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978-0-521-00608-8 - Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality

John M. Rist

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REAL ETHICS

John Rist surveys the history of ethics from Plato to the present and offers a vigorous defence of an ethical theory based on a revised version of Platonic realism. In a wide-ranging discussion he examines well-known alternatives to Platonism, in particular Epicurus, Hobbes, Hume and Kant, as well as contemporary 'practical reasoners', and argues that most post-Enlightenment theories of morality (as well as Nietzschean subversions of such theories) depend on an abandoned Christian metaphysic and are unintelligible without such grounding. He also argues that contemporary choice-based theories, whether they take a strictly ethical or more obviously political form, are ultimately arbitrary in nature. His lively and accessible study is informed by a powerful sense of philosophical history, and will be of interest to both students and scholars of ethics.

JOHN M. RIST is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Classics at the University of Toronto. His publications include *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge University Press, 1967), *The Mind of Aristotle* (University of Toronto Press, 1989), *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and many journal articles.

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With non-professional readers in mind, I have tried to ensure that the text can be understood without reference to the footnotes.