

**“Collecting, organizing the totality of its experience in what we call its character, the mind causes it to converge upon actions in which we shall afterwards find, together with the action which is their matter, the unforeseen form which is stamped upon them by personality; but the action is not able to become real unless it succeeds in encasing itself in the actual situation, that is to say, in that particular assemblage of circumstances which is due to the particular position of the body in time and space... Our body, with the sensations which it receives on the one hand and the movements which it is capable of executing on the other hand, is then, that which fixes our mind, and gives it balance and poise. The activity of the mind goes far beyond the mass of accumulated memories, as this mass of memories itself is infinitely more than the sensations and movements of the present hour; but these sensations and these movements condition what we may call our attention to life, and that is why everything depends on their cohesion in the normal work of the mind, as in a pyramid which should stand on its apex.”**

*(Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory 172-3)*

Why does the nervous system, like human societies and organizations, seem to beg for analysis and comprehension through the lens or cipher of a pyramidal geometry? The focal point of Bergson's hierarchical schema of consciousness is focus itself, that is, attention or awareness; we have here a series of superimposed triangles (after Lacan's schema) whose pinpoint alternates between polarized modalities: first, the ocular apparatus (itself a double tripartite structure whose apex is the surface of the cornea, with the visual field on one side and the inverted reflection on the other); then, sensation: the body's inter-face with externality, the focal point again being focus itself; then, the spiritual-social: the subject's inter-transposition with the void and the face on either side, an infinite and unterritorializable relation which cuts jagged gashes across and through the “stuff” and matter of subjectivity.

Indeed, Bergson is absolutely correct—everything depends on the cohesion of these jagged, irregular, mobile structures; their tripartite division (mind, body, soul; idea, image, word; object, eye, gaze) expresses the radical separation between any two layers within any structure, which reveals the radical interconnection between structures of awareness. Balance is inevitable, constantly resurging, self-correcting. We deconstruct the layers of awareness (physical, sensible, spiritual) only to discover their essential identity and contradiction in the same movement; it is this very rupture which is objectified in the cogito; this objectification is of course its downfall, as in fact it makes a much stronger case when inverted: we think because we are— i.e., pure materialism— but either way, the identity asserted between mind and body represses the fundamental rupture, the void point between or across both which awareness represents. But why does Bergson stand the pyramid upon its point?

The inversion which Bergson here intends is not between our body and its movements, nor between mind (thought, theory, memory, time) versus body (sensation, matter, movement, space); rather, there is a fundamental paradigm of balance and “poise” under which any awareness “decodes” itself through (e)motion, allows a crack in being so that its essence or “character” may be exposed, and this rupture is rather the empty core of that helix around which body and mind are braided together—that is, the world is neither a stage upon which awareness

and expression are performed are performed any more than awareness can give itself means, substance or inspiration to function.

By connecting awareness to balance, to the apex of an inverted pyramid, does Bergson not represent the weight, the burden of existence upon the singular “point” of the subject whose iceberg of unconsciousness is rather bearing down on his conscious attention rather than supporting? Our awareness is white hot and right here—is it not every engaged in an endless dissolution and triage of the mass of memories—which is itself a dissolution, displacement and metaphor for the mass of movements and sensations? Awareness is not thrown, but surges up from beneath a weight, constituted from the very courage to stand, as well as the steadiness to continue.

Yet, this balance is something like a logical rupture between “bodies” as independent, isolated, separate and mentally supervised “movement” as relationity, synchronicity interconnection. Poise is a kind of improvised synchronization with externality, as between “mind” as memories and “body” as pure sensation. This balance is not a solution; rather it is more like the generations, successive improvisations on similar themes; the uneasy balance of the family is structural (and is this still not the most repressed of Freud’s discoveries?) but constantly seeking cohesion of disparate personalities, both antagonism and resolution.

Therefore the balance of Bergson’s pyramid is as precarious as our attention span, for it is both (a) pure presentation and cautiously maintained, and (b) chronically absent and desperately sought after. Love, faith, understanding: are these are really enough to pacify and balance memory, to sanctify the present assembly, and transform emptiness into holiness? I’m not positive, but I’m pretty sure the answer is “yes”—if only for the briefest of moments...

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