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培文书系·社会科学系列

Great Traditions in Ethics

伦理学经典文选

丹尼斯
[美] 怀特 编
彼德弗伦德

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需要重申的是，作者本人的有些观点和结论尚需商榷，有些甚至是不可取的，为此提请读者加以甄别。书中的观点均不代表出版社观点。

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Authors

Saint Thomas Aquinas • Selections from the *Summa Contra Gentiles,* Book iii, and the *Summa Theologica,* Articles i–iii and v–viii

Aristotle • Selections from the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Books i–ii, vi, and x

Saint Augustine • Selections from the *Enchiridion,* Chapters xi–xii, xcvi, and c–ci, and *The City of God,* Books v, xii, xiv, and xix–xxii

A. J. Ayer and C. L. Stevenson • Selections from Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic,* Chapter vi, and Stevenson's "The Nature of Ethical Disagreement"

Annette Baier • Selections from "Trust and Antitrust"

Kurt Baier • Selections from *The Moral Point of View*

Joseph Butler • Selections from *Sermons* i–iii and xi and the *Preface*

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Thomas Hobbes • Selections from the *Leviathan,* Chapters vi, xiii–xv, and xxix–xxx, and *Philosophical Rudiments,* Chapter i

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Immanuel Kant • Selections from *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals,* First and Second Sections

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John Stuart Mill • Selections from *Utilitarianism,* Chapters ii–iii

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Plato • Selections from the *Gorgias* and the *Republic,* Books i–ii, iv, vi–vii, and ix

John Rawls • Selections from "Justice as Reciprocity"

W. D. Ross • Selections from *The Right and the Good*

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Henry Sidgwick • Selections from *The Methods of Ethics*

Benedict de Spinoza • Selections from *On the Improvement of the Understanding* and the *Ethics,* Chapters i–v

Bernard Williams • Selections from *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*

Preface

The eleventh edition of *Great Traditions in Ethics* contains a new chapter on John Mackie. Added to the existing chapter on Ayer and Stevenson it makes a pair of chapters on non-cognitivist theories. Together with the chapters on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Williams, these make up a group of chapters on figures who depart from or question, in one way or another, the traditional projects of philosophical ethics, but who nevertheless add to the body of philosophical thinking about ethics.

As many have noticed, philosophy and with it ethics have in recent times become more centered around problems rather than being directed at constructing all-embracing theories. Whether this is good or bad is controversial, but it is a fact, and it is reflected in the character of the last fifteen chapters or so of this book. Nevertheless the organization of the book has been retained, with each chapter devoted to one or two figures, and with the chapters being arranged more or less chronologically. A topic-by-topic arrangement might recommend itself, but there are difficulties in finding an arrangement that seems satisfactory from all points of view.

In view of the diversity of theories and points of view in ethics, we believe that the fairest way to introduce the subject to readers who have no previous acquaintance with it is to direct them to representative primary sources. To lessen somewhat the difficulty of reading the original writings, without sacrificing accuracy or reducing the challenge of ethics, we have subjected the material to some internal editing. By this means, we have eliminated what we regard as extraneous to the central argument, and, through rearranging the components of some of the theories, we have clarified the major lines of their arguments. The brief biographies and introductions at the beginning of each chapter suggest, respectively, something of the theorists' personal and historical backgrounds and of their general philosophical positions as they bear on ethical theory. In short, we hope that we have provided a guide to ethical theory for the beginning student.

As far as we were able, we presented each theory in its best light and followed as closely as possible what we believe the author intended. Beyond the exercise of judgment in selecting writers and passages to be used, and apart from our statements in the introductory chapter, we have endeavored to keep our own views and interests from prejudicing the presentation of the theories we treat. We have sought to put forward material that can serve as a basis for classroom work, not as a substitute for lectures and discussions.

Completeness has not been our goal. It is not within the compass of a single volume to contain, even in brief form, all the ethical theories that may deserve to be called

classics. Moreover, it was not feasible to present any theory in its entirety. We made no attempt at the delicate and tenuous task of classifying types of ethical theory; rather, we adopted a simple historical arrangement of chapters. Each chapter is an independent unit—although there are occasional cross-references—because it is desirable to leave the decision of a suitable order of treatment to the users of the book.

For the reader, we have undertaken to make the classical theories of ethics more readily accessible. On the assumption that comprehension is a necessary precondition of intelligent criticism, we have been interested primarily in the exposition of points of view that are important in the history of ethical theory, leaving for a later stage of ethical inquiry their analysis, criticism, comparison, and interpretation. Within each chapter, the constituent ideas of the theory treated have been set off from one another, and connecting passages serve both as transitions and explanations of important concepts. In addition, where we deemed it necessary, we have defined technical terms. At the close of each chapter, we have included a list of questions, a key to selections, and a guide to additional reading.

We are as always thankful to reviewers and others who have made suggestions that have both led to improvements and minimized mistakes. In particular these are Alan Goldman, College of William and Mary; Jasper Stewart Hunt, Minnesota State University; and Lawrence R. Pasternack, Oklahoma State University.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"The Unexamined Life Is Not Worth Living"

"The unexamined life is not worth living." In these terms, Socrates—the first great moral philosopher of Western civilization—stated the creed of reflective individuals and set the task of ethical theory. To seek, with the aid of reason, a consistent and correct ideal of life is the traditional goal of moral philosophers. Yet to search for basic moral principles and to attempt to solve problems concerning the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, is not the exclusive province of philosophers. Writers, government leaders, historians, and ordinary citizens also conduct ethical inquiry, although they may not call it that. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address,* and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* as well as discussions at the bridge table and in college dormitories, exemplify at various levels the same questing spirit and desire for wisdom.

Flowing beneath every human action is the current of ethical significance, and in all ages and places, questions about moral conduct and moral principles are posed and answers attempted. "To be or not to be?" is at its heart a question of ethics. And "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them"—this is, indeed, a difficult decision. In this, Hamlet's dilemma is typical of the problems that confront the ethical theorist and the sensitive lay person alike. They are among the most subtle and pressing problems of life.

The answers to ethical questions, whether as momentous as the agonized query of Hamlet or as trivial as the smallest matter of conformity to convention, are not to be found at the back of the book. The various means that have been devised to deal with ethical problems range from the mute acceptance of authority, through the poet's inspiration and the gambler's hunch, to the moral philosopher's direct and systematic analysis of the foundations of morality. Admittedly, the philosopher's commitment "to seek the truth, and to follow it wherever it leads" involves a harsh discipline. To earn the

title of "rational animal," we are not obligated to think through every moral situation to its very roots; but once we go beyond immediate action to a consideration of the reasons for our actions, we are in reason's territory, and there, logic rules. In truth, we have only two alternatives: to reflect on moral matters or to remain silent. We would have to use reason even to argue for the soundness of refraining from rational discussion. The philosopher Epictetus, confronted by a skeptic, made plain the inescapability of committing ourselves to the use of logic:

> When one of the company said, "Convince me that logic is necessary," Epictetus asked: "Do you wish me to demonstrate this to you?" "Yes." "Then must I use a demonstrative form of argument?" And when this was admitted: "Then how will you know whether I argue fallaciously?" And as the man was silent: "Don't you see," said Epictetus, "how even you yourself acknowledge that *logic is necessary, since without its assistance you cannot so much as know whether it is necessary or not?*"

Principles and Practices

To think about morality, deeply and honestly, is the main business of ethical theorists, and in this, we can all participate to some degree. But more often than not, it is an instructive and chastening experience to seek out the theory that lies beneath actual practice, for we can then see the inconsistencies of ordinary moral thought and practice. We condemn as lazy the person who chooses the life of a beachcomber, yet we envy and admire those who are sufficiently wealthy to spend their time doing nothing. We disapprove of the "climber" who is someone we dislike, yet we praise the same quality when it appears in a "go-getter" who is our friend. We say that "honesty is the best policy" and yet acknowledge in our actions and words the good taste and practicality of telling white, gray, and black lies. It would be difficult to reconcile the principles underlying such judgments, and we can see why systematic ethical theorists usually distrust common-sense morality. On examination, it proves to be a murky and illogical collection of rules bound together only by the slender threads of chance and custom.

When observation and experience reveal to us how great the distance is between the high-flown ideals to which people give lip service and the down-to-earth expediency of the morality they practice, we may lose confidence in the efficacy of moral principles and theories. But moral principles cannot be escaped. Even the most cynical moral opportunists, in their recommendation that we act in each case only to promote our best interests, are setting up a principle to govern behavior. It is different *in content* but not *in kind* from the Socratic ideal of the life of reason or the Utilitarian goal of "the greatest good of the greatest number." Our moral integrity suffers when our principles are allowed to remain underground or when they are inconsistent with each other or with our actions.

We all have beliefs in accordance with which we judge actions and characters, our own and those of others, to be right or wrong, good or bad; we have aspirations that we strive to realize; and we have a conception, dim or clear, of the best way to live. When we endeavor to fill in the blank places in our moral theory, to eliminate as far as possible contradictory directives for behavior; when we endeavor to know what principles we act upon and how these are related to the principles to which we give intellectual assent; and when we endeavor to know *why* we think an ideal or moral judgment