How Bergson’s “intuition” became moral in China: Inquiry into a philosophical translation

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Introduction

In the early twenties, Chinese intellectual field was mesmerized by the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Since its first introduction by Qian Zhixiu 錢智修 (1883-1947) in 1913 through an article published in The Eastern Miscellany (Dongfang zazhi 東方雜誌), the bergsonism captured the attention of a young generation of intellectuals versed in the new knowledge imported from the West. Thanks to John Dewey’s conferences about “three contemporary philosophers” held in March 1920 and soon reproduced in many periodicals and magazines Bergson was considered as one of the greatest philosophers alive. Despite the critics addressed against him across this conference, many intellectuals found in Bergson a philosophical ally to fight a battle against scientism and positivism, two new intellectual trends that dominated the intellectual field. Bergson’s philosophy was indeed very much employed during the debate about Science and the outlooks on life (Kexue yu renshengguan lunzhan 科學與人生觀論戰) that spackled between Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887-1969) and Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 (1887-1936). Bergson’s books were strongly debated. His research in

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1 Cf. Lai 1993, pp. 52-144; Wu Xianwu 2005, pp. 27-42.
2 Qian 1913. The article presented both Henri Bergson and Rudolf Eucken, two intellectual figures often associated to each other in this period. It was a translation of Abbott 1913.
3 For the original English text Dewey 2008. At that time Dewey was visiting China. For a presentation of his trip and his influence there cf. Keenan 1977.
the questions of psychology, ontology and also his avocation of a “creative evolution” raised many discussions in China. However, as Gao Ruiquan rightly puts it, from the many aspects of Bergson’s philosophy, it was the concept “intuition” that was the most highly regarded. It had a strong impact on modern Chinese Philosophy. Often translated into zhijue 直覺, but also sometime in zhiguan 直觀, “intuition” was to play a great role in the development of modern Confucian epistemology. In a seminal article on the concept of intuition in China, An Yanming noted that “from the beginning, [zhijue] has borne the apparent imprint of Henri Bergson’s Vitalism”. Taking this affirmation as a departure point, I would like to question the introduction of Bergson’s “intuition” in China and to put under light how Chinese philosophers recreate an “intuition” whose meaning and function were somehow very different from what Bergson had proposed at that time.

The introduction of Bergson’s philosophy in China is not a well-known topic in intellectual history. Aside from Lai Huei-Yun unpublished PhD dissertation and Wu Xianwu’s book, no scholar, neither Westerner nor Chinese, has yet produced a full analysis of Bergson’s reception in China. Several papers have already insisted on the influence Bergson has had on Chinese Confucian philosophers, notably Liang Shuming and Chen Lifu. However in my readings of Modern Chinese Philosophers in comparison with Bergson, I have noticed a very important but neglected paradox: Chinese intellectuals used Bergson’s intuition as a device for ethical inquiries sooner than the philosopher himself even started to write his moral philosophy. Bergson published his moral philosophy only in 1932 with Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion. In fact, under attacks in the political realm, Neo-Confucian philosophy found in the “intuition” (zhijue) a modern western concept to champion its value, and, as I will show below, another method to practice philosophy. While “Introduction to Metaphysics”, originally published in 1903, was an article concerning epistemology – Bergson defended here that science and metaphysics are two different approach to knowledge, the former is based on analysis whereas the second is possible through intuition – it was read as a paper in moral philosophy.

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6 See his preface of Wu 2005, notably pp. 7-10.
8 An 1997, p. 337.
10 I already gave a few remarks concerning this issue in a previous paper (Ciaudo 2013) where I advocated that there has been a “moralization of Bergson” through translation.
In order to unravel this paradox, this paper will focus on the question of Bergson’s reception by focusing on what Chinese Philosophers said about his “intuition”, whether it was named zhijue or zhiguan. To understand how those authors appropriated Bergson’s philosophy, one has first to become aware of the discrepancies and innovations produced by the translation and the introduction of Bergson works in Chinese. To do so, the paper analyses two sets of documents: first a selection of Chinese translations of “An introduction to metaphysics”, published between 1918 and 1921; and then several articles dealing with Bergson’s philosophy, notably the special issue of People’s Bell (Minduo 民鐸) dedicated to Bergson in 1921. Taking these documents as a corpus to study, this article will try to answer two intertwined issues: Why did zhijue become the most popular word used to speak about intuition? And, can we trace in the presentations of Bergson works the reasons why “intuition” was quickly associated to Confucian philosophy?

To answer these questions, I shall dismiss the philosophical approach to the problem – that would have meant to propose a new reading of Bergson – and choose to work in the framework of “conceptual history”. My methodology tries to maintain a balance between the method uphold by Quentin Skinner and that of Reinhart Koselleck\(^\text{11}\). The former is employed especially when I consider these philosophical discourses as performative acts whereas the latter posits that “a concept bundles up the variety of historical experience together with a collection of theoretical and practical references into a relation that is given and can be experienced only through the concept”\(^\text{12}\). In doing so, this paper intends to offer a first entry in the history of the concept of intuition in China by articulating the sociopolitical background and the emergence of a new philosophical repertoire around the early twenties.

In this regard, I first need to clarify the words I will be using. Writing a conceptual history of a modern Chinese concept is no easy task because western philosophical concepts were not simply translated through a process of word making. They were appropriated by Chinese intellectuals throughout what Lydia Liu had called “translingual practices”\(^\text{13}\). As such, one has to resist to the temptation of semantic transparency, “intuition” should not be considered as a unit-idea or a universal philosophical concept. As translation, especially from and toward non-European languages and cultures, is but a recent historiographical issue\(^\text{14}\) it is


\(^{13}\) Liu 1995; see also Howland 2003.

\(^{14}\) Cf. Burke & Richter 2012
important to be clear on the terminology. In this paper, I will keep a strong division between words and concepts and take into account Koselleck’s point of view: «a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word». Hence, a concept can only be attached to one and only word. Therefore, despite the fact that they are situated in the same semantic field, “intuition”, “zhijue” and “zhiguan” are not the same concepts. From a linguistic perspective, one never translates concepts but words. As a consequence, working on the appropriation of Bergson’s “intuition” in China means to focus on the emergence of a new concept to contemplate on and to name the world, or to practice philosophy.

In a first section, I will present rapidly the conclusion I had reached in my previous study (Ciaudo 2013). This will give the occasion to expose transformations that directly happened during the translation process. Then, I will try to map the uses of zhijue and zhiguan in the discursive field of the time. By doing so, one will get an entry into the different levels of Bergson’s appropriation. This section will notably discuss the writings of authors who used both zhijue and zhiguan, such as Fan Shoukang and Yang Zhengyu. Finally, I will consider how the concept “zhijue” was elaborated into a method, a new philosophical method that could help rebuild a modern Confucian philosophy.

I. Bergson lost in translation?

In his paper about Bergson and Liang Shuming, An Yanming noted that two texts played a very important part in the introduction of Bergson’s “intuition” in China: L’évolution créatrice and Introduction à la Métaphysique. The latter seems, however, to be the most important, as it is in this text that Bergson draw the lines between science and metaphysics, analysis and intuition. In this text, he clearly defined for the first time his concept:

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17 Bergson 2009a.
18 In this paper, all the original texts of Bergson are considered in the edition critically annotated under the direction of French greatest specialist of Bergson philosophy: Frédéric Worms.
«[...] un absolu ne saurait être donné que dans une intuition, tandis que tout le reste relève de l’analyse. On appelle intuition cette espèce de sympathie intellectuelle par laquelle on se transporte à l’intérieur d’un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu’il a d’unique et par conséquent d’inexprimable »19.

Furthermore, this text is a great material to investigate into the translation of Bergson’s philosophy from a historical perspective, as it was translated three times between 1918 and 192120. This not only shows the importance Chinese intellectuals accorded to this article but also that the text and its translation were highly debated. In 1918, Liu Shuya 刘叔雅 (1889 – 1958) published a translation of the first few pages of the text in The New Youth21. The second translation was an abridged translation produced by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868 – 1940), and published in 1921 in a special issue of the People’s Bell Magazine (Minduo 民铎) dedicated to Bergson. The last translation was produced by Yang Zhengyu and was the only complete one. It was published into a book that turned out to be much reprinted during the Republican Era.

The first thing to note about these translations is that nobody did translate from the original version of the text. Liu and Yang worked from an English translation22, while Cai translated from the German. Although Bergson was known to proof-read his English translations23, one has to consider whether some discrepancies or translation choices were made because of the German or English version of the text. For instance, in Cai’s version, “sympathie intellectuelle” turned into zhili de ganru 智力的感入 a word mimicking the

19 Bergson 2011, p. 5. Bergson underlines. One has to be careful with this quotation in modern edition of the text because in the 1934 reedition, Bergson cross out “intellectuelle”. When he wrote the first version of the text, he didn’t differentiate intuition and intelligence (See Bergson 2011, p. 59, note n°9). I think that the Chinese translators all understood the importance of this paragraph. One translator even underlined this short passage in order to indicate to his lectors that this was a key definition in Bergson’s philosophy (Yang 1921a, pp. 7-8)

20 The few sentences quoted above were also translated in several articles such as Li Shicen 1921 or Feng 1921.

21 The article entitled “Bergson’s philosophy” was made of two parts: first a short biography of Bergson, then the translation. It was supposed to be continued in the following issues of The New Youth but this never happened (Liu 1918)

22 One should however note that Liu also read Bergson in French, as in Liu 1919 (pp. 165-166), he gave direct reference to Bergson comments on Zeno’s paradox in the French edition of The Creative evolution.

23 See Bergson 1912, p. iv.
German “intellektueller Einfühlung”\textsuperscript{24}. One also has to point out that the three translations didn’t use the same word for intuition: Liu choose zhijue while the two others went with zhiguan. Considering that in the modern language, one now uses zhijue, one will have to question why Liu’s choice won the lexical battle – especially when one notices that in Japanese, it is nowadays chokkan 直観 that is still in use. At that time, several texts of and about Bergson had been published in Japan\textsuperscript{25}. Zhiguan had for instance been used by Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) in an article that presented and discussed Bergson’s philosophy in a manner that mimicked the structure of Bergson’s “Introduction to philosophy”\textsuperscript{26}. The Japanese text non only put forward the same arguments Bergson had used but also the examples and the metaphorical apparatus. The word zhiguan seemed to be an indirect reference to Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) “considering things from things” (yi wu guan wu 以物觀物)\textsuperscript{27}. A few years before, Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) even used Shao Yong’s exact term fanguan 反觀 to translate Schopenhauer’s intuition\textsuperscript{28}. On the opposite zhijue was a brand-new word. Liu Shuya didn’t invent the term as one can already find it in an encyclopedia edited by Huang Moxi 黃摩西 in 1911\textsuperscript{29}. But it is very clear that it was a neologism. One cannot find such a word in all Chinese canonical literature. Despite this word not being linked to an older usage\textsuperscript{30}, it is interesting to note that as soon as Liu translated the text, he associated “intuition” with Neo-Confucian philosophy\textsuperscript{31}. After translating the paragraph quoted above, he added a small note:

\textsuperscript{24} Cai 1921, p. 85 ; Bergson 1909, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{25} At that time Bergson was also very famous in Japan. See Miyama 2005; Ebersolt 2012. In fact, at some point in Japan both zhijue and zhiguan had been in used. Inoue 1912 used zhijue as a translation for “intuition”.
\textsuperscript{26} Nishida 1910. Nevertheless one also have to be careful with this affirmation, in some of his texts Nishida also used the characters zhijue 直覺. Having neither enough materials, nor knowledge in Nishida’s philosophy, I shall for now set aside the question of the difference between the two words in his writing. I hope however to dwell back into the issue of Japanese’s influence on Bergson translation in a latter research project.
\textsuperscript{27} Shao, 2010, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{28} Wang Guowei 1904. I am very thankful to Professor Shino for indicating me this usage.
\textsuperscript{29} Huang 1911. The term zhijue is also mentioned by Evan Morgan in his seminal study of Chinese neologism (Morgan 1913). This document has been identified thanks to the “Modern Chinese Scientific Terminologies” database directed by Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung and Joachim Kurtz.
\textsuperscript{30} Zhijue is not part of the “returns from graphic loans” identified by Liu 1995.
\textsuperscript{31} To stress some more on this association with neoconfucian philosophy, one can note that Liu translated “metaphysics” as xing er shang xue 形而上學 a term coined during the Song era. See also, Fang 2005.
The term zhijue is not very appropriate, while consulting the texts in European languages [I thought] that it was not different from what Cheng Zhengshu called the ‘knowledge of/as virtue’. Master Cheng said: ‘Knowledge from seeing and hearing is not knowledge of/as virtue. It results from the contact between one thing and another thing and therefore is not internal. The knowledge of those erudite and skillful persons belongs to this type of knowledge. Knowledge of/as virtue does not rely upon hearing and seeing’. This is in symbiosis with Bergson intuitive philosophy” (Liu, 1918, p. 102).32

As such, from the very first translation of Bergson’s Introduction to Metaphysics, “intuition” was associated to Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), and his “Knowledge of/as virtue” (dexing zhi zhi 德性之知). I shall not judge here whether this association is appropriate or not. My point is simply to underline the quick association to Neoconfucian philosophy produced by Liu Shuya, and raise the issue of how Chinese intellectuals and philosophers read Western philosophy. On can also add that, in comparison with the two other translations, Liu’s style tends to be more classical as he used many formal expressions taken from canonical texts such as “yi yan yi bi zhi 一言以蔽之”33 to say “in short / in brief”. The proximity of style may have helped the Chinese lectors to associate Bergson with Confucian writing. Indeed, in a conference pronounced many years later, the philosopher He Lin admitted that “when [Chinese intellectuals] used to read Bergson’s books, they often found in them a perfume of Chinese philosophy. (…) [Bergson’s philosophy] made [them] think about Laozi and Zhuangzi in pre-Qin philosophy and Wei-Jin period and about the Lu-Wang school of Song and Ming dynasties”34. As a consequence, one must insist on the role played by different “space of experience” (Erfahrungsraum) and “horizon of expectation” (Erwartungshorizont)

33 The Analects II, 2.
34 He 1984, p. 21.
in between the European versions of the texts and the Chinese\(^{35}\). Bergson’s European readers didn’t have the same intellectual background as his Chinese’s, and they had not the same uses for similar texts. In fact, one can even say that when he arrived in China Bergson was almost complete cut of the “1900 philosophical moment” and the question of spiritualism\(^{36}\).

Before turning to the difference between zhijue and zhiguan, a last important discrepancy in the three Chinese translations should be mentioned. They all failed to translate “un absolu”. This problem didn’t stir up because of the English or the German versions of the text, where one can read “ein Absolutes” and “one absolute”\(^{37}\). All Chinese translators crossed out the pronoun before “absolute”. However, “getting access to one absolute” is not exactly the same thing as “getting access to (the) absolute”. Cai only used “absolute” as an adjective while Liu and Yang added a genitive to the expression. They both wrote “juedui zhi jing 絕對之境 ” that one could translate back into “the realm or field of absoluteness”. This discrepancy is important, because by eliminating the pronoun Bergson’s words, we tend to lean toward a more “mystical” approach to philosophy. Bergson’s association with mysticism was precisely a critic raised by Dewey in his discussion of the French philosopher\(^{38}\). In 1923, a psychologist Tang Yue 唐銓 (1889-1987) also stated in a footnote of a translation that Bergson’s philosophy contains much mysticism\(^{39}\). But, let’s us turn back to Bergson original text. When he spoke of “possessing an absolute”\(^{40}\), he was considering an “object in space”\(^{41}\).

Quand je parle d’un mouvement absolu, c’est que j’attribue au mobile un intérieur et comme des états d’âme, c’est aussi que je sympathise avec les états et que je m’insère en eux par un effort d’imagination. Alors, selon que l’objet sera mobile ou immobile, selon qu’il adoptera un mouvement ou un autre mouvement, je n’éprouverai pas la même chose.\(^{42}\)

Bergson’s Introduction to metaphysics didn’t leave that much space for a moralistic approach of his concepts. The key idea of the text was to defend that “intuition” is the only

\(^{35}\) For an explanation on these two historical categories: Koselleck 2004, pp. 255-275.

\(^{36}\) On the notion of “philosophical moment” Cf. Worms 2009.

\(^{37}\) Bergson 1909, p. 2; Bergson 1912, p. 3.


\(^{39}\) Tang 1923, p. 94 note n°11.

\(^{40}\) Bergson 1912, p. 3

\(^{41}\) Bergson 1912, p. 2. For the original Bergson 2011, p. 2.

\(^{42}\) Bergson 2011, p. 2.
total means of knowledge for something that is in movement. To understand the movement of an object, one would have entered in it, and share its duration. Duration and movement were considered here as the same\textsuperscript{43}. As such, “intuition” in Bergson’s sense was nothing else than “intuition of duration”. A point completely overlooked by its translators. Yang Zhengyu’s translation goes even further than overlooking duration, he completely turned upside down the passage about the intuition of one’s own duration. If the original article was separated in several parts, Yang changed the divisions. One part of the text received the following title: “Introspection of oneself” (\textit{ziwo zhi neixing} 自我之内省), a wording that clearly draws a bridge Confucian practice of self-introspection. It is interesting here to compare Yang’s translation with Bergson’s original text, and Hume’s English translation. One can see a progressive transvaluation of Bergson’s meaning:

\begin{quote}
Il y a une réalité au moins que nous saisimons tous du dedans, par intuition et non par simple analyse. C’est notre propre personne dans son écoulement à travers le temps. C’est notre moi qui dure. Nous pouvons ne sympathiser intellectuellement, ou plutôt spirituellement, avec aucune autre chose. Mais nous sympathisons sûrement avec nous-mêmes.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

There is one reality, at least, which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis. It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures. We may sympathize intellectually with nothing else, but we certainly sympathize with our own selves.\textsuperscript{45}

或以為不用簡單之“分析”。而純賴“直觀”自內以把捉“實在”為難能矣。今晴明告以祛其惑。日常之問有一“實在”焉。為吾儕人人所能把捉者是等“實在”之謂何。即通過實踐流動之我等自身之人格 Our own personality in its flowing through time 綿延不斷之自我。Moi que dure 也。吾人對於他物形神分隔。與以“知的同感”尚嫌疏闊。則請先與吾人自身以同感也可。\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} Bergson 2011, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{44} Bergson 2011, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{45} Bergson 1912, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{46} Yang 1921a, pp. 10-11. Yang made a grammar mistake when adding the French. It should be “Moi qui dure”.
From the French to the English, “personne” became “personality”, a slight change that could give way to a more “moralistic” approach to the question of intuition. Nevertheless, such change remains slight compared to the addition of the Chinese translator. Yang Zhengyu completely reformulated the text, giving it a preaching overtone. One could translate his text as follows:

Some people think that seizing reality by relying simply on inner intuition and not using simple analysis is difficult. Today [we] explain them with clarity and dispel their uncertainty. In [our] every day [experience] there is a reality that we can all grasp. This reality, what is it? It is our personality in its flowing through time (Our own personality in its flowing through time), the ever-enduring self (Moi qui dure). We are mentally and physically separated from other things, “intellectually sympathizing” with them is all the more estranging. Therefore I invite you first to sympathize with your own self.

If Bergson was not totally lost in translation in this paragraph, one can clearly see that his philosophy was presented under a propaedeutic approach, bringing him closer to “self-cultivation”. Chinese lectors were first invited to sympathize with their selves before being able to do so with other objects (the term shukuo 疏闊 is even complicating the problem as it can mean “distant”, “separated” but also “impossible”). As such, the translation of “intuition” didn’t simply induce a moralization of the concept. The Chinese wording of Bergson’s translation also built a bridge between its philosophy and the issue of self-cultivation. In my opinion, the passage quoted above sounds very much like the words of a master of life, and not like a philosopher’s talk.

II. Mapping the uses of zhijue and zhiguan for “intuition”

Let us now try to map the uses of zhijue and zhiguan as translations of “intuition”. Why were there two terms? And was the difference between the two? To answer these questions, I will set aside the semantic explanation – that is the opposition between “a direct perception” (zhi jue 直覺) to “a direct contemplation” (zhi guan 直觀) – and will try to understand under which conditions the terms were used. To do so, I shall broaden our corpus

47 For a semantic analysis of the terms cf. Ciaudo 2013, pp. 321-323.
and consider articles that discussed the concept of intuition. I shall mainly focus on the 1921 Minduo issue dedicated to Bergson as seven articles dealt with this topic. If we approach this issue from a lexicographic approach, one can remark that both zhijue and zhiguan were used. In the issue, Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886-1973), Yan Jicheng 嚴既澄 (?), Qu Shiying 瞿世英 (1901-1976), Li Jingxi 黎錦熙 (1890-1978) only wrote zhijue while Cai Yuanpei only spoke of zhiguan. Li Shicen 李石岑, Yang Zhengyu and Fan Shoukan used both. Ke Yicen 柯一岑 never used these terms. At first, when I had only considered Bergson’s translation, I wondered whether this difference was the result of a Japanese influence. Yang Zhengyu and Zhang Dongsun who respectively translated Introduction to metaphysics and Creative Evolution used zhiguan. And they both had studied philosophy in Japan. However, this explanation cannot fit when one considers the Minduo issue, as in it both, Yang and Zhang started to use zhijue. Why such a change and why did Yang Zhengyu and Fan Shoukang use both expressions?

Let us first look at Yang Zhengyu. In his translation of Introduction of Metaphysics, he never used zhijue. However in his 1921 article one can two sentences where the words are used:

我們終日祗在那兒為生命求知識, 卻不能直覺生命底意味,…

We spend all day looking for the knowledge of life, but we cannot directly perceive the meaning of life.

他底學說重意味的直覺, 不重比較的表現; 重生力的創造, 不重結果的價值。

His doctrine insists on the direct perception of meaning, and not on its expression by comparison; it insists on the creativity of the élan vital and not on the values of its results.

In both sentences, I did not translate zhijue back into “intuition”, because it is clear from the syntax that it is a verb (I’d admit, however, that taken off of their contexts, those phrases are not semantically very clear). The word zhijue also is always associated to

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48 Ke 1921.
49 Yang 1921a, p. 6.
50 Yang 1921a, p. 7.
“meaning” (yiwei 意味), however one should note that this word includes the character “perfume” (wei 味). As such, choosing jue 覺 over guan 觀 could be a means to link the words together as one can “perceive” (jue 覺) perfume, but not “see” (guan 觀) it. When Yang uses zhiguan, he is designating a philosophical concept; with zhijue, we deal with an activity. That could be a first reason to use two different words in Chinese.

The situation is quite different in the texts of Fan Shoukang. In the second article of Fan published in the issue – article that was taken from a previous publication and that was in fact written first – Fan understood zhiguan as a nominative philosophical concept, while zhijue was read as a lexical component for “intuitivism” (zhijue zhuyi 直覺主義)51. In the first article, however, Fan almost only used zhijue. This difference could be explained by the progressive lexical victory of zhijue over zhiguan, indeed, as already mentioned Zhang Dongsun who also used to write zhiguan turned in 1921 to zhijue. One can dismiss the possibility of the interference of the editors. If the editors had wanted to unify the vocabulary used in the issue, Cai Yuanpei 1921 would have had to use the word zhijue. At some point, Fan seems to consider zhijue and zhiguan as completely equivalent for he writes “zhijue or zhiguan” (zhijue huo zhiguan 直覺或直觀)52.

However, on the second page of this text, there is a very interesting use of zhiguan. When writing about Kant, Fichte and Schelling he used zhiguan to translate Anschauung and Intellektuelle Anschauung (here written zhi de zhiguan 知的直觀)53. As such, maybe instead of looking toward Japan in the search for an influence, one should perhaps turn our gaze toward Germany, or more exactly German Philosophy. Could zhijue be a translation of the French intuition, while zhiguan was a translation from the German Anschauung? That could be a working hypothesis. I will not jump here to a far-reached conclusion; such hypothesis should be tested through a broader lexicometric analysis. However one should note that it could also explain why once in his 1921 text Li Shicen used zhiguan instead of zhijue54. In this part of the text, Li presented the critics addressed by Steward in his Critical Exposition of Bergson’s philosophy55. Yet, Steward’s critics of Bergson’s intuition were formulated from

51 Fan 1921b, pp. 6-7.
52 Fan 1921a, p. 4.
53 Fan 1921a, p. 2.
54 Li Shicen 1921, p. 21.
55 Steward 1911.
the standpoint of German philosophy, notably Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, a point raised by Li himself\textsuperscript{56}. As such, Li may have changed the term to \textit{zhiguan} because he was writing in this paragraph about German philosophy.

Now, how to explain the popularity of \textit{zhijue} over \textit{zhiguan}? First, the association of \textit{zhijue} with a method may have had a real importance as traditional Chinese thought is more concerned with “knowing how” than “knowing what”\textsuperscript{57}. Below, I will dwell some more on this issue. However, one should avoid essentialist explanations and keep in mind the discursive context of the early twenties. The will to separate a German philosophical tradition of intuition with Bergson could be a trail to follow. In the early twenties Chinese academic system was progressively maturing into a modern system. Chinese intellectuals were more and more aware of the differences between French, British and German philosophical tradition. However, such an explanation would not explicate why authors such as Mou Zongsan will use the term \textit{zhijue} to enter in a dialogue with Kant. To understand such a use, I think that we ought to consider the debates of the time. Indeed a key element of response can be found in the debate around Liang Shuming’s book \textit{Culture of East and West and their philosophies} (\textit{Dong Xi wenhua jiqi zhexue} 東西文化及其哲學)\textsuperscript{58}.

In 1921, this book raised a very heated debate in the academic and intellectual circles\textsuperscript{59}, a debate that may have had some influence on the primacy of \textit{zhijue} over \textit{zhiguan}. In his \textit{Culture of East and West and their philosophies}, Liang accorded several pages to Bergson’s intuition (\textit{zhijue 直覺}). He even went to assimilate it to Confucius “benevolence/humanity” (\textit{ren 仁})\textsuperscript{60}. I will come back to this association of Bergson with Confucianism below. Without considering the letter of the text, let us focus for now on the evaluation of this book by the contemporary Chinese intellectuals, as many prominent thinkers published book-reviews of this text. As a matter of fact, the first critics addressed to Liang were linked to his use of the concept of “intuition”\textsuperscript{61}. To comment Liang Shuming, they had to use back his typology,

\textsuperscript{56} Li Shicen 1921, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{57} Cheng 1997, pp. 36-38.
\textsuperscript{58} Liang 2005b.
\textsuperscript{59} Alitto 1986, pp. 126-134; see a selection of book-reviews and critics in Chen 1985, pp. 436-527.
\textsuperscript{60} Liang 2005b, p. 453.
\textsuperscript{61} See the articles written by Zhang Junmai (Chen 1985, pp. 436-445), Liu Boming (Chen 1985, pp. 460-467), Zhang Dongsun (Chen 1985, pp. 477-489) and Li Shicen (Chen 1985, pp. 502-503). In my opinion Alitto 1982 fails to see to see that there was two periods of critics toward Liang’s book. In February and March 1922,
enforcing by this way the primacy of zhijue over zhiguan already noticed in the 1921 Minduo issue. In their book-reviews published in 1922, Li Shicen and Zhang Dongsun who had been using zhiguan until 1921 completely drop this word in their articles and finally turned to zhijue. From that time on, when writing about Bergson, zhijue was systematically used whether one were directly writing about Bergson or translating his works or works about him. For example, Liu Yanling and Zhang Wentian who both translated separately Wildon Carr’s book on Bergson, Henry Bergson: The philosophy of Change, used zhijue to translate intuition62. In 1923, The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of New Knowledge (Xin wenhua cishu 新文化辞书) had no article concerning zhiguan, but one about intuitionism (zhijue zhuyi), one should, however, note that under this category was only presented the British trend of intuitivism, no French philosopher was here mentioned, Kant was the only German referred to63.

In 1926, in one of the first systematic dictionaries of philosophy in China, one could find both zhijue and zhiguan. However the latter only send back the lectors to the zhijue entry64. This Dictionary of Philosophy (zhexue cidian 哲学辞典) is also interesting because it clearly pinpoints a break in the chronology of Bergson’s introduction in China. In her unpublished PhD dissertation, Lai Huei-Yun considered that one could divide the history of Bergson’s introduction in China in three different periods: first, a time of curiosity without translation (1913-1918); then, four years when Bergsonism rose in China (1919-1923); and finally a time of dismissal. According to Lai, after 1923 Bergson’s philosophy was less and less studied in China; a decline of interest that was prolonged until very recently. Despite “intuition” had been a key concept of Bergson’s philosophy, it is worth mentioning that the Dictionary doesn’t mention the French philosopher in the zhijue entry. Kant and Fichte are the
only philosophers namely associated with the concept\textsuperscript{65}. If “Bergson” entry noted that his philosophy was a philosophy of intuition (zhijue zhexue 直覺哲學) nothing about his intuition was explained\textsuperscript{66}. But the most surprising about this dictionary is that one can find two entries for “intuitionalism” in the dictionary: zhijue shuo 直覺說 and zhijue zhuyi 直覺主義. Bergson is associated with the second\textsuperscript{67}. But as in the dictionary mentioned before, most of the pages were dedicated to British philosophers.

In the entry “forms of intuition” (zhiguan xingshi 直觀形式), Bergson is perhaps mentioned for the last time in association with zhiguan. The text presented him as a critic of Kant. The explanation was however very poor:

\begin{quote}
從柏格森純粹持續之說, 則世界之實在相, 惟是持續。故時間非直觀之形式, 而即直觀之內容。云形式者, 指空間而已。
\end{quote}

According to Bergson’s theory of pure duration, the real phenomenon of the word is only duration. Therefore time is no form of intuition, but the content of intuition. That means that space is the only form of intuition.

This last association with the term zhiguan fits, however, with the hypothesis of the German origin of the zhiguan translation. Elsewhere in the dictionary, Prinzip der Anschauung was also translated zhiguan zhuyi 直觀主義.

III. Intuition a method for Neoconfucian philosophy ?

One of the key ideas that one can find in all the texts of the Minduo issue is that “intuition” in Bergson’s philosophy is a method, a new method to consider the world. They all saw the central place of intuition in Bergson’s philosophy. And they were right. After all, as Deleuze once phrased it, intuition was “the method of bergsonism”\textsuperscript{68}. Li Shicen opening article of the issue stressed on the originality of Bergson’s work. In his eyes, Bergson was the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{65} Fan 1926, pp. 344-346. \\
\textsuperscript{66} Fan 1926, p. 406. \\
\textsuperscript{67} Fan 1926, p. 351. \\
\textsuperscript{68} Deleuze 1966, p.1.
\end{flushright}
greatest philosopher since Kant - an affirmation that can also be found in Zhang Junmai’s text. Li’s text is without doubt the best article of the issue, as he presented an almost complete presentation of Bergson’s philosophy, and clearly identified duration (miánting 绵廷) as the very basis of Bergson’s philosophy. He attributed much development to intuition, by notably drawing the line the different types of intuition in Bergson’s philosophy. Although his presentation isn’t complete, he pointed at the difference between the “aesthetic intuition” and the “philosophic” one. In this article, Li didn’t try to build bridges between Bergson and Chinese philosophy, at this point, he stayed in the context of Western philosophy, and so did Fan Shoukang.

Whether they considered Bergson’s philosophy strictly from the perspective of Western philosophy or in relation with Chinese philosophies, it is worth mentioning that the stress on the “intuition” as a method for philosophy or metaphysics was shared by almost all the writers of the issue. As such, the definition of intuition as the method of metaphysics in “An introduction to metaphysics” (1903) seems to have played an important role on the Chinese philosophical scene. Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 who seemed at that time infatuated with Bergson’s philosophy saw in intuition “a revolution in the philosophic method” (yi ge zhexue fangfa de geming 一個哲學方法的革命). He described Bergson’s intuition as a strong blow against European intellectualism. For Feng, his critics toward science were not a pure condemnation of Science – and idea then upheld by Bergson’s enemies. Bergson was “attacking the role given by intellectualism to ‘analysis’ but not the ‘analysis’ itself”. An original aspect of Feng’s text is that it tried to link the concept of intuition with native Chinese philosophy: first with Mozi’s “perception” (qinzhì 親知 ) then with Confucian’s introspection. As such, he tried to build bridges between Chinese and Western philosophy. In the case of Bergson, this was not a new idea. In 1919, Tang Hualong who wrote a preface for Zhang Dongsun’s translation of Creative Evolution saw in Bergson a “canal to thread together the Western and the Eastern Civilization” (wei Dong Xi wenming guantong zhi qu 為

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69 Li Shicen 1921, p. 1.
70 Zhang 1921, p. 10.
71 Fan 1921. He wrote long development on the sense of the concept in Western philosophy in general.
72 Feng, 1921a, p. 15
73 Feng 1921a, p. 21.
74 Feng 1921a, pp. 17 and 18. For a comment on Feng’s association of intuition with Mozi cf. Lai 1993, pp. 223-225.
Around 1921, there has been a debate between Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869-1936) and Lü Cheng 吕澂 (1896-1989) on the proximity of Bergson’s philosophy with Buddhism, and more specifically Consciousness-only. Since the discussions during this debate have already been analysed elsewhere⁷⁷, I shall only summarize here a few key points. Zhang, who had planned to compare Bergson and Vijñānavāda since 1917⁷⁸, tried to bring together the epistemological categories of western philosophy and Vijñānavāda. He considered that the concept of “experience” (shīyan 實驗) and “ideas” (lìxiāng 理想) were similar to the Buddhist notions of Pratyaksha (xiānliàng 現量) and Anumāṇa (bǐliàng 比量). Departing from that affirmation, he went on to affirm that Bergson’s intuition was somehow similar to the eighth consciousness in the Vijñānavāda, the ālayavijñāna (Zāng shí 藏識) or “the warehouse-consciousness”, or the unutterable state where all the states of consciousness are been given birth. He even stated that “Bergson could catch a glimpse of the warehouse-consciousness” (Bogesen shì pōng kūn jiàn zāngshí 柏格森氏頗能窺見藏式)⁷⁹. It is notable that the association of Bergson to Buddhism was somehow facilitated by the way Yang Zhengyu had translated some parts of Introduction to Metaphysics. In his translation le déroulement d’un rouleau turned into “reincarnation” (lùnhuí 輪迴)⁸⁰. When Bergson wrote « une conscience sans mémoire […] périrait et renaitrait donc sans cesse », Yang used again the Buddhist terminology of shēngshēng miémie 生生滅滅⁸¹. At some point, Bergson’s philosophy also employed the same metaphorical apparatus as the Vijñānavāda school. For instance, the ālayavijñāna is often compared in classical text to a never ending river flow, a

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⁷⁵ Zhang 1919, p. 4.
⁷⁶ While Chinese intellectuals considered Bergson’s philosophy akin with Yogācāra, Japanese philosophers tended to see some similarities between his philosophy and Zen Buddhism. See for instance Kuki [1928] 2013.
⁷⁷ Yao 2014.
⁷⁸ Lai 1993, pp. 49-50.
⁷⁹ Quoted in Yao 2014, p. 85.
⁸⁰ Yang 1921a, p. 13.
⁸¹ Yang 1921a, p. 15. These discrepancies were first identified by Lai 1993 pp. 171-174.
metaphor also used in Bergson’s philosophy to designate Life\textsuperscript{82}. As in Bergson’s philosophy, man can grasp Life through intuition, the proximity between his philosophy and \textit{Vijñānavāda} was easy to point at. Zhang’s position was supported by the linguist Li Jingxi 黎錦熙 (1890-1978) who also identified together the two notions, in fact Bergson intuition was seen as a mean to attain the \textit{ālayavijñāna}\textsuperscript{83}. This association was also to influence Li Shicen who in his book-review about Liang Shuming’s \textit{Culture of East and West and their philosophy}, later wrote that Bergson’s philosophy was too easy and plain, and it ought to be studied from the point of view of \textit{Vijñānavāda}\textsuperscript{84}.

However this association between the bergsonian intuition and \textit{Vijñānavāda} hold on several grounds that were soon to be attacked. Lü Cheng who rejected the assimilation of the \textit{ālayavijñāna} to Bergson’s philosophy, declared that people tended to look at Bergsonism and \textit{Vijñānavāda} as alike thought systems only because they shared the river flow metaphor\textsuperscript{85}. In his text published in the same Minduo issue, he stressed on many differences between Bergson and the Buddhist school. In my opinion, one of the most interesting critics he raised was the problem of memory – a key concept of Bergson’s philosophy. Lü was right when he noted that Bergson’s philosophy had been built on a theory of memory\textsuperscript{86}. This was in total contradiction with \textit{ālayavijñāna} which is memoryless. In several texts\textsuperscript{87}, Liang Shuming also throw very strong blow against Zhang’s approximate comparative philosophy. He condemned the association of \textit{Pratyaksha} (\textit{xianliang} 現量) and \textit{Anumāna} (\textit{biliang} 比量) to intuition, noting that these notions had absolutely nothing in common. The first was in fact closer to “sensation” while the second corresponded to “intellect”. According to Liang, \textit{Vijñānavāda} approach of knowledge was built on two consecutive stages: first the genesis of consciousness (the \textit{xianliang} 現量 stage) and a time of logic (the \textit{biliang} 比量 stage). For him, \textit{Vijñānavāda}
was not only completely against intuition, but it was also the best epistemological doctrine. He even wrote that *Vijñānavāda* was but the only method of metaphysics. As such, Bergson was a little belittled.

By refusing to link Bergson to Buddhism, Liang was in fact defending the complexity of Buddhist epistemology. This approach was also notably held by Ouyang Jingwu (1871-1943), who advocated the following year that Buddhism was above every other intellectual doctrines, as the title of his article claimed it: “Buddhism is neither a religion, nor a philosophy, but only what we need today.” In the end people such as Zhang Taiyan, Lü Cheng, and Li Shicen, who had defended the comparison, agreed that Buddhism was above Bergsonism. As a consequence, bringing the two together was no longer that important. In his interview with Zhang Junmai and Lin Zaiping, Bergson also rejected the idea that his philosophy had anything to do with Buddhism.

Before examining in more details this interview, I would like to add a few words on Liang Shuming’s uses of the concept of *zhijue*. As An Yanming already shown, in Liang’s texts, *zhijue* could be understood in three senses: “They are *zhijue* as a method of knowledge, *zhijue* as an equivalent of *benneng* 本能, and *zhijue* as an equivalent of *liangzhi* 良知.” This last understanding is important because, it created a new link between Bergson’s philosophy and Chinese Confucian tradition. In his *Eastern and Western Cultures*, Liang Shuming associated “intuition” with both Mencius and Confucius. By equating benevolence (*ren* 仁) with “intuition,” Liang put forward the idea that intuition was to help man to grasp the meaning of life, and, moreover, to realize its inner virtues. Uphold as the key idea of Confucianism, “intuition” was to characterize the entire Chinese culture. Let us read how Liang used the word:

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88 Liang 2005a, p. 278.
89 Quoted in Lai 1993, p. 237.
90 Zhang 1921, p. 13.
92 Lai 1993 considers that Liang was the first Chinese intellectual to bring the two together (p. 229). However it seems to me that around 1920-1921, Liang Shuming, Zhang Junmai and Feng Youlan all came up with that idea.
93 Liang 2005b, p. 453.
儒家說：“天命之謂性，率性之謂道”。只要你率性就好了(…)。這個知
和能, 也就是孟子所說的不慮而知的良知, 不學而能的良能, 在今日我們
謂之直覺。94

The Confucians says that “What Heaven has conferred is called the Nature;
an accordance with this Nature is called The Path of duty”. One ought
therefore to follow one’s nature. (…) This knowledge and this ability, are
what Mencius spoke of as the intuitive ability that men possess without
having acquired it by learning, and the intuitive knowledge that they
possessed without the need to exercise their thoughts. In modern terms, I
would speak of intuition (zhijue).

Of course, Liang was not drawing here a clear parallel between Bergson and
Confucian philosophy. He didn’t compare Bergson with Mencius. However, by using this
word associated with the bergsonian intuition 95, he brought together Bergson and
Confucianism. When talking about zhijue, Liang approached it as a method to behave in life.
Intuition was the key dimension of Chinese’s attitude toward life (Zhongguo rensheh taidu
中國人生態度). As such, he kept the bergsonian idea that “intuition” was the means to access
to Life. This focus on the function and the method of “intuition” is also obvious when
considering the interview that Zhang Junmai and Lin Zaiping had with the French philosopher.
Almost all their questions revolved around the practice of intuition. The two Chinese
philosophers first asked Bergson about the three different types of intuition, he had written
about in The Creative Evolution. (That is “philosophical intuition”, “spatial intuition” and
“sensible intuition”)96. However, they seemed to be more specifically interested in the
intuition sensible. It is important to note that there has not be so many Chinese thinkers who
have made differences between the three types of intuition in Bergson’s work, Li Shicen and
Zhang Dongsun were perhaps the other two thinkers interested in this distinction. Almost as
soon as the interview began Zhang and Lin asked questions about how to implement
“intuition” in our daily lives. “Is the intuitive method inborn, or can it be cultivated (xiuyang
修养)?” asked Zhang, while Lin enquired, “how to put in practice the intuitive method? Can it

94 Liang 2005b, p. 452. The quotations from the Chinese Classics are adapted from Legge’s translation.
95 See p. 1, note n°8.
96 Zhang 1921, pp. 11-12.
They discussed whether intuition could be understood as a type of meditation. Zhang spoke of *jingshen shang qianxiu gongfu* 精神上潛修功夫 “spiritual self-cultivation practice” (he added in brackets ‘meditation’), while Lin Zaiping spoke of *jingzuo* 靜坐 “silence-sitting”, a term association to neoconfucian meditation. Lin and Zhang were looking for concrete means to realize “intuition” in their life; they wanted to know how to practice an activity that would led them to a better understanding of the world and themselves. This interview of Bergson, that soon became become authoritative, is important because it clearly connected the dots between Bergson’s philosophy and Confucian terminology. While answering a question of Cai Yuanpei, Bergson said:

所謂直覺無一定條件可言，就消極言之，則非分析也(analysis), 非顯微鏡之辨析毫釐也(Hairsplitting), 非論理上之對抗原則也(Dialectic)：就積極言之，則自察也(Self-observation)內省也(Introspection)。

There are no definitive terms to speak about intuition, speaking about it in the negative sense, it is no analysis, no hairsplitting, no dialectic: speaking about in the affirmative sense, it is self-observation and introspection.

While translating Bergson’s words in Chinese, Zhang Junmai produced cultural echoes. Whereas *zicha* 自察 is not a very often used term, *neixing* 內省 is a clear reference to the favourite disciple of Confucius, Yanhui 颜回。It is also a term that one can find in *The State of equilibrium and harmony (Zhong yong 中庸)*:

《詩》云：「潛雖伏矣，亦孔之昭！」故君子內省不疚，無惡於志。君子所不可及者，其唯人之所不見乎！

It is said in the Book of Poetry, “Although the fish sink and lie at the bottom, it is still quite clearly seen.” Therefore the superior man examines his heart that there may be nothing wrong there, and that he may have no cause for

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97 Zhang 1921, p. 12
99 One can find it notably in *The Historical annals of Sima Qian*, or in the *Book of the Han*.
100 See *The Analects* XII, 4.
dissatisfaction with himself. That wherein the superior man cannot be equalled is simply this work which other men cannot see.\footnote{Zhong Yong 中庸, §34; Translation of James Legge.}

For Zhang Junmai but also Feng Youlan, Bergson’s “intuition” found its place in a discourse about self-introspection (neixing 内省) – a wording also referring to Zeng zi 曾子 threefold introspection (wu ri san xing 吾 日三省) (The Analects, I, 4). Feng Youlan considered that zhijue 可以 could be linked to Zengzi self-introspection because it designated a non-analytic appreciation of conscience\footnote{Feng 1921, pp. 18-19.}. He reckoned that not anyone was able to attain Master Zeng level, however everyone was capable of accessing to one’s consciousness (yishi 意識) through intuition. In his conference in China, John Dewey had characterized Bergson’s philosophy as a philosophy that “assigns a major role to introspection”\footnote{Dewey 2008, p. 221.}. The translation in Chinese was, however, going further than simply speaking of intuition as an introspection practice. The very word used to translate this term turned “intuition” into a practice of superior men, or men of good (junzi 君子). This association is obvious when one considers Zhang Junmai’s comment about Bergson’s book Mind-Energy.

Published in 1919, this book brings together several conferences that Bergson had given during the two precedent decade. Despite the fact that it was only translated in Chinese in 1929\footnote{Hu 1929.}, many commentators of Bergson made reference to it. In 1921, Feng Youlan wrote a book-review encouraging Chinese intellectuals to carefully read this work\footnote{Feng 1921b.}. It seems that many intellectuals followed that advice. Zhang Junmai and the controversy over science and metaphysics that he incidentally launched in 1923 illustrate how Bergson was to be used in the defence of Confucian philosophy. From the perspective of intellectual history, this controversy was very important. Hu Shi 胡適 considered this debate to be the first big intellectual controversy since the introduction of Western culture in China\footnote{Hu 1998, p. 397.}. Many younglings that were soon to become great Chinese philosophers such as Mou Zongsan\footnote{See Mou 2015, p. 49. In this text, Mou wrote however a very harsh critic on Zhang.}, read at that time the articles published during the controversy. During the debate Zhang often quoted Bergson on intuition:
Bergson states categorically that the use of reason is not appropriate to seize reality. Furthermore, what one calls reality, what one calls life, is but the movement and the spontaneity of men invisible thoughts. Since it can’t be grasped in the field of reason, there is only one method: the intuition. This is the content of Bergson’s metaphysics.

However, the most important quotation of Bergson in Zhang’s text, is a passage that doesn’t mention directly the “intuition”. Towards the end of his text, Zhang quoted a long excerpt from Bergson’s article “La Conscience et la Vie” published in l’Energie spirituelle:

“人類中人類之至精粹者中，生機的衝動貫徹而無所阻；此生機的衝動所造成之人身中，則有道德的生活之創造流以驅使之。故無論何時，憑藉其既往之全體，使生影響於將來，此人生之大成功也。道德的人者，至高度之創造者也；此人也，其行動沉雄，能使他人之行動因之而沉雄，其性慈祥，能焚燒他人慈祥之爐火；故道德的人……形上的真理之啟示者也。”

In man alone, especially among the best of mankind, the vital movement pursues its way without hindrance; this vital movement thrusting through the human body which it has created on its way, spur the creative current of the moral life. Man, called on at every moment to lean on the totality of his past in order to bring his weight to bear more effectively on the future, is

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108 Zhang Junmai 1981, 958

109 Zhang Junmai 1981, p. 976. For the original text : « Chez l'homme seulement, chez les meilleurs d'entre nous surtout, le mouvement vital se poursuit sans obstacle, lançant à travers cette œuvre d'art qu'est le corps humain, et qu'il a créée au passage, le courant indéfiniment créateur de la vie morale. L'homme, appelé sans cesse à s'appuyer sur la totalité de son passé pour peser d'autant plus puissamment sur l'avenir, est la grande réussite de la vie. Mais créateur par excellence est celui dont l'action, intense elle-même, est capable d'intensifier aussi l'action des autres hommes, et d'allumer, généreuse, des foyers de générosité. Les grands hommes de bien, et plus particulièrement ceux dont l'héroïsme inventif et simple a frayé à la vertu des voies nouvelles, sont révélateurs de vérité métaphysique » (Bergson 2009b, p. 25). Zhang was quoting from the French version.
the great success of life. The moral man who is a creator in the highest degrees, - the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and, itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity. The men of moral ... are revealers of metaphysical truth.”

He then added:

此言也，與我先聖盡性以贊化育之義相吻合，乃知所謂明明德，吾日三省，克己復禮之修省功夫；皆有至理存乎其中，不得以空談目之。

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These words embrace the ideas of our past saints regarding the fulfilment of one’s nature through education-transformation. One can find true principles in the self-cultivation activities of illustrating illustrious virtues, of examining oneself on three points, and of subduing one’s self and returning to propriety. These are not empty talks.

The quoted paragraph doesn’t mention the word “intuition”, but it is present in the following lines of the original text. In fact, this paragraph could be considered as a nexus in Bergson’s work, since the analysis published in the recent critical edition of Bergson’s Mind-Energy note that many dimensions of Les Deux sources de la Morale et de la Religion are already contained in this paragraph in potentiality. Despite his obvious defense of Confucianism, Zhang was in fact putting the finger on a key passage of Bergson’s work, a passage from which Bergson would later develop his own moral philosophy. As such, by moralizing Bergson’s intuition, Chinese translators and interpreters were not completely betraying the French philosopher, but also saw in his philosophy a potential moral philosophy at the right spot.

Mind-Energy was also an important source of inspiration for Neoconfucian thinkers, because in the conference “Fantomes de vivants et recherche psychique” presented before the

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110 Translation adapted from Bergson & Carr 1920, pp. 31-32.
112 Bergson 2009b, p. 246. “The moral man” was indeed to become a very important key word in Bergson’s last book.
Society for Psychical Research of London in 1913, Bergson had proposed a train of thoughts on which could be built a discourse in defence of *lixue* 理学 and *xinxue* 心学 legitimacy. Bergson said:

> I have sometimes asked myself what would have happened if modern science, instead of setting out from mathematics to turn its direction toward mechanics, physics and chemistry, instead of bringing all its forces to converge on the study of matter, had begun by consideration of mind – if Kepler, Galileo and Newton, for example, had been psychologists. They would have produced a psychology of which today we can form no idea, just as before Galileo no one could have imagined what our physics would be, - a psychology which probably would have been to our present psychology what our physics is to that of Aristotle. Foreign to every mechanistic idea, science would have studied eagerly instead of dismissing *a priori*, phenomena such as those you study; perhaps “psychical research” would have stood out as its principal preoccupation.\(^{113}\)

After formulating these ideas, Bergson was soon to “wake from saying [this dream]”\(^{114}\).

But Chinese philosophers were to prolong the dream. What if Song studies (*Song xue* 宋學) on the mind had been this “science” which emerges on the “consideration of mind”? This idea clearly had an influence on Feng Youlan\(^{115}\), and probably on many pro-confucian thinkers.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I argue that the association of Bergson’s intuition with Confucian moral philosophy was the result of selective but complex appropriation of Bergson’s work. First, translation played a very important role in this process: by associating Bergson’s intuition with Cheng Yi’s “knowledge of/as virtue”, Liu Shuya opened a road toward the emergence of a modern Chinese concept, associated to Confucian philosophy. Authors such as Liang Shuming, Feng Youlan and Zhang Junmai – or the so-called New Confucianists\(^{116}\) - then stressed on the link between “intuition” and Confucian philosophy by either focusing on the

\(^{113}\) Bergson 1920 pp. 98-99; for the original Bergson 2009b, pp. 80-81.

\(^{114}\) Bergson 1920, p. 101

\(^{115}\) cf. Masson 1985, pp. 4-8.

question of “self-introspection”, “self-cultivation” or “innate knowledge”. However this association was only made possible thanks to the dismissal of some epistemological issues inherent to Bergson’s early text about intuition. Indeed, Bergson’s intuition was not only cut off the question duration – a huge gap when one knows that Bergson himself considered “the intuition of duration” to be the centre of his philosophy\textsuperscript{117} – but it was also progressively disconnected from Buddhist typology. When Buddhists thinkers such as Zhang Taiyan and Li Jinxi draw lines between “intuition” and traditional Buddhist concepts such as Pratyaksha (xianliang 現量) and Anumāna (biliang 比量), they kept Bergson in the epistemological field. However, he didn’t hold long there for even the ones who defended this association, though in the end that Buddhist typology was more precise. Cut off from its roots and from the traditional Chinese epistemological concepts, “intuition” as zhijue turned into a method to know oneself.

As the debate over science and metaphysics was soon to prove, the very notion intuition met its Confucian fate: moralization. Despite his being provocative formulation, I think we can agree with Henrik Stenius\textsuperscript{118} when he defended that translation may emasculate concepts. Indeed, Bergson was completely cut out of the philosophical moment in which he found its place, and his intuition was disconnected from the core concepts of his philosophy. In the end, the bergsonian intuition turned into a philosophical tool for Neo-Confucian philosophy. Nevertheless, one should perhaps be moderate about these comments. By focusing on the question of intuition from a moral perspective, Chinese intellectuals betrayed the Bergson of Introduction to Metaphysics, but they announced the one of the Two sources of Moral and Religion. In his preface to Caterina Zanfi’s study on Bergson’s reception in Germany, Frédéric Worms noted that the different translation and understanding of Bergson throughout Germany all pinpointed at “singular aspects of Bergson’s work”\textsuperscript{119}. Perhaps one could say the same thing about its Chinese reception: in the “moral-man” of the Mind-Energy Confucianist saw the Confucian man of good (junzi 君子), the great philosopher or the great mystic that would be put under light by Bergson in 1932.

\textsuperscript{118} Stenius 2004.
\textsuperscript{119} Zanfi 2013, p. 9
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