

Duration and subjectivity: The impact of Bergson on Holzkamp

Martin J. Jandl

Abstract

The intention to link Bergson and Holzkamp may seem absurd, as Bergson's philosophy has been considered “irrational” since Cassirer's and Horkheimer's verdicts. If one discards long established misunderstandings though, a common theme emerges that is shared between both thinkers: the critique of quantifying psychology based on a finely-worded idea of man. This commonality is clearly accentuated in Holzkamp's critique of the psychology of learning (1) and Bergson's critique of psychophysics (2). Against the backdrop of Bergson's conception of memory as an intermediary between perception and sensation and as a faculty of action (4), a closer reading of Holzkamp's determinations of the learning subject and his replacement of the term “memory” with “retention-remembering” (3) raises the question whether Holzkamp was not an enthusiastic reader of Bergson's. However, instead of focusing on this speculation in the conclusion (5), I will address the opportunity of a new “psycho-science” – specifically psychotherapy science.

Keywords

duration, intuition, subjectivity, critics of mainstream psychology, memory, retention-remembering

The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a “young science”; its state is not comparable with that of physics, for instance, in its beginnings. [...] For in psychology there are experimental methods *and conceptual confusion*. [...] The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

1.

Klaus Holzkamp constructs his work dialectically – dialectically in the sense that every false theory contains a kernel of truth, which, after being secured through argumentation, must be preserved in a better synthesis obtained by determinate negation. Therefore, *Learning*, Holzkamp’s last work, is not a simple contradiction to the (conventional) psychology of learning, but the successful attempt at a reinterpretation.

To equate learning with the simple storage of information, which we receive in a more or less pronounced compulsory setting, constitutes such a gross reduction of the learning process that it barely avoids being a glaring misconception. In contrast, Holzkamp considers learning to be an opportunity for expanding one’s individual independence and thus preserving or even establishing one’s individual life interests (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 11). Of course, this thesis echoes emancipatory thinking, which, however, is found not only in the Marxist and socialist tradition but in the modern era as a whole. To put it drastically: the learning concepts of mainstream psychology use the oppressed pupil as a starting point. The externally determined circumstances of schooling, which are difficult for the pupils to understand, seamlessly continue in the experimental settings of psychological laboratories (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 13). The learner of mainstream psychology is by no means a free subject, but an organism responding to stimuli.

Holzkamp prefaces his reinterpretation with astonishment over the fact that the psychology of learning is still being mentioned at all. At the famous conference at the Swedish Umea University in 1984, contributions about stimulus-response learning were summarily dismissed as “animal learning” and their representatives ridiculed as “animal psychologists”; by contrast, human learning is distinguished by “awareness”. To draw conclusions about human

learning through insights gained via animal experiments is quite simply inadmissible. Moreover, Holzkamp points to the well-known evidence base regarding the typical characteristics of learning mechanisms, which also disagrees with the idea of applying knowledge gained from animals to human learning processes or findings about one species to another. But, apparently, about 30 years of intensive animal experimentation in the service of human psychology are “not that easy to disregard” (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 45), since at the time the approach ensured psychology’s supposed ascent to the realm of natural sciences.

The reinterpretation of classical conditioning is achieved by a reformulation of the conventional *if-then* statement, which is aimed solely at the temporal proximity of CS and UCS. The conventional understanding of the conditioning process is defined as follows: “*If*, shortly before a certain stimulus (UCS), to which the test person consistently reacts in a specific manner (UCR), another stimulus is introduced which did not cause any reaction in the test person at first (CS), *then* the test person (after a certain number of repetitions) will react to the CS in the same (or a similar) manner as to the UCS, thus showing a conditional reaction (CR).” (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 47) Instead, this should read: “*If* a certain stimulus (CS) announces, signals, etc. the arrival of another stimulus (UCS), *then* the test person (after a number of repetitions) will respond to this (originally neutral) reference stimulus (CR) alone in a similar way as to the signalled stimulus (UCR).” (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 48) The latter definition of the conditioning process suggests that this is not a process with the characteristics of a natural law, but that the test persons interpret the laboratory situation and act accordingly: this does not constitute conditional behaviour but reasoned action. Even in restrictive situations, people act highly reasonably. It is imperative not to remove the situational embedding of the relationship between the signal and the signified from the premise – to do so means to be guilty of gross underdetermination (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 48). “‘*Classical conditioning*’ in humans [means] reasonable action in case of extremely limited access to reality – in particular, through situational and/or experimental *withdrawal* of insight into such factual and social discrepancies between the ‘unconditional’ and the ‘conditioned stimulus constellation’ that would have made *different resolutions* ‘reasonable’”. (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 51)

If people in laboratory situations are thought of as acting, one realizes that the assumptions regarding UCS and CS are levelled and that alternatives to action implementation are extremely limited. Here, Holzkamp (2005, p. 52) points to the fact that Pavlov ensured the consistency of salivary secretion as UCR and CR by fastening the dog to a rack and thus taking away the dog's species-specific response to the food, namely to brush against the CS, whining and wagging its tail – meaning that even the original experiment, which became

the basis for a longstanding research tradition, was based on massive experimental restriction on the behaviour, which, unfortunately, will not improve subsequently in favour of the test animals (i.e., Devereux, 1988, pp. 25ff.).

Operational conditioning comes a little closer to the definition of learning as an extension of options, since it is the behaviour of the animals that leads to positive or negative reinforcement. Therefore, it is not difficult to find an *if-then* statement that, in the case of people, refers to actions under laboratory conditions: “If a person repeatedly has received a reward for a certain action, then they sensibly will repeat the action (in the absence of other premises) for the purpose of reintroducing the rewarding event.” (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 55). In this and in the case of cognitive learning theories, it is easy for Holzkamp to map out the patterns of rationale that test persons will follow in an experimental setting – which confirms that the supposedly scientific psychology does not earn this status on account of its subject matter, but at best because of the statistical methodology it uses, the result of which, however, is that the research subject, the human being, is treated as a thing, meaning that they are *de*-humanized and *de*-subjectivised.

Even this short outline shows that Holzkamp’s criticism of mainstream psychology lies in how its idea of man is flawed. This objection dates back to his early analyses, which mapped out the implicit idea of man in psychology (Holzkamp, 1972), which in turn likely was inspired by Martin T. Orne (1962): the human being or subject is reduced to a producer of behavioural data by exclusive examination from a third person perspective, and the theoretical connection of the data is either not provided at all (behaviourism) or by using AI models (cognitive psychology). This approach negates available lifeworld-related knowledge, but also non-scientific concepts of the human psyche or the subject, and dismisses them as pre-scientific nonsense in favour of a desperate striving for being considered a true science. In other words, Holzkamp vigorously opposes the reduction of human beings in psychological research and proposes a different idea of man, which requires a different psychology. Holzkamp’s idea of man highlights the person acting independently, or rather the person who acts highly reasonably. Action must be clearly distinguished from behaviour and must be preferred as a categorical principle.

Subject science, as Holzkamp envisions it, considers the subject a centre of intentionality which experiences other people as other centres of intentionality and uses the inter-subjective space thus created to constitute a reciprocal interlocking of perspectives: “With this standpoint, I am not neutral in the world, but relate to it as a sensory-physical, needy, *interested* subject. My objectives, plans, and intentions as characteristics of my intentionality are *content statements and proposals for action from the standpoint of my life interests*. Accordingly, I

perceive the other as the center of intentionality of *their* life interests, which relate to mine in certain ways.” (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 21) The intentional relation to the world should not be considered a cognitive or mental act, but includes the active realization of actions (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 23). People act freely because they act for good and “my own respective” reasons. Environmental circumstances are used as premises in the explanation of resolutions and represent the recalcitrant reality, so to speak. The realization of resolutions via actions constitutes a change of the premises, meaning the recalcitrant reality – wherein lies the hope that humans are creating a world in which they will feel at ease (Holzkamp, 2005, p. 24; also Holzkamp, 1985).

It would be exciting and tempting to break down all the philosophical thoughts Holzkamp processes – the list of inspirational sources ranges from Husserl to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty to Habermas; not to omit constructivist idea providers from Dingler and Lorenz to Janich. Still more tempting to question the coherence of Holzkamp’s theory of action itself; does he align the relation of cause and action too closely with the relation of cause and effect? I am going to push all this aside and ignore it. I am concerned with the identification of a thought-motif, not the meticulous description of possible influences – the motif, to be specific, that designed a psychological model to counter the deplorable state of mainstream psychology and on this basis called for a different approach to the psyche. Holzkamp is not simply about criticism but about counter-design, reconsideration, and different ways of research. This is a motif he shares with Bergson.

2.

Henri Bergson’s fight against the third person perspective in psychological research begins about 80 years before Holzkamp’s attack, and the opponent is not yet so powerful. In effect, it is the delicate bloom of psychophysics, which only carries the first hints of the quantification ambitions of psychology. Bergson, clearly Holzkamp’s precursor in this, does not criticize Weber and Fechner – whose theory he also calls “peculiar” (Bergson, 2008c, p. 237) – and a number of French psychophysicists, simply because of the triteness of their “findings”, but develops a model of the psyche that will have an ongoing impact on the 20th century. Bergson’s criticism is based on an independent design of the psyche, probably with the idea of providing a foundation for a different psychology.

Psychophysics assumes constant sensation when the stimulus remains unchanged. Only a change in the stimulus leads to a change in sensation. Bergson, like later his successor Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1974), is up in arms

about this assumption: a five-minute observation of an (immobile) vase differs at the beginning from any other moment of the observation. According to Bergson, this difference is due to memory, which builds up more and more with every second of observation and thus “pushes” something into the observation. Even the most monotonous observation cannot be compared to any physical system in a state of equilibrium. The fact that the observer knows how long they have been steadily looking at an unchanging object will constantly modify their gaze. Thus, boredom may develop or an ever-increasing interest in details – memory pushes recent moments or moments from some time ago into the observation, into the psychical event. Bergson postulates change even in the context of the most monotonous situation, featuring the best-known thing, namely ourselves: „The truth is that we change without ceasing, and that the state itself is nothing but change.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 12)

Change is by no means the juxtaposition of discontinuous moments. There is no phenomenological way to disprove the feeling that certain experiences enter our awareness with particular verve, but for Bergson these strong experiences are “the beats of the drum which break forth here and there in the symphony” (2013, p. 13). Strong experiences are part of the flow of consciousness or the “fluid mass of our entire psychological existence”. “Each is only the best illuminated point of a moving zone which comprises all that we feel or think or will – all, in short, that we are at any given moment. It is this entire zone which in reality makes up our state. Now, states thus defined cannot be regarded as distinct elements. They continue each other in an endless flow.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 13) Bergson labels this endless flow, the reality of the entire psychological existence, “duration”. Change and duration are inextricably linked. Bergson’s use of “duration” runs counter to the usual understanding that that which lasts does not change. As far as psychological life is concerned, time is the substance of which it is composed (Bergson, 2013, p. 14).

Time, or, in the case of the psyche, *duration* is the substance of which the ego is composed. The ego does not float timelessly over a changing or constant psychic life – as an unfortunate mental lapse of Husserl’s (2013) suggests – but continues like life itself. Consequently, Bergson states that there is no substance that is “more resilient” or “more substantial” than duration. It embraces and makes present, past, and future possible. „If our existence were composed of separate states with an impassive ego to unite them, for us there would be no duration. For an ego which does not change does not endure, and a psychic state which remains the same so long as it is not replaced by the following state does not endure either.“ (Bergson, 2013, p. 14) From this follows a thought as keenly deduced as it is well formulated: “Duration is the continuous progress of the past

which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 14)

The concepts Bergson formulates in *Creative Evolution*, from which I quoted so far, can be found as early as in his first book. There, in *Time and Free Will*, Bergson developed his counter-model for the quantification of psychical phenomena. The main idea is that all spatially determined entities are distinct: we can clearly distinguish trees from bushes and these from other objects – and that which is clearly distinguishable, can be counted. Spatiality and quantification are directly related. Mental states, subjective states, cannot be separated from one another – as already established (see above). Bergson insists on the autonomy of the psyche beyond a spatial, quantifiable definition. However, he does not deny that sensations are linked to external causes. Yet mental states occur in the “depth of the mind” and by no means show “solidarity” with external causes (Bergson, 2012, p. 22). Bergson moves teleology and thus freedom before the causal dependency demanded by psychophysics: “Either sensation has nothing to do, or it is nascent freedom.” (Bergson, 2012, p. 32)

Contrary to psychophysics, which is fixated on causality, it is the directionality of the consciousness, its teleological orientation that moves stimuli into the focus of attention in the first place. “The affective state must then correspond not merely to the physical disturbances, movements or phenomena which have taken place, but also, and especially, to those which are in preparation, those which are getting ready to be.” (Bergson, 2012, p. 32) It is not the objective increase in stimulus alone that leads to an increase of the intensity of the experience, but the increase in stimulus in combination with the anticipation and bias of the person exposed to the stimulus. As the stimulus increases, the response to the stimulus changes, and this is what leads to an increase in intensity.

One is inclined to view an affective state as nothing but the conscious expression of an organic stimulus or the internal reaction to an external cause (Bergson, 2012, p. 31). But do pleasure and pain, to name two affective states here, really express what is happening within the organism right then? Is it not also their function with regard to stimuli to “announce those which are to follow” (Bergson, 2012, p. 31)? What is the difference between an organism that functions purely automatically and an organism experiencing states of consciousness between physical reactions? “If pleasure and pain make their appearance in certain privileged beings, it is probably to call forth a resistance to the automatic reaction which would have taken place.” (Bergson, 2012, p. 32) Humans are not “automatons”, but conscious beings. The intensity of affective sensations is therefore not the awareness of the involuntary movements “which are being begun and outlined, so to speak, within these states, and which would

have gone on in their own way” (Bergson, 2012, p. 33). Consequently, pain should not be compared to a note on a scale which grows louder and louder, but with a symphony “in which an increasing number of instruments make themselves heard” (Bergson, 2012, p. 33). The intensification of an affective sensation such as pain is guided by the interest or rather the involvement of the entire organism. „Within the characteristic sensation, which gives the tone to all the others, consciousness distinguishes a larger or smaller number of sensations arising at different points of the periphery, muscular contractions, and organic movements of every kind: the choir of these elementary psychic states voices the new demands of the organism, when confronted by a new situation. In other words, we estimate the intensity of a pain by the larger or smaller part of the organism which takes interest in it.” (Bergson, 2012, p. 33)

What is true for pain is also true for pleasure. “What do we mean by a greater pleasure except a pleasure that is preferred?” (Bergson, 2012, p. 35) The intensity of a pleasurable sensation lies in the fact that the body gives itself to it completely, sinks into it, and rejects every other sensation (Bergson, 2012, p. 35). A keynote turns into a symphony that requires a whole orchestra: the body becomes more and more involved when we perceive an increase in intensity. Bergson does not consider this a simple “more” or a quantitative increase in sensation but a qualitatively different absorption of the whole body by a sensation. This also applies to “many” conceptual sensations, since these also have affective character (Bergson, 2012, p. 35) – such as light sensitivity, olfactory sensibility, and auditory, taste, or temperature sensations. That the increase in intensity results from physical involvement applies to all of them. Bergson argues that the way to differentiate between different levels of intensity with regard to sensation lies in the effort or defensive attitude toward the stimulus, which results from physical involvement – thus, he indicates clearly that this is a matter of something qualitatively different, because, in phenomenological terms, our respective intentions differ.

Bergson easily explains the phenomenon of why intensity is (falsely) considered in quantitative terms. When the respective sensation loses its “affective character” and passes into the state of imagination, the physical response tendency moves into the background and the object which caused the reaction into the foreground. The cause is extensive and thus measurable, which closes that vicious circle of thought. “We thus associate the idea of a certain quantity of cause with a certain quality of effect; and finally, as happens in the case of every acquired perception, we transfer the idea into the sensation, the quantity of the cause into the quality of the effect. At this very moment, the intensity, which was nothing but a certain shade or quality of the sensation, becomes a magnitude.” (Bergson, 2012, p. 38) In order to personally experience

this idea, Bergson proposes to take a pin and slowly stab it into one's own left hand. At first, one will feel a slight tickling sensation, followed by a touch, followed by a sting that transitions into a localized pain and finally radiates into the surrounding area. But these are different qualitative sensations, "variants of the same". Bergson adds something else: the effort felt in the right hand, which does execute the motion and has to do more work with increasing depth of penetration, is reinterpreted into the intensity of the sensation, cause and effect are reversed so that quality may become quantity (Bergson, 2012, p. 38; and also Bergson, 1991, p. 40).

This physical involvement, the "collectivity of the shocks received by the organism" (Bergson, 2012, p. 38), can also be applied to auditory sensation, which yields clear nuances of intensity. A highly intense sound captures the attention completely, thus suppressing all other sounds. The listener will also perceive a characteristic vibration in the head or even in the body – but this does not change the fact that the sound perception does not correspond to the vibration or could be reduced to it. On the other hand, the physical epiphenomena cannot be denied. On top of that, people listening to intense sounds tend to think about how much effort it would take them to produce a sound in this volume (Bergson, 2012, p. 39). If one produces one note after another, there will be a short pause between notes, a discontinuity, and that suggests the association of notes as discrete points in space. Bergson admits that it is this physicality that allows quantification, yet he contends: "But the sound would remain a pure quality if we did not bring in the muscular effort which produces it or the vibrations which explain it." (Bergson, 2012, p. 40) Bergson demonstrates the same for the sensation of temperature as well as for light. (Bergson, 2012, p. 43ff) In anticipation of the Qualia discussion (Nagel, 1996), Bergson (1991, p. 40) asks: "What, indeed, would be a pain detached from the subject that feels it?"

With this, Bergson's analysis reaches the point at which he differentiates between the surface self and the deep-seated self. This distinction is based on the assumption that the ego comes in contact with the external world at its surface (Bergson, 2012, p. 94). This contact creates successive sensations and these retain something of the reciprocal exteriority that characterizes their causes objectively – which is the reason why "superficial psychic life" takes place in a homogeneous medium (Bergson, 2012, p. 95). This superficial psychic life is distinguished by a symbolic character. "But the symbolical character of such a picture becomes more striking as we advance further into the depths of consciousness: the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a force whose states and changes permeate one another and undergo a deep alteration as soon as we separate them from one another in order to set them out in space." (Bergson, 2012, p. 95) The "deep-seated self" in this

description is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's will, especially the use of the word "force" for its basic characterization and it being the actual decision-making unit. Schopenhauer's will, objectivized in an individual, also makes the decisions from within the depths of the individual, and passionately. But Bergson's reception of Schopenhauer is not the topic here. The surface self and the deep-seated self or the "deeper self" (Bergson, 2012, p. 95) form one person. Therefore, the state of the surface self is reflected down in the depths of the ego, for it is reciprocal exteriority to which material objects owe their co-existence in space. This reflection has consequences: "little by little our sensations are distinguished from one another like the external causes which gave rise to them, and our feelings or ideas come to be separated like the sensations with which they are contemporaneous." (Bergson, 2012, p. 95)

A legitimate question arises: if consciousness is homogenized in everyday life, how does Bergson know that this interweaving heterogeneity of states of consciousness even exists, that there is thus a deeper self which can be separated from the surface self? The answer lies in dreams. When dreaming, the surface self is switched off, duration no longer measured but felt, and full quality – spatial quantity, the distinction between different thoughts and emotions is lifted in dreams (Bergson, 2012, p. 95). "The imagination of the dreamer, cut off from the external world, imitates with mere images, and parodies in its own way the process which constantly goes on with regard to ideas in the deeper regions of the intellectual life." (Bergson, 2012, p. 103) It is not only his dream theory that makes Bergson precursor and inspiration to Freud and Adler, but also a different thought, which can be found in *Matter and Memory*: "Now, in every way, dreams imitate insanity." (Bergson, 1991, p. 170) But, unfortunately, this connection shall not concern us here and must therefore be dropped again after this mention.

Duration cannot only be grasped in dreams, but also in everyday life (Bergson, 2012, p. 96). The deep-seated self "sees" itself in its own quality through intuition. "Intuition is what encompasses mind, duration, and pure change." (Bergson, 2008a, p. 45) For intuition, change is essential. Intuition is a "direct contact of the self with the self" (Bergson, 2008a, p. 44); it is immediate consciousness. "There is only one thing, the continuous melody of our inner life – a melody that lasts and will last indivisibly from the beginning to the end of our conscious existence. And that is our personality." (Bergson, 2008b, p. 169)

Just as Holzkamp reinterprets conditioning as acting in flawed situations as well-reasoned acting under a certain premise and thus counteracts behavioural psychology with a psychological design that puts the free person instead of a biofeedback automaton at its centre, Bergson responds to psychophysics with the symphonic model, which establishes the autonomy of sensation from a postulated

causal dependence on stimuli, because it is the beginning of freedom which manifests in the proposed focus on this or that stimulus and in a more or less strong involvement of the person as a whole. While the “details of interpretation” of modern thinker Holzkamp and romantic thinker Bergson may differ, the motif remains the same.

Assigning Bergson’s philosophy to romanticism may seem counterintuitive, because he did not really live in the era of romanticism. Nevertheless, his motifs are still characterized by romantic influences (Jankélévitch, 1994, p. 64). In this respect, it may be surprising that he formulates a theory of memory in his œuvre that Holzkamp may have used as a template.

3.

The general view is that cognitive psychology overcame behaviourism and ran straight into the next problem – it turns human beings completely into automatons, or, more precisely, into computers. Holzkamp (1995, p. 136) attests to the consistent “homunculisation” that happens in cognitive psychology: a computer is not an acting entity but is programmed and used by acting entities, specifically human beings. If the person who is programming and using the computer is thought of in terms of a computer, it would be necessary for this human to carry another human, a homunculus, inside themselves who would have to program the human computer and use it for their own purposes, ad infinitum. If genuinely human faculties such as thinking, feeling, experiencing, etc., are surreptitiously outsourced into causally describable processes, it becomes necessary to cheat and introduce another entity that is capable of performing these genuinely human faculties. It could also be said that the homunculus problem is a disguised inclusion of the explanandum into the explanans: neurons think, the amygdala feels fear, a certain brain area experiences this or that emotion, etc.

Holzkamp logically and consequently rejects the conception of memory as a mere data storage facility. All memory and multi-memory models can be defined in terms of justificatory discourse. Doing this, it becomes clear “that the ‘strategies’, ‘search processes’, etc. mentioned there refer to activities of the subject which are used ‘reasonably’ to optimize retention and retrieval efficiency.” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 139) Holzkamp replaces the computer-metaphorically “contaminated” concept of memory with the dual concept of “retention-remembering”. The relation between the two terms is inferential-implicative: “To intend retention without anticipating the requirement for recollection is obviously meaningless from the subject’s standpoint; or, to put it

even more bluntly, the intention to retain, in a certain way, is the same as the intention to remember what has been retained at a later point.” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 143) Mere repetition does not explain anything; rather, the test persons develop subjective strategies in order to fulfil the anticipated requirement for recollection and thus improve their memory by repeatedly perusing the learning material (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 145) – just as pupils repeat vocabulary and formulas over and over again to pass a test. Memory does not simply “happen”, but is integrated into the context of a person's life. Without the intention of retention and remembering, memory models are open to ambiguous interpretation and, according to Holzkamp, should be reinterpreted from the subject's point of view.

The “expectancy concept of the subject's active, change-inducing outreach into their lifeworld” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 151) must be positioned against the “worldlessness” of behaviourist and cognitive theories. Learning requirements presented to the learner do not necessarily result in the learning process. “To accept the respective subjective learning problem implies [...] that the transition to the (intended) ‘learning’ is a certain *attitude* (of detachment, decentring, aspectuation, etc.) by which I deliberately resolve not to continue in my usual fashion (since that has led nowhere), but first to orient myself so that I may find indications of where and how it might be possible for me to learn something, and thus deliberately assume the problem of action to be a learning problem (or reject such an assumption for me).” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 184) To express this in an existentialist way: what individuals are willing to learn depends on their personal design and the resulting realizations. Advancements in learning, which Holzkamp calls “learning leaps”, are characterized as the overcoming of a real limitation regarding one's approach to the world via an extended approach to the world – what happens is a realization of new possibilities through learning about the subject. “Learning leaps [...] do not *happen* as an approach to an – in some way – externally determined ‘final state’, but are *carried out by me as a learning subject* by having ‘good reasons’ to realize a ‘fundamentally’ higher level of access to a certain subject through attempting to overcome a certain learning problem at a certain level of approaching a subject through learning while considering the connection between worldview and extension of disposition/life.” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 245)

The conception of memory as “data storage” or “inner possession” ultimately lacks the positionality of the acting subject in a world where it must respond to the circumstances into which it was born. In the perspective of the “homo faber”, memory is “a characteristic of the historically grown living situation into which the richness and clarity of the relationships between the individual and their social as well as tangible environment enter into as a

constitutive factor.” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 311) This implies a fundamentally external focus of what is retained – the memory, or what is retained/remembered, should not be viewed as separate from the object that triggered closer examination. This is the point where Holzkamp locates the permanence of what is memorized. „Permanence grows to the extent that *what is to be retained* can be *integrated into existing permanent knowledge structures via depth of access to the subject*. That way, it is stripped of its transience and becomes a part of the individual’s permanent knowledge base.” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 310) The discussion about the “retention time of long-term memory” in cognitive psychology reveals itself once more to be the result of a false concept of human beings, who are thought of as isolated thought apparatuses with physical supplementary equipment, i.e., as cyborgs whose relationship to the world is reduced to the evolutionary concept of adaptation – even though being human is, in fact, better realized using the terms producing, creating, and being in contact.

The subjective relationship to the world refers to the relation of the physical subject within its lifeworld: “my respective” location means a “physical situatedness” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 253). In addition to this, the “mental-linguistic situatedness” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 259) and the “personal situatedness” (Holzkamp, 1995, p. 263) have to be incorporated into the conceptual design of the learning subject. Holzkamp formulates the foundations of a psychology the smallest examination unit of which is not the “black box” but the individual in their “my respective” situatedness in the world. In this – if I may allow myself this brief digression at this point – Holzkamp connects with Thompson and Noë, who, in their critical examination of the neuroscientific research about subjective conditions, insist on a paradigm shift insofar as they want the empirical philosophy of Locke and Hume to no longer be applied as the basis for the idea of man used in research, but rather Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of corporeality, which does not underestimate the individual’s intentional relationship with the world (Holzkamp quotes Merleau-Ponty). Noë (2009, p. xiii) illustrates the postulate of human-in-their-world as the smallest research unit even for neuroscientific research with the beautiful sentence that thinking is like dancing: being human means to physically share the world with others. Thompson (2010) offers, in Holzkamp’s words, a reinterpretation of neuroscientific results in terms of Merleau-Ponty. In the “enactive approach”, cognition is “the exercise of skilful know-how in situated and embodied action”; even more: “A cognitive being’s world is not a pre-specified, external realm, represented internally by its brain, but a relational domain enacted or brought forth by that being’s autonomous agency and mode of coupling with the environment.” (Thompson, 2010, p. 18)

Again, I resist the temptation to embed these thoughts into the philosophy of the twentieth century – the endeavour would span a wide range of thinkers from Husserl and Sartre over Wittgenstein and Ryle to Bateson and Varela. Instead, it is imperative to recall the impact of Bergson's analyses on this motif – that memory and action cannot be separated, and that memory must be approached from the perspective of the *homo faber*.

4.

While Bergson's first publication, *Time and Free Will*, establishes intuition as the central faculty, meaning the faculty used by humans to contact their deep-seated self, and strongly criticizes the focus on and entanglement with worldly things that characterizes the majority of the average humans, Bergson's *Matter and Memory* – probably Bergson's most ingenious book, according to Jankélévitch (2015, p. 66) – performed a complete about-face, viewing the physical and social worldliness of humans in a positive light (Jankélévitch, 2015, p. 96). The fundamental law of the inner life is now “the focus of our consciousness on action” (Bergson, 1991, p. 176). Intuition is now joined by intelligence. Intelligence is defined as the ability to understand, an “offshoot” of the faculty of acting and thus “a more and more precise, more and more complex, and more and more supple adaptation of the consciousness of living beings to the conditions of existence provided for them” (Bergson, 2013, p. 3). Human intelligence is directed at handling the world, primarily by handling “inanimate objects”. “We are made in order to act as much as, and more than, in order to think – or rather, when we follow the bent of our nature, it is in order to act that we think.” (Bergson, 2013, 336) What we do depends on who we are, and also on what we have already done. We are creating ourselves continually. (Bergson, 2013, p. 17). „[F]or a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 17)

The reconnection to handling life becomes clear in the following, almost poetic words which *avant-la-lettre* are reminiscent of Camus' (2015, p. 24) characterisation of the absurd human in *The Myth of Sisyphus*; Bergson states: “Harnessed, like yoked oxen, to a heavy task, we feel the play of our muscles and joints, the weight of the plow and the resistance of the soil. To act and to know that we are acting, to come into touch with reality and even to live it, but only in the measure in which it concerns the work that is being accomplished and the furrow that is being plowed, such is the function of human intelligence. Yet a beneficent fluid bathes us, whence we draw the very force to labour and to live. From this ocean of life, in which we are immersed, we are continually drawing

something, and we feel that our being, or at least the intellect that guides it, has been formed therein by a kind of local concentration.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 221) Handling life is a constructive process through and through: “In a general way, human work consists in creating utility; and, as long as the work is not done, there is ‘nothing’ – nothing that we want.” (Bergson, 2013, p. 337) It is desire and need, or vital requirements, which drive people to rise up against the void by creating something useful – *homo faber* creates something full from emptiness. For Bergson, life moves in the direction of the full.

Memory occupies a central position in the physical, needy worldliness of humans and is positioned between perception and action – Bergson speaks of the “deed”. A human being possesses a high degree of indeterminacy, their essence must not be compared to a reflexive automaton – sensation, as stated above, is the beginning of freedom. What is perceived reaches further the freer the animate being happens to be – Bergson (1991, p. 15) claims that this is true for all living creatures and establishes that mammals in general are suspended from being automatons. The freer a living creature, the more indeterminate its action and the further reaching its perception. The fact that freedom almost necessarily results in the indeterminateness of action need not be discussed further – but how do the reach of perception and freedom fit together? The answer to this is memory: “In fact, there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience.” (Bergson, 1991, p. 18) Memory “surrounds” the core of the immediate perception and consolidates a multitude of perceptual moments into one – it thus creates the subjective side of the perception of things (Bergson, 1991, p. 19). Consequently, there is no impersonal perception; perception is always perception from a subjective perspective, a perspective that denotes the particular history of a particular person. Perception is my respective perception, and this is because perception is saturated and streamlined by my respective memory. And perception is positioned physically: the objects are interconnected and they turn toward “our body” the side, emphasized by the light upon it, which interests *our body* (Bergson, 1991, p. 21). One must not make the mistake to regard perception as “a kind of photographic view of things”, because that is a fundamental error.

If one proceeds, as Bergson (1991, p. 51) does, from activity, that is from “our ability to bring about changes in things”, it is reasonable to assume that without an “equal and corresponding outlook” over the past, there can be no “grasp of the future” (Bergson, 1991, p. 53). At the same time, being active gives meaning to movement and the memorization of movements becomes particularly important, indeed the work of memory is of central relevance for action: “to act is just to induce this memory to shrink, or rather to become thinned and

sharpened, so that it presents nothing thicker than the edge of a blade to actual experience, into which it will thus be able to penetrate.” (Bergson, 1991, p. 98) The memory that has this motoric quality combines physical-subjective positionality with the necessity of action and causes the moments to flare up which are important when dealing with the world. Memory provides answers to the questions the world presents to us – and these answers will differ if the histories of the people involved differ, but they will be similar if the histories of the people involved resemble each other.

Future, present, past – these three appear to be strictly separate. The moment when the future becomes present, the future is destroyed, and the present crumbles as it is carried into the past. This idea, well known since Augustine, is specifically interpreted by Bergson since he emphasizes the basic concept of his theorizing – that is duration: The present must not be thought punctual; it is not a notch in the time axis stretching from future to past. The present is duration (Bergson, 1991, p. 132). The lasting present is described as follows: “What I call ‘my present’ stands with one foot in my past and with the other one in my future.” (Bergson, 1991, p. 132) To make this picture even more vivid: The stretch marked off by between two widely straddled legs is the present – in imagery, it is stretched, but actually it is duration. My present is the consciousness of my own body moving in space (Bergson, 1991, p. 133). The body is a “centre of activities, the place, where the received impressions intelligently choose their path in order to realise themselves in movement; the body, thus, represents the actual state of my becoming, or what is in the state of getting formed in my duration.” (Bergson, 1991, p. 133) Memory materialises as image that is relevant here and now. Thus, this memory leaves the state of being ‘mere memory’ and turns to be a part of the present. Pure memory, however, is powerless (Bergson, 1991, p. 135).

The past and mere memory seems to be pointless when defining the present in this way – since here presence is fully understood in terms of the future, in terms of creating something useful and handy for bodily, needy humans. The ‘promises and threats’ of the material universe attract our attention (Bergson, 1991, p. 138). It is memory that gives orientation to what is to choose and what is to avoid; memories are not dead weights (Bergson, 1991, p. 139), but beacons: Memories create a ‘chain of the same sort’ and, thus, the person’s character “that is present at all decisions and they are present in the actual synthesis of all our past states” (Bergson, 1991, p. 140). The past emotional life exists, hence, in a higher degree than the outer existence (also Bergson, 2013, p. 15). The impression that memories flicker up only then and when simply results from the fact that the duration of the present allows that to become conscious what is useful in the course of action. Consequently, memory is not at all a faculty of

storing things into categories (Bergson, 2013, p. 14) – it is constantly present, drenching and standardises perceptions and guides the actions accordingly to the person's character that bundles up memories. "Thus, our perception, so momentary it might be, consists of an uncountable set of memorised elements, and, in truth, every perception is already memory. Virtually we perceive the past only; the pure present is the unfathomable progress of the past that nibbles at the future." (Bergson, 1991, p. 145; Bergson will adhere to the metaphor of 'nibbling at the future' in *Creative Evolution*, see above). These thoughts will take formative influence on Adler – and Bergson's influence, according to my view, strongly outweighs Adler's encounter with Freud's psychoanalysis.

Eventually, Bergson polemicizes against psychologists who compare memories with kink folds engraving increasingly when repeated. Bergson's reply is clear: The majority of our memories refer to events in our life with one specific date, and thus no repletion; the memories the psychologist speaks about are rare (Bergson, 1991, p. 72). A psychological theory on memory based on repetition is mistaken. Such a theorising should be reinterpreted in the light of a memory theory that gives a better account of the psyche.

5.

Bergson's ideas were once, according to Foley (2015, p. 107), radical and disputed, but latest when he was awarded with the Nobel prize, Bergson's influence on philosophers, artists and scientists became highly influential so that a direct reference in the respective works was no longer necessary – everybody knew Bergson – what changed after World War II, first slowly, then rapidly. Thus, it is a fascinating venture to search for clues of Bergson in the writings of philosophers, psychologists, and psychotherapy school founders. The similarities (interpreted as influences) between Holzkamp and Bergson are a small contribution to this venture.

There is a further similarity: Both, Bergson and Holzkamp, share the same destiny. Neither of them was broadly received in mainstream psychology. That deplorable state must not be forgotten, especially the reflection on what humans are must be brought and re-brought into the minds of psychologists since experimental data gaining, data calculation and clinical focusing is simply not the full and satisfying programme of an academic discipline that, in the first place, deals with human subjective states (and not behaviour). However, fortunately there is a silver strip on the horizon since another psycho-discipline emerged in the academic field – psychotherapy science. Psychotherapy science must not be mixed up with quantitative and qualitative psychotherapy research; rather,

psychotherapy science is the “discipline of the subjective” (Pritz & Teufelhart, 1996), and thus its methodology is hermeneutics. Research designs are applied that are founded on the first-person and the second-person perspective; furthermore, there are radical hermeneutic research strategies (e.g. Greiner & Jandl, 2015; Jandl & Greiner, 2017) aiming at the reflection of view of man in the different psychotherapy school. Psychotherapy science in its academically institutionalised form as ‘geisteswissenschaft’ with immanent clinical application is oriented both on psychotherapeutic treatment and on philosophically oriented reflection on the view of man.

Acknowledgements

My friend and colleague, Kurt Greiner, was so kind to discuss my paper with me; he advised me with some good ideas. My colleague Brigitte Sindelar was so kind to read and comment this text as well.

References

- Bergson, H. (1991). *Materie und Gedächtnis. Eine Abhandlung über die Beziehung zwischen Körper und Geist*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Bergson, H. (2008a). *Einleitung zu Denken und schöpferisches Werden*. Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Bergson, H. (2008b). *Die Wahrnehmung der Veränderung*. In ders., *Denken und schöpferisches Werden* (pp.149-180). Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Bergson, H. (2008c). *Über den Pragmatismus von William James. Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit*. in ders., *Denken und schöpferisches Werden* (pp.234-246). Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Bergson, H. (2012). *Zeit und Freiheit*. (5. ed.) Hamburg: CEP Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Bergson, H. (2013). *Schöpferische Evolution*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Camus, A. (2015). *Der Mythos des Sisyphos*. (15. ed.) Reinbek bei Hamburg: rororo.
- Devereux, G. (1988). *Angst und Methode in den Verhaltenswissenschaften* (übers. von Caroline Neubaur und Karin Kersten). (2. ed.) Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Foley, M. (2015). *Bergson. Great Thinkers on Modern Life*. New York: Pegasus Books.
- Greiner, K. & Jandl, M. J. (2015). *Bizarrosophie. Radikalkreatives Forschen im Dienste der akademischen Psychotherapie*. Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz.
- Hagner, M. (2008). *Homo cerebrialis. Der Wandel vom Seelenorgan zum Gehirn*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Holzkamp, K. (1972). *Verborgene anthropologische Voraussetzungen der allgemeinen Psychologie*. In K. Holzkamp, *Kritische Psychologie. Vorbereitende Arbeiten* (pp.35-74). Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer.

- Holzkamp, K. (1985). *Grundlegung der Psychologie (Studienausgabe)*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus.
- Holzkamp, K. (1995). *Lernen. Subjektwissenschaftliche Grundlegung (Studienausgabe)*. Frankfurt a.M.: New York: Campus.
- Husserl, E. (2013). *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Jandl, M. J. & Greiner, K. (2017). *Abenteuer Bizarrosophie. Experimentalhermeneutische Expeditionen in der Psychotherapiewissenschaft*. Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz. [in Vorbereitung]
- Jankélévitch, V. (1994). *Bergson lesen*. Wien: Turia + Kant.
- Jankélévitch, V. (2015). *Henri Bergson*. Duke: Duke University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1974). *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. [Aus dem Französischen übersetzt von Rudolf Boehm]
- Nagel, T. (1996). *Wie ist es, eine Fledermaus zu sein?* In M. Frank (Hrsg.), *Analytische Theorien des Selbstbewusstseins* (pp.135-152). (2. ed.) Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Noë, A. (2009). *Out of Our Heads. Why You are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Orne, M. T. (1962). *On the social psychology of the psychological experiment: With particular reference to demand characteristics and their implication*. *American Psychologist*, Vol.17/11, pp.776-783.
- Pritz, A., & Teufelhart, H. (1996). *Psychotherapie – Wissenschaft vom Subjektiven*. In A. Pritz (Hrsg.), *Psychotherapie – eine neue Wissenschaft vom Menschen* (pp.1-18). Wien: Springer.
- Sellars, W. (2002). *Der Empirismus und die Philosophie des Geistes* [translated, edited and introduced by Th. Blume]. (2., unchanged ed.) Paderborn: Mentis.
- Thompson, E. (2010). *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Harvard: Harvard Press paperback edition.

Martin J. Jandl, born 1969, studied philosophy, art history and psychology at the University of Vienna. In his book “*Kritische Psychologie and Postmoderne*” (“*Critical Psychology and Postmodernism*”, published 1999 in German only) the procedure of philosophical reflection on psychological theories is first performed. Since then Jandl tries to fight cognitivism as the starting point of the definition of the human being. Jandl tries to strengthen linguistic and praxeological approaches founding his philosophical work on psychology. His investigation topics are philosophy of language, philosophy of science and philosophy of mind. Jandl is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Psychotherapy Science at the Sigmund Freud University in Vienna, Austria.
E-mail: martin.jandl@sfu.ac.at