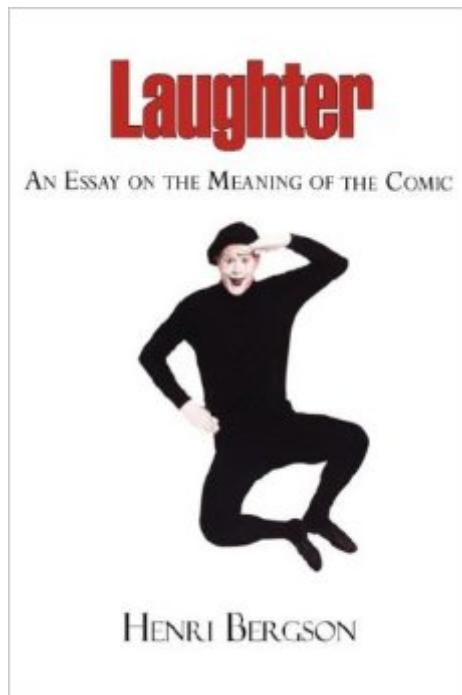


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Laughter - An Essay On The Meaning Of The Comic



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

Like Socrates, French Philosopher and Nobel Prize Winner for Literature Henri Bergson is associated with a "method." Socrates piled question after question upon the hapless denizens of Athens. Bergson posed questions not to citizens but to situations, gestures, stage plays, puns, quips, oddities and mannerisms. He asked: what makes this so funny, laughable, risible? If his book LAUGHTER were a prize fight, it would still be going on: for it never delivers a knock-out punch. LAUGHTER never quite succeeds in defining what makes the humorous uniquely what it is. Perhaps Bergson never intended to deliver a crushing blow or write the last word. Perhaps he was more the butterfly gathering nupture first here than somewhere else. Certainly, his thought was always in motion. But then so was life, in his view. The way Henri Bergson analyzes humor is consistent with his theory of life. Not for him Descartes's view of man as a mind locked into a machine. Henri Bergson does accept that spirit is not matter and that a man's soul is always being tempted by his body to cease growing, cease adapting to reality, tempted to grow lazy, "inattentive" and eccentric. We laugh when we see people layering themselves with something alien to their best nature. They wear disguises, like clowns or the emperor who preened himself on his invisible clothes. They repeat cliches from the ceremonial side of life that don't apply to the spontaneous challenges of love, politics or art. When men lose interactive, supportive touch with their society, we laugh at them. We thereby simultaneously salute their spirit while rebuking their giving in to the downward tug of their flesh. Laughter is the medicine by which society, a living thing, heals itself.

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