

## Introduction. Reassessing Bergson

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# INTRODUCTION. REASSESSING BERGSON

Matyáš MORAVEC

In 1912, Bertrand Russell published his “Philosophy of Bergson,” based on a presentation he gave earlier to “The Heretics” society in Cambridge. Though not the first — and certainly not the last — attack against Bergsonian thought from an analytic philosopher, Russell’s criticism played a crucial part in the disappearance of Bergson from analytic thought. One still finds Bergson mentioned (usually in a highly critical manner) by analytic-minded philosophers in the 1940s and 1950s, but by the 1960s, he almost entirely disappears from analytic discussions, especially those revolving around the philosophy of time. Although Russell’s critique has, itself, been criticised and dismantled at various points, the historical constellations around the birth of analytic philosophy in Cambridge ensured a devastating and lasting influence of Russell’s criticism and Bergson’s gradual exclusion from the mainstream of English-speaking philosophy.

In the past few years, this has, for the first time, started to change. Recent scholarship has seen increasing interest by English-speaking philosophers in Bergson’s thought on — amongst other topics — time, history, action, and memory. This has enabled Bergson to step out of those philosophical traditions with which he is almost canonically bound and enter into new dialogues.

Over a hundred years after facing Russell’s critique and just under a hundred years since his reception of an honorary doctorate there, Bergson returned to Cambridge. The essays published in this collection are the fruits of the “Reassessing Bergson” conference, which took place on 11-12 September 2019 at Pembroke College, Cambridge. The aim of this

event was not merely to undo the damage done by Russell, but also to bring together scholars from different philosophical traditions, working on different topics with different methods, but who are all joined by a common interest in Bergson. The essays in this issue of *Bergsoniana* are based on the talks given there.

We would like to thank all the institutions which allowed this meeting to take place: The Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Aristotelian Society, the British Society for the History of Philosophy, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, the Mind Association, Pembroke College, Cambridge, the Société des Amis de Bergson, and the Society for Philosophy of Time. Most importantly, our thanks go to all the participants who nourished the extremely fruitful dialogues that started in Cambridge.

**Matyáš Moravec** is a postdoctoral research associate at Durham University. His research focuses on building links between Bergson's philosophy, analytic metaphysics and the philosophy of religion. He is also interested in Bergson's reception by early 20th-century British philosophers.