

**MORALITY AND ETHICS  
IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

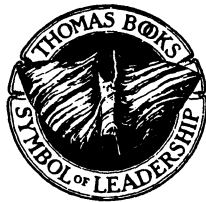


# MORALITY AND ETHICS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

*By*

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**CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.**  
*Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.*

*Published and Distributed Throughout the World by*

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.  
2600 South First Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9265

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© 2004 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07466-6 (hard)  
ISBN 0-398-07467-4 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2003060324

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*Printed in the United States of America  
MM-R-3*

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Aiken, Lewis, R., 1931-  
Morality and ethics in theory and practice / by Lewis R. Aiken.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-398-07466-6 (hard) – ISBN 0-398-07467-4 (pbk.)  
I. Ethics. I. Title.

BJ1012.A38 2004  
170—dc22

2003060324

## PREFACE

The morals and ethical values of a society, as expressed in the thoughts and actions of its members, consist of standards or rules of right and wrong conduct regarding sexual behavior, property, aggressive behavior, and other important social concerns and activities. The results of recent public opinion polls indicate that moral and ethical concerns are among the most important issues facing the United States. Renewed interest in issues related to morality and ethics has been prompted not only by terrorism and other violent crimes against persons that affect our feelings of vulnerability but also by white-collar crimes of the sort publicized in the Enron, Andersen Accounting, WorldCom, Global Crossing, and Tyco financial scandals.

The terms *morality* and *ethics* are similar in meaning and, though not synonymous with religious values, form a part of religious teachings. Both terms are concerned with matters of character, or right and wrong conduct, but *ethics* has a more abstract or systemic meaning than *morality*. According to Coicaud and Warner (2001, p. 3),

Morality is . . . an evaluation of what is good and what is bad in absolute terms. It is a praise of what is good and a condemnation of what is bad. Ethics is different. [It] approaches and organizes what is good and what is bad by keeping sight of the imperative of reciprocity among people, of the need to facilitate their lives together.

The difference between morality and ethics with regard to reciprocity or cooperative social interaction is one reason why moral judgments may be absolutist or intolerant, whereas tolerance—a search for ways of bringing different people together—is more likely to be designated a concern of ethics. The terms morality and ethics are, however, often used interchangeably, and the differences between them are not emphasized in this book.

Traditionally, studies of morality, or *moral philosophy*, along with *natural philosophy* and *mental philosophy*, constituted a part of the broad field philosophy. Psychology and other social sciences began to separate from of philosophy during the late nineteenth century, but they continued to be influenced

by their philosophical roots as well as the cultural climate of the times. Much psychological research and theorizing during the late nineteenth century had a strong “moral” flavor, but the advent of more scientific, behaviorally oriented approaches in psychology and other social sciences during the early twentieth century was accompanied by a declining interest in studies of morality and ethics. The studies of deceit conducted by Hartshorne and May (1928–1930) were a notable exception to this trend.

The research and theorizing of Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1976) and other social and personality psychologists during the mid- and late-twentieth century led to a renewed interest in theories and empirical findings in the areas of morality, ethics, values, beliefs, and related topics. Even more recently, widely publicized episodes of uncontrolled violence, sexual abuse, terrorism, economic exploitation, and other immoral, scandalous behaviors have led to a reemphasis on research and writings concerned with dependable interpretations and explanations of moral development and deviations from traditional moral principles.

This book is a compact but comprehensive treatment concerning moral and ethical behavior. It consists in part of an overview of the historical foundations, concepts, theoretical formulations, assessment, and research methods pertaining to the origins, characteristics, and consequences of moral and ethical behavior. It is an interdisciplinary and eclectic volume, including material from a wide range of scholarly and applied areas. The eleven chapters are grouped into two sections of four and seven chapters each. Section I (Background, Theories, and Research) deals with the history, theories, and investigations in philosophy, theology, psychology, and sociology concerned with morality and ethics. Theories and research on moral development, individual differences in morality, and procedures for controlling and intervening in immoral behavior are given particular attention in Chapters 2–4. The seven chapters in Section II (Applied Ethics) are application-oriented, focusing on ethical issues, principles, and practices in various applied contexts. A set of Questions and Activities that may be even more useful than the chapter material itself in inducing a feeling for and a deeper understanding of the topic is included at the end of each chapter. URLs for websites containing further information on the chapter material are also provided in appendixes of chapters 5–11. A comprehensive glossary, bibliography, and subject and author indexes complete the book.

*Morality and Ethics in Theory and Practice* is written primarily as a professional and source book for students and practitioners who desire a brief overview of concepts, theories, and research on this topic. The book may also serve as a primary or secondary textbook in college or university courses in departments of psychology, sociology, business, law, philosophy, political science, health sciences, and religion. With regard to competing books,

several pages or chapters in books on child psychology deal with the topic of moral development. There are also sections on altruism, bystander intervention, and other ethical behaviors in books on social psychology, and collections of papers on morality in edited books of readings. Many books of readings on morality and ethics in broader and narrower fields of inquiry, and a number of popular interest or self-help books on these topics are also available. More condensed material may also be found in general- or special-purpose encyclopedias and on selected websites. With the possible exception of the textbook by Thiroux (2001), however, the author is not aware of any professional book or text that has the same coverage in as compact or readable format as this book. Be that as it may, the reader will not find complete answers to all moral problems, of either a personal or practical nature, in this book. This is so, at least in part, because:

Man solves his moral problems as he does nearly all his practical problems—not by finding perfect solutions, but by finding solutions that make his state a little better instead of a little worse. (Hazlitt, 1964)

Seeking answers to moral questions and dilemmas is a continuing, sometimes lifelong process, and not one that can be expected, as with most endeavors in life, to yield complete satisfaction.

Here's hoping that you enjoy reading this book as much as I have writing it. I shall be happy to receive comments, questions, and corrections regarding the contents of the book and related matters. Please send them to my e-mail address: lewisaiken@aol.com

LEWIS R. AIKEN, PH.D.





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## Section I

### BACKGROUND, THEORIES, AND RESEARCH

The study of morality and ethics is a multifaceted and multidisciplinary enterprise. Initiated in philosophy and religion during ancient times, it expanded to include the social and life sciences as well as the practical fields of medicine, business, science, politics, education, and other areas of human endeavor. Despite centuries of deliberation and argument, however, the principles, origins, and applicability of moral and ethical precepts continue to be debated. Therefore, the reader of this book will not find a universally agreed-upon set of guidelines or rules for living or a “how to do it” treatise on the moral life. Rather, what is presented and discussed here must be logically evaluated in the light of one’s own personal experience and adapted accordingly.

This book provides a compact and comprehensible introduction to concepts, theories, empirical investigations, and practical applications pertaining to morality and ethics. The four chapters in Section I focus on historical origins, terminology, theoretical underpinnings, assessment and research. In particular, the contributions of philosophy, religious studies, psychology, and cultural anthropology are discussed and evaluated.





## Chapter 1

# PHILOSOPHY OF ETHICS

- Concepts and Structure
  - Morality and Religion
    - Augustine and Aquinas
    - Religion and Culture
    - Divine Command Theory
  - Universality and Relativity of Morals
  - Behavioral Science and Philosophy
  - Some Dichotomies
  - Areas of Ethical Philosophy
- Normative Ethics
  - Theories of Value
  - Theories of Obligation
    - Teleological Theories
    - Deontological Theories
  - Virtue Ethics
- Metaethics
- Applied Ethics

**F**rom the cradle to the grave, we are taught that truth, justice, freedom, respect for life, and love constitute moral principles to live by. We are often unable to live according to these principles, but we recognize their importance for the survival and flourishing of a democratic society.

### CONCEPTS AND STRUCTURE

This book is about *morality* (from Latin “morales”) and *ethics* (from Greek “ethos”), two concepts that are concerned with social standards of right and wrong, or acceptable and unacceptable conduct, regarding sexual behavior,