

## **Henri Bergson and the theory of special relativity**

Everyone has certainly heard of Albert Einstein and his theory of general and special relativity. The case is different for the French philosopher Henri Bergson. The reader is probably familiar with his concept of time as duration (*durée*), his critique of Spencer's theory of evolution, or the concept of laughter described in the book with the same title. Far fewer people know Bergson as Einstein's adversary in the debate on the nature of time.

On April 6, 1922, in Paris, at a meeting of the *Société française de philosophie*, the increasingly popular physicist, Albert Einstein, was to talk about his new theory. Bergson was also present at the meeting. He was then the most popular philosopher in the world. His lectures were so crowded that the elite used to send their footmen to take a seat for them in the audience in advance. When Bergson was giving a speech in New York, an unprecedented traffic jam was recorded. However, Bergson had come to Einstein's lecture with the sole intention of listening to what the physicist had to say, he did not intend to speak. Nevertheless, he was drawn into the discussion. The audience was curious about his views, the more so as Einstein's statements touched upon issues important to Bergson's thoughts, in particular the subject of time. Indeed, Bergson was critical, albeit respectful, of Einstein's theory. He expressed his concerns about the philosophical repercussions of special relativity. Thus began the debate between the physicist and the philosopher, which in fact never ended. For both of them never changed their positions on the subject.

The presented research project addresses two issues related to this debate. First, it is an attempt to present Bergson as a philosopher of science *par excellence*. He is not considered as such even though he had a lot to do with sciences. His critique of special relativity is an extraordinary case study - it is proof of his thoughts' the craftsmanship, as well as the precision of his methodological approach. The second issue that is the subject of research in this project is the presentation of the Bergson-Einstein debate as an attempt to reconcile the concept of time in physics with time in philosophy. An attempt that ultimately negated hopes of creating a universal concept of time.