

AN EVALUATION OF HENRI BERGSON'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The idea of morality is in the nature and consciousness of every man. When it comes to moral judgments, the case is different. Moral disagreements abound in the history of philosophy. Man has always been poised with the question, what is morality? There have been several questions on the objectivity and subjectivity of morality, however one can only speak from a point of view. Henri Bergson is seen as a revival in moral theory over the past two decades. Recently there is an increased attention to Bergson's controversial book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. In this work, he made a distinction between open and closed morality, according to him, open morality is an open society that is democratic and liberal in the sense that it includes everyone while closed morality, is a closed society that is authoritarian and inhumane. Open morality upholds freedom and universality while closed morality operates under the rule of authority, hierarchy and immobility. However, Bergson pointed out that there has never been nor ever could be either a truly open society or a fully closed one - these are ideal limits. In other words, closed morality upholds obedience before the law. Critics have pointed out that there is no clear statement of how real duration, the flow of consciousness, and the vital impetus are related. The notion of Bergson's 'open and closed morality' can be applauded in its multiplicity because it encompasses everyone. Is morality supposed to be strict and static or dynamic? What is Bergson's theory of open and closed morality? If Bergson's theory of open and closed morality has not been completely realized, what is the prevalent implication to the society today? Which society according to Bergson is best for man and his society? The researcher adopts the analytic method of research and aims to properly examine the notion of Henri Bergson's idea of open and closed morality so as to have a better understanding of the concept. The researcher aims to sieve out the notion of morality as it relates with the society on one hand and on the other hand, examine what it entails in the philosophy of Henri Bergson. At the end of the research, the researcher aims to answer the question of morality and how it relates with the society through open and closed morality in Bergson; also, the suitable moral society according to Bergson will become glaringly clear.

Keywords: Morality, Open Society, Closed Society, Static and Dynamic

Introduction

The problem of what is right and wrong in the world of ours has become questionable. Right and wrong without doubt have constituted lots of discomfort, havoc and other problems in human life. Consequently, so many thinkers of different epochs have contributed in one way or the other according to their own understanding, to unravel this dilemma. Nevertheless, throughout the different periods starting from ancient era to contemporary era, the problem of what is right and wrong have continued to occupy the minds of philosophers. However, no consensus has been reached with regard to a solution. It is this problem – the lack of any particular solution that propels this research. The central goal is to get a better understanding of what is right and wrong as interpreted by Bergson.

Bergson's view on open and closed morality and his rigorous experiences of the retrospection on previous philosophers on morality allured him to distinguish between open and closed morality. In his attempt to answer the question of what is right and wrong, he based his conception of what is right and wrong on individual differences. According to Bergson (2002), everyone according to his particular emotions, judges or estimates what is good and what is wrong. Living in a constantly changing and

more global society, where distances between cultures and nations become ever smaller, he argues that we are continuously trying to find ourselves as individual beings. It could be a life long journey for us humans to find our place within society and the rules that follow, when at the same time wanting to advocate for our own autonomy and will.

Since man is a social animal, his future evolution will be accelerated or retarded by the sort of group in which he lives. Bergson (2002) discussed this question in his work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where he drew a distinction between a society that is "closed" and one that is "open," describing in each case corresponding types of religion and of morality. The aim of this paper is to underscore the problem of morality, which is the notion of morality, the acceptability of morality and what can be said to be moral. A very pertinent question one may ask and to which no acceptable answer have being given is; what is Morality? Therefore, the aim of the research is an attempt to contribute to knowledge by expanding Bergson's open and closed morality as an answer to the above question.

Bergson described closed morality to be a closed society that is authoritarian, inhuman, static, secular, disciplined, caught up in automatism and organized for self-preservation. In his view, it represents a halt in the evolutionary process. Open morality on the other hand, is an open society that is democratic, liberal, dynamic, progressive, creative and characterized by freedom and universal charity. It represents a forward thrust. It is apparent that man has progressed beyond the state of the primitive closed society, and while he is still far from the ideal of the open society, morally he is advancing in that direction. Thus, the Bergson attempts to resolve questions such as; how do we decide what is right and do it and how do we decide what is wrong and avoid it? Who or what is the yardstick for measuring or deciding moral actions? What is morality for Bergson? What is the philosophical background of morality in Bergson? How does this moral progress come about? What is Bergson's theory of open and closed morality? Should morality be strict and static or dynamic? If closed morality restricts freedom and places man into cohesion, does it imply that morality needs cohesion? Do people do good as a result of fear/punishment or they do good because it is good to do good? What will be the outcome in an open society where people are free and liberal to act? Can man be entitled wholly to all the freedom and still find himself doing good without being held accountable? In other words, is man free but everywhere in chains? If Bergson's theory of open and closed morality has not been completely realized, what is the prevalent implication to the society today? The research attempts to approach Bergson's concept of morality by appraising his idea. The first place to begin is to look into the notion of open and closed morality (concept of morality) of Bergson.

What is Open and Closed Morality?

Open and the closed are the 'two sources' of religion and morality and the basic tendencies of life. They function as a set of contrasts that structure social, religious and political life: on the one hand a tendency toward stasis, boundedness, stability and closure; on the other hand a tendency toward open-ended change, novelty and newness. Frédéric Worms (2012) argues that the distinction between the open and closed "could change everything" because it effectively exists in history and life. Worms argues that perhaps, the two central goals are;

First, to show that the open and the closed are forces or tendencies of life operative in moralities, religions and all forms of social and political organization; secondly, to make this distinction available for practical use in the face of the dangers of mechanization and war. (Frédéric Worms, 2012)

For Worms, open and closed morality culminates in a politics of the 'in-between', a constantly renewed effort to renegotiate the two opposed directions or tendencies.

Mullarkey (1999a) distinguished between closed and open morality by presenting it as a concept of equality and democracy that affirms their essential openness and indeterminacy. Democracy as used by him is productively 'vague' such that it is the central political institution that provides latitude for the moral creativity and inventiveness that liberty and equality require. Mullarkey (1999b) argues that democracy provides a notion of equality that avoids the circularity at the heart of the concept: rather

than equality “equaling” anything in particular. Thus, it ultimately remains open and receptive to the vagueness of politics.

Popper (2020) in his view on open and closed society believed firstly that philosophy is soaked through with faith in the human mind and love of freedom, defined as the right of an individual to make independent decisions and confront the consequences of those decisions. In his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Popper (2020) refers to social philosophy in an unflattering manner as that which claims the discovery of historical laws and which allows for the prediction of historical events.

For him, part of being human is by having a moral responsibility that can only evolve under conditions of political freedom that is solely secured by democracy. In his view, this is similar with the Marxists who describes democracy disparagingly as ‘mere formal freedom’ and it becomes the basis of everything else. According to him,

This ‘mere formal freedom’, i.e. democracy, the right of the people to judge and to dismiss their government, is the only known device by which we can try to protect ourselves against the misuse of political power; it is the control of the rulers by the ruled. Since political power can control economic power, political democracy is also the only means for the control of economic power by the ruled. Without democratic control, there can be no earthly reason why any government should not use its political and economic power for purposes very different from the protection of the freedom of its citizens. (Popper, 2020).

He defined democracy as open society, the rule of law and not the majority rule. He was perfectly aware that government by the people can result in tyranny by the majority, which is not any better than any other form of tyranny. The political purpose of democracy is to provide freedom and justice reaching out as far as possible without any undue limitations to freedom.

The idea of an open society can be fully understood through a comparison with a closed society. What in essence is a closed society? Popper highlights the magicality and irrationality of such societies, the leaning towards a tribal structure of social life. According to him,

It is one of the characteristics of the magical attitude of a primitive tribal or a ‘closed’ society that it lives in a charmed circle of unchanging taboos, of laws and customs which are felt to be as inevitable as the rising of the sun or the cycle of the seasons, or similar obvious regularities of nature. It is, therefore, a magical, collective, tribal society – it can be described in terms of a biological or an organic theory of the state. (Popper, 2020)

Popper a closed society to a living organism. According to him, “A closed society resembles a herd or a tribe in being a semi-organic unit whose members are held together by semi-biological ties – kinship, living together, sharing common efforts, common dangers, common joys and common distress (Popper, 2020). The first feature of closed society is obedience of the citizens to the rulers, following orders, released from liabilities. Bhuiyan (2011) would convey it to interpret raising “slaves” instead of independent citizens that can take responsibility for their own actions.

Another of the features is of closed society is indoctrination – controlling minds (Orwellian control of thoughts). The constant and harsh censure of all intellectual activity and perpetual propaganda is directed at unifying and molding of minds. The state is free of any moral obligations. Therefore, history is the only judge. The only rule outlining individual codes of behaviour is the collective good – propaganda lies and adjusting the truth becomes acceptable. The truth becomes important as long as it serves the state. If the situation and state interest call for it the rulers can cheat and lie. Since intellectual independency is the foundations of intellectual dexterity, the totalitarian state takes all measures necessary not to allow for the development of critical thinking of its citizens. Citizenship is a collection

of rights and responsibilities which is bestowed on an individual granting a formal/legal identity (Uzowulu & Umeogu, 2021). Intellectual independence leads to complications, which prove impossible to overcome within the frame work of any form of authoritarianism. The authoritarian will in general select those who obey, who believe, who respond to his influence. But in doing so, he is bound to select mediocrities. For he excludes those who revolt, who doubt, who dare to resist his influence. Never can an authority admit that the intellectually courageous, i.e. those who dare to defy his authority, may be the most valuable type.

Bergson's Two Sources of Morality

Bergson and Carter (1935) in the book, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, develops an ideas from *Creative Evolution*. He identified that there are two sources from which two kinds of morality and religion evolve. According to him, there is the closed morality, whose religion is static and is concerned with social cohesion; and there is the open morality, whose religion is dynamic. There is a rigidity to the rules of closed moralities. An example of closed morality is Kantians moral philosophy. For Kant, the survival of the community requires that there be strict obedience which is interpreted as the categorical imperative. Although Kant's categorical imperative is supposed to be universal, it is not, according to Bergson; it is limited and particular (Stumpf, 1971).

According to Bergson (2014), Kant's theory has made a “psychological error.” In any given society, there are many different, particular obligations. The individual in society may at some time desire to deviate from one particular obligation. When this illicit desire arises, there will be resistance from society but also from his habits. If the individual resists these resistances, a psychological state of tension or contraction occurs. The individual, in other words, experiences the rigidity of the obligation. Now, according to Bergson, when philosophers such as Kant attribute a severe aspect to duty, they have externalized this experience of obligation's inflexibility. In fact, for Bergson, if we ignore the multiplicity of particular obligations in any given society, and if instead we look at what he calls “the whole of obligation,” then we see that obedience to obligation is almost natural. According to Bergson, obligations, that is, customs, arise because of the natural need an individual has for the stability that a society can give (Gallagher, 2012). As a result of this natural need, society inculcates habits of obedience in the individual. Habituation means that obedience to the whole of obligation is, in fact, for the individual, effortless.

Kant believes that he can resolve obligation into rational elements. In the experience of resistance to the resistances, the individual has an illicit desire. And, since the individual is intelligent, the individual uses intelligence, a rational method, to act on itself. What is happening here is that the rational method is merely restoring the force of the original tendency to obey the whole of obligation that society has inculcated in the individual. But as Gallagher (2012) notes, the tendency is one thing; the rational method is another. The success of the rational method, however, gives us the illusion that the force with which an individual obeys any particular obligation comes from reason that is, from the idea or representation, or better still, from the formula of the obligation.

Closed morality really concerns the survival of a society. It excludes other societies and mostly concerned with war. The religion of closed morality is based on what Bergson calls the “*fabulation function*” (Harman & Thomson, 1996). The *fabulation function* is a particular function of the imagination that creates ‘voluntary hallucinations.’ The *fabulation function* takes our sense that there is a presence watching over us and invents images of gods. These images then insure strict obedience to the closed morality. In short, they insure social cohesion.

Nature has made certain species evolve in such a way that the individuals in these species cannot exist on their own. They are fragile and require the support of a community. The open morality and dynamic religion are concerned with creativity and progress. They are not concerned with social cohesion, and thus Bergson calls this morality “open” because it includes everyone. The open morality is genuinely

universal and it aims at peace. It aims at an “open society.” The source of the open morality is what Bergson calls “*creative emotions*” (Frederic Worms, 2005).

The difference between creative emotions and normal emotions consists in this: in normal emotions, we first have a representation which causes the feeling (I see my friend and then I feel happy); in creative emotion, we first have the emotion which then creates representations. So, Bergson gives us the example of the joy of a musician who, on the basis of emotion, creates a symphony, and who then produces representations of the music in the score. We can see here that Bergson has also finally explained how the leap of an intuition happens. The creative emotion makes one unstable and throws one out of the habitual mode of intelligence, which is directed at needs. Indeed, in *The Two Sources*, Bergson and Carter (1935) compares creative emotions to unstable mental states as those found in the mad. But what he really has in mind is mystical experience. For them, mystical experience is not simply a disequilibrium. Genuine mystical experience must result in action; it cannot remain simple contemplation of God. This association of creative emotions with mystical experience means that, for Bergson, dynamic religion is mystical. Indeed, dynamic religion, because it is always creative, cannot be associated with any particular organized set of doctrines. A religion with organized – and rigid — doctrines is always static (Gallagher, 2012).

To go from the closed to the open morality is to take a new path away from the pressures of society, towards a new and different morality embracing all of humanity. In all aspects of time, Bergson finds that some outstanding people have outlived this morality, by turning their faces to that “complete morality” or “absolute morality.” It is thereby a morality focusing on the human, whereas the first morality is social. This shift from the first to the second is “not one of degree but of kind.” Individuals will not reach humanity just by thinking that he loves other societies or would like to, as these thoughts will remain thoughts. The real open morality or open soul will on the other hand be able to love all of humanity. It is an unconditional and self-sufficient love that does need to be aimed at a specific entity, as it is already loving. The attitude acquired here calls for an effort, an effort that only by emotion can guide the will beyond the constraints of social pressure. The emotions that men have from nature, based on their instinct, are limited to only act according to their own needs. Emotions in the open morality are instead genuine inventions, “at the origin of which there has always been man” (Gallagher, 2012).

Bergson (2014) goes further to describe two different kinds of emotions, one happening in the closed obligation, the other in the open. The first emotion, that needs an object for it to be affected, is what Bergson calls the infra-intellectual, whereas the other is called supra-intellectual, an emotion already filled with ideas and sensations. The open soul will thus want to act according to these emotions and seeks to be positively inspired by them, and will not see them as forced restrictions from outside, but something it naturally wants to hold on to. To sum up, to the new morality there is the emotion, which develops as an impetus in the realm of the will, and as an explicative representation in that of intelligence.

Mystics, saints and formers of religions are some of those exceptional men that throughout history have conquered the constraints of nature and pressure from the closed societies, and thereby lifted humanity to a new fate. Humans have been and are following these men, whom they look upon as heroes. To once again light up the difference between the closed and the open morality, one could call the first pressure and latter aspiration. Pressure is the picture of a society wanting to maintain social cohesion. If these obligations are accomplished it would most likely cause the emotion of pleasure; morality of aspiration on the contrary, implicitly contains the feeling of progress.” Between the first and the second morality is the distance between rest and motion, where the latter is seeking for this motion, which is seen as a transition stage. When the soul goes from being closed to being open, the closed morality will not be absorbed by the new morality. Rather, it has instead been transformed - the new morality has gone beyond intelligence. To find out where this new morality derives from, one has to go back to the evolution of life and the intention nature had with humans. Nature gave the individual intelligence to

separate them from animals, yet nature still intended man to be sociable, and for the necessary maintenance of social cohesion habits were formed, which shaped the instinct.

Thus the original moral construction was made for closed societies. Bergson and Carter (1935) further claims how nature could thereby not have foreseen how intelligence would develop, but by no means have wanted it to cause danger to the original structure of morality. As the closed societies should remain in the closed circle, nature would be surprised how some individuals have gone beyond nature to broaden “his social solidarity into the brotherhood of man.”¹⁸ Intelligence has developed as a helping hand to free humans from restrictions of nature, to express nature as constituting itself anew, this is the work of a man’s genius.

Justice and Reason in Bergson’s Morality

Justice is one of the moral ideas that have developed in history, by the creative effort of exceptional men, with a transition from relative to absolute justice. The relative justice takes form in a society, being one obligation out of many that serves social cohesion. It does not have a specific privilege, or more specifically a concern towards the individual.

To return to the act of reasoning, Bergson claims that moral activity in a civilized society is essentially rational (Frederic Worms, 2005). Certain standards have been set in society for individuals to follow, whereby they will use their reason to find it rational to follow these guidelines. Even for the open morality, there will always be this fundamental framework for pure obligation, which is the obligation deriving from the side of nature linking humans to their society. However, the open morality in an open society will still be embracing all of humanity, by going further than the pressure of the closed society, to a new morality of aspiration. This aspiration is an ideal, Bergson believes. The mystics, who through time have exalted societies and given them new ideals and perspectives to the world, have given rise to a two-sided morality of the civilized humanity in present time: The old system of “impersonal social requirements” together with awareness about the best there is in humanity, shown by the mystics. This organization of moral life, Bergson finds to be self-sufficient and rational. But as mentioned before, obligation and morality do not necessarily derive from pure reason. Though many philosophers before Bergson have taken the view of morality developed in reason, he finds this explanation unlikely. For him “real obligation is already there, and whatever reason impresses upon it assumes naturally an obligatory character” (Frederic Worms, 2005)

The concept of real obligation is made in society, according to how much the individual partakes in the protection of the social cohesion. Reason will from there more or less rediscover morality. The way individuals’ reason will be an outcome of society, where the act of reasoning has then been socialized. The mystics who have been the only ones capable of transforming morality from the closed to the open have made a creative evolution, where each one with a love so great and with an entirely new emotion, capable of transposing human life into another tone. However, while the mystics are real living creatures in the world, Bergson does not know whether there exists an open society at all now a mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving, animated by a common will, towards the continually renewed creation of a more complete humanity, is no more possible of realization in the future than was the existence in the past of human societies functioning automatically and similar to animal societies. Pure aspiration is an ideal limit, just like obligation unadorned. Nonetheless, mystics have shown and are continuing “to draw civilized societies in their wake” (Bergson, Paul, & Palmer, 2004).

Bergson’s Static Religion and Dynamic Religion

Just as Bergson distinguishes between closed and open morality, he also distinguishes between static religion and dynamic religion (Lawlor & Moulard-Leonard, 2004). Static religion is connected to the closed morality which is present in closed society. Static religion serves as a function that will protect the “control” of society against human intelligence. Even though human society holds some similarities to those of ants and bees, where the society is based on instinct, humans differ from animals, as they have the ability to reason and question their individual place in society. This particular skill makes

humans possible to break free from society and refuse to fulfill their social obligations, which society entails. According to Lefebvre and White (2012), such refusal would however only develop either from selfishness or from the despair that comes with the uncertainties of life and the fact that death is inevitable.

Static religion intervenes with myths about the universe and how humans fit into it. The myth-making function works by for example promising rewards or threatening humans with punishment in the afterlife and asserting that a higher “presence” is watching each of human’s actions. According to Harman and Thomson (1996);

The pressure of instinct has given rise, within intelligence, to that form of imagination which is the myth-making function. Myth-making has but to follow its own course in order to fashion, out of the elementary personalities looming up at the outset, gods that assume more and more exalted form like those of mythology, or deities ever more degraded, such as mere spirits.

The ideas that are a part of the static religion and myth-making function are based on the “*fabulation function*”, which then creates “voluntary hallucinations” in human mind. These are images of gods and spirits, which then come to represent ideals for man to follow (Harman & Thomson, 1996). These images also insure strict obedience to the closed morality and as a result insure social cohesion. In other words, right from the beginning of these beliefs, there was a defensive reaction of nature against the discouragement found in intelligence. This reaction arouses within intelligence itself images and ideas which hold in check the depressing representation or prevent it from materializing.

As stated above, static religion serves to ward off the dangers that could follow with human intelligence, and as a result static religion is seen as being infra-intellectual. It must be understood that as a matter of fact, the individual and the society are interconnected. Individuals make up society, and consequently the society shapes a whole side of the individual. According to Bergson (2014), “the individual and society thus condition each other, circle-wise.” This circle, made by nature, can be broken once man is able to get back into the creative impetus and as a result push human nature forward instead of letting it revolve on the same spot. Once this circle is broken a new and more personal religion, namely dynamic religion, can be founded. In order to get at the very essence of religion, human must pass directly from the outer and static religion to the inner and dynamic religion.

In the third chapter of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Bergson & Carter, 1935), he outlines the concept of what he calls dynamic religion. In order to define the concept of dynamic religion, Bergson also took a look at former primitive societies, as well as the ancient Greek and Roman, and furthermore draws examples to other religions, in particular Buddhism and Hinduism. According to (Bergson & Carter), whether it is static or dynamic religion, religion must be taking at its origins. Static religion was embedded in nature, whereas dynamic religion is seen as something which goes beyond nature. Bergson explains that dynamic religion consists of creativity and progress. He furthermore clarifies that it is not made up by any organized set of rules. A typical example of dynamic religion is Christianity. In the Christian faith you are forgiven of all your sins, because no man is judge except God. But reverse is the case for the Islamic religion which is an example of a static religion. Today in Kano State, Nigeria, there is the Hisbah Corps, religious police saddled with the responsibility of enforcing, prosecuting and punishing all sharia law violators. Prior to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the country was governed by strict sharia law. The practice of flogging and stoning defaulters to death, as the case was very rampant. Women are the disadvantaged. The inequality and mistreatment against them are extreme. For instance, they are effectively put under house arrest, they are not allowed to work or acquire education, they did not have the liberty of free movement, and if they must appear in public, their bodies must be properly covered. Their voice must not be heard by a stranger when they speak in public. They are also not allowed to partake in sporting activities (Uzowulu & Umeogu, 2021).

The morality, which drives dynamic religion forward, is what Bergson refers to as an absolute morality. Nevertheless, dynamic religion must be acquired through a direct and spiritual experience of God. Hence, dynamic religion is seen as being embedded in mysticism. As a result, it is through this mystic experience of God that man can attain the highest stage within morality and religion. But in order to achieve the most perfect form of mysticism, practical action in the world is needed, or as Deleuze, Habberjam, and Tomlinson (1986) phrases it, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifest. This effort is of God, if it is not God himself. Consequently, dynamic religion is seen as being “supra-intellectual.” Mysticism is to be understood as the spirituality that comes with the direct experience of God – an experience of God, which is a kind of understanding that goes beyond the intellect. Ultimately true mysticism must be experienced.

Mysticism often bring Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, to mind and do not strike as being naturally attached to Christianity; nevertheless mysticism is in fact at the core of Christian spirituality. Mysticism was never obtained by Greek thought, and according to Bergson it was never fully completed in Hinduism or Buddhism either. He states;

Neither in Greece nor in the ancient India was there complete mysticism, in the one case because the impetus was not strong enough, in the other case because it was thwarted by material conditions or by too narrow an intellectual frame (Jankélévitch, 2015).

However, complete mysticism would be that of action, creation and love. Hence for Bergson there seems to be no doubt about it, the complete mysticism is that of the great Christian mystics. Unlike static religion, dynamic religion is embraced more rarely and only by a small “selected” group of religious people, whom Bergson also refers to as the great mystics. The fundamental end for dynamic religion and mysticism would be to establish the contact with such an individual, who could become a great mystic and thus be able to rise above the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action.

Dynamic religion is and has been spread through the experience of these selected few religious “heroes”, as for example St. Paul, St. Teresa and not at least Jesus Christ himself, who were all devoted to spreading the Christian faith (Mullarkey, 1999a). The great mystics also serve as role models for the society, who can help inspire others to experience true mysticism and God, as these have reached a genuine insight to God, and consequently obtained an insight to true mysticism. It must be kept in mind that it is possible to mistake true mysticism with mystic insanity. Naturally we find raptures, ecstasies and visions abnormal, and that it is also difficult to make a distinction between the abnormal and the “morbid” state of mind, but the great mystics are aware of this.

Nevertheless, the mystics have been able to leave raptures and ecstasies behind, and instead reached the desired end of recognition of the human will with the divine will. The fact is that these abnormal states, resembling morbid states, and sometimes doubtless very much akin to them, are easily comprehensible, if we only stop to think what a shock to the soul is the passing from static to the dynamic, from the closed to the open, from every day to mystic life.

In order to attain this genuine understanding of true mysticism and to pass from static to dynamic religion, humans need to go through several transition phases. However, as close the union with God may be, it is only final if the union is total. This will happen when the fundamental division between “him who loves and him who is beloved” is gone, and as a result God is present and happiness is unlimited. Even though the human soul, in both thought and feeling, is absorbed by God, the human will, which is seen as the essential action of the soul, remains left outside. Consequently, the union is not total and the soul is not yet divine. The soul is quite aware of this hence, its vague disquietude,

hence the agitation in repose which is the striking feature of what we call complete mysticism: it means that the impetus has acquired the momentum to go further, that ecstasy affects indeed the ability to see and to feel, but that there is, besides, the will, which itself has to find its way back to God.

For Mullarkey (1999b) religion is meant to be absorbed intellectually, on the other hand, mysticism must be experienced, as it would mean absolutely nothing to the human, who had not had a spiritual experience of God. Consequently, the first method finds it necessary to strengthen the intellectualization of humans to such an extent that the simple tool would give place to a vast system of machinery such as might set human activity at liberty. This liberty, supported by a political or social organization, would make sure to be applied to its true object. However, this method is more complex than just anticipated and also seen as dangerous, because as it would develop, it could turn against mysticism. Thus, by using this method, there would be certain risks that should be taken.

The second method consists of passing on the mystic impetus to a few privileged souls, which all together could form a spiritual society. With the help of the exceptionally gifted souls, the spiritual societies might then multiply. This would mean that the impetus would be preserved and continued until such time as a profound change in the material conditions imposed on humanity by nature should permit, in spiritual matters, of a radical transformation. This is the method applied by the great mystics. Bergson contemplates on how the first method can only be used by society much later, until then it is the second method that can be followed. The great mystics have come to use their super abundant energy on founding these so called religious orders. The impetus of love, which will raise humanity closer to God and make the divine creation absolute, can only reach the goal through the mystics, with the help of God. Therefore, in order to reach the goal, all their effort must be aimed at this very difficult and still incomplete mission.

An Evaluation of Bergson's Moral Philosophy

In the first chapter of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson and Carter (1935) started by contemplating on how humans since birth are following the demands and prohibitions from their parents and teachers. He points out how children hardly ever question these regulations, as it becomes a habit to follow one's parents and teachers, because of the authority we perceive them to have. Later in life, humans will come to realize that behind these demands from our parents and teachers lies society, that lays pressure on us through them. Further from this point, Lefebvre (2017) sees to compare this thought with the cells of an organism. Each cell has its certain hierarchic place, where it seeks to maintain its given discipline and habits "for the greatest good of the organism." Though what separates the almost unbreakable laws of an organism to that of a human society is that the latter is made up by free wills. If these Will's then are to be organized then they will more likely resemble the appearance of an organism. Social life will in this sense be a system of more or less deeply rooted habits, corresponding to the needs of the community. These habits are both from command and obedience and with these habits come a sense of obligation, what Bergson terms social obligation (Frederic Worms, 2005). The pressure from social obligation is of great power, and each of these different habits are enforced upon the members of society to communicate a social necessity. Though, why should one follow these demands from society, instead of one's own desires and fantasies?

Bergson et al. (2004) argues how a person, ready to follow his own way instead of considering his fellow-men, is likely to be dragged back by social forces soon after. However, this sense of necessity together with the consciousness of the possibility to break it is what he calls an obligation. While man belongs to a society, Bergson upholds that man also belongs to himself. Individuals are in interdependence with others, but obligation, which we look upon as abound between men, first binds us to ourselves. In order to uphold social solidarity among men, a special social ego is to be added to the individual self, and to nurture this ego is in fact the core of the individual's obligation to society. However, man in society has a social conscience, where the verdict of conscience is the verdict which would be given by the social self. The individual is aware of the rules laid down by society, and if these are somehow broken, it would cause moral distress in the relationship between the individual and

society. Additionally, individuals have other factors that connect them with society, such as a family, a job, a sense of nationality and more, to where they have a social obligation as well. This shows when the daily routines drawn up by society, and where most people merely aim at fulfilling these duties and tasks, without being entirely conscious of it. It is only when obedience is seen as an overcoming of the self that the consciousness arises.

Furthermore, Bergson et al. (2004) implies how one's ability to reason is used stick to one's duties and resist one's own desires and needs. "An intelligent being generally exerts his influence on himself through the medium of intelligence. Though, one thing is that reason is used as a tool to get back to obligation. This Bergson believes, does not necessarily entail that obligation derives from reason or rationality. To sum up, the totality of obligation is the collected number of obligations, each one having its force on the will in the form of a habit, where all obligations work together as the pressure imposed upon the ordinary, moral conscience.

He goes further to compare obligation in its basic state with the form of a categorical imperative, (how slightly Kantian). He includes the saying: "You must because you must", an order human can face in life in many different ways, standing in front of the obligations of life. To get back to the act of reasoning, Bergson implies that instinct in this case comes before reason. When man reflects upon his situation, he will not contemplate "enough to seek for reasons" an absolutely categorical imperative will in this way be instinctive (Frédéric Worms, 2012).

While the obligations of human society together with obligations in general can be seen to lead back to instinct, Bergson claims that it would be a mistake not to include intelligence, which is what separates humans from animals. While both species are born with instinct, humans have also intelligence from nature. Therefore, human beings can ponder about their own situation, whereas for example a bee will not reflect upon its work in the bee-hive, as it is a natural instinct for it to work for the greatest good.

However, there has been a change through time from the primitive societies to the society of today, especially with the accumulated number of habits and knowledge civilized man have in present time. Nonetheless, they still have one great similarity: They are both closed societies: their essential character is none the less to include at any moment a certain number of individuals, and exclude others. When a person has a moral obligation to its society, it is a closed morality for that specific society, and not for others. One can soon think of war time, where individuals fight for the maintenance of the social cohesion in their society, and tries to protect themselves against others. While this social instinct in social obligation is not fairly changeable, a closed society is still large. It can be changed from the closed to the open society, from the closed to the open morality.

Conclusion

Since man is a social animal, his future evolution will be accelerated or retarded by the sort of life he lives. (Bergson & Carter, 1935) discussed this in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, where he drew a distinction between a society that is "closed" and one that is "open," describing in each case corresponding types of religion and of morality. A closed society is one dominated by the routine and mechanical. It is resistant to change, conservative, and authoritarian. Its stability is achieved by increasing its self-centeredness. Hence, conflict with other self-centered groups, often involving war, is a condition of its preservation. Internal cohesiveness is secured by a closed morality and a closed religion. Bergson's analysis was influenced by the sociological doctrines of Émile Durkheim (Omeregbe, 1989). Closed morality is static and absolutistic while closed religion is ritualistic and dogmatic. Both institutions exert pressure on individuals to accept the standard practices of the community. Spontaneity and freedom are reduced to a minimum. Conformity becomes the prime duty of the citizen. There is an obvious analogy between such a society and the repetitive mechanisms dealt with by the intellect. Indeed, Bergson regarded closed societies as in large measure the intellect's products.

The existence of a multiplicity of closed societies on the earth is an obstacle to human evolution. Accordingly, the next development in humankind requires the establishment of an open society. Instead of being limited, it will embrace all humankind; instead of being static, it will be progressive; instead of demanding conformity, it will encourage the maximum diversity among individuals. Its moral and religious beliefs will be equally flexible and subject to growth. Religion will replace the stereotyped dogmas elaborated by the intellect with the intuition and illumination now achieved by the mystics. The spread of the mystical spirit must ultimately create an open society whose freedom and spontaneity will express the divine élan which pervades the universe.

Bergson's outlook had a marked influence on the thought and literature of Europe. His gifts as a writer, his ingenuity in constructing vivid analogies, and his flair for describing the subtleties of immediate experience — "true empiricism," as he called it — contributed to the popularity of his work. On the other hand, critics have contended that many of his doctrines are vague and ill-supported by arguments. Too often, it is said, rhapsodic formulations are offered where they ought to be sustained logical analysis. There is, for instance, no clear statement of how real duration, the flow of consciousness, and the vital impetus are related. Are these separate processes, or just distinguishable aspects of one process? Does matter have an independent status, or is it simply a "devitalized" form of the *élan vital*? (Cahn, 2010). Such questions are difficult, if not impossible, to answer. Many critics have also deplored the Bergson's doctrine of the intellect for irrationalism and the cruder versions of pragmatism. Yet when all these criticisms have been made, the Bergsonian heritage remains an important element in twenty-first-century philosophy.

Looking deeply at Bergson's open and closed morality and his dynamic and static religion, we see that his morality, which is deeply spiritual is a nice attempt to explain morality, as it employs multiplicity, which in turn incorporates everyone. Closed morality being a strict morality is somehow hard to live in because it denies the individuals the freedom and responsibility they deserve which in turn brings about some sort of slavery, however one is advise to move from closed morality in order to exercise the fundamental human right; one is given the right of choice to choose between the morality he/she wants. Nigeria for instance, claims to be a secular state, but the introduction of the Shariah Code in the Northern part of the country show that there is need to evolve a system of morality that recommend itself to people irrespective of religious beliefs. Thus, a moral system as that developed by Bergson, although forged within the western philosophical tradition, can help one in the task evolving thinking out an appropriate moral framework for such as the Nigerian civic society. However, beyond the Nigerian context, the Bergsonian moral system is also relevant for global society marked by globalization and the consequent multi-culturalism and plurality of religions. The thoughts of Bergson made a seminal contribution to the age-long problem in philosophy of how to think of permanence and change.

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