

# **Taking SIDES**

**Clashing Views  
on Controversial  
Moral Issues**

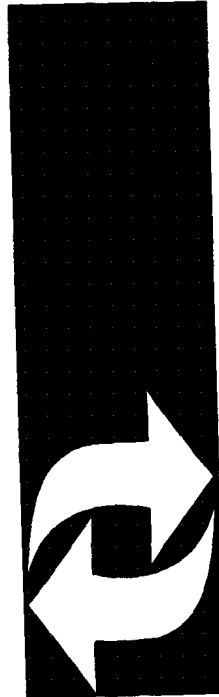
**Fifth Edition**

**Stephen Satris**



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**Clashing Views on  
Controversial  
Moral Issues**



**Fifth Edition**

**Edited, Selected, and with Introductions by**

**Stephen Satris**

*Clemson University*

**Dushkin Publishing Group/Brown & Benchmark Publishers  
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## *To my mother and father*

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# PREFACE

This text contains 40 essays, arranged in pro and con pairs, that address 20 controversial issues in morality and moral philosophy. Each of the issues is expressed in terms of a single question in order to draw the lines of debate more clearly.

Some of the questions that are included here have been in the mainstream of moral philosophy for hundreds of years and are central to the discipline. I have not shied away from abstract questions about moral knowledge, relativism, and the relationship between morality and religion. Other questions relate to specific topics of contemporary concern, such as euthanasia, abortion, affirmative action, and drug legalization.

The authors of the selections included here take a strong stand on a given issue and provide their own best defenses of a pro or con position. The selections were chosen for their usefulness in defending a position and for their accessibility to students. The authors are philosophers, scientists, and social critics from a wide variety of backgrounds. Each presents us with a determinant answer on an issue—even if we ultimately cannot accept the answer as our own.

Each issue is accompanied by an *introduction*, which sets the stage for debate, and each issue concludes with a *postscript* that summarizes the debate, considers other views on the issue, and suggests additional readings. The introductions and postscripts do not preempt what is the reader's own task: to achieve a critical and informed view of the issue at stake.

*Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Moral Issues* is a tool to encourage critical thought on important moral issues. Readers should not feel confined to the views expressed in the selections. Some readers may see important points on both sides of an issue and may construct for themselves a new and creative approach, which may incorporate the best of both sides or provide an entirely new vantage point for understanding.

**Changes to this edition** This new edition is significantly different from the fourth edition. Altogether there are five completely new issues: *Is There Such a Thing as Moral Knowledge?* (Issue 1); *Can the Free Market Solve the Problems of the Environment?* (Issue 4); *Should There Be a Market in Body Parts?* (Issue 7); *Is Surrogate Motherhood Wrong?* (Issue 13); and *Is Overpopulation a Myth?* (Issue 18). In addition, for two of the issues retained from the previous edition, the issue question has been significantly modified and both selections have been

replaced in order to focus the debate more sharply and to bring it up to date: Issue 11 on pornography and Issue 17 on affirmative action. For the issues on the relationship between morality and religion (Issue 3), "hate speech" (Issue 9), homosexuality (Issue 10), and drug legalization (Issue 14), one or both of the selections have been replaced to provide new points of view. In all, there are 18 new readings in this edition. I have also revised and updated the issue introductions and postscripts where necessary.

**A word to the instructor** *An Instructor's Manual With Test Questions* (multiple-choice and essay) is available through the publisher for the instructor using *Taking Sides* in the classroom. A general guidebook, *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom*, which discusses methods and techniques for using the pro-con approach in any classroom setting, is also available.

**Acknowledgments** I would like to thank Mimi Egan, publisher for the Taking Sides series, of Dushkin Publishing Group/Brown & Benchmark Publishers for her valuable editorial assistance and sound advice. In working on this revision, I also received useful suggestions from many of the users of the fourth edition, and I was able to incorporate several of their recommendations in this edition. I particularly wish to thank the following:

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Stephen Sattris  
Clemson University

# INTRODUCTION

## Thinking About Moral Issues

Stephen Satris

### GETTING STARTED

If you were asked in your biology class to give the exact number of bones in the average human foot, you could consult your textbook, or you could go to the library and have the librarian track down the answer, or you could ask your friend who always gets A's in biology. Most likely you have not previously had any reason to consider this question, but you do know for certain that it has one right answer, which you will be expected to provide for the final exam.

What do you do, however, when faced with a moral question like one of the ones raised in this text? Where do you begin when asked, for example, Does society have an obligation to care for the less well off? Maybe this is something you have already thought about, particularly if you have ever been stopped by a streetperson and asked for money. You may already have formed some opinions or made some assumptions—or maybe you even have conflicting opinions. Whereas it is a relatively straightforward matter to find out how many bones there are in the human foot, in addressing moral issues, understanding cannot be acquired as easily. Someone cannot report back to you on the right answer. You will have to discuss the ideas raised by these moral questions and determine the answers for yourself. And you will have to arrive at an answer through reason and careful thought; you cannot just rely on your *feelings* to answer these questions. Keep in mind, too, that these are questions you will be facing your entire life—understanding will not end with the final exam.

In approaching the issues in this book, you should maintain an open mind toward both sides of the question. Many readers will already have positions on many of the issues raised in this book. But if you are committed to one side of an issue, it will be more difficult for you to see, appreciate, and, most important, learn from the opposing position. Therefore, you first ought to ask yourself what your own assumptions about an issue are; become aware of any preconceived notions you may have. And then, after such reflection, you ought to assume the posture of an impartial judge. If you have a strong prior attachment to one side, that should not prevent you from giving a sympathetic ear to the opposing side.

Once the arguments have been laid out and you have given them careful consideration, you do not want to remain suspended in the middle. *Now* is the time for informed judgment.

A natural dramatic sequence is played out for each of the 20 issues discussed in *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Moral Issues*. A question is posed, and you must open yourself to hear each author's arguments, reasons, and examples, which are meant to persuade you to take the author's viewpoint. But then comes the second part of the drama. Having heard and considered both sides of an issue, what will *you* say? What understanding of the issue can *you* achieve?

You can choose aspects of the yes answer and aspects of the no answer and weave them together to construct a coherent whole. You can accept one answer and build some qualifications or limitations into it. Or you might be stimulated to think of a completely new angle on the issue.

Be aware of two dangers. The first is a premature judgment or fixed opinion that rules out a fair hearing of the opposing side. The second danger is to lack a judgment after having considered the issue. In this case, two contrary positions simply cannot both be right, and it is up to the reader to make an effort to distinguish what is acceptable from what is unacceptable in the arguments and positions that have been defended.

## FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

The 20 issues in this book are divided into five sections, or parts. The first section deals with fundamental questions about morality considered as a whole. It is in this context that one might be told that there is no such thing as moral knowledge, or that "it's all relative." The issues in the first part do not directly confront specific moral problems; they question the nature of morality itself.

Already in Part 1, we see something that is a recurring feature of moral thought and of this book: moral issues are interrelated. Suppose, for example, that you answer the question, Is morality relative to culture? in the affirmative and also answer the question, Is morality grounded in religion? in the affirmative. How can these two answers fit together? A positive answer to the second question is generally thought to involve a source for morality that is beyond the customs and traditions of any one particular social group. (It may be possible to maintain affirmative answers to both of these questions, but a person who does so owes us an explanation as to how these two ideas fit together.) Many other issues that at first sight might seem distinct have connections between one another.

A further point, and one that applies not only to the issues in Part 1 but to controversial issues in general, is this: In evaluating any position, you should do so on the merits (or lack of merit) of the specific case that is made. Do not accept or reject a position on the basis of what the position (supposedly) tells you about the author, and do not criticize or defend a position by reducing it to simplistic slogans. The loss of articulation and sophistication that occurs when a complex position is boiled down to a simple slogan is significant and real. For example, a no answer to the question, Is morality grounded in



religion? might be superficially labeled as “antireligion” and a yes answer as “proreligion.” Yet, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who has always been regarded as the foremost theologian of the Christian tradition, would respond with a no to that question. Moral questions are complex, and the reduction of answers to superficial slogans will not be helpful. The questions and issues that are raised here require careful analysis, examination, and argumentation.

## MORALITY AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL THOUGHT

Part 2 includes several questions that have to do with ways of looking at society and the world, turning a critical eye to social arrangements, and considering possible changes. In many ways the issues raised in this section are basic to an understanding of our own place within society and our relationships both to other people and to animals. Issues considered in Part 2 are: Can the free market solve the problems of the environment? Should animals be liberated? Is feminism a positive value for society? Should there be a market in body parts? Does society have an obligation to care for the less well off? and, Should “hate speech” be tolerated?

The question of whether or not the free market can solve the problems of the environment is asking if the free market can solve *all* of the problems of the environment. The question is not whether or not the free market can solve *some* of the problems of the environment. For example, in a given case, the free market may encourage a company to adopt new manufacturing methods that would both reduce its manufacturing costs and benefit the environment. Such a situation would be a good one. But, in general, the free market has been criticized for regarding the environment as a free resource. Manufacturing costs, for example, may be held down by using nearby air or water as a receptacle for unwanted by-products of production. In any case, critics of the free market hold that it encourages profit-making activity regardless of whether it is beneficial or harmful to the environment. And many people would say that this is the root of the problem.

Should animals be liberated? is a question that challenges much that has been taken for granted in our culture and that underlies the ways in which animals are currently treated. Is there such a thing as cruelty to animals and mistreatment of animals? Can animals suffer wrongfully at the hands of human beings? It is difficult to claim exemption from society’s attitude toward animals—an attitude that tends to regard animals as *things* that people may use for their own purposes. Is the call for animal liberation valid, or is it perhaps an expression of sentimentality or hazy thinking?

The question of whether or not feminism is a positive value for society can be taken in a number of ways. Feminism has had an immense impact on society, and most would agree that it has been beneficial. But a further issue is whether or not it has played itself out (or even whether or not it has gone too far). Is there a positive view of society, some future ideal that we can aspire to, that feminism can enable us to envision and pursue?

The question of a market in body parts seems somewhat ghoulish at first glance, but there is a serious need for human organs and that need is not currently being met by the method of donation. Many people would like to see organ donation increase. But, defenders of a market would say, if we are serious about increasing the availability of organs, then we should use the incentives of the market instead of waiting and hoping for voluntary donation. But others feel that a market is inappropriate in this case and look instead to ways of increasing donations.

Does society have an obligation to care for the less well off? Those who support a yes answer to this question would have society, primarily through government agencies, directly provide for the poor. If the poor need food, shelter, and medicine, then this is what would be supplied. Those who support the no position deny that these items should simply be given to the needy. Rather, we should create a thriving economic system in which the poor and needy can find ways to take care of themselves. This is a basic question about what kind of society we judge to be the best.

The question about the toleration of "hate speech" is also a question about what kind of society we judge to be the best. We can anticipate that there will be individuals who hate and that some people will hate others because of their race, gender, ethnic origin, etc. The question is whether or not society should tolerate the open expression of this hatred in the form of speech. For our purposes, whether or not society should tolerate "hate speech" is not a legal question, answerable by reference to the Constitution or prior court cases, but a moral one.

### MORALITY, SEX, AND REPRODUCTION

Part 3 introduces questions about particular moral issues that relate specifically to individuals as sexual and reproductive beings. The questions here are: Should society be more accepting of homosexuality? Is pornography degrading to women? Is abortion immoral? and, Is surrogate motherhood wrong?

Only in the last 20 years or so has a movement for "gay rights" and "gay liberation" in the United States even dared to be active and visible. Prior to that time, public pressure with regard to homosexuality had been consistently negative. It is still largely negative, but there is also a strong belief that what consenting adults do in private is their own business (and not society's business). Homosexuality does not just involve private acts, however. Sexual orientation has at least as much to do with perceptions—with how one views one's own sexual identity and how one sees others—as it does with private acts. This issue is worth exploring not only for possible insights into homosexuality but also for possible insights into wider social arrangements and institutions.

A similar recommendation can be made about the question, Is pornography degrading to women? An exploration of this question, and associated

social observations, might lead not only to insight into pornography itself but also to insight into larger social phenomena. Feminist criticism of pornography, represented by Helen Longino's selection, must be recognized as quite different from more traditional complaints about such things as "dirty pictures." Longino and others invite us to consider the matter in a new light; and when we do, that light may be turned onto other social phenomena too.

The question, Is abortion immoral? is not at all a new one. It threatens to polarize people into pro-life and pro-choice camps, but it is best to leave such labels and superficial slogans behind. Whenever an issue seems to demand answers very quickly, as this one might, it is better to go slowly and to first consider the arguments, examples, and rationale of each position before making up your mind.

The question, Is surrogate motherhood wrong? is primarily a question about the morality of a woman bearing a child for someone else. The focus here is not about public policy, the law, or a general practice of surrogate motherhood. All these further developments bring problems of their own. Rather, the question here is about the morality of the original idea of surrogate motherhood.

## MORALITY, LAW, AND SOCIETY

This section considers the questions, Should drugs be legalized? Should capital punishment be abolished? Is euthanasia immoral? and, Is affirmative action unfair?

Asking whether or not drugs should be legalized raises a number of points that require consideration. Here, we are asking about the future and about what kind of society we think is worth aiming for. Should we strive for a society in which certain substances are available on the open market, with full legal status and quality control, or one in which certain substances are not allowed and violators are dealt with by the law? As the authors of the readings in this issue indicate, whatever the legal status of drugs, there will always be social costs.

Many subsidiary questions enter into the issue about capital punishment. Does the death penalty deter crime? Is it the only way to give some criminals what they deserve? Does it fall unfairly on minorities? Is there a worldwide contemporary movement away from the death penalty? And, finally, even if we had the answers to all these questions, is there a way of using those answers to address the overarching question of whether or not capital punishment should be abolished?

Is euthanasia immoral? is another question of life and death. In addressing this question, it might be useful to keep in mind the distinction between voluntary euthanasia (where the person who is killed has specifically requested this) and involuntary euthanasia (where no such request has been made). Another important factor is the physical, mental, and emotional condition of

the person who makes this request. Could it be that euthanasia is called for in some cases but not in others? Or is euthanasia always wrong?

The final topic discussed in this section is affirmative action, a policy that is intended to address problems arising from the history of race relations in the United States. Affirmative action can be seen as backward-looking or forward-looking. If it is a form of compensation or a response to previous injustices, then it is backward-looking; it aims to justify itself by looking at the past. If it is a method for promoting a more racially integrated and just society, then it is forward-looking. Programs of affirmative action, however, have been attacked as reverse discrimination. Sometimes affirmative action is thought of as an unjust means to a just end—an unfair tilting of the playing field in order to help certain players.

### MORALITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

Since many legal matters only extend as far as a country's boundaries, and since morality is often associated with legality, moral concerns might be thought to be confined within one country's boundaries. But this would be a mistaken view. In the absence of any special theory to the contrary, it seems that moral issues do not radically change—as the law might well change—when we cross international borders.

The issues considered in Part 5 are by no means the only issues that involve the world outside one's own country, but they do raise questions that specifically address matters of government, international relations, and the global population. The questions are: Is overpopulation a myth? Are human rights basic to justice? and, Do rich nations have an obligation to help poor nations?

The question of whether or not overpopulation is a myth confronts the troubling possibility that there may be too many people for the earth to handle. Of course, if overpopulation is indeed a myth, then it is not a concern. But if it is real, then what should be done? Can population growth be held down? How would this be enforced?

The question, Are human rights basic to justice? asks whether or not there are limits to what anyone—even a government or country—can demand of people. If there are basic human rights, then whatever system of law and justice is established by a given country must be a system that recognizes these human rights. But a contrary view would assert that the idea of human rights is only a Western idea that is not necessarily recognized on a universal basis.

The last issue, which asks whether or not rich nations have an obligation to help poor nations, can also be considered in terms of the global village. Catastrophic natural disasters and political turmoil bring suffering and even starvation to the people of some nations. Is there an obligation on the part of more financially stable nations to assist in such cases? Or is reference to a global village inappropriate here? What responsibility does our own nation have toward the people of distant nations?

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<p>Philosopher James Rachels argues that there is indeed such a thing as moral knowledge and that it can be attained through careful attention to facts, logic, and argument. British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) argues that there is no such thing as moral knowledge and that morality is purely subjective.</p>	
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<p>Canadian philosopher Jan Narveson argues that the free market, not the government, can best determine how to deal with environmental problems. American philosopher Tony Smith holds that the extension of private property rights and capitalism to environmentally sensitive areas is no guarantee that environmentally sound practices will result.</p>		
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<p>Australian philosopher Peter Singer argues that since animals can suffer pain, and since pain is a bad experience for whatever being has that experience, human beings need to take the suffering of animals into consideration. British philosopher Michael P. T. Leahy argues that although it may be necessary to be more humane to animals, drastic changes in human behavior toward animals are not called for.</p>		
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- NO: Stephen G. Post**, from "Organ Volunteers Serve Body Politic,"  
*Insight* 118

Policy analyst Merrill Matthews, Jr., argues that a market in organs would increase organ availability, put choices into the hands of people, and help save lives. Stephen G. Post, a biomedical ethicist, argues that the commercialization of organ donation would lead to poorer quality organs and a decline in moral idealism.

- ISSUE 8. Does Society Have an Obligation to Care for the Less Well Off?** 124

- YES: Trudy Govier**, from "The Right to Eat and the Duty to Work,"  
*Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 126

- NO: Irving Kristol**, from *Two Cheers for Capitalism* 135

Canadian philosopher Trudy Govier argues that society does have an obligation to care for the less well off and that welfare should be provided without being made contingent upon something. Author and social critic Irving Kristol argues that society should promote economic growth in general, not simply redistribute wealth to the less well off.

- ISSUE 9. Should "Hate Speech" Be Tolerated?** 142

- YES: Jonathan Rauch**, from "In Defense of Prejudice: Why Incendiary Speech Must Be Protected," *Harper's Magazine* 144

- NO: Stanley Fish**, from "There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing Too," *Boston Review* 153

Writer and social commentator Jonathan Rauch argues that intellectual pluralism, which tolerates the verbal expression of various forms of bigotry, should be promoted. Professor of law Stanley Fish argues that there is no such thing as a right to "free speech" and that "hate speech" should therefore not be protected.

- PART 3 MORALITY, SEX, AND REPRODUCTION** 163

- ISSUE 10. Should Society Be More Accepting of Homosexuality?** 164

- YES: Richard D. Mohr**, from *A More Perfect Union: Why Straight America Must Stand Up for Gay Rights* 166

- NO: Carl F. Horowitz**, from "Homosexuality's Legal Revolution,"  
*The Freeman* 175



Professor of philosophy Richard D. Mohr defends homosexuality against charges that it is unnatural and immoral, and he calls for greater social acceptance of homosexuality. Carl F. Horowitz, a policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, argues that legal acceptance of homosexuality has gone too far.

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**ISSUE 11. Is Pornography Degrading to Women? 186**

**YES: Helen E. Longino**, from "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A Closer Look," in Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* 188

**NO: Alan Soble**, from "Pornography: Defamation and the Endorsement of Degradation," *Social Theory and Practice* 198

Philosopher Helen E. Longino argues that pornography defames women, endorses the degradation of women, and contributes to a sexist culture that fosters psychological and physical violence against women. Philosopher Alan Soble contends that portrayals of degradation do not necessarily endorse it and that pornography is not responsible for violence against women.

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**ISSUE 12. Is Abortion Immoral? 208**

**YES: Don Marquis**, from "Why Abortion Is Immoral," *The Journal of Philosophy* 210

**NO: Jane English**, from "Abortion and the Concept of a Person," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 218

Professor of philosophy Don Marquis argues that abortion is generally wrong because it deprives the individual of a future that he or she would otherwise have. Philosopher Jane English (1947–1978) argues that there is no well-defined line dividing persons from nonpersons and that some abortions are morally justifiable.

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**ISSUE 13. Is Surrogate Motherhood Wrong? 228**

**YES: Herbert T. Krimmel**, from "The Case Against Surrogate Parenting," *Hastings Center Report* 230

**NO: Ruth Macklin**, from "Is There Anything Wrong With Surrogate Motherhood? An Ethical Analysis," *Law, Medicine and Health Care* 238

Professor of law Herbert T. Krimmel argues that the fundamental wrong in surrogate motherhood lies in a woman's intention to have a baby because she wants to give it away. Philosopher Ruth Macklin argues that there is nothing wrong with the current practice of surrogate motherhood except for the commercial aspect.