

A Difference between Ecstatic Time and Pure Duration

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The article offers a speculative comparison of two approaches to modern materialist science – that of Heidegger based on the understanding of ecstatic time and that of Bergson based on the notion of vital momentum, or pure duration. Bergson's notion of vital momentum can be derived from the Heideggerian ecstasy of the future. The notion of fundamental material elements as well as the notion of their lawful movement can be derived from the Heideggerian ecstasies of the past and the present. Bergson also sees modern science as based on the concept of what is finished (past) and of what is present (given). While Bergson opposes his vital momentum to the notion of matter which underlies modern materialist science, Heidegger shows the historical origin of these notions in the Greek understanding of Presence and also the ontological origin in Presence as ecstatic time. Bergson's pure duration is a mode of the inauthentic understanding of temporality. The analysis and comparison draw on phenomenological-hermeneutical approach, fundamental ontology as well as 'philosophy of life'.

Keywords: Bergson, *durée* pure, ecstatic time, *élan vital*, Heidegger, materialist science

INTRODUCTION

This article will use Heidegger's writings and notions to reconstruct the historical and ontological origin of key modern scientific or philosophical principles such as law of nature, matter and material particle as well as its spiritual antonym will, creativity and *élan vital*. Next to Heidegger, the other key author here will be Bergson or, rather, his notion of *élan vital* and pure time (duration) with Heidegger's ecstatic temporality will be juxtaposed and to which it will be compared. The article will claim or presuppose the ontological superiority of the Heideggerian understanding in the sense that it goes deeper or is more fundamental. We will demonstrate that both the notion of *élan vital* (or pure duration) and the material notions that it opposes can be derived from the (Heideggerian) temporal phenomenon of 'falling' (Verfallen) and point back to the movements of ecstatic temporality.

The first chapter will link both Heideggerian and Bergsonian thought to the previous philosophy of life, and will link 'life' to the ancient Greek philosophical dynamic ontology. Heidegger's notion of ecstatic temporality is a retrieval of the Greek dynamic notion.

The second chapter will drive further the point that the (modern) duality of 'matter' and 'spirit' was not known to the ancient Greek thought and is also 'alien' to Heidegger. But it is of

decisive importance for Bergson. The absence of this duality allows the dynamic, or moving, nature of reality roll uncovered. It undermines the image of ancient Greek philosophy as 'abstract theory' and show its rootedness in practicality which is essential to 'nature' itself. But if there is no abstract or deadening theory, then there can be no duality between theory and practice and dynamic time does not need to be opposed to inert space.

The final part of the article will use Heidegger's notion of the ecstasies of time and the notion of inauthentic time as falling and link them to the Heideggerian reconstruction of ontologico-historical origin of modern notion of 'material element' and 'mathematical law of nature' as well as of Bergsonian aspatial and immaterial time.

Heideggerian and Bergsonian terms have been treated together in other scholarly publications. M. Sinclair (2014) juxtaposed Bergson's and Heidegger's treatments of the topic of 'creation' in order to show their similarity so that eventually their essential difference can be seen: Bergson sees creation as a function of the will. On the other hand, his philosophy is not just an expression of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity but also includes a recognition that inheritance and originality are a function of each other and neither is reducible to the will. J. Gilbert-Walsch (2010) pays attention to the challenges of talking about time at all and how the sensitivity to these challenges is important to both Heidegger and Bergson. It also sheds light of what it means to engage in rigorous philosophical praxis. He points to the tension between the original act in thinking and its being put to language. R. Ronchi (2023) ponders the difference in the way Bergson and Heidegger treat technology and tends to see the Bergsonian open and 'cosmological' approach superior to 'anthropological-existential' closed approach. He seems to ascribe to Heidegger the dualism of 'instinct/intelligence' but Stasiulis (2024) argues that it is not the case with Heidegger. J. H. Li (2020) goes back to the old debate between quantitative and qualitative time exemplified by the debate between Bergson and Einstein in the 1920's, and he tends to present Heidegger as a kind of a follower of Bergson's in this regard. The debate is also discussed by J. Canales (2005; 2010), D. Scott (2006) and Vuger (2023). H. Massey (2015) discusses the notions of time proposed by Heidegger and Bergson and tries to defend Bergson's notion from Heidegger's critique. In addition to this monograph, he also contributed a chapter (2021) to the book *Bergsonian Mind* where he argues that Heidegger's notion of time is indebted to the Bergsonian one: at any rate, there are points of agreement like the very priority to the notion of time, priority of action, and challenging the ontological primacy of the 'now'. Similar topics were also discussed by Inwood (2012), Kačerauskas (2007), Kačerauskas, Vėželis (2016), Sinclair (2017) and Zahavi, Overgaard (2012).

POWER, WORK AND TEMPORALITY

This is a speculative comparison of two ontologies which are at least in a sense derived from the philosophy of life and thus bring (the issue of) temporality to the fore. One of the ontologies is that of ecstatic time by Heidegger, and the other one is that of the vital momentum (*élan vital*) by Bergson.

For Heidegger, time, or temporality, is a unity of three ecstasies – standing out into the future, the past and the present. As such, time is indeed *four* dimensional as the unity itself, or Being, which unites the three ecstasies and unfolds – or stands out, or un-conceals itself – as such temporality is the fourth and uniting dimension (cf. Heidegger 2007: 20). In such temporalising, spatiality is also given as the equiprimordial givenness of time-space.

Whereas in the Bergsonian description, the vital momentum is in a strong tension with materiality (= spatiality) as they are perceived as distinct and more or less opposing tendencies (cf. Bergson 2008). Descartes had introduced the duality of matter, which he equated with space, and spirit – and Bergson is a strong advocate of the spirited and *willful* aspect and at the same time a critiquer of materialist science whether in the guise of Darwinian understanding of evolution or Einsteinian understanding of universe and relativity, or Galilean understanding of gravity (cf. Li 2020; Canales 2005, 2010; Bergson 2008). To matter/space he opposes the creative and the qualitatively temporal of the vital momentum.

Incidentally, we can find an analogue, seed or anticipation of such an understanding in Schopenhauer and even Augustine: the former pays attention to the flowing experience of music which is beyond Kantian categories such as causality and beyond spatiality in general and is purely temporal (Schopenhauer 1958: 266). The latter (in Book 11 of the *Confessiones*) also spiritualised and despatialised/dematerialised time and argued for this conclusion based on temporality in music or, for that matter, rhythm of spoken language (Augustine 2002).

Heidegger – in this aspect, somewhat like Bergson – can be said to understand the ontological ‘principle’, i.e. Being, as creative. But, unlike in Bergson, this creativity has nothing to do with opposing materiality. The word that Heidegger uses is *Werk* (cf. Heidegger 1990: 131). It is not just a literal but also a philosophical-thoughtful translation of the ancient Greek philosopheme *ergon*. For the Greeks, the activity of all there is – which is captured by the word *ergon* – unfolds without any distinction between ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’ whatsoever. These terms, this notion and the corresponding dualism are utterly unknown and alien to the Greeks (Heidegger 1979: 242). In a similar fashion, they are alien to Heidegger who shapes or originates his thought from the ancient Greek place of thinking. *Being is fuisis; fuisis is growth* – growth is the sense of activity, or work. There is no ‘inert’ matter which can only derive its mobility from outside influences but everything that there is is, as it were, permeated with power/work/activity. This is why Aristotle speaks of *en-ergeia*, that is, being-at-work, of each thing. At the same time this being-at-work brings to the fore the power which lies in the ‘elements’ out of which one comes to be. For example, a horse is always at work of maintaining its own existence as well as the existence of its *eidos* (species) and in order to do that he employs the powers in the grass, water and air which are transformed into its bones, blood and muscles etc. – and they in turn are not just ‘material’ but living – which allows its own existence and that of its species (*eidos*) to come to the fore and linger.

The power is ‘felt’ like *oreksis* (cf. Arist. Met.: 1071a1; Arist. De. An., 433b28) – desire (appetite). Schopenhauer speaks of *will*, the inner essence of things that is ‘felt’ by the existents as their ‘inner’ side, whereas corporeality and everything that can be described with the ‘intellect’ (conceived in Kantian terms) is the ‘superficial’ side. Such description can perhaps be said to be overly ‘mystical’. Because it is reminiscent of the matter/spirit dualities. [*Man muss Schopenhauern zuerst verneinen.** This understanding be better construed in the sense that the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘material’ are one and the same thing. One does not need, for instance, to ‘escape matter’ in order to get to the essential but the essential is always there because the ‘corporeality’, ‘materiality’ and ‘wordliness’ is but the way of being of this ‘spirit’ or ‘power’ or ‘will’ or ‘work’ or, if you will, ‘creativity’. It is the power, and the desire, that already is there in each thing as its essence – which, just like Aristotle emphasised (and Plato did not object that, did he?), cannot be thought in separation from existents. The *work* of this *power* is what

* Nietzsche 2020.

Heidegger retrieves and ‘reconceptualises’, that is, brings to language afresh, with his four dimensional – ecstatic – time (time-space).

FUSIS AS PRACTICAL

To continue the emphasis further, *fusis* should not be confused with *nature*. *Natura* is opposed to *cultura*, that is, to cultivation and activity, while it itself is passive. We also use the word *natural* to convey the sense that it happens by itself, ‘spontaneously’, without any effort or work (cf. Lewis 1947: 16). But *fusis* itself exists only as work, only as *active*. To be even more precise, *fusis* exists as power – which is prior to both ‘activity’ and ‘passivity’ or, rather, it involves both (Heidegger 1990: 89, 104–106). *Fusis* exists as both power to produce, to bring forth – like the horse brings itself forth in existing – and the power to suffer, like grass suffers being transformed into the blood and muscles, and, thus, (part of) the shape of the horse. Such dynamics is the way *fusis* – Being – brings about, temporalises things.

It is perhaps a hindrance to retrieving the meaning of this ancient philosophy if we understand it as theoretical. Theory is opposed to practice, and this opposition (later) turns into the modern opposition of mathematical science and spontaneous life – exactly the opposition, which is taken up by Bergson. But – if power, and desire, is not opposed to existing entities and their existing but is precisely their essentiality, then the terms that were used to employing only in the description of practice should indeed be used to understand the world at large. *Fusis* is work, that is, it is practical, it is *practice*.

This is precisely why Aristotle’s ‘theory’ is none other than a description of motility of existence in terms of work, that is, in practical terms. Aetiology in Aristotle is a description of unconcealing that Being performs, and this unconcealing (or the way power works) is fourfold: that out of which (material), the what it is (eidos), the telos and the fourth to gather the first three into a unity, the ‘origin of movement’. This is the ontological meaning of the so-called four ‘causes’ of Aristotle (Stasiulis 2016: 251–253). And this aetiology is just as temporal as it is practical. The work to retain oneself and one’s eidos (species) derives from the *telos* (the love, the one) and this work is the tension and reconciliation between the power to produce (that is, to produce the eidos) and the power to suffer (that is, in order to produce the eidos for the sake of telos). Hence, *energeia* and *entelecheia*.

Also, to note, production always takes place futurally, it is directed as a project toward the eidos, and equiprimordially it is thrown into the past out of which the eidos must be produced. The power in the past and the power in the future are basically the same power in the sense that they have the same direction and are reconciled in the telos. The moment of choice, the present moment, which is equiprimordial with the union of future and past, has to do with the telos. The existing in the way of four ‘aetions’ is the ecstatic temporality explicated in Heidegger.

To summarise or give an interim conclusion, Being/*fusis* is practical at the ontological level, its unconcealing is temporalising in the fourfold way – and this temporalising unconcealing, this ecstatic powerfulness is the presence which was the *Sache* of thinking for the Greeks and Being for Heidegger.

MODERN ONTOLOGY AS DERIVED FROM THE ‘FALLING’ (VERFALLEN)

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger demonstrates that Cartesian spatiality is derived from Daseinian spatiality. Also, Cartesian ontology is dependent on ancient Greek ontology. Daseinian

spatiality (and ontology in general) and ancient Greek ontology coincide at the basic level because Heidegger's description of Dasein is nothing else but a retrieval of the transcendental level of ancient Greek thought and existence. Thus, Daseinian ontology also is a presupposition of Cartesian ontology. Cartesian ontology is a derivative of Daseinian ontology.

In the later period, Heidegger pays more and more attention to language. The deep structure of Dasein is the deep source of language. Thus, eventually, Cartesian ontology can be said to be dependent on and derivative of language. The grammatical category of the 'noun' is crucial for the spatial understanding of stable things. But Heidegger pays attention to the unity of noun and verb and adverb in Plato's thought and Greek Dasein in general. While Cartesian ontology is spatial and oriented at stable objects, its temporal-spatial background is the ecstatic praxis of the worlding world. Still, this practical Dasein tends to *fall* into the stability of things, lose its true ('authentic') temporal-practical aspect, and this 'loss' equals the 'inauthentic' existence. The aspect of the 'inauthentic' existence that concerns us here, in this article, is the 'inauthentic', or 'fallen', understanding of things. And this understanding is the transcendental basis of Cartesian ontology, that is, also of the modern natural scientific understanding of the world. That is, – and this is what we aim to show in this article, – modern natural scientific understanding of the world is 'inauthentic', which means that it has 'fallen away' from its ecstatico-temporal worlding.

In more specific terms, ecstatic temporo-spatiality has three dimensions – the past, the present and the future. In their inauthentic form, the ecstasis of the past 'falls into' the materialist-mechanical law of nature, the ecstasis of the present 'falls into' atomist/corpuscularist physical ontology, and the ecstasis of the future 'falls into' despatialised spontaneity, or materiality-opposing – but also potentially materiality-controlling – creativity, so much akin to Bergson's vital momentum.

First, let us discuss atomism/corpuscularism. It experienced a revival during Galileo's and Descartes' time but it traces its origins back to Democritus and Leucippus. Democritus' thought of atoms and void is in turn indebted to Parmenides distinction between Being and Nothing, hence, on the ancient Greek thinking of Presence. As noted above, this thinking of Presence has its 'transcendental' roots in the deep structure of thinking or language. Heidegger emphasises that Presence was the theme of the philosophy of each and every ancient Greek thinker. But then, as well as later and now, there were differences or disagreements in terms of how this presence is to be understood. Heidegger (1979) focuses on the disagreements between Aristotle who implied the correct understanding of Presence as unconcealing and Antiphon, to whose style of thinking the whole subsequent line of atomists and corpuscularianists can be traced.

Antiphon comes from the Eleatic school. He interprets stable presencing in such a way that *only the* elements – earth, water, air and fire – truly are in accordance with *fusis*. Because all other things are not *stable* – from wood many different things can be made and wood itself is formed out of the earth. Thus, only the earth is stable. All things *formed* from the elementary stuff are unstable. Thus only the *unformed* is stable. Things *are* only in as much as they consist of something stable. Thus, only the 'elemental' qualifies as the essence of Being. 'Materialism' is born here (ibid.: 205).

But Heidegger explains that Aristotle rejects this understanding of Being. Not its equation with stable presencing – this is common to all Greek thinkers; but its equation with the elements or one of the elements. These are Aristotle's reasons, paraphrased:

- 1) *fusis* has to do with movedness and not only stability;
- 2) equating the stability of presencing with the always underlying stuff would be one-sided;
- 3) Being is not mere stability but unhiddenness, coming into the open, presencing;
- 4) the elements are beings but beings should be explained in terms of Being and not vice versa (ibid.: 208).

Hence Aristotle's distinction of *matter* and *form*, that is, *hulē and morfē*; but unlike in Antiphon, form is also essential; furthermore, it is precisely form and not matter which is essential to *fusis* (ibid.: 209). Hyle is 'material' for – that is, for production. Production is bringing into appearance. *Morfē* is also not 'form' but bringing into appearance. It is not an ontic but an ontological characteristic and a way of *kinēsis*, movement (ibid.: 211, 215).

Kinēsis is a change of something into something – and the change comes into appearance alongside the changing thing. *Morfē* is what the appropriate 'material' changes into – the 'end' of change, of presencing and, thus, as such end, such rest into which change moves, meets the condition for stable presencing better (ibid.: 219).

But more important kind of kinesis is genesis, coming into being.

Aristotle, hence, accepts the doctrine of Antiphon and at the same time most sharply rejects it (ibid.: 224). The reason why *fusis* can be treated in two ways as *hulē* and *morfē* and with the result that *hulē* can be mistakenly understood as something formless and always present at hand, lies in *morfē* itself. That is, *morfē* itself is twofold because *sterēsis* (deprivation) is also something like appearance. *Sterēsis* is a kind of saying. For example, saying that something is 'warm' is attributing, saying it *to* something, and saying something is 'cold' is saying it *away* from something (*sterēsis*) (ibid.: 226) 'In [*sterēsis*] is hidden the nature of [*fusis*]' (ibid.: 227). Because in each presencing an absencing simultaneously becomes present – the blossom grows, comes into appearance and the leaves which prepared the way for the blossom to bud come into disappearance. Living is a kind of dying and dying is a kind of living. *Fusis* is a 'self-productive putting-away of itself' (ibid.: 227) (*sich herstellende Wegstellen ihrer selbst*); hence, its twofoldness. And therefore 'that out of which' can be interpreted as the stable material from which something is formed. The 'dunamei on' – what is appropriate, that is, out of which something is produced, brought to presence – is misinterpreted as merely orderable and at hand. And this inflation of the non-essence which belongs to essence is what gave/gives rise to 'materialism' and doctrine of 'elements' (ibid.: 228).

And it is 'inauthentic' understanding precisely because it does not take into account the twofoldness of Being – it is both presencing and simultaneously absencing and, hence, both unconcealment and remaining concealed. Whereas 'authentic' understanding relates to truth as unconcealment and is in a relation to Being.

Obviously, the ontic movements of 'material elements' do not preclude linear-calculative time but authentic time as unconcealment is here excluded.

Second, the inauthentic variant of the ecstasis of the past is the notion of stable laws of nature, based on the mechanical understanding of cause and effect. Mechanical cause and effect also take place in linear-calculative 'inauthentic time'. For the Greeks, aetiology had to do with being-responsible for producing/unconcealing/coming into appearance. The underlying Being in all unconcealing is the authentic meaning of presence. But traditional Greek ontology was transformed in Descartes' philosophy into transcendental grounds for modern science (Heidegger 2006: 96). Modern mathematical science is based on the assumption of *stable* mathematically/calculatively graspable 'laws of nature' where nature is material, and

matter is an extended stability. Not just 'material particles' and their mechanico-causal interactions are here given but also the stable laws to be captured. If the notion of 'material particle' stems from the inauthentic meaning of the present, the notion of stable mechanical law of nature stems from the inauthentic meaning of the past. As Bergson notes, the modern law of (mechanico-material) nature is modelled after a finished, completed product, the 'creation' has already passed. It can only repeat itself ever identically but can never change.

In authentic time, present, past and future are a unity. But Bergson opposes his notion of the future to the mechanical, that is, to the materio-mechanical composite parts and movements and mechanical laws of nature, and this seems to be the gist of his vital momentum – it is wholly futural, devoid of past and present. Hence his notion of 'creation' – its crucial element is novelty or unpredictability. But this unpredictability also takes place in linear time. To this extent and also in as much as it simply opposes the inauthentic forms of past and present, it is an inauthentic form of the future. Vital momentum is pure *will* (cf. Sinclair 2014). In Aristotle as read by Heidegger, producing of *fusis* is different from making which is an act of will that making is constructing artificial things other than the maker. But *fusis* arises from itself and comes back into itself (Heidegger 1979: 228). *Fusis* goes forward and simultaneously back into *fusis*. And this is the authentic movement of Being – unconcealing is always a concealment. Dasein 1) futurally 2) returns to oneself. This is why Dasein is a) not a 'material body' which can only be spatial, material or mechanical and b) not a 'spirit' which can only be spontaneous, willing, temporal but aspatial, but it is body as unconcealment.

CONCLUSIONS

Heidegger reads Aristotelian *energeia* and *entelecheia* as well as Greek *fusis* as the notions describing or implying the authentic four-dimensional time(-space) where Being involves a unity of the three ecstasies of (authentic) time – future, past and present. Hence, Greek ontology construed correctly implies the three ecstasies of time. As modern ontology is seen in Heidegger as an 'inauthentic' development of Greek ontology, or, at any rate, as development based on ancient Greek ontology, the shapes of modern ontology need also be implicitly (or explicitly) derived from the ontology of ecstatic time.

We have demonstrated that modern atomism or corpuscularianism presupposes the notion of presence and the ecstasis of the present, the notion of modern law of material nature presupposes the ecstasis of the past, and Bergson's notion of vital momentum – or modern notion of will in general – presupposes the ecstasis of the future.

Bergson's understanding of the phenomenon of laughter is closely related to his notion of vital momentum and its opposition to mechanical materiality. As a possible guideline for prospective investigation, one could investigate how imploding the notion of *élan vital* back into its origin in authentic time would change the understanding of laughter and how such treatment of laughter could shed light on the ontology of presencing.

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Skirtumas tarp ekstatinio laiko ir grynosios trukmės

Santrauka

Straipsnyje spekulatyviai lyginami du požiūriai į modernųjį materialistinį mokslą – Martino Heideggerio požiūris, pagrįstas ekstatinio laiko supratimu, ir Henrio Bergsono požiūris, pagrįstas gyvybinio impulso, arba grynosios trukmės, samprata. H. Bergsono gyvybinio impulso sampratą galima kildinti iš M. Heideggerio ateities ekstazės. Pamatinių materialijų elementų sampratą ir jų dėsningo judėjimo sampratą galima kildinti iš M. Heideggerio praeities ir dabarties ekstazių. H. Bergsonas taip pat mano, kad šiuolaikinis mokslas paremtas to, kas užbaigta (praeitis), ir to, kas dabartiška (duota), samprata. H. Bergsonas savo gyvybinį impulsą priešpriešina materijos sampratai, kuria grindžiamas modernusis materialistinis mokslas, o M. Heideggeris parodo šių sampratų istorinę kilmę iš graikiškojo prezencijos supratimo, taip pat ontologinę kilmę iš prezencijos kaip ekstatinio laiko. H. Bergsono grynoji trukmė yra laikiškumo neautentiško supratimo modusas. Analizuojant ir lyginant remiamasi fenomenologine-hermeneutine prieiga, fundamentalią ontologiją ir „gyvenimo filosofiją“.

Raktažodžiai: H. Bergsonas, *durée pure*, ekstatinis laikas, *élan vital*, M. Heideggeris, materialistinis mokslas