own making and responsibility.

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