



On Being Free

Frithjof Bergmann

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“A breath of fresh air. Not only does Bergmann give good reasons why standard contemporary philosophical views on freedom are fundamentally off base, but he also displays why current educational disputes over regimented vs. permissive education, and political debates over regulated vs. unregulated society, are grounded in irrelevant and confused notions of freedom. The book is brilliant and terribly exciting.” — Frederick Suppe

With extraordinary elegance and philosophic power, Frithjof Bergmann presents a genuine rethinking of freedom. By changing the focus from outside to inside the person, Bergmann shows how freedom can be a reality in self-growth, parenting, education, and in shaping a society that stimulates rather than stunts the self. Rejecting the standard views of freedom as an external ideal that progressively removes obstacles or as an irrational, unencumbered act that rejects all order, Bergmann argues that the primary prerequisite of freedom is a self possessed of something that wants to be acted out. An act is free if the agent identifies with the elements from which it flows. Such identification is logically prior to freedom. At the same time, this points to the problem of coming to a true understanding of one's self and to the difficulty of building a society that contains objects with which a self can identify or, at least, a society of which the self is not ashamed.

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