

ANSELL-PEARSON, Keith. *Bergson: Thinking Beyond the Human Condition*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018. ix + 194 pp. Paper, \$29.95—Why Bergson now, again? Keith Ansell-Pearson offers a renewed account of Bergson's relevance almost two decades after the publication of his last book on Bergson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*, in 2002. His earlier work was significant for the primacy it accorded to the philosophy of evolution in Bergson's thought. *Thinking Beyond the Human Condition*, a collection of essays written over the last two decades, introduces another dimension: the aim of overcoming the human condition through thought. This aim is what provides Ansell-Pearson with his most recent answer to the question, why Bergson now?

Thinking Beyond the Human Condition is distinctive in part for its objects: for while it does include chapters on familiar Bergsonian themes—such as time (chapter 3), memory (chapter 4), and freedom (chapter 3)—it also uncovers and attends to a number of still underappreciated areas of Bergson's thought. These include the commentary on Lucretius (chapter 2), the affinities that Bergson shares with Nietzsche regarding the critique of established religion (chapter 7), and perhaps most uniquely the possibility of a nascent philosophy of education as well (chapter 8). The theme that unifies these topics is the practical orientation that Ansell-Pearson discovers in each of them. He argues that Bergson ought to be understood in line with the ancient Greek conception of philosophy as a way of life that is grounded in a way of seeing the world anew. For Ansell-Pearson's Bergson, any new way of seeing the world is the concomitant of a critique of habitual ways of perceiving and acting within it. Thus, the critique of closed society, static religion, the spatial conception of time, and the deterministic understanding of the self, are all means to the end of freeing ourselves from a set of inherited constraints (social, biological, and epistemological) and opening ourselves to the possibility of seeing, thinking, and acting in novel forms.

The human condition is defined by spatialized thinking. This is a form of thinking through spatial concepts, which owes its genesis to adaptive interaction with inanimate material objects and the fabrication of tools from out of them. Spatial thinking decomposes wholes into isolable parts and regards organization on the model of built artifacts. It separates form from function, isolates bodies and systems from their relations, and reduces time to movement across fixed positions. Its basic deficiency is an inability to think the reality of duration, which consists for Bergson in the ongoing retention of a past opened onto an unforeseeable future.

Spatial thinking is a form of intelligence. But intelligence is not exhaustive of thought. It is an evolved faculty, and so can be refined, enlarged, and even functionally displaced, like a spandrel. Beyond it lays what Bergson calls intuition. Intuition is a mode through which to think time. It purports to grant access to the inner reality of its objects without filtering them through the forms and frames of preexisting concepts. It is grounded in the immediate apprehension of the self by the self as an enduring or durational reality. The knowledge one has of oneself in time

is apparently nonconceptual. This is the core of intuition. There are several facets to Bergson's theory of this faculty: the critique of the false problems of spatial thinking, the articulation of differences in kind where intelligence sees only degree, and the comprehension of real time. Intuition culminates in the last. Its ultimate aim is to be able to transpose the immediate apprehension of the self onto other objects as well, and so grasp them in their absolute temporal reality as well, in duration.

If the human condition is defined by spatialization, then it is intuition through which the means for moving beyond it can be made available to thought. Each chapter of *Thinking Beyond the Human Condition* treats one domain—the self, evolution, society, and so on—in which intuition can be deployed in order to escape the constraints of spatialized thought. The negative and positive aspects of Bergson's philosophy can be organized according to the distinction between the human condition and what lies beyond it. The critique of ethical rationalism, closed social formations, mechanistic biology, and determinism corresponds to the critique of spatialization in its various modalities, while the ideal of mystic affirmation, open society, a dynamic theory of evolution, and an account of human freedom describes what is possible outside of the constraints of spatialized intelligence. Thus does a critique of thought aim to issue in a new set of possibilities for action. This is Ansell-Pearson's Bergson succinctly stated.

Is the text successful? It is difficult to evaluate a collection of essays, each written initially—with one exception (chapter 3)—as a stand-alone piece with its own aims. Certainly each chapter succeeds individually, which should come as no surprise as Ansell-Pearson remains one of the most important Bergson scholars writing in English. Yet the collection is unified by a theme, which is that the human condition is something to be overcome philosophically. Ansell-Pearson situates this aim within the context of ecological crisis. But while the relationship between rising extinction rates, oceanic acidification, a destabilized climate, and an alienating, anthropocentric set of human social and epistemological habits may prove compelling as an argument for Bergson's contemporary relevance, it is left disappointingly undeveloped here. The Anthropocene is mentioned only in passing, as if its mere invocation should be sufficient as an argument. One is left wanting for a fuller, more careful treatment of Bergson's environmental philosophical pedigree, as well as for the vexed issue of the causal relationship between natural crises and kinds of human behaviors.

Perhaps to put the point this way is to miss it, as one of the lessons of this volume is that the ambition to think beyond the human condition is one that ramifies across each of the avenues of Bergson's thinking, assuming a shape particular to each: thus there is a way to think beyond the human condition ethically (open society), religiously (dynamic religion, mystic affirmation), evolutionarily (the creativity of the vital impetus), pedagogically (inadequacy of concepts, spatial habits of intellect), temporally (duration, memory), and practically (freedom).

Intuition remains at the core of each attempt to overcome the human condition, but I take it that one of the accomplishments of Ansell-Pearson's latest work resides in the demonstration that the overcoming of the human condition as a goal has to be thought in a form specific to each context in which it is pursued. I see no reason why more traditionally materialist avenues for engagement with planetary crisis could not be introduced into this network in order to complicate it and hopefully to be complicated by it in turn.—Tano S. Posteraro, *Penn State University*

ARISTOTLE. *Metaphysics*. Translated with notes by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2016. liv + 652 pp. Cloth, \$87.00; paper, \$29.00—David Reeve's translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is a welcome addition to his collection of fine translations of works of Plato and Aristotle. Of the 652 numbered pages in this edition, the last 400 contain 1644 numbered endnotes and a lengthy index of terms. Additionally, Reeve provides a thirty-page introduction to the *Metaphysics*. So this is far more than just a translation.

Let me consider the translation first and then distinguish two kinds of comments. There are two measures of translations of the *Metaphysics*, literalness and language. Ross's Oxford translation reads very well, but does not preserve Aristotle's technical terminology. In contrast, Montgomery Furth produced a translation on *Metaphysics Z–H* that is so literal that is gibberish. Of those who have tried to translate Aristotle's language consistently, most have kept the standard Latin expressions, like "substance," "actuality," and "essence." Some, like Joe Sachs, set aside Latin terms in favor of more concrete and direct English terms in order to allow readers to grapple with the text on their own. Reeve's translation falls into the middle on both measures. First, he tries to make the technical terms clear while still producing a readable text. Second, he uses some of the standard Latinized terms—"cause" "substance," "essence," "being qua being"—but he also adopts some more familiar English terms, such as, "starting point" for *archê*, "lack" for *sterêsis*, and "activity" for *energeia*. Because the Greek text is so sparse, all translators of the *Metaphysics* are forced to interpret it. For the famous first line of *Metaphysics* Γ, Reeve has: "There is a science that gets a theoretical grasp on being *qua* being and of the [coincidentals] belonging intrinsically to it." Contrast this with Ross: "There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes that belong to it in virtue of its own nature"; and with Sachs: "There is a kind of knowledge that contemplates what is insofar as it is and what belongs to it in its own right." Sachs is closest to the original and to its mystery; but "contemplates," though literal, falsely suggests the science is complete at this point and, anyway, Sachs uses "being as being" by the end of the chapter. Ross adds the word "attributes" and is a bit

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