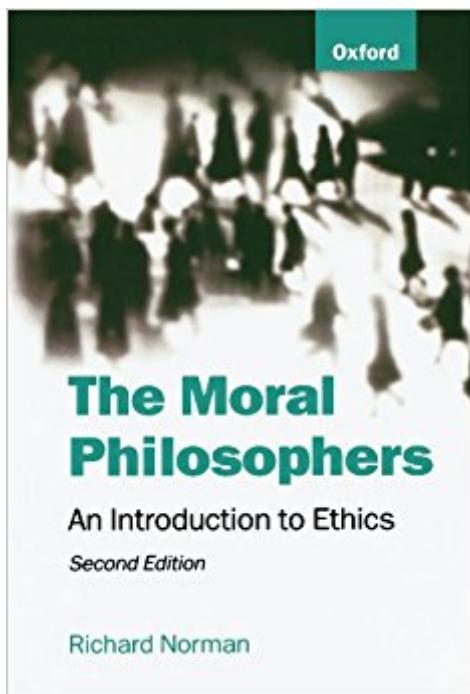


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# The Moral Philosophers: An Introduction To Ethics



## **Synopsis**

The second edition of this accessible book features a new chapter on Nietzsche and an entirely new Part III that covers contemporary utilitarianism, rights-based ethical theories, contractarian ethics and virtue ethics, and recent debates between realism and anti-realism in ethics. The strengths of the first edition--its readability, historical approach, coverage of specific moral philosophers, and detailed recommended reading sections at the beginning of each chapter--combined with the new material make this an essential resource for all readers interested in ethics.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 2 edition (February 26, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0198752164

ISBN-13: 978-0198752165

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.3 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #159,935 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #48 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Aesthetics #122 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Philosophy > Aesthetics #370 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Ethics

## **Customer Reviews**

'The writing throughout is clear and pleasant to read. The factual information . . . is accurate; and the explanatory comments are apposite and illuminating. . . . All told, the main body of this book has a great deal to commend it.' W. D. Z. Hudson, University of Exeter, *Times Higher Education Supplement*

Richard Norman is at University of Kent at Canterbury.

This book came in a reasonable amount of time and was very helpful with material needed for a course I took. The supplier did indeed have it in good condition so my expectations were met. The price was also affordable and I would consider purchasing from this supplier again.

Everything A-Okay with this purchase. Using the text in a course now.

Richard Norman is an interesting moral philosopher in his own right. His work on just war theory in this nuclear age is of note. This book, which purports to be an introductory ethics primer, is written at a rather sophisticated level - really, at one step beyond some of the more popular introductory texts - However, the thicker prose does not obviate its value. The book focuses on the major moral theorists (which is where, I believe, the focus ought to be in an introductory course) and gives a brief - but reasonably sufficient history of the development of moral theory. While Norman does not ignore metaethical (moral epistemic and psychological) issues, he does not delve too deeply, and he barely touches on specific applications of theory (applied ethics). I personally, much prefer his work on the Moderns and compared with the Ancients. The chapters on Hume and Mill, where the development of utilitarianism is discussed are first rate. Also, an unusual bonus, and rather prescient on the writer's part, is the inclusion of a full chapter discussing Hegel's moral theory, rarely found in such general history of ethics approaches. Norman presents a cogent and important argument for such an inclusion. The last two chapters on contemporary ethics provide a solid and useful, if clipped and, at points, somewhat superficial, quick overview of issues in moral theory in the twentieth century. When all is said and done, one can find better introductions to the moral theories of the Greeks and Kant, but the readings on the Utilitarians, Utilitarianism, and their contemporary critics, make the book more than worth reading, and a useful classroom text for more advanced students.

This is a very good and surprisingly ambitious introduction to moral philosophy. In this concise book, Norman aims to acquaint readers with the essential features of important moral philosophers, provide a critical evaluation of these ideas, lead readers through the process of critically evaluating ideas, and sketching an outline of what would constitute an acceptable moral theory. The last is an aim that is well beyond the confines of most textbooks and is quite interesting. The book falls into 3 parts; the work of the Ancients - Plato and Aristotle; the now classic moderns - Hume, Kant, Mill, and Hegel (seen largely through the lens of his British disciple Bradley); and 20th century work, mainly the Anglo-American tradition. There is a chapter on Nietzsche, which serves as a reminder of other possible perspectives. Norman's explications of the Ancients and 20th century work is particularly good. I find the sections on Hume and Kant less satisfactory. The quality of explanation is not as good as the other chapters. This is the one section of the book where Norman's aims of providing a critique of ideas and outlining the characteristics of an acceptable moral theory tend to overpower the strictly explanatory aim. This is not a major flaw. I think Norman also makes some

small but significant errors. In his discussion of Hume's views on property, he ignores the fact that historians suggest that property had a somewhat different meaning in the 18th century, including not just possessions but also aspects of character, reputation, and even rights. I think as well that Norman is incorrect in some of his statements about the important contemporary philosopher John Rawls. Norman wants his readers to be actively engaged in thinking about these issues and his goal of outlining the grounds for an acceptable moral theory is a challenge to readers. This is an unusual but effective teaching method.

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