

ETHICS

Ethical questions are often associated with practical dilemmas: questions *in* morality, in other words. This volume, by contrast, asks questions *about* morality: what it is, and to what it owes its precarious authority over us. The focus on metaethics is sustained throughout, via a wide range of philosophical perspectives. Distinguished luminaries who include R M Hare and Bernard Williams address keenly debated issues such as what constitutes morality in politics; the relationship between education and ethical standards; and whether or not morality can indeed be defined at all. As Nikhil Krishnan writes in his elegant Foreword, “The plain-speaking, essayistic *grace* of these essays, speaks nevertheless of the possibility of moral philosophy, written with an eye to a listener, very possibly not a professional philosopher, who has the right to say, “This is all very well, your neat little theory, but it doesn’t ring true. Things are more complicated than that.”

A. PHILLIPS GRIFFITHS (1927-2014) was in 1964 appointed Professor of Philosophy at the newly constituted University of Warwick, becoming at that time the youngest philosophy professor in the UK. In 1979 he was made Director of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, a post he held for fifteen years.

NIKHIL KRISHNAN is Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge and Fellow in Philosophy at Robinson College, Cambridge.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

TALKING PHILOSOPHY

General Editor: James Garvey

The Royal Institute of Philosophy has been, from the very start, a fundamentally outward-facing organization. In 1924, Sydney Hooper – main mover behind the establishment of the Institute – realized that outreach to a wide interested public was a vital part of the value (whether social, cultural or intellectual) that philosophy at its best can impart. The Institute's first executive committee actively promoted that broad pedagogical message through accessible civic talks, and included in its ranks many of the most eminent luminaries of the day: not just professional philosophers but also sociologists, physicians, politicians, evolutionary biologists and psychologists. The Institute, from its foundation, has thus been rooted in an egalitarian community of people devoted to the principles of learning, debating and teaching philosophical knowledge in the broader service of what Hooper called 'the most permanent interests of the human spirit'. Talking Philosophy maintains this noble tradition. A book series published under the joint auspices of the Institute and Cambridge University Press, it addresses some of the most pertinent topics of the day so as to show how philosophy can shed new light on their interpretation, as well as public understanding of them.

Books in the series:

Moral Philosophy

The Philosophy of Mind

Ethics

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

ETHICS

EDITED BY

A. PHILLIPS-GRIFFITHS

Trinity College, Cambridge

WITH A FOREWORD BY

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

Robinson College, Cambridge



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths, Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009107716

DOI: 10.1017/9781009106900

© The Royal Institute of Philosophy and the contributors 1993, 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

Previously published as Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement: 35, *Ethics*, 1998, Paperback ISBN 9780521457644

This edition first published 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-10771-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

Foreword page ix

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

Preface xxv

A. PHILLIPS-GRIFFITHS

List of Contributors xxvii

Objective Prescriptions 1

R. M. HARE

Integrity and Self-Identity 29

STEWART R. SUTHERLAND

The Better Part 42

STEPHEN R. L. CLARK

Invincible Knowledge 77

RENFORD BAMBROUGH

Emmanuel Levinas: Responsibility and Election 97

CATHERINE CHALIER

Ethical Absolutism and Education 119

PETER GARDNER

Morals and Politics 148

ANTHONY QUINTON

Duties and Virtues 168

ONORA O'NEILL

CONTENTS

The Definition of Morality 190

JOHN SKORUPSKI

Ethics, Fantasy and Self-transformation 228

JEAN GRIMSHAW

How We Do Ethics Now 250

JAMES GRIFFIN

Justice without Constitutive Luck 280

S. L. HURLEY

Who Needs Ethical Knowledge? 335

BERNARD WILLIAMS

Institutional Ethics 351

MARCUS G. SINGER

References 388

Index 399

FOREWORD

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

The essays in this volume began their lives as lectures given to the Royal Institute of Philosophy in 1992–93 by many of the most eminent philosophers of the day. They are, as the title suggests, about ethics. But that word suggests a slightly different, and wider, scope than this volume in fact has. ‘Ethics’, it emerges, is meant here in the sense it acquired in the British philosophy of the 1940s and 50s. As R. M. Hare, the author of the first of this volume’s essays had put it in the Preface to his influential *The Language of Morals* (1952), ethics as he conceived it is ‘the logical study of the language of morals’.¹ Ethics is what philosophers do; what the so-called folk do is ‘morals’.

By 1992, the pair of terms usually used to mark the same contrast was ‘metaethics’ and ‘normative ethics’. With changing fashions disappeared the vogue for calling everything a ‘logical study’; also gone by then was the mid-century fondness for taking the peculiar province of philosophy to be language. But that still left us with a genuine distinction: between, on the one hand, the question of (for instance) what actions are right and wrong and why, and on the other, the questions of what it *means* to say of an action that it is wrong, what *facts* (if any) could make such

¹ R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), iii.

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

statements true, what state of mind one would be in when making such a statement, and where such statements could, strictly speaking, be objects of knowledge. The essays in this volume are, in the widest sense of the word, concerned with matters metaethical.

Time was when to say this was to invite a great sigh of dismay. Such a reaction was anticipated in the preface to another influential book, by a student and critic of Hare's, published twenty years after his own *début* and twenty years before the essays in this volume. Bernard Williams began his *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (1972) by acknowledging a common charge against the moral philosophers of Hare's generation, that they were guilty of 'refusing to write about anything of importance'. Their work, it was alleged, was consequently 'peculiarly empty and boring'. To be fair, he continued, *most* writings on moral subjects were empty and boring; think of those justly neglected volumes of sermons delivered by Victorian headmasters to chapels full of schoolboys under duress. The thing about more recent moral philosophy in the "analytical" or "linguistic" style' was that it seemed to have 'found an original way of being boring, which is by not discussing moral issues at all. . . . The desire to reduce revealed moral commitment to a minimum and to use moral arguments in the role of being uncontentiously illustrative leaves an impression that all the important issues are off the page, somewhere, and that great caution and little imagination have been used in letting tiny corners of them appear.'²

At first glance, it looked like Williams was calling for a revival of the lost 19th-century tradition of normative

² Bernard Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), xvii–xviii.

FOREWORD

theorising—John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick, for instance—in place of footling analyses of moral language ('ought', 'good', and so forth). Were that the case, the 1970s would have provided him with much to hearten him. They were, after all, the years that gave us John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971), the papers in the American journal *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (Peter Singer's 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality' was published in one of its early issues), and of Philippa Foot's pioneering essays on applied ethics. But Williams's own short book was only minimally concerned with such matters. His focus was not Hare's, insofar as he was only glancingly interested in questions about ethical language. But it was clear enough that the questions he was raising were not so much questions *in* morality but questions *about* it: what is it, and to what does it owe its strange (if precarious) authority over us? Where Hare had deliberately put aside questions of moral psychology—the moral 'sentiments' so beloved of the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment—as matters for a different occasion, and possibly a different discipline, Williams put the moral sentiments at the centre of his own alternative picture.

The impression *Morality* gave was not of a physiologist looking at a healthy body wondering how it worked, but rather that of a worried diagnostician confused by an odd combination of symptoms. To Williams, morality presented itself as a *problem*. The more one looked at its apparent features—its claim to consist in a body of truths, its ability to motivate agents, its claim to objectivity, to universal authority—the more suspect they began to seem. His suspicions were in part metaphysical: if there were moral facts, how did they fit (if at all) into the picture of the world given to us by

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

the sciences? They were also epistemological: if there were moral truths, how were we to know them? And most of all, they were practical: how seriously did we need to take it? Could there be a life without—beyond—morality?

In Williams's presentation, a focus on metaethics, far from evading the problems of morality, was getting at what was itself a moral problem. And it did so in a way that made some of the more gung-ho normative theorising of those decades seem a trifle complacent. This volume shows a happy symmetry in being bookended (almost) by essays from Hare and Williams, both pursuing the themes of their influential works from the 1980s: Hare's *Moral Thinking* (1981) and Williams's *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985), both books serving as summations of long careers.

Characteristically, Hare's tone, even in the last productive decade of his life, is that of the frustrated explainer. His conviction that the principal problems of metaethics had been solved (indeed, solved by him) in the 1950s seems to have survived the many attempts by his colleagues to unsettle it. His immediate interlocutor is J. L. Mackie, and his immediate concern to reply to Mackie's well-known insistence that all ethical statements, committed to making 'objective prescriptions', must of necessity be false.³ The argument runs, very roughly, as follows: ethical statements are, as most people would agree, worth accepting only if true; they are true only if there are facts to make them true; but they can't *be* true, because the universe has no facts of the right sort. The very

³ J. L. Mackie, 'The Subjectivity of Values', in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 15–49.

FOREWORD

idea of a moral fact—something that might simultaneously tell you what to do and make you do it—is intolerably ‘queer’.

Hare retorts that moral language, and the objectivity of moral discourse, requires no such outlandish presuppositions. The aim is one he shares with another contributor to this volume, Peter Gardner, who helpfully clarifies what it might be to be that horrible thing, an ‘ethical absolutist’. Both philosophers agree that moral statements require truth conditions of a kind. But Hare insists here that such conditions can be supplied by appealing to nothing more metaphysically substantial than ‘a way of reasoning . . . which appeals to the formal features of moral statements alone’ (p. 17). Words like ‘ought’ come with (as it were) instruction manuals for how to apply them correctly. Attend to these formal features, and they will tell us how to think about morals; think aright, and ‘we shall attain *knowledge* of the *truth* of moral statements—knowledge of the only sort that is deserving of that name, i.e. rational certainty’ (p. 17).

Bernard Williams’s contribution to this volume is much less optimistic that knowledge, truth, certainty and objectivity are within the philosopher’s reach. (No doubt he is one of those ‘confused’ philosophers whom Hare accuses of introducing ‘complications’ into what should be—once we grasp, and therefore accept, his position—a perfectly simple matter.) To readers who do not share Hare’s certainties, Williams’s paper will bring out, sharply and concisely, the difficulties around the idea of moral knowledge, and with it, call into renewed question the prospects of a philosophical defence of objective moral truth.

Williams accepts Hare’s characterisation of the problem as one about whether anything in morality could be the

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

object of rational certainty. As he more cautiously puts it, what would it be to have ‘reasonable confidence’ in one’s ethical convictions, as opposed to ‘the confidence of bigotry’? In the late chapters of *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Williams had several cautionary remarks for any attempt to understand reasonable ethical confidence on the model of scientific confidence. In science, if anywhere at all, we can intelligibly (perhaps reasonably) hope that disagreement—between scientific beliefs, theories, frameworks—might some day be resolved. Moreover, *should* such convergence come to pass, we could intelligibly and reasonably hope that it was a case of convergence on the truth, not a marvellous coincidence or a collective delusion. Indeed, we could hope that our beliefs being true would help explain why this was the belief we had all converged on.

However, Williams was pessimistic that any such convergence in ethics was, for one thing, likely. In ethical matters, he thought, human beings and societies being what they are, disagreement may well be ineradicable. But even if we should all, wonderfully, come to agree on all ethical matters, it needn’t follow that our agreement must be understood as either revealing or constituting the truth. No more than the fact that most scientific publication today is in English tells us that English is the language of fundamental scientific reality. Such facts, as he succinctly put it in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, ‘have too many credible explanations of other kinds’—for instance, political ones.⁴

⁴ Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy (With a Commentary on the Text by A. W. Moore)*, Reissue (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 152.

FOREWORD

The essay in this volume makes a fresh start on the problem. If moral knowledge (such as it is) is not best understood in terms of an analogy with scientific knowledge, what models might help us to understand it better? Williams draws on Edward Craig's attempt to fashion a 'genealogy' for the concept of knowledge in his 1990 book, *Knowledge and the State of Nature*, a book whose significance for epistemology has come to be appreciated a good more in the last few years.⁵ Craig's model, and Williams's, is not Nietzsche, whose genealogies aimed on the whole to debunk, but rather Hume, whose 'vindicatory' genealogy of justice is supposed to tell us how, and in what circumstances, human beings might have come to form, and to value, particular dispositions.⁶

The central idea in Craig's genealogy of the concept of knowledge is that knowledge is what we seek in a reliable informant—and a reliable informant is something human beings have always needed and will always need as long as each one of us can't be everywhere and see everything.⁷ To construe the problem of knowledge in that way is already

⁵ E.g. Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Sally Haslanger, 'What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology', *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 459–480.

⁶ See, in particular, Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 20–40; also, Edward Craig, 'Genealogies and the State of Nature', in *Bernard Williams*, ed. Alan Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181–200.

⁷ Edward Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

unsettling to any attempt to talk breezily about moral knowledge. What could a reliable informant even be in matters of morality? More recent discussion in both metaethics and epistemology has adopted the unfortunate term ‘testimony’ as its most general label for the phenomenon. The term does the job alright, though it conjures the unfortunate picture of a moral expert put into the witness box to be asked by a crafty barrister, ‘So, you claim that murder is wrong, do you?’

Williams sensibly puts the question in terms that are truer to ordinary (that is to say, non-philosophical) usage: whom might we trust to give us *counsel* in ethical matters? What qualifications, or more realistically what *qualities*, would we hope for our counsellors to possess? And what does it tell us that few seekers after ethical guidance would want it from ‘someone who has a PhD in ethical theory but whose judgment, quite possibly, we would not trust on any serious practical question?’ (p. 216).

The point here is partly polemical and tells strongly against any picture that assimilates ethical knowledge to some kind of technical expertise, but it also points outward into even harder questions. It is a hard enough thing to find an ethical counsellor who understands the difference between ‘if I were you’ and ‘if you were me’ (the advice relationship is full of potential for manipulation). But what of when the relationship turns antagonistic? As, say, in situations of cross-cultural dialogue, where what one party sees as a well-intentioned piece of advice comes across as patronising bullying, or worse, as a kind of imperialism? As often in his writings, Williams ends not with a philosophical

FOREWORD

solution to his original philosophical problem, but with a humble admission that philosophy—still less a philosophy focusing exclusively on our language—can only get us so far with a problem like this one. Such problems will be with us anyway.

The limits of philosophy crop up also in Renford Bambrough's contribution, but the pessimism is expressed in a distinctively Wittgensteinian register. This is obvious enough from the many references in his essay to Wittgenstein's death-bed musings on epistemology, published as *On Certainty* (1969), and in his attempts to apply to ethics that book's central claim: 'I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false'.⁸ What would it be for there to be an *ethical* picture of the world that could function the same way as such foundational empirical beliefs as 'I have hands'?

Bambrough's Wittgensteinianism runs deeper still and infects—to put it more generously, imbues—the style of the work through and through. Questions are raised—is ethics like science? must philosophical progress be like scientific progress? can there be a really original philosopher?—and they are even addressed, but one is never quite sure if they have been answered, indeed if the author is even trying to. Considerations are adduced—or, as Wittgenstein might have preferred to say, reminders are

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 94.

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

assembled—but not in a way that allows us to reconstruct anything that deserves to be called an argument. Bambrough’s paper is distinctive in this respect, matched perhaps only by Catherine Chalièr’s essay on ‘Responsibility and Election’ in the thought of Emanuel Levinas, and it is no surprise that both Wittgenstein and Levinas, in different ways, have had an increasingly awkward reception in English-language philosophy that persists to this day.

Some papers in this volume spring no stylistic surprises for the reader and come closest to dispensing with metaethical wrangling for some solid normative work. Onora O’Neill’s paper helpfully relates two sets of concepts in ethics, and also two traditions of moral philosophy, the Aristotelian and Kantian, by showing us how we should think about duties in relation to virtues. Susan Hurley’s essay on the problem of constitutive luck—the fact that luck is essentially involved in making us the particular people we are—explores in intricate detail how we can square this fact about ourselves with some basic convictions about justice, for instance, that it is an injustice for people’s shares of the world’s benefits and burdens to be the consequence of mere luck. In both essays, questions that are raised as problems internal to morality end up provoking more basic questions about morality and the coherence of that category.

Other papers are more explicit in their metaethical concerns. Marcus Singer’s paper on institutional ethics raises the question of whether ‘the principles and standards applicable to moral judgments of actions ... are also applicable ... to the judgment ... of institutions’ (p. 223). In a similar vein, Anthony Quinton raises the question of

FOREWORD

whether political philosophy is properly seen as a ‘subordinate part of moral philosophy’ (p. 95). John Skorupski’s searching paper on ‘The Definition of Morality’ goes furthest into this territory, drawing on Mill and Williams in its attempt to trace the relations between morality and the practice of blaming. Skorupski takes seriously, as many moral philosophers do not, the Nietzschean idea—developed with polemical vigour in the final chapter of Williams’s *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*—that morality might well be a pathological deformation of psychological phenomena that are not, at root, part of a penal view of the world. This is a long way away from Hare’s avowedly unpsychological attempt to find the essence of morality in the logical structure of its characteristic vocabulary. If Skorupski does not embrace any radical Nietzschean conclusions, he does allow to them a substantial measure of insight. Morality sails close to the wind when it plays with sentiments (resentment, anger, vengefulness) that are almost directly opposed to its ostensible spirit.

Jean Grimshaw’s splendid essay does not dwell in any detail on its own metaethical aspirations. It presents itself as a straightforward treatment of a question raised in much feminist writing: how should we respond (as feminists, as moral beings) when we find our sexual desires and fantasies failing to conform to our political and ethical principles? Should we try, if we can (a big if), to transform our desires? Give up on morality? Or is there a third option?

Grimshaw’s treatment of the question is wide-ranging, draws on a fascinating range of sources (radical feminist, psychoanalytic) not often encountered in

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

mainstream English-language moral philosophy. Its conclusion is, willy-nilly, metaethical. Our experience of such conflicts tells us something important about ourselves, but equally, brings to light an element of morality itself, viz. the ‘impossible dream’ it offers of a perfectly coherent, supremely harmonious life where ‘all elements of thought, fantasy, imagination, desire and action might fit together into a seamless whole’ (p. 158). Perhaps the problem is neither our desires nor our principles, but rather the idea of coherence itself. Grimshaw urges us to look for other, more realistic and less daunting, models of coherence.

Feminist practice, for traditional feminist reasons that Grimshaw identifies, has generally been well enough aware that morality can be both ally and enemy to the feminist cause. In a helpful remark of Sheila Jeffreys that she quotes, ‘If we listen to our feelings about sex sensitively instead of riding roughshod over them through guilt or anxiety about being prudes, we can work out what is positive and what is negative’ (quoted on p. 147). Feminist practice, like any other kind of theoretically informed practice, must deal with the natural impulse to run together three different things, what Skorupski in his essay terms ‘morality, character-ideals and ends’ (p. 143).⁹ There is what we want to be, what we hope to be, and what we can be blamed (or feel guilty) for not being: these can and do come apart, and

⁹ Skorupski’s distinctions are similar to those drawn in a more explicitly psychoanalytic work, Richard Wollheim, ‘From Voices to Values: The Growth of the Moral Sense’, in *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 197–225.

FOREWORD

no good comes of making our (natural, understandable) failures to live up to our ideals of what we hope to be into one more source of distress and guilt, not when life throws enough of those our way already.¹⁰

Grimshaw's essay does not advertise its 'method', but it does have one. It is not the method rightly criticised in James Griffin's essay on 'How We Do Ethics Now' under the label 'piecemeal appeal to intuition' (p. 159). But the appeal to intuition is really a particular, somewhat unfortunate, form lately taken by a more basic method, an expression of a more basic ideal, that is as old as philosophy itself: viz. that the assertions of philosophers must be accountable to something, or to something. In Hare's essay, philosophy is accountable above all to language and its implicit 'logic'. In Grimshaw's essay, by contrast, our words have no more (but no less) authority than our desires and our fantasies. They all reveal us to ourselves, in our full complexity, something obscured when philosophers think of psychology as something done in another, lesser, department down the road. In her vision of philosophy, a philosophical understanding of ourselves requires, at least in the first instance, not analysis,

¹⁰ For an important recent discussion of similar themes, see Amia Srinivasan, 'Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?', *London Review of Books*, 22 March 2018. As she puts it, 'The question, then, is how to dwell in the ambivalent place where we acknowledge that no one is obligated to desire anyone else, that no one has a right to be desired, but also that who is desired and who isn't is a political question, a question usually answered by more general patterns of domination and exclusion.'

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

and still less explanation or justification, but what Wittgenstein (as Bambrough in this volume quotes him) describes as ‘natural history’ (p. 55).

The essays in this volume, perhaps because of their origins as oral presentations, lack some of the features of prose and typesetting that mark so much academic publication today: examples are fully integrated into paragraphs rather than indented with a cute label (‘Thought Experiment 3. The Axeman’s Caravan’), arguments are not set out in numbered premises, citations are as likely to be to poets, novelists and theologians as to fellow philosophers. These features speak to the conventions of a different age, recent though 1993 may be. The lack of stylistic and disciplinary anxiety in this volume could be a consequence of the relative seniority of its contributors. But the plain-speaking, essayistic *grace* of these essays speaks nevertheless to the possibilities of moral philosophy when written with an eye not to a pedantic referee with the power to reject a submission, but rather to a listener, very possibly not a professional philosopher, who has the right to say, ‘This is all very well, your neat little theory, but it doesn’t *ring* true. Things are more complicated than that.’

Hare in his essay asserts that ‘Good moral philosophy’ is simply ‘clear and honest moral philosophy’ (p. 17). Doubtless that is so, as long as it is allowed that clarity and honesty may require philosophers to acknowledge that things are more complex than a simple, linguistically minded, philosophy allows them to be. It may require also that when philosophers turn to psychology (or, for that matter, literature or history or anthropology), they do so

FOREWORD

because they hope to find there the answers to their questions that philosophy unaided cannot give them.

References

- Craig, Edward. 'Genealogies and the State of Nature'. In *Bernard Williams*, edited by Alan Thomas, 181–200. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Craig, Edward. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hare, R. M. *The Language of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Haslanger, Sally. 'What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology'. *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 459–480.
- Mackie, J. L. 'The Subjectivity of Values'. In *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, 15–49. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Srinivasan, Amia. 'Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?' *London Review of Books*, 22 March 2018.
- Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (With a Commentary on the Text by A. W. Moore). Reissue. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006 [1985].
- Williams, Bernard. *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.
- Williams, Bernard. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

NIKHIL KRISHNAN

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. Translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969.

Wollheim, Richard. 'From Voices to Values: The Growth of the Moral Sense'. In *The Thread of Life*, 197–225. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

P R E F A C E

A. PHILLIPS-GRIFFITHS

The essays in this volume are based on lectures given to the Royal Institute of Philosophy at 14, Gordon Square, London in the session 1992–93.

‘Given’, that is, in every sense: the Institute, as a small charity, depends on that of its speakers. We are most grateful.

The Institute owes a particular debt of gratitude in this instance to Professor Singer, who came all the way from Wisconsin for the sole purpose of giving his lecture. Not for the first time: he made a special visit in 1986 to give his lecture on Value Judgments, printed in the Institute supplementary volume *Key Themes in Philosophy*, and he arranged and conducted the 1984–5 lecture series on American philosophy, editing the subsequent supplementary volume.

To the Institute, he is by way of becoming an institution: though not in the sense in which he is interested (see p. 229). His original, stimulating and, it is to be hoped seminal, paper included a number of scrupulous acknowledgments to people, sometimes named and sometimes not, whom he suspected of having contributed to his thought on this matter, which high-handed editing has suppressed. One was to a Director of the Institute who knows, as well as any of them, that the development of this distinct branch of ethics is entirely Professor Singer’s own.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Renford Bambrough

Stephen R. L. Clark

Catherine Chalier

James Griffin

Peter Gardner

Jean Grimshaw

R. M. Hare

S. L. Hurley

Onora O'Neill

Lord Quinton

Marcus G. Singer

John Skorupski

S. R. Sutherland

Bernard Williams

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-10771-6 — Ethics

Edited by Allen Phillips-Griffiths , Foreword by Nikhil Krishnan

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)
