

A VIRTUAL INTERPRETATION OF HENRI BERGSON'S CINEMATOGRAPHICAL METHOD

Sunnie D. Kidd

This presentation on virtual incorporations will not only deal with the abstract theoretical but include two concrete embodiments of the virtual into the “flipper book” of years ago and the cinematic. Both are enjoyable and elucidate that which people readily understand. This brings imagination and movement together.

The mind derives three kinds of representations: qualities, forms and acts. There are three primordial elements of language which characterize these representations: adjectives, substantives and verbs. Adjectives and substantives symbolize states, verbs movement.

Now let us characterize our natural occurrence towards becoming. It is varied. That which goes from one color to another color and from a completely different color to another are different qualitative movements. That which goes from acorn to oak from embryo to human being are different evolutionary movements. That which goes from one action to another and from a completely different action to another are different extensive movements. All three of these movements themselves differ immensely.

Now, if you will, remember the flipper book of years ago which included still pictures that you rapidly flipped through so as to create movement. This takes a series of snapshots and throws these instantaneous views before one so that they replace each other very rapidly.

Virtual reality gets real when one steps inside and becomes “it.” In this way one can use it to reproduce realms that exist only in our minds. Virtual reality allows one to enter another consciousness. A mind-link where anything goes. Think it, be it.

Methodological consciousness itself though not perceived appears to be clear in the case of an unperceived object obscure in the case of an unperceived idea. It is by successive degrees that the idea comes to embody itself in that particular image which is virtual.

Henri Bergson says that the cinematographical method is the only practical method. It consists in making the general character of knowledge form itself on action, with the detail of each act dependent upon in its turn on that of knowledge.¹

Now let us think of an original idea for the cinematic. The best practical method most useful to summarize a story over and over again in one's mind is the cinematographical method. It is to relate a story in summary, without unnecessary details to emphasize the essential points of the plot.

To keep one engaged one has to intensify effects, to introduce shifts and surprises around the main theme and meaning of every scene. This process, the form of the essential elements is performed in one's meaning. In this way the story can be related succinctly. Then every subject can be approached from several views, each illuminating its different aspect.

If a showing begins with specific characters committing a certain act, the one engaged in this view realizes that these characters will be accompanied throughout the cinematic. It is this that will constitute the main theme.

The difficulty in developing action is that one does not get attracted to inessential scenes. The major aspects should be developed and expanded, letting others move into the background.

In thinking back to the flipper book, it is because it unrolls, bringing in turn the different photographs of the scene to continue each other, that each recovers mobility. This is the successive invisible movement of reality, which is virtually possible.

Simply: imagination is virtual. Virtual reality did not come out of nowhere. In its purest form it is imagination. It is now externalized in the entertainment, space programs and the medical fields. Within our mind imagination exists, that which is to be. The verb, imperative, commands action. When imagination is embodied, brought into action it is the virtually possible becoming real. That which was only thought up, which is virtual reality, is possible since it already exists in the mind.² As Ferrari says if it can be conceived it can be created. This means it is virtually imagined as already obtained. Imagination sees something as it is brought into action it becomes embodied.

Virtual and real interpenetrate. The reality of a movie is the scenery and the location of the actors. The virtuality of the movie is what seems to be. Cinema is truth at 24 frames per second, at which the separate photographic images fuse in the human perceptual system. People watching movies have had to learn how to perceive film virtuality, to make sense out of the stream of sensation. This engages the mind. To create this seeming is the affect of designing and implementing the virtuality. Howard Rheingold tells us that, "A 'virtuality,' then, is a structure of seeming—the conceptual

feel of what is created.”³ It is interactive in which each plays into the other. For Bergson:

*...intelligence, considered in what seems to be its original feature, is the faculty of manufacturing artificial objects, especially tools to make tools, and of indefinitely varying the manufacture.*⁴

Possibilities of action are marked out before the action itself. This requires reflection. Reflection is a consciousness that has virtually reconquered itself. From the moment the intellect, reflecting upon its own doings, perceives itself as a creator, there is no object of which it may not have an idea. Reality is too small for virtuality. Upon direct interaction the virtual becomes actual in practical action. Language contributes a liberating movement. The word, made to pass from one thing to another is by nature transferable and free. Bergson exemplifies this movement:

It can therefore be extended, not only from one perceived thing to another, but even from a perceived thing to a recollection of that thing, from the precise recollection to a more fleeting image, and finally from an image fleeting, though still pictured, to the picturing of the act by which the image is pictured, that is to say, to the idea.⁵

Our perception of an object distinct from our body expresses virtual action. The more the distance decreases between this object and our body, the more does virtual action pass into real action. Bergson saw this movement as early as 1911:

Suppose the distance reduced to zero, that is to say that the object to be perceived coincides with our body, that is to say again, that our body is the object to be perceived. Then it is no longer virtual action, but real action.⁶

This interactive movement comes together when each plays into the other upon the ground of *Inbetweenness*. Bergson tells us how this is manifested:

Our sensations are, then, to our perceptions that which the real action of our body is to its possible or virtual action. Its virtual action concerns other objects, and is manifested within those objects; its real action concerns itself, and is manifested within its own substance. Everything then will happen as if, by a true return of real and virtual actions to their points of application or of origin, the external images were reflected by our body into

surrounding space, and the real actions arrested by it within itself.⁷

Notes

- 1) Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911), pp. 306-307.
- 2) Thought and imagination are different aspects of the mind, disembodied so to speak, brought into being through action which is embodied.
- 3) Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Reality* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 177.
- 4) Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- 6) Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1911), p. 58.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p. 58.