

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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### THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON, I.

ACCORDING to a French philosopher quoted and approved by William James,<sup>1</sup> people are led to accept the philosophy of Bergson by a process resembling that of religious conversion. One is either a disciple or one is not. In the former case, although Bergson's theories may have been made the subject of long study, the final conviction of their truth is based less upon reason than upon feeling. There is a sudden change of attitude, the standard of philosophical values is found to have altered, and in the new light all things take on a different aspect. Such a view of the nature of Bergson's philosophy, in spite of its attempt to rule out the ordinary canons of criticism, possesses a certain measure of truth. Bergson's style of treatment, the variety and vividness of his imagery, his eager enthusiasm, all become more impressive the oftener his books are read, and all alike mark him as belonging to the family of the prophets. Moreover the reason fares so badly at his hands that the critic feels ashamed to subject such brilliant speculations to the despised rules of logic, and thus is forced to believe or to reject in silence. Nevertheless it is as philosophy that Bergson propounds his doctrines, and as philosophy they must be judged. A sympathetic appreciation of his standpoint is doubtless necessary, if we are to understand him; but before we can even try to determine the value of his writings, they must be not only appreciated, but tested by rational criticism. Perhaps it is true, as Bergson contends, that the construction of a metaphysic should be the work of intuition rather than of intellect; but it is to the intellect alone that the final evaluation of even an intuitive metaphysic must belong.

<sup>1</sup>A *Pluralistic Universe*, p. 266.