

OXFORD READERS

Ethics

Edited by Peter Singer

Oxford · New York

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1994

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland Madrid
and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

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First published as an Oxford Reader 1994

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ethics / edited by Peter Singer.
P. cm. — (Oxford readers)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Ethics. I. Singer, Peter II. Series.
BJ1012.E8865 1994 170—dc20 93-2949
ISBN 0-19-289245-2

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by Pure Tech Corporation, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Bookcraft (Bath) Ltd
Midsomer Norton, Avon

b. Criticism

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

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Ivan's Challenge

Tell me honestly, I challenge you—answer me: imagine that you are charged with building the edifice of human destiny, the ultimate aim of which is to bring people happiness, to give them peace and contentment at last, but that in order to achieve this it is essential and unavoidable to torture just one little speck of creation, that same little child beating her chest with her little fists, and imagine that this edifice, has to be erected on her unexpiated tears. Would you agree to be the architect under those conditions? Tell me honestly!

[*The Karamazov Brothers*, trans. Ignat Avsey (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1994), i, part 2, bk. 5, ch. 4. First published in 1879–80.]

W. D. ROSS

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The Personal Character of Duty

The real point at issue between hedonism and utilitarianism on the one hand and their opponents on the other is not whether 'right' means 'productive of so and so'; for it cannot with any plausibility be maintained that it does. The point at issue is that to which we now pass, viz. whether there is any general character which makes right acts right, and if so, what it is. Among the main historical attempts to state a single characteristic of all right actions which is the foundation of their rightness are those made by egoism and utilitarianism. But I do not propose to discuss these, not because the subject is unimportant, but because it has been dealt with so often and so well already, and because there has come to be so much agreement among moral philosophers that neither of these theories is satisfactory. A much more attractive theory has been put forward by Professor Moore: that what makes actions right is that they are productive of more *good* than could have been produced by any other action open to the agent.¹

This theory is in fact the culmination of all the attempts to base rightness on productivity of some sort of result. The first form this attempt takes is

¹ I take the theory which, as I have tried to show, seems to be put forward in *Ethics* rather than the earlier and less plausible theory put forward in *Principia Ethica*.