

creative evolution

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a philosophical theory espoused early in the 20th century by Henri Bergson, a French process metaphysician (one who emphasizes becoming, change, and novelty), in his *Évolution créatrice* (1907; *Creative Evolution*). The theory presented an evolution in which a free emergence of the individual intelligence could be recognized. It was thus wholly distinct from previous deterministic hypotheses that were either mechanistic or teleological and represented evolution as conditioned either by existing forces or by future aims. Bergson based his theory on the distinction between matter and the *élan vital*, or life force, the progress of which he saw as a line continually bifurcating or diverging from its course. The evolution of matter is orderly and geometric; disorder, however, with free and unpredictable creativity, is the effect of the life force on its material surroundings. The argument is largely conducted by means of striking metaphor and analogy: life, for instance, is compared to a wave spreading outward toward a circumference that is broken down at one point only and to an artillery shell from which new shells scatter when it bursts.

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