

Pete A.Y. Gunter

Getting Bergson Straight

The Contributions of Intuition to the Sciences

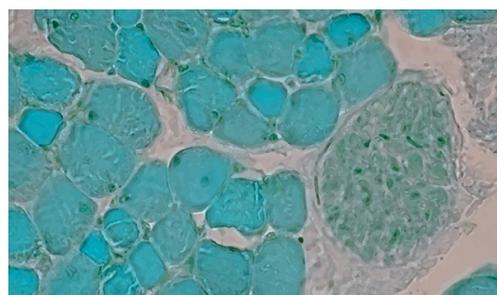
SERIES IN PHILOSOPHY

About the author

Professor Pete A.Y. Gunter began the study of philosophy at the University of Texas in the plan two honors program, from which he graduated in 1958. A Marshall scholar at Cambridge University (1958-1960), in 1963, he was awarded a Ph.D. from Yale University for his dissertation on the relation of intellect and intuition in the work of Henri Bergson. The present work is a thoroughgoing elaboration and development of this dissertation, brought up to date through contact with new developments in the sciences. Professor Gunter taught philosophy at Auburn University (Alabama) from 1962-1965, then at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. In 1969, he moved to Denton, Texas, where he founded the department of philosophy at North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas).

The more than 50 years in which Professor Gunter has taught at the University of North Texas have been characterized by a broad variety of interests. He has worked on several environmental projects, notably the creation and enlargement of the Big Thicket National Biological Preserve, the first such in the history of the National Park Service. He has written three books on the big thicket and edited and published two others. His 'The Big Thicket: A Challenge for Conservation' (Jenkins, 1972) was credited with playing a role in the establishment of the Preserve. Prof. Gunter has published 19 books, over 160 book reviews, and innumerable articles. Among the former are 'Creativity and George Herbert Mead' (1990), 'Bergson and the Evolution of Physics' (1969), and 'Bergson and Modern Thought: Towards a Unified Science' (1987). He published the 'Bergson Bibliography' (1974, 1st ed; 1986, 2nd ed)

with the Philosophy Documentation Center as well as a third edition—adding several thousand items—for the Presses Universitaires de France (online, Espace Bergson). A folk singer, Prof. Gunter has written many songs along with published poems and short stories.



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Pete A.Y. Gunter



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Summary

This study concerns the ideas of one particular philosopher, Henri Bergson, whose views of time, intuition, and creativity have had a significant impact on art, literature, and the humanities, both in his time and in our own. Although it is generally recognized that Bergson's ideas have significantly impacted the arts and the humanities, it has not been recognized how they have also had a creative influence on the sciences as well. Nor has it been realized that this was one of his most basic contentions. Bergson's conception of intuition—his fundamental insight into reality—was not limited to fugitive insights into human existence. By realizing previously unsuspected possibilities for research and discovery, his endeavors were also meant to make possible new advances in the sciences. If it enabled his cousin by marriage, Marcel Proust, to explore human memory in depth, it also inspired psychologists like Daniel Schachter to use Bergson's ideas to make real contributions to contemporary memory science. If his notion of creative evolution brought many thinkers to a belief in human creative freedom, it brought others (notably Alexis Carrel and Pierre Lecomte de Noüy) to a scientific study of biological time. Among his successful speculations was the theory of the Big Bang cosmology. 'Getting Bergson Straight' shows many points at which Bergson's ideas anticipated future developments in the sciences. This was seen clearly by the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Luis de Broglie who viewed Bergson's physics as presaging quantum physics. Thus, the text is well situated for arts, humanities, social science, and natural science classrooms studying creative thinking and/or intellectual history.

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