

**THE NEW
PHILOSOPHY OF
HENRI BERGSON**

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The new philosophy of Henri Bergson by Edouard Le Roy

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EDOUARD LE ROY

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PREFACE

THIS little book is due to two articles published under the same title in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1st and 15th February 1912.

Their object was to present Mr. Bergson's philosophy to the public at large, giving as short a sketch as possible, and describing, without too minute details, the general trend of his movement. These articles I have here reprinted intact. But I have added, in the form of continuous notes, some additional explanations on points which did not come within the scope of investigation in the original sketch.

I need hardly add that my work, though thus far complete, does not in any way claim to be a profound critical study. Indeed, such a study, dealing with a thinker who has not yet said his last word, would to-day be premature. I have simply aimed at writing an introduction which will make it easier to read and understand Mr. Bergson's works, and

serve as a preliminary guide to those who desire initiation in the new philosophy.

I have therefore firmly waived all the paraphernalia of technical discussions, and have made no comparisons, learned or otherwise, between Mr. Bergson's teaching and that of older philosophies.

I can conceive no better method of misunderstanding the point at issue, I mean the simple unity of productive intuition, than that of pigeon-holing names of systems, collecting instances of resemblance, making up analogies, and specifying ingredients. An original philosophy is not meant to be studied as a mosaic which takes to pieces, a compound which analyzes, or a body which dissects. On the contrary, it is by considering it as a living act, not as a rather clever discourse, by examining the peculiar excellence of its soul rather than the formation of its body, that the inquirer will succeed in understanding it. Properly speaking, I have only applied to Mr. Bergson the method which he himself justifiably prescribes in a recent article (*Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, November 1911), the only method, in fact, which is in all senses of the word fully "exact." I shall none the less be glad if these

brief pages can be of any interest to professional philosophers, and have endeavored, as far as possible, to allow them to trace, under the concise formulæ employed, the scheme which I have refused to develop.

It has become evident to me that even today the interpretation of Mr. Bergson's position is in many cases full of faults, which it would undoubtedly be worth while to assist in removing. I may or may not have succeeded in my attempt, but such, at any rate, is the precise end I had in view.

In conclusion, I may say that I have not had the honor of being Mr. Bergson's pupil; and, at the time when I became acquainted with his outlook, my own direct reflection on science and life had already produced in me similar trains of thought. I found in his work the striking realization of a presentiment and a desire. This "correspondence," which I have not exaggerated, proved at once a help and a hindrance to me in entering into the exact comprehension of so profoundly original a doctrine. The reader will thus understand that I think it in place to quote my authority to him in the following lines which Mr. Bergson kindly wrote me after the publication of the articles reproduced in

this volume: "Underneath and beyond the method you have caught the *intention* and the *spirit*. . . . Your study could not be more conscientious or true to the original. As it advances, condensation increases in a marked degree: the reader becomes aware that the explanation is undergoing a progressive involution similar to the involution by which we determine *the reality of Time*. To produce this feeling, much more has been necessary than a close study of my works: it has required deep sympathy of thought, the power, in fact, of rethinking the subject in a personal and original manner. Nowhere is this sympathy more in evidence than in your concluding pages, where in a few words you point out the possibilities of further developments of the doctrine. In this direction I should myself say exactly what you have said."

PARIS, 28th March 1912.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Mr. Benson has made his own translations of passages quoted from M. Bergson's works, but for the convenience of American readers the references in the footnotes have been made to apply to the authorized translations available in this country, instead of to the French editions.

The following information is provided for your reference:

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