Poverty and Morality

Religious and Secular Perspectives

This multiauthored book explores how many influential ethical traditions – secular and religious, Western and non-Western – wrestle with the moral dimensions of poverty and the needs of the poor. These traditions include Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, among the religious perspectives; classical liberalism, feminism, liberal egalitarianism, and Marxism, among the secular; and natural law, which might be claimed by both. The basic questions addressed by each of these traditions are linked to several overarching themes: what poverty is, the particular vulnerabilities of high-risk groups, responsibility for the occurrence of poverty, preferred remedies, how responsibility for its alleviation is distributed, and priorities in the delivery of assistance. These essays are preceded by a background chapter on the types, scope, and causes of poverty in the modern world and some contemporary strategies for eliminating it. The volume concludes with Michael Walzer’s broadly conceived commentary, which provides a direct comparison of the presented views and makes suggestions for further study and policy.

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Poverty and Morality

Religious and Secular Perspectives

Edited by

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The Trustees of the Ethikon Institute dedicate this book to

MARVIN and BETTY HOFFENBERG

in recognition of their long-standing assistance to the poor
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Acknowledgments

This book is the result of a project in comparative ethics organized by the Ethikon Institute in collaboration with the Dominican Lay Scholars Community and the Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem. The trustees of the Ethikon Institute join with Philip Valera, president, and Carole Pateman, series editor, in thanking all who contributed to the success of this project. We are especially indebted to the Sidney Stern Memorial Trust and the Skirball Institute on American Values for their enabling financial support.

Special thanks are due to Marvin Hoffenberg for providing the idea for the project and to William A. Galston and Peter H. Hoffenberg for taking on the challenging task of editing this book. We are also grateful to Sohail H. Hashmi and Andrea Reynolds for their expert assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication and to Beatrice Rehl, our editor at Cambridge University Press, for her encouragement, valuable guidance, and support.

The Ethikon Institute

The Ethikon Institute, a nonprofit organization, is concerned with the social implications of ethical pluralism. Its dialogue-publication projects are designed to explore a diversity of moral outlooks, secular and religious, and to clarify areas of consensus and divergence among them. By encouraging a systematic exchange of ideas, the Institute aims to advance the prospects for agreement and to facilitate the peaceful accommodation of irreducible differences. The Ethikon Institute takes no position on issues that may divide its participants, serving not as an arbiter but as a neutral forum for the cooperative exploration of diverse and sometimes opposing views.

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The Dominican Lay Scholars Community is an ecumenical organization that promotes both interreligious contact and carefully structured dialogue
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between religious scholars and professional scholars in other intellectual disciplines. Among its other objectives, the DLSC encourages a systematic and impartial search for common intellectual ground among secular and religious outlooks on a wide range of important issues.

The Shalom Hartman Institute

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