

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
ETHICS

Lawrence C. Becker, *editor*

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Encyclopedia of **ETHICS**

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A-K

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Introduction

The *Encyclopedia of Ethics* is a reference work in philosophy addressed to an audience of scholars and university students but fully accessible to others with a serious interest in the field. Two hundred sixty-seven writers from around the world have contributed to it as either editors or authors.

The encyclopedia contains 435 signed articles (see the List of Entries) on topics in meta-ethics, ethical theory, perennial moral problems, and political, social, and legal theory. There are survey articles on trends and eras; summaries of leading concepts, principles and theoretical problems; and biographical entries for philosophers whose place in the history of ethics is secure. There are also biographical entries for a few contemporary philosophers whose seniority and eminence make their inclusion appropriate.

Articles vary in length from 500 to 9,000 words, but only a few are at the extremes (seventy percent of the articles fall between 1,000 and 5,000 words). Each article has a bibliography, and the usual cross references and see-also references are supplemented with two indexes: an analytical index of the text of the articles and an index of authors cited in the bibliographies. All of the articles were peer reviewed prior to being accepted for publication.

The core of this encyclopedia is its coverage of philosophical ethics as it is practiced among English-speaking academics. This core is densely populated with rather narrowly focused articles (e.g., pride, humility), many of which are accompanied by broadly conceived surveys (e.g., virtue ethics, virtues). With respect to space constraints, topics clearly in this core were given priority over topics in areas such as religious ethics, political theory, philosophy of law, and social theory. The editors generally deferred to existing and planned reference works in other languages and other disciplines for detailed coverage of their areas.

The scope of the encyclopedia, however, is considerably broader than its core might suggest. Philosophical ethics has been defined here broadly enough to include the theory-oriented parts of applied ethics. In addition, the encyclopedia has lengthy survey articles on the history and current status of philosophical ethics in other areas of the world; major traditions in religious ethics; the relation of philosophical ethics to technology, religion, law, literature, and social, political and economic systems and theories; the relation of philosophical ethics to important contemporary social/political movements and problems; and the relation of philosophical ethics to other fields of philosophy. Moreover, the editors have given careful attention to theories of rational choice and economic analysis; feminist ethics; virtue theory; and moral psychology. The encyclopedia also includes a thirteen-part, multi-authored, 60,000 word history of ethics from the pre-Socratics through the first nine decades of the twentieth century.

The idea for this encyclopedia came from Gary Kuris of Garland Publishing in the fall of 1986. By the end of that year, the editor and co-editor had developed a general plan for the project. At that point, and for some time following, the plan called for a one-volume work of approximately 750,000 words, with perhaps 350 entries. A four-year timetable was agreed upon.

By the spring of 1987, fifty scholars had joined the board of consulting editors. Over the next eight months, through three rounds of proposals and extensive correspondence, the editors and consulting editors first increased a list of some 900 possibilities for articles to over 1,200, and then pared it down

INTRODUCTION

to 370, each matched to prospective authors. Over the next year, that list was refined, largely as a product of the editor's correspondence with the scholars who agreed to write articles. By the spring of 1988, the number of entries had grown to over 450, and all of the articles had been commissioned. Of necessity, deadlines were widely staggered. The first completed article arrived in April 1988, three weeks after it was commissioned; the last arrived in January 1991. By that point the project was eight months behind schedule, but had grown from a projected one-volume work of 750,000 words to a two-volume work of over a million words.

Almost all of the peer reviewing was done by consulting editors, some of whom read as many as a dozen articles, and by the editor, who read them all and corresponded with authors about changes. The co-editor did the name and date authority work for all of the articles, edited them for conformity with the project's guidelines, and standardized the form of the bibliographies. After further copyediting by the publisher, authors read the proofs of their articles. Final responsibility for the content of the articles rests, of course, with the authors.

A word about the selection of articles on contemporary figures: For obvious reasons, encyclopediasts sometimes decline to supply articles on living figures. The editors believe this is generally a wise policy, and originally proposed to follow it. We were, however, quickly overruled by a nearly unanimous board of consulting editors, whose advice on the matter was confirmed by a much wider circle of contributors. The consensus was that a few (and only a few) contemporaries should be included, but there was no consensus (beyond two names) about who the unlucky few should be. The editor alone bears the responsibility for the result. His policy was first to limit the candidates for such articles to the most senior members of the profession (those in or nearing retirement), and then to choose from the list of senior people whose work is widely cited and discussed only those who are known primarily for advancing a substantive theory of their own, rather than for critiques of others. (Even so, the list was longer than a few, and in fact was longer than what is published here. Three articles that were commissioned did not come in on time.) It should be noted that the subjects of these articles were not consulted about who should write them, or indeed about whether they should be written.

Good encyclopedias are like beneficial labyrinths: to get the benefit, one must trace a long, smooth path from an entrance to a prize, and thence to an exit. There are many paths in this work that lead from an arbitrarily chosen entry through 200 or more articles back to the original entry. There is at least one path that leads from a particular entry through every other article in the work. Some dead ends are inevitable (informative, even).

Users are the final arbiters of devices such as encyclopedias and labyrinths. All of us who have worked on this project hope for astute users. Such readers will understand that no encyclopedia in philosophy can be complete or definitive, nor should it try to be, for that would mean trying to stop the philosophical enterprise itself. They will understand that no encyclopedia in philosophy should be used as a substitute for philosophy, or as a substitute for a direct encounter with the work it describes. And they will not refuse, at the end of the first article they read, to enter the labyrinth.

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Note on Usage

The articles in this encyclopedia are listed in letter-by-letter alphabetical order, ignoring the spaces between the words in their titles. Thus for example the article on “Mo Tzu” appears after the article on “Motives”. (By contrast, in a word-by-word alphabetization scheme, “Mo Tzu” would appear nearly sixty pages earlier, before the article on “Mohammed”.) The List of Entries gives a convenient overview of the arrangement.

The dates given for people and events have been checked against standard biographical and bibliographical sources. In some cases, however, where standard sources differ from each other or from the results of more recent scholarship, we have followed the advice of our authors. This is especially applicable to the articles on Greek and Chinese antiquity, where we have often used approximate dates even though precise dates are listed in some sources. In the modern era, such problems are fewer, but even here the reader should be wary. Sources differ in minor ways. We are reliably informed, for example, that Richard Cumberland was born in 1632, as we have given it, and not in 1631 as many sources have it.

We have not given birth dates for living figures (except in the titles of articles devoted to them). But otherwise it has been our policy to insert birth and death dates at the first mention, in each article, of a historical person's name. We have also typically supplied the date of first publication, or where that is not applicable, the date of composition for non-recent works. Some authors have naturally protested the resulting typographical clutter and, in a few cases, have insisted on reducing it. But we think readers will find the information worth the added reading effort.

Following general practice for encyclopedias, there are no footnotes, and parenthetical references in the text have been kept to a minimum. In those few places where citations are necessary, the page references are given in the relevant listing in the bibliography.

The see-also references for each article are included in the final sentence of the article's text, just prior to the bibliography. These references do not usually include the names of persons mentioned in the text.

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Hollins College supported the first three years of this project, not only by providing accounting support and superb duplicating and mailing services, but by reducing the editor's teaching load from three to two courses per semester for part of that time, and by allowing the co-editor to take an unpaid half-time leave from her library duties during one academic year. Special thanks for these arrangements go to our colleagues at Hollins—Allie Frazier and Nickolas Pappas (Philosophy), Timothy Hill (Treasurer), Brenda Laprade (Duplicating and Mailing), Bridget Puzon (Dean), and Richard Kirkwood (Librarian). The College of William and Mary, where the project was completed, furnished a course reduction for the editor during a crucial semester. Thanks go to James Harris (Chair of the Philosophy Department) and David Lutzer (Dean of Arts and Sciences) for that accommodation. The life of an encyclopediast prior to computers is just barely imaginable to us, and it is not a pretty picture. William Singleton, Director of Computer Services at Hollins College, was unfailingly helpful in all matters concerning software and hardware. Thanks also to programmers Norman Swartz, D. Lynn Fauss, and Paul Brest. The reference and cataloging departments of Fishburn Library at Hollins and of Swem Library at William and Mary have also been extremely helpful.

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Family and friends have been unfailingly supportive. They have pressed us to speak about the project only when it seemed we needed to (or, at any rate, only when it seemed inevitable that we would). They have suffered in silence, and celebrated each small milestone with us. Our love to them all.

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