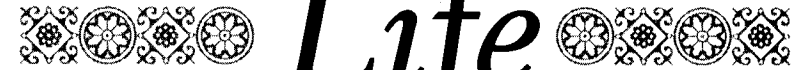


FOURTH EDITION



*The Moral  
Life*



AN INTRODUCTORY READER  
IN ETHICS AND LITERATURE

*Louis P. Pojman  
Lewis Vaughn*

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*Dedicated to  
my colleagues in the English Department  
United States Military Academy  
West Point*



*Where Philosophy and English  
cross-fertilize each other  
in a magnificent manner*

### ***For Further Reflection***

1. Evaluate Fried's argument against lying. Why is lying always wrong—even if only a little wrong? Is his argument sound? Explain.
2. Fried makes several comparisons of lying with other acts: stealing, injuring, counterfeiting, promise-breaking, and violating the social fact of language. Are these good analogies?
3. Fried says lying is exploitative. Is this always the case? Can you think of cases where one lies not to exploit but to help another?

## ***Does Morality Depend on Religion?***

### PLATO

Plato (427–347 B.C.) is one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived and the first philosopher to write systematically about metaphysics and ethics. Here we see his mentor, Socrates, engaged in a dialogue with the self-righteously religious Euthyphro, who is going to court to report his father for having killed a slave. In the course of the discussion Socrates raises the question that is known as the question of the divine command theory of ethics: Is the good good because God loves it, or does God love the good because it is good? The doctrine that morality depends on religion is called the Divine Command Theory, since God's commands determine what is right and wrong.

SOCRATES. But shall we . . . say that whatever all the gods hate is unholy, and whatever they all love is holy: while whatever some

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Reprinted from the *Euthyphro*, translated by William Jowett (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889).

of them love, and others hate, is either both or neither? Do you wish us now to define holiness and unholiness in this manner?

EUTHYPHRO. Why not, Socrates?

SOCR. There is no reason why I should not, Euthyphro. It is for you to consider whether that definition will help you to instruct me as you promised.

EUTH. Well, I should say that holiness is what all the gods love, and that unholiness is what they all hate.

SOCR. Are we to examine this definition, Euthyphro, and see if it is a good one? Or are we to be content to accept the bare assertions of other men, or of ourselves, without asking any questions? Or must we examine the assertions?

EUTH. We must examine them. But for my part I think that the definition is right this time.

SOCR. We shall know that better in a little while, my good friend. Now consider this question. Do the gods love holiness because it is holy, or is it holy because they love it?

EUTH. I do not understand you, Socrates.

SOCR. I will try to explain myself: we speak of a thing being carried and carrying, and being led and leading, and being seen and seeing; and you understand that all such expressions mean different things, and what the difference is.

EUTH. Yes, I think I understand.

SOCR. And we talk of a thing being loved, and, which is different, of a thing loving?

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Now tell me: is a thing which is being carried in a state of being carried, because it is carried, or for some other reason?

EUTH. No, because it is carried.

SOCR. And a thing is in a state of being led, because it is led, and of being seen, because it is seen?

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. Then a thing is not seen because it is in a state of being seen; it is in a state of being seen because it is seen; and a thing is not led because it is in a state of being led; it is in a state of being led because it is led; and a thing is not carried because it is in a state of being carried; it is in a state of being carried because it is carried. Is my meaning clear now, Euthyphro? I mean this: if anything becomes, or is affected, it does not become because it is in a state of becoming; it is in a state of becoming because it becomes; and it is not affected because it is in a state

of being affected; it is in a state of being affected because it is affected. Do you not agree?

EUTH. I do.

SOCR. Is not that which is being loved in a state, either of becoming, or of being affected in some way by something?

EUTH. Certainly.

SOCR. Then the same is true here as in the former cases. A thing is not loved by those who love it because it is in a state of being loved. It is in a state of being loved because they love it.

EUTH. Necessarily.

SOCR. Well, then, Euthyphro, what do we say about holiness? Is it not loved by all the gods, according to your definition?

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. Because it is holy, or for some other reason?

EUTH. No, because it is holy.

SOCR. Then it is loved by the gods because it is holy; it is not holy because it is loved by them?

EUTH. It seems so.

SOCR. But then what is pleasing to the gods is pleasing to them, and is in a state of being loved by them, because they love it?

EUTH. Of course.

SOCR. Then holiness is not what is pleasing to the gods, and what is pleasing to the gods is not holy, as you say, Euthyphro. They are different things.

EUTH. And why, Socrates?

SOCR. Because we are agreed that the gods love holiness because it is holy; and that it is not holy because they love it. Is not this so?

EUTH. Yes.

SOCR. And that what is pleasing to the gods because they love it, is pleasing to them by reason of this same love; and that they do not love it because it is pleasing to them.

EUTH. True.

SOCR. Then, my dear Euthyphro, holiness, and what is pleasing to the gods, are different things. If the gods had loved holiness because it is holy, they would also have loved what is pleasing to them because it is pleasing to them; but if what is pleasing to them had been pleasing to them because they loved it, then holiness too would have been holiness, because they loved it. But now you see that they are opposite things, and wholly different from each other. For the one is of a sort to be loved

because it is loved: while the other is loved, because it is of a sort to be loved. My question, Euthyphro, was; What is holiness? But it turns out that you have not explained to me the essence of holiness; you have been content to mention an attribute which belongs to it, namely, that all the gods love it. You have not yet told me what is its essence. Do not, if you please, keep from me what holiness is; begin again and tell me that. Never mind whether the gods love it, or whether it has other attributes: we shall not differ on that point. Do your best to make it clear to me what is holiness and what is unholiness.

### *For Further Reflection*

1. Does morality depend on religion for its validity, or does it have independent validity? In other words, Is the divine command theory true? What does Socrates seem to believe? What do you believe? Why?
2. What are the implications of holding that ethics depends on religion? Could God make rape and murder morally right actions today? How do you know that He hasn't (and kept it a secret)? If it turns out that no God exists, does that mean that morality is an illusion?
3. If Goodness means simply "what God commands," what do we mean when we say that "God is good"?
4. If the divine command theory is true, how is God different from the devil? Is He simply more powerful?