

A Spirit of Living

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Bergson is opposed to the conventional view of morality as equivalent to rigidity, and grasps the important truth that if morality is to be of worth at all it must lie not in a fixed set of rules, habits, or conventions, but in a spirit of living...

This is of very great ethical importance indeed, as it means that we must revise many of our standards of character. For example, how often do we hear of one who, holding an obviously false view long and obstinately, is praised as consistent, whereas a mind which moves and develops with the times, attempting always to adjust itself to changing conditions in its intellectual or material environment, is contemptuously dubbed as "changeable" by the moralists of rigidity. We must, however, learn that consistency of character does not mean lack of change. Stanchness of character is too often mere obstinate resistance to change. We must therefore be on our guard against those who would run ethics into rigid moulds, and so raise up static concepts and infallible dogmas for beliefs or action. Change must be accepted as a principle which it is both futile and immoral to ignore, even in the moral life. This does not mean setting up caprice or impulsiveness, for in so far as our change of character expresses the development of the single movement of our own inner life it will be quite other than capricious, but it will be change, and a change which is quite consistent, a creative evolution of our personality. Bergson and His Philosophy, J. Alexander Gunn, Chapter 10 ETHICAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS