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978-0-521-58097-7 - Ethics and Activism: The Theory and Practice of Political Morality

Michael L. Gross

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Ethics and activism

In *Ethics and Activism*, Professor Michael Gross challenges a central tenet of liberal political theory – that the integrity of the modern democratic state rests on a carefully crafted moral foundation of autonomy, ethical first principles, and political action.

In a work firmly grounded in philosophical enquiry and empirical investigation, Professor Gross integrates insights from normative political philosophy, rational choice theory, and cognitive developmental psychology to explore three exemplary cases of morally inspired political activism – Jewish rescue in wartime Europe, abortion politics in the United States, and peace and settler activism in Israel. From all three analyses, a surprisingly paradoxical finding emerges: *The most politically competent individuals are, most often, the least morally competent.*

Contrary to the prevailing view, this finding casts doubt on strong models of political morality characterized by enlightened moral reasoning, cosmopolitan concerns, and concerted political action. Instead, it affirms the concept of alternative weak models that fuse political activism with immature moral development, parochial moral communities, and narrow sectarian interests.

In this pioneering study, Professor Gross provides empirical support for a view that further erodes the liberal vision of democratic character, education, and society.

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ETHICS AND ACTIVISM

The theory and practice of political morality

MICHAEL L. GROSS

University of Haifa



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To
Daphna for inspiration
Saul for tenacity
Elisheva for mirth
and to
Haia for all three

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