Bergson by Mark Sinclair (review)

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future science. The goal, he says, is to purify our conception of nature of any falsifying anthropomorphic admixture—*including especially all values*—and then to translate our human psychology back into this purified conception (see also KSA 9:11[211]).

I think this suggestion, that Nietzsche proposed a systematic correction of the enormous "projective error" involved in value realism (29), is a better interpretation of his argument against moral realism than the one offered by Leiter. In a shift from his first book, Leiter now claims that this is not so much an argument from disagreement in moral attitudes but rather from the intractable disagreement recorded throughout the history of moral philosophy (29–30). According to Leiter, Nietzsche thinks that the best (i.e. naturalistic) explanation for this disagreement (23) appeals to natural facts about human beings (i.e. psycho-physiological and social facts) and does not need to make any reference to objective moral facts (29–32). But this is an indirect argument based on a small and controversial set of data points, and Leiter's textual support for attributing this argument to Nietzsche is quite weak (35–37).

As for Nietzsche's own power-centered evaluative perspective, Leiter is of course right that he cannot be a realist about this if he is a global antirealist about values. So, contrary to what many scholars say, Nietzsche does not think it is an objective fact that we *should* strive for power or that striving for power *is* valuable. Suppose, however, as I think is the case, that Nietzsche takes himself to have discovered (through the program cited above) the objective fact that *all* human beings, and not only himself, just *do* happen to find intrinsic value in striving for power (Z II:12). He would then be entitled to claim that his own evaluative perspective is privileged simply on the basis of its shared appeal to all human beings (62–63).

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Mark Sinclair. *Bergson.* New York: Routledge, 2020. Pp. xxi + 303. Paper, $35.95.

Mark Sinclair's book is the first attempt at a comprehensive introduction to Bergson to be published in English in the last decade. *Bergson* begins with an intellectual biography, intended as "the most extensive . . . available in English" (5). It is. It is also among the most accomplished chapters of the book. Chapter 2, on time, initiates the book's overview of the main topics of Bergson's thinking and introduces its methodology. Sinclair systematically reconstructs Bergson's positions instead of following the way they unfold in Bergson's works themselves. The summary of *Time and Free Will* begins, for instance, with the second and third chapters of the book (36–37). The author situates each of the themes he studies with respect to Bergson's biography (49–50). Later texts are taken into account in order to highlight the way in which Bergson's early positions developed over the course of his career (42, 45). Bergson's views are occasionally clarified with the terminology of analytic metaphysics (45–47). They are also situated by Sinclair with respect to the relevant historical influences as often as possible. Each presentation concludes with a brief consideration of the shortcomings of Bergson's claims.

The chapters on time, freedom, memory, mind, knowledge, and life should sound familiar to even casual readers of Bergson. Occasionally, one may be surprised by the author's insistence on the debt Bergson owes to Ravaisson or Boutroux when it comes to the core features of some of these topics. Sinclair too often has recourse to biographical details alone to justify these insights (42, 90, 92–93, 70–71, 99). Newcomers to Bergson will have to take Sinclair at his word, while Bergsonists will be left wanting for further argumentation as well as wondering whether received conceptions are to be modified in light of these historical observations.

Most distinctive are the chapters on laughter and art. Sinclair argues for the preeminence of these themes in Bergson's work. The study of laughter is supposed to represent "a transitional, pivotal moment in Bergson's philosophy as a whole" (134). This is because laughter displays most clearly the tension between life and matter (138). As for art,

understanding Bergson's views on this topic is supposed to allow us "to understand not just a particular aspect of his thinking but his philosophy as a whole" (178). Artistic production is unforeseeable, which means that artworks should not be regarded as possible before they are actual (187). Instead, the creation of an artwork, though not possible in advance, will have been possible after the fact, retrospectively (191–96). *Bergson* develops this idea in the direction of a largely novel Bergsonian philosophy of history.

Though he signals its possibility, Sinclair is not optimistic about the prospects of such a philosophy of history. This is because he takes Bergson to be committed to the view that the will, "a self-propelling and self-constituting power" (246), is free in principle from the causal constraints of history. This so-called "voluntaristic" (246) notion of the will is supposed to underlie all of Bergson's ideas, from what authentic freedom and artistic creation are to the social function of great individuals, the destiny of humanity, and even the evolution of life in general (197–98, 245–51). If Sinclair is right, Bergson's conception of the will may well be the key to his entire philosophical project.

Sinclair suggests that if it is on the basis of voluntarism that Bergson's philosophy is to be understood, then it is on the same basis that Bergson's philosophy is to be critically evaluated (250–51). This is meant as a challenge to those who are interested in Bergson's view of life but are concerned by the shape it took in the wartime writings (to which Sinclair pays close attention), as well as to those who are interested in Bergson's philosophy of nature but are put off by the idea that humanity ought to assume dominion over the earth (which Sinclair mentions only briefly). Just as with his claims regarding Bergson's conceptual debts, Sinclair's position about the philosophy of will requires more argumentation if it is to be accepted. In the end, the book paints an unflattering portrait of Bergson, which may look too much like a caricature of Nietzsche (246).

There is, nevertheless, a lot worth applauding in this book. It should help introduce Bergson to a new audience and encourage the ongoing renewal of interest in his thought. Its summaries of Bergson's views are among the best recently produced. But it occasionally falls short as a critical examination of Bergson's ideas and as a presentation of those ideas to analytically trained philosophers who may be concerned with their viability once scrutinized in separation from their author. Sinclair is to be congratulated for relating Bergson's views to the philosophical lineages to which they belong, but, on this score too, more work is to be done to convincingly support the book's interpretations. If *Bergson* is to be criticized for anything, it is for overreaching itself as an exhaustive overview of Bergson's thought. As an introduction, however, it is excellent.

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Sander Verhaegh. *Working from Within: The Nature and Development of Quine's Naturalism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xxi + 218. Cloth, $74.00.

Verhaegh's excellent book provides the first complete account of Quine's naturalism. Guiding Quine's view is the idea that we cannot stand outside our theory of the world. We are always working from within. Only by understanding this idea do we see what Quine's naturalism comes to.

While many philosophers casually treat Quine's naturalism as something already well-understood, Verhaegh does not, and he dedicates part 1 to its systematic exposition. According to him, this consists of two components: "the principled rejection of transcendental perspectives and the adoption of a perspective immanent to our scientific conceptual scheme," both based on Quine's view that we must always be working from within (11). Verhaegh discusses Quine's epistemology and metaphysics. I will consider the latter, as it is less familiar and also shows some of the significance this book has beyond Quine scholarship.