



# Perspectives on Ethics

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Judith A. Boss



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Judith A. Boss

*Center for the Study of Human Development, Brown University*



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*To my daughter Alyssa, on the occasion of her graduation  
from law school as valedictorian of her class*

# Preface

Many students in an introductory-level ethics course perceive the subject as irrelevant to their lives. This obstacle is caused largely by courses and texts that focus exclusively on theory. Also, students often lack the analytical tools necessary to understand the complex theories in philosophical readings. Ethics courses that are lean in theory and focus on issues, on the other hand, tend to leave students feeling that morality is all relative. In addition, multiculturalism and the increasing awareness of the impact of human activities and decisions on the environment have made professors and students more aware of the inadequacies of traditional approaches to making moral decisions.

*Perspectives on Ethics* is intended to overcome these obstacles by guiding students through the theoretical readings while at the same time anchoring moral theory in real life through the use of discussion questions and case studies. Although traditional Western moral philosophy forms the core of the book, this reader also integrates selections from non-Western traditions and other disciplines in an effort to address the true richness of moral analysis.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

### *The Introduction*

Many students feel overwhelmed when they first encounter philosophical writings. The introduction helps alleviate this anxiety by providing students with the critical thinking skills necessary for understanding and critically analyzing the readings. Critical thinking questions at the beginning of each section reinforce these skills.

### *The Reading Selections*

The selections in this book include readings from traditional Western moral philosophy as well as readings that represent non-Western, multicultural, feminist, religious, anthropological, sociobiological, psychological, legal, and literary perspectives. The readings work together as an interrelated whole, each elaborating on and reinforcing themes brought up in other readings. At the same time, enough readings are included so they can be used selectively.

### *The Nine Chapters*

The readings are divided into nine chapters. These chapters are arranged in approximate order of a person's moral development which moves from ethical relativism to universal moral principles. The following is a brief summary of each section:

1. The opening chapter raises questions about the study of ethics and the need for ethics education.

2. The second chapter introduces the reader to moral theories based on ethical relativism. This section is further subdivided into ethical subjectivism (morality is relative to the individual), and cultural relativism (morality is relative to the culture).

3. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between morality and religion. In particular, this chapter addresses the question of whether morality is relative to religion and God's commands, or whether it is based on universal moral values that exist independently of religion and God.

4. The readings in Chapter 4 deal with conscience and moral development. The notion of moral development requires us, as moral agents, to strive to go beyond the types of ethical relativism discussed in the two previous chapters.

5. Chapters 5 through 9 cover moral theories which regard morality as universal. Chapter 5 introduces students to ethical egoism, the view that morality is doing that which is in our best self-interests. In this chapter students are encouraged to expand their thinking beyond their own self-interests without, at the same time, minimizing the moral importance of their own interests and lives.

6. Chapter 6 is on utilitarian theory. Utilitarians believe that the morality of an action is determined solely by its consequences. The readings in this chapter include the utilitarian theory of Chinese philosopher Mo Tzu as well as Western utilitarian theories. While consequences are important, students learn that an adequate moral theory cannot be based on consequences alone.

7. Deontology, one of the most popular moral theories, is the subject of Chapter 7. Deontologists regard duty as the basis of morality. In this chapter students learn about the different types of moral duties and their relevance to real-life issues such as suicide, self-esteem, lying, and distributive justice.

8. There are two main branches of rights ethics, the subject of Chapter 8. Natural rights ethicists claim that rights stem from our human nature; other rights ethicists say that rights are derived from duties. This chapter looks at the implications of these different theories on rights.

9. The final chapter is on virtue ethics. Almost all moral theories contain a strand of virtue ethics as well as rights ethics. Virtue ethics is sometimes regarded as the highest form of moral theory. Virtue requires not only that we do what is

right but that we *be* good people; which brings us back to Aristotle's deeply-held conviction (one also held by this author) that "the ultimate purpose in studying ethics is not as it is in other inquiries, the attainment of theoretical knowledge; we are not conducting this inquiry in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, else there would be no advantage in studying it."

The theories in the chapters are organized in the same order that they appear in a person's moral development—beginning with ethical relativism and ending with the theories based on universal moral principles. Because so many college students still subscribe to ethical relativism, considerable attention is given to these theories.

Each chapter, like the readings within the chapters, builds on the previous sections. The readings on morality and religion are included in their own section since the religious ethics ranges the whole gamut from ethical relativism (divine command theory) to universalist ethics (natural law theory). The section on conscience and moral development acts as a bridge between ethical relativism and theories based on universal moral principles. One of the primary purposes of this book is to help the student make the journey across this bridge.

### *The Critical Reading and Discussion Questions*

The chapter introductions and questions provide the primary structure that weaves the topics together. Each reading in *Perspectives on Ethics* is preceded by a short introduction and a set of critical thinking questions. Discussion questions are included at the end of each reading; these questions require the student to think deeper about the arguments and concepts raised in that particular reading. The discussion questions also encourage students to relate these concepts to other readings in the book as well as to real-life moral issues in their own lives.

### *Chapter Applications*

Each chapter ends with several case studies relating to the set of readings. The majority of case studies are based on real-life events. These case studies provide students with an opportunity to apply moral theory to real-life issues such as jealousy, deception, greed, euthanasia, hate speech on campuses, abortion and fetal rights, homelessness, child labor, political asylum, family obligations, and economic justice. Some of the case studies involve moral dilemmas that force students to defend a particular position on a controversial issue. Discussion of real-life moral dilemmas has been shown to enhance a student's ability to engage in effective moral reasoning. On the other hand, exclusive focus on dilemmas runs the danger of leaving students with the impression that there are no right and wrong answers and that morality is all relative. Therefore, other cases focus on issues that are fairly straightforward but which require introspection and reflection.

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# Introduction

*What good fortune for those in power that people do not think.*

Adolf Hitler

As a philosophical discipline, ethics is the study of the values and guidelines by which we live, as well as the justification of these values and guidelines. Ethics does not rely simply on personal opinion or the acceptance of customs and guidelines of a particular group or culture. Rather, philosophical ethics requires analysis and evaluation of these guidelines in light of universal principles. This aids the development of critical thinking skills and, thus, the ability to make better moral judgments.

There is no way to avoid making moral judgments. Every day we are confronted with situations in which we have to decide what is the correct course of action. Even inaction may constitute a decision by default. Whatever decision we make we do so for reasons. Some of these reasons are better than others. We've all heard the proverb "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." One goal of an ethics course is to help you discern which reasons are better so you can make considered moral decisions—ones you are less likely to regret later.

In addition to individual decision making, effective participation in a democracy requires that you first be able to engage in critical thinking and dialogue. Critical thinking is a process that can help you determine if a particular claim is true or, at least, more likely to be true than competing claims. By improving your critical thinking skills, you will be better prepared to make good decisions in your life and avoid being swept along by the prevailing opinion. People who are adept at critical thinking are less likely to be taken in by faulty reasoning and more likely to make satisfactory moral decisions in their own lives.

## WHAT IS A MORAL THEORY?

Moral philosophers constantly ask questions such as: "What kind of life should I live?" "How can I know what is good?" "What are my obligations and rights?" "Do we have free will?" "Why should I be moral?" "What is the source of morality?" "How can I justify my moral beliefs?" "Do I have a moral obligation

to non-human beings and the rest of nature?" "Are people basically good or are they basically selfish?" and "What happens when moral principles come into conflict?" Moral theories provide a coherent structure by which to analyze and answer these and other important questions.

This reader will introduce you to some important moral theories that have shaped people's behavior and analysis of moral issues throughout the world. You may ask how reading about something as abstract as moral theory can help you make a better moral decision. What do moral theories have to do with real life? A moral theory is not just a collection of abstract musings. It also concerns action, the consequences of action, and our motives and our character. In analyzing and explaining moral concepts, moral theories provide us with a justification for which actions and norms are morally right or wrong. A good moral theory, in other words, provides moral principles for guiding our behavior and shaping our character.

Even though moral theories may remain unarticulated, they shape our world view and our interpretation of experiences. For example, most U.S. adults identify morality with cultural norms and customs. The theory underlying this assumption is known as *cultural relativism*. Cultural relativism as a theory is wrought with inconsistencies and problems; it leaves no room for the concept of social reform and encourages mindless conformity to convention.

In seeking answers to questions about the meaning of life and the nature of goodness, moral philosophers go beyond conventional answers. Sometimes analysis will reveal that what at first appeared to be a coherent moral insight is nothing more than the result of cultural tradition—such as Eurocentrism or a belief that men are more rational than women.

As with scientific theories, some moral theories do a better job than others at answering these questions. It is up to us to learn how to discern which theories are best. Theories, by their very nature, also oversimplify. Sometimes theories contain fragments of truth that, when combined with other theories, can enrich our understanding of morality. In this chapter you will learn how to evaluate the merits and weaknesses of a particular moral theory.

This book divides moral theories into two broad categories: ethical relativism and universalist theories. Each category is based on a different set of assumptions about the ultimate source of morality. Ethical relativism claims that morality is created by people. Universalist theories, on the other hand, claim that morality is the same for all people and that people discover rather than create morality. Theories claiming that morality is relative tend to be weaker and less consistent. However, because so many people base their moral decisions on ethical relativism, it is important that we study these theories if only to learn how to recognize their weakness.

The construction of a moral theory may progress through several stages. A philosopher, after reflection and listening to critiques of his or her theory, may rework the theory or even abandon it altogether. One of the simplest, and the weakest, moral theories is ethical subjectivism, which claims that morality is all a matter of personal opinion. Cultural relativism, which enjoyed popularity among some scholars in the first part of this century, fell out of favor following World

War II. The strongest moral theories are those that claim that morality is universal. Interestingly, people's moral reasoning tends to evolve over the course of their lifetime from ethical subjectivism to cultural relativism to a belief in universal moral principles.

## CRITICAL READING SKILLS

Like many students, you may feel overwhelmed when you first encounter philosophical writings. This reader will provide you with the critical thinking skills necessary for understanding and critically analyzing the readings. Critical reading skills provide a framework by which you may test different theories and lines of reasoning. Keep in mind that you are not approaching the readings empty-handed. You have been making moral judgments all your life. Following are some recommendations for effective critical reading.

### *Preparing to Read*

1. *Set aside enough time.* Readings in moral philosophy form a whole, with each part building on the other. Therefore, you should allow enough time to read through each selection without interruption. Part of the task of the moral philosopher is to prod the reader into asking questions and reexamining his or her values and lifestyle. To get the most out of each reading, also plan to set aside time between readings to reflect on the arguments that are presented.

2. *Get in the right frame of mind.* The first step in critically reading moral philosophy is to take on the perspective of the philosopher. Critical reading is not passive. Rather, it requires the participation of the reader. According to educator Charles Fries, critical reading and making social judgments involve "the cultivation of a whole array of techniques [including] understanding, thinking, reflecting, imagining, judging, evaluating, analyzing and reasoning."<sup>1</sup>

Taking the perspective of a philosopher means first setting aside your own prejudices and preconceptions in order to be objective. Philosophers adopt as their starting point an attitude of qualified skepticism. As a philosopher you should question your own beliefs as well as the beliefs of others.

3. *Be aware of your own reactions to the readings and various theories.* Being objective requires controlling, or at least being aware of, your emotional reactions to the readings. Most of us hate to be proven wrong and will use defense mechanisms, known as resistance, to avoid having our cherished world views challenged. These defense mechanisms include anger, boredom, distractions, superficial tolerance, and avoidance. For example, you may find yourself turning on the television or radio while reading a particular selection. These types of resistance may keep you from thinking in depth and, hence, engaging in critical reading. If you are aware of these reactions, you can take steps to work through these defenses when reading a particular section.

4. *Learn how to recognize arguments.* Learning how to recognize and analyze an argument is at the heart of critical reading. The majority of selections in this reader present an argument to support a particular theory or position on a moral issue. The goal of the writer is to convince you, the reader, that his or her theory or position is the correct or best one.

In order to determine if a particular argument is good, you first have to be able to identify the flow of reasoning. Reasoning proceeds from the premises to a conclusion. The premises are propositions that offer reasons or support for a particular position or conclusion. The conclusion is that proposition that is supported by the premises. The conclusion in writings from moral philosophy may be a theory, such as “morality is relative to culture” or a position on an issue, such as “abortion is immoral.”

The ability to analyze arguments and to recognize faulty reasoning is important in the study of ethics. *Logic*, the study of correct and incorrect reasoning, provides people with the methods and skills to formulate sound moral arguments as well as to distinguish good arguments from poor arguments. If you have not had a course in logic, there are several logic books, as well as some ethics books, that explain how to recognize and break down arguments.

5. *Read the critical reading questions.* Before you start reading, look over the critical reading questions at the beginning of the selection. These questions serve as guideposts that point out the important ideas in the reading. They will also make it easier for you to answer the discussion questions at the end of each reading selection.

### *The First Reading: Identifying the Key Parts*

Breaking down each selection into its essential parts will make the readings more manageable. Most writings in moral philosophy include two main parts: (1) the main argument with its conclusion and premises and (2) the explanations and clarifications of key terms and concepts used in the argument. Some readings may also include background material or examples of application of the theory. It is usually easiest to begin with the main argument because this generally forms the focal point of the reading. A summary of the main argument is often found in the first paragraph or two of the reading.

1. *Identify the conclusion.* The purpose of most philosophical writing is to support a particular position. This position is known as the *thesis statement* or *conclusion*. In critical reading, begin by identifying the conclusion of the main argument. The conclusion is often stated at the beginning of the writing and then restated again at the end. If you are having trouble identifying the conclusion or thesis, ask yourself, “What is the main purpose of the argument? What is the writer trying to prove? What position is the writer trying to get me, the reader, to accept?”

Sometimes arguments contain terms known as *conclusion indicators*. Conclusion indicators include terms such as *therefore*, *thus*, *hence*, *it follows that*, *for this reason*, and *consequently*, which can help you identify the conclusion. For example, in Book One of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, the thesis statement or conclusion appears in the second sentence: "We may therefore assent to the view which has been expressed that 'the good' is 'that at which all things aim.'"

In critical reading it is usually helpful to underline or highlight the conclusion. Even philosophers sometimes stray from their original argument! If the conclusion is clearly marked, you, as a critical reader, will be less likely to be thrown off by any distractions.

2. *Identify the premises.* Premises in moral arguments include both (a) descriptive statements about facts and (b) prescriptive statements about what ought to be. Ethics goes beyond science and observation. We cannot go directly from a descriptive statement about how things are to a prescriptive statement about how things ought to be. Instead, moral judgments and values—such as "do not lie," "be fair," and "do no harm"—need to be brought into the picture when making decisions about the right course of action. Definitions of key terms may also appear in premises. In a good argument, the writer tries to use only premises that are uncontroversial and readily accepted by most rational people. This is because if one of the premises is factually wrong or unacceptable to a reader, the conclusion itself may also be untrue or unacceptable.

Ethical arguments do not stand on their own but are grounded in other philosophical assumptions about matters such as the role of humans in the universe, the existence of free will, and the nature of moral knowledge. If you are not sure what the argument's premises are, ask yourself questions such as "What assumptions does the writer make regarding human nature and the place of humans in the world?" "What assumptions does the writer make about the nature of society?" "What facts or moral principles does the writer use to support his or her position?" If you are having trouble identifying the premises, try looking for premise indicators. Words such as *because*, *since*, and *for* may signal the presence of a premise. However, as with conclusion indicators, not all premises are conveniently preceded by a premise indicator.

Aristotle offers a premise for his conclusion in the very first sentence of his *Nichomachean Ethics*: "It is thought that every activity, artistic or scientific, in fact every deliberate action or pursuit, has for its object the attainment of some good." This premise is based on Aristotle's observation about human nature that humans engage in activities in a purposeful way. In critical reading, however, you should never simply accept a premise without first assessing whether it is true. For example, is Aristotle's observation or assumption that all human behavior is purposeful correct? Not all Eastern philosophers agree with this interpretation of human activity.

Bracket or mark each of the premises. If you have any questions about a premise, put a question mark beside it so you can go back later and examine it

more closely. Sometimes a particular premise may be followed by a long explanation of the premise. This may clear up some of your initial doubts about the premise. A premise may also appear again later in the argument. You may want to write a quick summary of each premise in the margin of the page so you can keep track of them.

Some philosophers, such as Aristotle, may digress during the course of the argument to address objections and counterarguments. This is in part because the *Nichomachean Ethics*, like some of the other writings in this book, were probably lecture notes and, therefore, more abbreviated than a polished literary writing. This is not to say that the argument is not as good as others; it just means that it involves a more open-ended approach with give-and-take discussion.

Premises that the writer considers to be obvious are sometimes unstated. In critical reading it is important that you learn how to read between the lines. Although some of the unstated assumptions or premises may be relatively innocuous, others—particularly those concerning human nature—tend to be based on cultural and religious biases rather than empirical data. If there are any unstated assumptions, you should make note of them as well.

3. *Identify the key terms and their definitions.* Constructing sound moral judgments involves clearly defining and explaining the key terms. Terms such as *person*, *happiness*, *good*, *rational*, and *right* are notoriously ambiguous with different shades of meaning to different people. For this reason it is important that philosophers clarify how they are using these terms, and they must use these terms in a consistent manner throughout their argument. In critical reading, ask yourself if the key terms in the argument have been clearly defined.

In the reading from the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle goes to considerable lengths to define the term *good*. He begins by using the generally accepted definition that *good* is “happiness.” However, this leaves him having to define the term *happiness*, which he does in his usual skillful manner. Indeed, simply being able to clarify these terms is often a notable achievement in itself!

### *The Second Reading: Critical Analysis*

Once you have identified the various parts of the reading, you are ready to subject it to critical analysis. In going back over the reading, ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Are the key terms and concepts clearly defined?* Are definitions omitted, or are they too vague to be useful? Are you satisfied with the definitions used? For instance, are you satisfied with Aristotle’s definitions of *good* and *happiness*? Are the key terms used in a consistent manner throughout the reading? In the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro*, for example, Euthyphro keeps changing the meaning of the term *impiety* during the course of his argument. Socrates, being the astute philosopher he is, challenges Euthyphro on this point by asking him to clarify the definition of this key term.

2. *Are the premises acceptable?* An argument may be logically flawless. However, some of its premises may be based on incorrect data. Many people blend fact and opinion. It is important to distinguish between the two. Can the descriptive premises be supported? In discussions of moral issues, writers often back up their conclusions with empirical claims such as “capital punishment acts as a deterrent to future crime” or “same-sex marriages will weaken the structure of the traditional family.” When you see statements such as these, do not simply assume that the writer has done his or her research. Remember, as a philosopher you are adopting the position of a skeptic. Ask yourself if the writers back up the statement with facts.

For example, Ayn Rand, in her theory of rational egoism, claims that productive work makes people happy. The premise is critical to her whole argument. However, is the claim empirically correct? Does she cite any studies to back up her claim, or is this premise simply based on her personal opinion? Aristotle, on the other hand, claims that virtuous people are the happiest. Can his claim be verified? Check it out. In fact, if you look at the studies on happiness, you will find that Aristotle’s claim has more empirical support than does Rand’s.

Also look at the prescriptive premises. Are the moral principles and sentiments used in the premises acceptable? Although people may disagree on the application of general moral principles, the acceptance of the basic principles themselves is often uncontroversial—even across cultures. More often, the problem with a theory is that some important moral principles have been omitted or not taken seriously. For example, utilitarians believe that morality can be reduced to one principle: “Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.”<sup>2</sup> As a result utilitarians have been accused of failing to give sufficient weight to the principle of justice and to issues of personal autonomy.

3. *Do the premises support the conclusion?* The premises form the foundation of the argument. In a good argument, the premises must be strong enough to support the conclusion. A well-constructed argument, like a well-built house, must be able to withstand challenges. If the premises are weak, the whole argument can collapse like the proverbial house built on sand.

If any of the key premises are based on incorrect data or unacceptable prescriptive statements, the whole argument is weak, no matter how compelling the conclusion may seem. If any of the premises are false, the conclusion may also be false.

An argument can also be weak because it contains fallacies. When an argument is psychologically or emotionally persuasive but logically incorrect, it contains what logicians call an *informal fallacy*. Examples of informal fallacies include:

- Attacking the character of people who disagree with one’s position
- Using a factual statement from someone who is not an authority in the field under discussion

- Appealing to popular opinion
- Making generalizations based on insufficient or atypical cases
- Changing the topic to a related subject
- Claiming something is moral simply because it is natural

People are most likely to resort to fallacies when they are uncertain of their position. Being able to recognize fallacies will make you less likely to fall for them.

The conclusion must be based on the premises. Sometimes the conclusion may say too much. It may make assertions that go far beyond anything stated in the argument. This does not mean that the conclusion is false, just that it is unsubstantiated. When a conclusion is not properly supported by the premises, you should reject the argument.

4. *Is the argument consistent?* Consistency is the hallmark of reason. Consistency requires that our reasons be universal unless there is a compelling difference between situations that renders the reason inapplicable. The notion of universality is captured in the concept of ought. We *ought* not to kill unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Self-defense is an instance of a situation where the rule “do not kill” may be inapplicable. The personal pleasure someone may get from killing, on the other hand, is not a compelling reason for overriding the command “Do not kill.”

In deciding whether an argument is consistent, ask yourself if the writer applies the principles put forth in the theory to everyone. The notion of impartiality is found in almost all moral systems. Impartiality requires that everyone’s interest count the same and that everyone be treated with equal respect. Impartiality rules out giving preferential treatment to or discriminating against a certain group. If a philosopher argues that different groups should receive different treatment, then he or she must provide justification for deviating from the principle of impartiality. For example, such a justification is important in discussions involving the moral status and rights of non-human animals, unborn humans, and the environment. If the writer cannot provide good reasons for differential treatment, then the requirement of impartiality should not be set aside.

Sometimes the premises themselves contain contradictions. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau claims that virtue is one thing for men and another for women. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her criticism of Rousseau’s moral theory, accuses him of being inconsistent in his definition of virtue. Some ethical relativists—although claiming that moral principles are relative and differ from person to person—may also try to sneak in universal moral principles, such as tolerance, through the back door. When writers claim both that there *are* universal moral principles and that there are *no* universal moral principles, they are being logically inconsistent. If the theory contains inconsistencies and internal contradictions, it should be rejected.

5. *What are the implications of the theory, and are these implications acceptable?* Some moral theories have unstated implications that most people find unacceptable. According to emotivists, for example, moral statements are neither



true nor false but merely expressions of feelings. One of the implications of this theory is that the actions of the Nazis during World War II were neither right nor wrong but merely morally neutral expressions of their feelings.

Cultural relativists, who equate morality with cultural norms, also have a problem with horrific events such as the Holocaust. Daniel Goldhagen examines some of these implications in the selection from *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Because the implications of these two theories are unacceptable to most rational people, both theories fell out of favor with scholars after World War II.

6. *Does the theory offer practical guidance for living the good life?* Moral theories do not exist apart from real life. A good theory offers practical suggestions for how we should act and live a better life. According to Aristotle, for instance, the ultimate purpose of studying ethics is in order to become good.

Ask yourself if the theory provides practical guidelines for making everyday moral decisions. Also ask whether these guidelines are within human capability. Sometimes the guidelines, such as universal love, are too vague and abstract to be useful in actual application. Just as a house without windows or doors may be structurally sound, some moral theories, although logically consistent, offer little guidance for living our lives. Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism and Confucian ethics, in contrast, are concerned primarily with offering guidelines for making practical moral decisions.

7. *Does the theory work in unusual situations or when there is a conflict between moral values?* A theory should also provide guidelines for resolving a conflict between moral values and help in discussing controversial moral issues. Many theories are fine for dealing with relatively straightforward situations. However, their weakness becomes evident when we try to apply them to unusual situations or to a moral dilemma.

For example, Immanuel Kant, in his insistence that moral principles never come into conflict, has been criticized for not taking sufficient account of situations where lying, to use an example, may be the only way to save a life. Utilitarianism has also been criticized for allowing the execution of an innocent person if it will restore social harmony. Whether these criticisms are justified is up to you, as a critical reader, to decide.

8. *Does the theory pass the test of publicity?* The test of publicity requires that rational persons, and especially those who will be affected by the theory or position, agree with it. Confucius refers to this as the *principle of reciprocity*: "Do not do unto others as you would not want others to do unto you." To share the perspective of those affected by a theory, we must use our imagination to put ourselves in their place. For example, in deciding the morality of same-sex marriage, one of the questions you should ask yourself is which position you would find most acceptable from a moral point of view if you were gay or lesbian. The Golden Rule, which is basic to so many moral positions, is an example of a moral principle that passes the test of publicity. Slavery, as a moral position, would not pass the test of publicity.