

BERGSON'S "INTUITION" IN CHINA AND ITS CONFUCIAN FATE (1915-1923): SOME REMARKS ON ZHIJUE IN MODERN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. *This paper investigates the translation of Henri Bergson's philosophical writings in relation to the development of the concept of "intuition" (zhijue 直覺) in contemporary Chinese philosophy. As Bergson's intuition was very soon associated with "the knowledge of/as virtue" (dexing zhi zhi 德性之知), it turned into one of the basic Chinese modern concepts to think about ethical and moral issues. However, Chinese philosophers used Bergson's intuition as a device of moral philosophy sooner than the philosopher himself even started to write his moral philosophy. This paper decrypts the moralization of intuition in Chinese context, and questions the issue related to the formation of the concept of zhijue. The key documents put under light in this paper are Chinese translations of "An introduction to metaphysics" (1903) and several articles related to Bergson published around 1921.*

Keywords: *Bergson, intuition, translation, Confucianism, Buddhism*

Since its first introduction in 1913, Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) philosophy mesmerized the Chinese intellectual field (Lai 1993: 52-144; Wu 2005: 27-42). Bergsonism had captured the attention of a young generation of intellectuals versed in the new knowledge imported from the West. Thanks to John Dewey's conferences about "three contemporary philosophers" (Dewey 2008) held in March 1920 and soon reproduced in many periodicals and magazines, Bergson was considered as one of the greatest philosophers alive. In fact many intellectuals found in Bergson a philosophical ally to fight a battle against scientism and positivism, two intellectual trends that dominated the intellectual field (Kwok 1965). Bergson's philosophy was indeed very much employed during the debate about Science

and the outlooks on life (*Kexue yu renshengguan lunzhan* 科學與人生觀論戰) that sparked between Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887-1969) and Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 (1887-1936) (Shino 2009). Bergson's books were also strongly debated. His concept of "creative evolution" raised many discussions in China. However, as Gao Ruiquan rightly puts it, among the many aspects of Bergson's philosophy, it was the concept "intuition" that was most highly regarded (Wu 2005: 7-10). It had a strong impact on modern Confucian Philosophy (Jing 2005; Rošker 2016). In a seminal article on the concept of intuition in Liang Shuming's 梁漱溟 (1893-1988) texts, An Yanming noted that "from the beginning, [intuition (*zhijue* 直覺)] has borne the apparent imprint of Henri Bergson's Vitalism" (An

1997: 337). Taking this affirmation as a departure point, this paper questions the introduction of Bergson's "intuition" in China and puts under light how Chinese philosophers understood "intuition" in a manner somehow very different from what Bergson had proposed at that time.

The introduction of Bergson's philosophy in China is not a well-known topic in intellectual history. Aside from Lai Huei-Yun's unpublished PhD dissertation (Lai 1993) and Wu Xianwu's book (Wu 2005), no scholar, neither Westerner nor Chinese, has yet produced a full analysis of Bergson's reception in China. Despite the influence of Bergson on several Chinese philosophers has already been studied; we still lack a broader picture of its reception.

In my readings of Modern Chinese Philosophers, I have noticed a very important but neglected paradox: Chinese intellectuals used Bergson's intuition as a device for ethical inquiries sooner than the philosopher himself even started to write his moral philosophy. Bergson published his moral philosophy only in 1932 with *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion*. In the early twenties, most of Chinese intellectuals took as a starting point of their considerations about Bergson's philosophy a short text: "Introduction à la métaphysique". Originally published in 1903, it was an article concerning the methodology of philosophy, science and metaphysics. It stressed the importance of "intuition" as the very foundation of metaphysics. Bergson notably defended the claim that intuition, as the possibility to spiritually enter an object and share its duration, was the approach to absolute knowledge, while analysis, that is an intellectual construction whose buildings

blocks are but symbols, was only giving access to relative knowledge. Despite the fact that he made no reference to the question of morality, Chinese intellectuals read this paper as a method for moral philosophy and introspection. The translation of Liu Shuya 劉叔雅 (1889-1985), also known as Liu Wendian 劉文典 serves as a striking illustration. In his explanation of the word "intuition" (*zhijue*), he explicitly associated Bergson's intuition with Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033-1107) "Knowledge of/as virtue" (*dexing zhi zhi* 德性之知)¹. He clearly associated Bergson with Neoconfucianism.

To unravel this paradox, this paper will question Bergson's Chinese reception by focusing on what Chinese Philosophers said about his "intuition". But before giving voice to Bergson's Chinese readers and commentators, one has first to become aware of the discrepancies and innovations produced by the translation and the presentation of Bergson's works in Chinese. To do so, I analyse two sets of documents: a selection of Chinese translations of "Introduction à la métaphysique", published between 1918 and 1921; and then the special issue of *People's Bell* (*Minduo* 民鐸) dedicated to Bergson in 1921. Taking these documents as a corpus to study, this article aims at answering the following question: Can we trace in the presentations of Bergson's works the reasons why "intuition" was quickly associated with Confucian philosophy?

To answer this question, I shall dismiss the philosophical approach to the problem – that would have meant to propose a new reading of Bergson – and choose to

¹ My translation of Cheng Yi's wording is taken from Huang (2010: 66-67).

work in a framework closer to “conceptual history”. Writing a conceptual history of a modern Chinese concept, such as *zhijue*, is no easy task because western philosophical concepts were not simply translated through a process of word making. They were appropriated by Chinese intellectuals throughout what Lydia Liu had called “translingual practices” (Liu 1995). As such, one has to resist the temptation of semantic transparency, “intuition” should not be considered as a unit-idea or a universal philosophical concept. As translation, especially from and into non-European languages and cultures, is but a recent historiographical issue (Burke 2012), it is important to be clear on the terminology. In this paper, I will follow Koselleck when he writes that “*a word becomes a concept* only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into *one word*” (Koselleck 2004: 85, my emphasis). A concept can only be attached to one and only word. Therefore, despite the fact that they are situated in the same semantic field, “intuition” and “*zhijue*” are not the same concept². From a linguistic

² At first the world *zhiguan* 直觀 was used to translate Bergson’s intuition (Qian 1914). However, in the early twenties, *zhijue* won primacy over *zhiguan*. In the 1921 *Minduo* issue on Bergson, several authors used both the terms but *zhiguan* was mainly used in reference to German philosophers. It seems that for some of them *zhijue* was a translation of the French “intuition”, while *zhiguan* was a translation of the German *Anschauung*. See notably Fan Shoukan (1921) and Li Shicen (1921). In Japan, it seems that *zhiguan* was more often used in the translation of German philosophy, while *zhijue* was used for English texts (Ishizuka 2003: 206). As Bergson was often translated from the English version of his text, this hypothesis could work for both countries. However a broad comparison of the two terms and their usage is still necessary.

perspective, one never translates concepts but words. As a consequence, working on the appropriation of Bergson’s “intuition” in China means to focus on the emergence of a new concept to practice philosophy.

In a first section, I will present rapidly the conclusion I had reached in my previous study (Ciaudo 2013). This will give me the occasion to expose transformations that directly happened during the translation process. Then I will consider how the concept “*zhijue*” was read as a method, a new philosophical method that could help to rebuild a modern Confucian philosophy.

Confucianisation through Translation?

The article “Introduction à la métaphysique”, first published in 1903, is a very important text for the history of Bergson’s Chinese reception. It was translated three times between 1918 and 1921. This shows not only the importance Chinese intellectuals gave to this article but also that the text and its translation were highly debated. In 1918, Liu Shuya published a translation of the first few pages of the text in *The New Youth*. The second translation was an abridged translation produced by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940), and published in 1921 in the special issue of the *People’s Bell* Magazine dedicated to Bergson. The last translation was written the same year by Yang Zhengyu and was the only complete one. It was published into a book that turned out to be often reprinted during the Republican Era. In this text, Bergson draws the lines between science and metaphysics, analysis and intuition. He also clearly defines for the first time his concept:

It follows from this that an absolute could only be given in an intuition, whilst everything else falls within the province of analysis. 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 1912: 7; original emphasis; for the original French see Bergson 2011: 5)

Chinese translators all understood the importance of this paragraph. Yang Zhengyu even underlined this short passage in order to indicate to his readers that this was a key definition in Bergson's philosophy (Yang 1921a: 7-8). The first thing to comment about the Chinese translations of this text is that nobody translated from the original version of the text. Liu and Yang worked from an English translation, while Cai translated from the German. Although Bergson was known to proof-read his English translations (Bergson 1912: iv), one has to consider whether some discrepancies or translation choices were made because of the German or English version of the text. For instance, in Cai's version, "*sympathie intellectuelle*" turned into *zhili de ganru* 智力的感入, a word mimicking the German "*intellektueller Einfühlung*" (Cai 1921: 85; Bergson 1909: 4). One also has to point out that the three translations didn't use the same word for intuition: Liu choose *zhijue*, while the two others went with *zhiguan* 直觀. Considering that in the modern language one now uses *zhijue*, one has to question why Liu's choice won the lexical battle. *Zhijue* was a brand-new word that bared no link to classical Chinese literature³, unlike

zhiguan, which was incidentally an indirect reference to Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) "considering things from things" (*yi wu guan wu* 以物觀物) (Ciaudo 2013: 321-322). Liu Shuya didn't invent the term as one can already find it in an encyclopaedia edited in 1911 (Huang 1911). But it is very clear that it was a neologism (Morgan 1913). Despite this word not being linked to any older Confucian usage, it is interesting to note that as soon as Liu translated the text, he associated "intuition" with Neoconfucian philosophy. After translating the paragraph quoted above, he added a small note:

直覺二字，不甚妥當，搜其歐文本籍，與程正叔所謂「德性之知」無殊。程子云：「見聞之知，非德性之知。物交物，則知之非內也，今之所謂博物多能者是也。德性之不假見聞」此與柏格森之直覺哲學脗合。

The term *zhijue* is not very appropriate, while consulting the texts in European languages [I thought] that it was not different from what Cheng Zhengshu called the "knowledge of/as virtue". Master Cheng said: "Knowledge from seeing and hearing is not knowledge of/as virtue. It results from the contact between one thing and another thing and therefore is not internal. The knowledge of those erudite and skilful persons belongs to this type of knowledge. Knowledge of/as virtue does not rely upon hearing and seeing". This is in symbiosis with Bergson intuitive philosophy (Liu 1918: 102).

Hence, from the very first translation of Bergson's "Introduction à la métaphysique", "intuition" was associated to Cheng Yi, and his "Knowledge of/as virtue" (*dexing zhi zhi*

³ By classical literature I understand mainly Confucian literature used in the Imperial examination system. *Jue* is of course a very important term in Chinese Buddhism. We can even find the sequence of the two

characters *zhi* and *jue* in the *Chanyuan zhuquanji duxu* 禪源諸詮集都序. However, the intellectuals who used *zhijue* to translate Berson's "intuition" did not make reference to this text. I am very thankful to Professor Shino Yoshinobu for indicating me this reference.

德性之知). Liu also spoke of metaphysics in terms of as *xing er shang xue* 形而上學 an expression coined with Neoconfucian “First Philosophy” (Fang 2005). I shall not judge here whether this association is appropriated or not. My point is simply to underline the quick association to Neoconfucian philosophy produced by Liu Shuya, and raise the issue of how Chinese intellectuals and philosophers read Western philosophy. One can also add that, in comparison to the two other translations, Liu’s style tends to be more classical as he used many formal expressions taken from canonical texts such as “*yi yan yi bi zhi* 一言以蔽之” (*The Analects* II, 2) to say “in short”, “in brief”. The proximity of style may have helped the Chinese readers to associate Bergson with Confucian writing. Indeed, in a conference pronounced many years later, the philosopher He Lin 賀麟 (1902-1992) admitted, “when [Chinese intellectuals] used to read Bergson’s books, they often found in them a scent of Chinese philosophy. [...] [Bergson’s philosophy] made [them] think about Laozi and Zhuangzi in pre-Qin philosophy and Wei-Jin period and about the Lu-Wang school of Song and Ming dynasties” (He 1984: 21). As a consequence, one must insist on the role played by different “space of experience” (*Erfahrungsraum*) and “horizon of expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*) between the European versions of the texts and the Chinese⁴. Bergson’s European readers didn’t have the same intellectual background as Chinese, and they had not the same uses for similar texts. In fact, one can even say that when he arrived in China, Bergson was almost completely cut off from

the “1900 philosophical moment” (Worms 2009), the question of spiritualism and the heated debate around psychology. For example, Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887-1969) who was considered as one of the greatest specialists of Bergson, spoke of Fechner Law concerning the relationship between the physical magnitude of a stimulus and the intensity of its subjective perception as if it was completely accepted (Zhang 1981: 927). It seems that he was not aware that Bergson had denounced the “fallacy of Fechner’s reasoning” (Bergson 2013: 45-54).

Another important discrepancy in the three Chinese translations should be mentioned. They all failed to translate “*un absolu*”. This problem didn’t stir up because of the English or the German versions of the text, where one can read “*ein Absolutes*” (Bergson 1909, 2) and “one absolute” (Bergson 1912: 3). All Chinese translators crossed out the indefinite article before “absolute”. However, “getting access to one absolute” is not exactly the same thing as “getting access to (the) absolute”. Cai only used “absolute” as an adjective while Liu and Yang added a genitive to the expression. They both wrote “*juedui zhi jing* 絕對之境” that one could translate back into “the realm or field of absoluteness”. This discrepancy is important, because by eliminating the pronoun, we tend to lean toward a more “mystical” approach to philosophy – a critic precisely raised by Dewey (Dewey 2008: 227) but also by some psychologists such as Tang Yue 唐鈺 (1889-1987) (Tang 1923: 94)⁵.

⁴ For an explanation on these two historical categories see Koselleck (2004: 255-275).

⁵ In Bergson’s philosophy, the term “absolute” is no infinite totality, but can be understood as the absolute *quality* of a thing perceived through an act of intuition, as opposed to the relative knowledge of the external world available to the intellect (Fink 1999: 22).

But, let us turn back to Bergson's original text. When he spoke of "possessing an absolute", he was considering an "object in space":

When I speak of an absolute movement, I am attributing to the moving object an interior and, so to speak, states of mind; I also imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them by an effort of imagination. Then, according as the object is moving or stationary, according as it adopts one movement or another, what I experience will vary. (Bergson 1912: 2; for the original French see Bergson 2011: 2)

Despite the expression "states of mind" (états d'âmes), Bergson's "Introduction à la métaphysique" didn't leave much space for a moralistic approach to his concepts. The key idea of the text was to defend the claim that "intuition" is the only total means of knowledge for something that is in movement. To understand the movement of an object one would have entered in it, and share its duration. Duration and movement were considered here as the same (Bergson 2011: 26). As such, "intuition" in Bergson's sense was nothing else than "intuition of duration". His philosophy was built on the idea that philosophers and scientists tend to consider time in a spatial framework, they translate it into symbols, and fail to grasp the real time that is duration. This point was somehow overlooked by its translators⁶. Yang Zhengyu's translation went even further by adding here a middle-title: "Introspection of oneself" (*ziwo zhi neixing*

⁶ In a recent talk at the conference "Les échanges littéraires sino-français pendant la République de Chine (1912-1949)" (June 30-31, 2016) Shino Yoshinobu made the same remark about Zhang Dongsun's translation of *L'Évolution créatrice*.

自我之內省)⁷. His wording clearly draws a bridge with Confucian practice of self-introspection. It is interesting here to compare Yang's translation with Bergson's original text, and Hulme's English translation. One can see a progressive transvaluation:

Il y a une réalité au moins que nous saisissons tous du dedans, par intuition et non par simple analyse. C'est notre propre personne dans son écoulement à travers le temps. C'est notre moi qui dure. Nous pouvons ne sympathiser intellectuellement, ou plutôt spirituellement, avec aucune autre chose. Mais nous sympathisons sûrement avec nous-mêmes. (Bergson 2011: 6)

There is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves. (Bergson 1912: 9)

或以為不用簡單之“分析”。而純賴“直觀”自內以把捉“實在”為難能矣。今晴明告以祛其惑。日常之間有一“實在”焉。為吾儕人人所能把捉者是等“實在”之謂何。即通過實踐流動之我等自身之人格。Our own personality in its flowing through time 綿延不斷之自我。Moi que (sic) dure 也。吾人對於他物形神分隔。與以“知的同感”尚嫌疏闊。則請先與吾人自身以同感也可。(Yang 1921a: 10-11)⁸

From the French to the English, "*personne*" became "personality", a slight change that could give way to a more "moralistic" approach to the question of intuition. Nevertheless, such change remains minimal compared to the addition of the Chinese

⁷ Yang was probably following the example of the Japanese translation of the text (Beruguson 1913).

⁸ Yang made a grammatical mistake when adding the French. It should be "Moi qui dure".

translator. Yang Zhengyu reformulated the text, giving it a preaching overtone. One could translate his text as follows:

Some people think that seizing reality by relying simply on inner intuition and not using simple analysis is difficult. Today [we] explain them with clarity and dispel their uncertainty. In [our] every day [experience] there is a reality that we can all grasp. This reality, what is it? It is our own personality in its flowing through time (Our own personality in its flowing through time), the ever-enduring self (Moi qui dure). We are mentally and physically separated from other things, “intellectually sympathizing” with them is all the more estranging. Therefore I invite you first to sympathize with your own self.

If Bergson was not totally lost in translation in this paragraph, one can clearly see that his philosophy was presented under a propaedeutic approach, bringing him closer to the idea of “self-cultivation”. Chinese readers were first invited to sympathize with their inner selves before being able to do so with other objects. As such, the translation of “intuition” didn’t simply induce a moralization of Bergson’s key concept by associating it with moral concerns. The Chinese translations also built a bridge between its philosophy and the issue of self-cultivation by reformulating Bergson’s style and tone.

How Bergson turned Confucian: Intuition as a Method

Aside from the role played by translation in the confucianisation of intuition, the focus on “intuition” as a method to practice philosophy had a great impact on the reception of Bergson. The translation of “intuition” into *zhijue* was in this regard key to the matter, because this word could

be read as a verb, which meant “to perceive directly” (see notably Yang 1921b)⁹. With Bergson’s wording, Chinese philosophers found a modern neologism to make explicit the means of knowledge that their own intellectual traditions had pointed at. It is worth mentioning that all the authors in the *People’s Bell* issue – whether they considered Bergson’s philosophy strictly from the perspective of Western philosophy (for instance Li Shicen and Fan Shoukang) or in relation with Chinese philosophies – insisted on the fact that for Bergson “intuition” was a method that held a central place in his philosophy. And they were right. After all, as Deleuze once phrased it, intuition was “the method of bergsonism” (Deleuze 1966: 1). The definition of intuition as the method of metaphysics in “Introduction à la métaphysique” (1903) had profoundly informed Bergson’s reception on the Chinese intellectual scene¹⁰. Feng Youlan who was at that time infatuated with Bergson’s philosophy saw in intuition “a revolution in the philosophic method” (*yi ge zhexue fangfa de geming* 一個哲學方法的革命) (Feng 1921: 15). He described Bergson’s intuition as a strong blow against European intellectualism. Bergson was “attacking the role given by intellectualism to ‘analysis’ but not the ‘analysis’ itself” (Feng 1921: 21). An original aspect of Feng’s text is that it tried to link the concept of intuition with native Chinese philosophies: first with Mozi’s “perception” (*qinzhi* 親知) then with Confucian introspection (Feng 1921: 17-18).

⁹ In the *Minduo* issue I haven’t found any *zhiguan* that could be read as such. This verbal reading of *zhijue* may have helped in its progressive supremacy over *zhiguan*.

¹⁰ As soon as 1914, Qian Zhixiu already identified in “intuition” Bergson’s most important concept.

As such, he built bridges between China and the West, and, in the same time, he insisted on the fact that Chinese thought was philosophical. In associating Chinese native intellectual trends with Bergsonism, Chinese philosophers insisted on the idea that Chinese was worth naming a philosophy.

In the case of Bergson, the association was not a new idea. In a text appraising Yuan Shikai's 袁世凱 (1859-1916) restoration of Confucius' worshiping rituals, Zhang Dong-sun 張東蓀 (1886-1973) already defended that Bergson and Confucius were both humanist thinkers (Zhang Dongsun 1913). In 1919, Tang Hualong 湯化龍 (1874-1918) who wrote a preface for Zhang Dongsun's translation of *L'évolution créatrice* saw in Bergson a "canal to thread together the Western and the Eastern Civilization" (*wei Dong Xiyang wenming guantong zhi qu* 為東西洋文明貫通之渠) (Bogesen 1919: 4). Before 1921, Bergson was however most often associated with Buddhism, and more specifically *Yogācāra* School, also known as *Vijñānavāda*. In fact, Liu Shuya's association of Bergson's intuition with Cheng Yi's "Knowledge of/as virtue" was criticized by Zhang Shouming 張壽明, who considered that Bergson's philosophy had no link with Confucianism. If a bridge with an Asian tradition should absolutely be built, it ought to be with Buddhism (Zhang Shouming 1918). Around 1921 there was a debate between Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) and Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896-1989) on the proximity of Bergson's philosophy with Buddhism, and more specifically *Vijñānavāda*. Since the discussions of this debate have already been analysed elsewhere (Yao 2014), I shall only summarize here a few key points. Zhang, who had planned to compare Berg-

son and *Vijñānavāda* since 1917 (Lai 1993: 49-50), tried to bring together the epistemological categories of western philosophy and *Vijñānavāda*. He considered that the concepts of "experience" (*shiyān* 實驗) and "ideas" (*lixiang* 理想) were similar to the Buddhist notions of *Pratyaksha* (*xianliang* 現量) and *Anumāna* (*biliang* 比量). Departing from that affirmation, he went on to affirm that Bergson's intuition was somehow similar to the eighth consciousness in the *Vijñānavāda*, the *ālayavijñāna* (*Zang shi* 藏識) or "the warehouse-consciousness", that is the unutterable state where all the states of consciousness are been given birth. He even stated that "Bergson could catch a glimpse of the warehouse-consciousness" (*Bogesen shi poneng kuijian zangshi* 柏格森氏頗能窺見藏識) (quoted in Yao 2014, 85). It is notable that the association of Bergson to Buddhism was somehow facilitated by the way Yang Zhengyu had translated some parts of *Introduction to metaphysics*. In his translation *le déroulement d'un rouleau* turned into "reincarnation" (*lunhui* 輪迴) (Yang 1921a: 13). When Bergson wrote "une conscience sans mémoire[...] périrait et renaîtrait donc sans cesse", Yang used again the Buddhist terminology of *shengsheng miemie* 生生滅滅 (Yang 1921a: 15)¹¹. At some point, Bergson's philosophy also employed the same metaphorical apparatus as the *Vijñānavāda* school. The *ālayavijñāna* is often compared in classical texts to a never-ending river flow, a metaphor also used in Bergson's philosophy to designate Life. As in Bergson's philosophy, man can grasp Life through intuition, the proximity

¹¹ These discrepancies were first identified by Lai 1993: 171-174.

between his philosophy and *Vijñānavāda* was easy to point at. Zhang's position was supported by the linguist Li Jingxi 黎錦熙 (1890-1978), who also identified together the two notions, and even went to the point of seeing Bergson's intuition as a means to attain the *ālayavijñāna* (Li Jinxi 1921: 3). This association was also to influence Li Shicen who in his book-review about Liang Shuming's *Culture of East and West and their philosophy*, later wrote that Bergson's philosophy was too easy and plain, and it ought to be studied from the point of view of *Vijñānavāda* (Chen 1985: 502-503).

However this association between the Bergsonian intuition and *Vijñānavāda* hold on several grounds that were soon to be attacked. Lü Cheng who rejected the assimilation of the *ālayavijñāna* to Bergson's philosophy, declared that people tended to look at Bergsonism and *Vijñānavāda* as alike thought systems only because they shared the river flow metaphor (Lü 1921: 4)¹². In an article, he pointed out many differences between Bergson and the Buddhist school. One of the most interesting criticisms he raised was the problem of memory – another key concept of Bergson's philosophy. Lü was right when he noted that Bergson's philosophy had been built on a theory of memory¹³. This was in total contradiction with *ālayavijñāna* which is memoryless. In

several texts (Liang 2005a: 275-280; Liang 1921), Liang Shuming also has thrown very strong blows against Zhang's approximate comparative philosophy. According to Liang, *Vijñānavāda* approach of knowledge was built on two consecutive stages: first the genesis of consciousness (the *xianliang* 現量 stage) and the time of logic (the *biliang* 比量 stage). For him, *Vijñānavāda* was not only completely against intuition, but it was also the best epistemological doctrine. He even wrote that *Vijñānavāda* was the only method of metaphysics (Liang 2005a: 278). Bergson was here clearly belittled.¹⁴ By refusing to link Bergson to Buddhism, Liang was in fact defending the complexity of Buddhist epistemology and metaphysics. In the end, people who had defended the comparison agreed that Buddhism was above Bergsonism. As a consequence, bringing the two together was no longer that important. In his interview with Zhang Junmai and Lin Zaiping, Bergson also rejected the idea that his philosophy had anything to do with Buddhism (Zhang 1921: 13). The debate was closed.

Before continuing let us add a few words on Liang Shuming's uses of the concept of *zhijue*. As An Yanming already shown, in Liang's texts, *zhijue* could be understood in three senses: "They are *zhijue* as a method of knowledge, *zhijue* as an equivalent of *benneng* 本能, and *zhijue* as an equivalent of *liangzhi* 良知" (An 1997: 347). This last understanding is important because,

¹² Le Dœuff 1980 has notably put forward the importance of metaphors in the understanding of philosophical system.

¹³ It is often said that chronology is very important to understand Bergson's philosophy. Henri Gouhier who was one of the first of Bergson's editors noted that "chronology indicates the direction of Bergsonism" (Gouhier 1984: viii). One ought to read his books in the chronological order. *Matière et Mémoire* was published in 1896 just before the "Introduction à la métaphysique", as such Lü's comments here show that he understood the links between Bergson's works.

¹⁴ One has however to be careful with Liang Shuming's opinion on the question of the links between Bergson's intuition and Buddhist terminology. In a very short period of time, he had repeatedly changed his mind. As we can see in *Culture of East and West*, where he assimilated "intuition" with the Buddhist concept of *feiliang* 非量 (Liang 2005b: 399). See An (1997).

it created a new link between Bergson's philosophy and Chinese Confucian tradition. In his *Culture of East and West*, Liang Shuming associated "intuition" with both Mencius and Confucius. Also by equating benevolence (*ren* 仁) with "intuition", Liang put forward the idea that intuition was to help a man to grasp the meaning of life, and, moreover, to realize its inner virtues. Upheld as the key idea of Confucianism, "intuition" was to characterize the entire Chinese culture. Let us read how Liang used the word:

儒家說：“天命之謂性，率性之謂道”。只要你率性就好了(...)。這個知和能，也就是孟子所說的不慮而知的良知，不學而能的良能，在今日我們謂之直覺。

The Confucians say that "What Heaven has conferred is called the Nature; an accordance with this Nature is called the Path of Duty". One ought therefore to follow one's nature. [...] This knowledge and this ability are what Mencius spoke of as the intuitive ability that men possess without having acquired it by learning, and the intuitive knowledge that they possessed without the need to exercise their thoughts. In modern terms, I would speak of intuition (*zhijue*). (Liang 2005b: 452, classical quotations adapted from Legge's translation)

Of course, Liang was not drawing here a clear parallel between Bergson and Confucian philosophy. He didn't compare Bergson with Mencius. However, by using this word (*zhijue*) associated with the Bergsonian intuition, he brought together Bergson and Confucianism. When talking about *zhijue*, Liang approached it as a method to behave in life. Intuition was the key dimension of Chinese's attitude toward life (*Zhongguo rensheng taidu* 中國人生態

度). As such, he kept the Bergsonian idea that "intuition" was the medium for access to Life.

This focus on the function and the method of "intuition" is also obvious in the interview that Zhang Junmai and Lin Zaiping had with the French philosopher. Most of their questions revolved around the practice of intuition. Almost as soon as the interview began, Zhang and Lin asked questions about how to implement "intuition" in our daily lives. "Is the intuitive method inborn, or can it be cultivated (*xiuyang* 修养)?" asked Zhang, while Lin enquired, "how to put in practice the intuitive method? Can it be taught?" (Zhang 1921: 12). They discussed whether intuition could be understood as a type of meditation. Zhang spoke of *jingshen shang qianxiu gongfu* 精神上潛修功夫, "spiritual self-cultivation practice" (he added in brackets "meditation"), while Lin Zaiping spoke of *jingzuo* 靜坐, "silence-sitting", a term associated to Neo-Confucian meditation. Lin and Zhang were looking for concrete means to realize "intuition" in their life; they wanted to know how to practice an activity that would lead them to a better understanding of the world and themselves. This interview of Bergson, that soon became become authoritative (Cai 1984: 361-362; Guo 1936: 273-275), is important because it clearly connected the dots between Bergson's philosophy and Confucian terminology. While answering a question of Lin Zaiping, Bergson said:

所謂直覺無一定條件可言，就消極言之，則非分析也 (analysis)，非顯微鏡之辨析毫釐也 (Hairsplitting)，非論理上之對抗原則也 (Dialectic)：就積極言之，則自察也 (Self-observation) 內省也 (Introspection)。

There are no definitive terms to speak about intuition, speaking about it in the negative sense, it is no analysis, no hairsplitting, no dialectic: speaking about it in the affirmative sense, it is self-observation and introspection.

While translating Bergson's words into Chinese, Zhang Junmai produced cultural echoes. Whereas *zicha* 自察 is not a very often used term¹⁵, *neixing* 內省 is a clear reference to the favourite disciple of Confucius, Yanhui 顏回 (*The Analects* XII, 4). It is also a term that one can find in *The State of Equilibrium and Harmony* (*Zhong yong* 中庸). For Zhang Junmai but also Feng Youlan, Bergson's "intuition" found its place in a discourse about self-introspection (*neixing* 內省) – a wording also referring to Zengzi 曾子 threefold introspection (*wu ri san xing* 吾日三省) (*The Analects* I, 4). Feng Youlan considered that *zhijue* could be linked to Zengzi self-introspection because it designated a non-analytic appreciation of conscience (Feng 1921: 18-19). He reckoned that not anyone was able to attain Master Zeng level, however everyone was capable of accessing one's consciousness (*yishi* 意識) through intuition. In his conference in China, John Dewey had characterized Bergson's philosophy as a philosophy that "assigns a major role to introspection" (Dewey 2008: 221). The translation in Chinese was, however, going further than simply speaking of intuition as introspection practice. The very word used to translate this term turned "intuition" into a practice of superior men, or men of good (*junzi* 君子). This association is obvious when one

¹⁵ One can find it notably in *The Historical Annals* of Sima Qian, or in the *Book of the Han*.

considers Zhang Junmai's comment about Bergson's book *L'énergie spirituelle*.

Published in 1919, this book brought together several conferences that Bergson had given during the two preceding decades. Despite the fact that it was only translated into Chinese in 1924, many commentators of Bergson made reference to it. During the 1923 controversy over science and metaphysics, Zhang often made reference to Bergson to defend his position. About "intuition", he wrote:

柏氏斷言理智之為用，不適於求實在。然而人心之隱微處，活動也，自發也，是之謂實在，是之謂生活。既非理智之範疇所能把捉，故惟有一法，曰直覺而已。是柏氏玄學之內容也。(Zhang Junmai 1981, 958)

Bergson states categorically that the use of reason is not appropriate to seize reality. Furthermore, what one calls reality, what one calls life, is but the movement and the spontaneity of men invisible thoughts. Since it can't be grasped in the field of reason, there is only one method: the intuition. This is the content of Bergson's metaphysics.

However, the most important quotation of Bergson in Zhang's text is a passage that doesn't mention directly the "intuition". Towards the end of his plea, Zhang quoted a long excerpt from Bergson's article "La Conscience et la Vie" published in *l'Energie spirituelle*:

人類中人類之至精粹者中，生機的衝動貫徹而無所阻；此生機的衝動所造成之人身中，則有道德的生活之創造流以驅使之。故無論何時，憑藉其既往之全體，使生影響於將來，此人生之大成功也。道德的人者，至高度之創造者也；此人也，其行動沉雄，能使他人之行動因之而沉雄，其性慈祥，能焚燒他人慈

祥之爐火；故道德的人……形上的真理之啟示者也。(Zhang Junmai 1981: 976; for the original French see Bergson 2009b: 25)¹⁶

In man alone, especially among the best of mankind, the vital movement pursues its way without hindrance; this vital movement thrusting through the human body, which it has created on its way, spur the creative current of the moral life. Man, called on at every moment to lean on the totality of his past in order to bring his weight to bear more effectively on the future, is the great success of life. The moral man, who is a creator in the highest degrees, the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and, itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity. The men of moral [...] are revealers of metaphysical truth.” (Translation adapted from Bergson and Carr 1920: 31-32)

He then added:

此言也，與我先聖盡性以贊化育之義相吻合，乃知所謂明明德，吾日三省，克己復禮之修省功夫：皆有至理存乎其中，不得以空談目之。

These words embrace the ideas of our past saints regarding the fulfilment of one’s nature through education-transformation. One can find true principles in the self-cultivation activities of illustrating illustrious virtues, of examining oneself on three points, and of subduing one’s self and returning to propriety. These are not empty talks. (Zhang Junmai 1981: 976)¹⁷

The quoted paragraph doesn’t mention the word “intuition”, but it is present in the following lines of the original text. In fact, this paragraph could be considered as a

¹⁶ Zhang was quoting from the French version. It is a passage that Zhang often quoted at that time, see for instance Zhang Junmai 1981: 321.

¹⁷ The classical Confucian expressions are taken from the first sentence of the *Great Study*, *The Analects* I, 4 and XII, 1.

nexus in Bergson’s work, since the analysis published in the recent critical edition of Bergson’s *L’énergie spirituelle* note that many dimensions of *Les Deux sources de la Morale et de la Religion* are already contained in this paragraph in potentiality (Bergson 2009b: 246)¹⁸. Despite his obvious defence of Confucianism, Zhang was in fact putting the finger on a key passage of Bergson’s work, a passage from which Bergson would later develop his own moral philosophy. He anticipated a possible development of Bergson’s philosophy. As such, by moralizing Bergson’s intuition, Chinese translators and interpreters were not completely betraying the French philosopher, but also saw in his philosophy a potential moral philosophy at the right spot.

L’énergie spirituelle was also an important source of inspiration for Neo-Confucian thinkers, because in the conference “*Fantomes de vivants et recherche psychique*” presented before the Society for Psychical Research of London in 1913, Bergson had proposed a train of thoughts on which could be built a discourse in defence of *lixue* 理學 and *xinxue* 心學 legitimacy. Bergson said:

I have sometimes asked myself what would have happened if modern science, instead of setting out from mathematics to turn its direction toward mechanics, physics and chemistry, instead of bringing all its forces to converge on the study of matter, had begun by consideration of mind – if Kepler, Galileo and Newton, for example, had been psychologists. They would have produced a psychology of which today we can form no idea, just as before Galileo no one could have imagined what our physics would be, a psychology which probably would have been to our present psychology what our

¹⁸ “The moral man” was indeed to become a very important key word in Bergson’s last book.

physics is to that of Aristotle. Foreign to every mechanistic idea, science would have studied eagerly, instead of dismissing a priori, phenomena such as those you study; perhaps “psychical research” would have stood out as its principal preoccupation. (Bergson 1920: 98-99; for the original Bergson 2009b: 80-81)

After formulating these ideas, Bergson was soon to “wake from saying [this dream]” (Bergson 1920: 101). But Chinese philosophers were to prolong it. What if Song studies (*Song xue* 宋學) on the mind had been this “science” which emerged on the “consideration of mind”? This idea clearly crossed Feng Youlan’s mind (Masson 1985: 4-8.), and probably on many other Confucian thinkers’. The translation of “psychology” into *xinli xue* 心理學, a word that could also be understood as the “study on the mind and the Principle” may not have been totally innocent in this association.

Conclusion

To conclude, I argue that the association of Bergson’s intuition with Confucian moral philosophy was the result of selective but complex appropriation of Bergson’s work. First, translation played a very important role in this process: by associating Bergson’s intuition with Cheng Yi’s “knowledge of/as virtue”, Liu Shuya opened a road toward the emergence of a modern Chinese concept, associated with Confucian philosophy. Authors such as Liang Shuming, Feng Youlan and Zhang Junmai then stressed the link between “intuition” and Confucian philosophy by either focusing on the question of “self-introspection”, “self-cultivation” or “innate knowledge”. However this association was only made possible thanks to the

dismissal of Bergson’s original arguments and their development. Indeed, Bergson’s intuition was cut off from the question duration. In China, it was also progressively disconnected from Buddhist typology. When thinkers such as Zhang Taiyan and Li Jinxi drew lines between “intuition” and traditional Buddhist concepts such as *Pratyaksha* (*xianliang* 現量) and *Anumāna* (*biliang* 比量), they kept Bergson in the epistemological field. However, he didn’t hold long there for even the ones who defended this association, though in the end that Buddhist typology was more precise. Cut off from its roots and from Chinese epistemological concepts, “intuition” as *zhijue* turned into a method to know oneself.

As such, in the early twenties, Bergson’s intuition met its Confucian fate: moralization, a process that would have a negative influence on the posterity of Bergson philosophy in China. As Lai Huei-Yun showed it in her PhD dissertation, Bergson’s philosophy was to be belittled in China after 1924. That year, the Confucian thinkers were considered as the losers of the debate over science and metaphysics, and Bergson, who had been one of their forefront intellectual supports, fell with his proponents. Bergson’s philosophy was to be less and less studied in China, but *zhijue* was to continue its own trajectory in the history of Chinese philosophy.

In the end, despite his provocative formulation, I think we can agree with Henrik Stenius (2004) when he defended that translation may emasculate concepts. Indeed, Bergson was completely cut out of the philosophical moment in which he found its place, and his intuition was disconnected from the core concept of his philosophy – duration. In the end, the Berg-

sonian intuition turned into a philosophical tool for Neo-Confucian philosophy. Chinese readers found in Bergson a philosophy as method and not as content. Nevertheless, one should perhaps be moderate about these comments. By focusing on the question of intuition from a moral perspective, Chinese intellectuals partially betrayed the Bergson of 1903, but they partly announced the one of 1932. In his preface to Caterina Zanfi's study on Bergson's reception in Germany,

Frédéric Worms noted that the different translation and understanding of Bergson throughout Germany all pinpointed at "singular aspects of Bergson's work" (Zanfi 2013: 9). Perhaps one could say the same thing about its Chinese reception: in the "moral-man" of the *L'énergie spirituelle* Confucianists saw the Confucian man of good (*junzi* 君子), the great philosopher or the great mystic that would be put under light by Bergson in 1932.

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**BERGSONO „INTUICIJA“ KINIJOJE IR JOS KONFUCINĖ PLĖTOTĖ (1915–1923):
KELETAS PASTABŲ APIE ZHIJUE MODERNIOJOJE KINIJOS FILOSOFIJOJE**

Joseph Ciaudo

Santrauka. Straipsnyje tiriamas Henri Bergsono filosofinių raštų vertimas ir jo santykis su intuicijos (*zhijue* 直覺) sąvokos raida šiuolaikinėje Kinijos filosofijoje. Bergsono intuicijos sąvoka buvo greitai susieta su „pažinimo dorybe“ (*dexing zhi zhi* 德性之知) ir virto viena pagrindinių modernių kiniškų sąvokų, kuriomis svarstomi etiniai ir moraliniai klausimai. Tačiau kinų filosofai ėmė naudoti Bergsono intuiciją kaip moralės filosofijos instrumentą anksčiau, nei pats Bergsonas pradėjo rašyti apie moralės filosofiją. Šiame straipsnyje išaiškinamas intuicijos sumoralinimas kiniškame kontekste bei keliamas klausimas apie *zhijue* sąvokos susiformavimą. Pagrindiniai šiame straipsnyje analizuojami dokumentai yra kiniški „Metafizikos įvado“ (1903) vertimai ir keletas apie 1921 m. pasirodžiusių straipsnių, susijusių su Bergsonu.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Bergsonas, intuicija, vertimas, konfucianizmas, budizmas

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