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Elements in Ethics

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MORALITY AND PRACTICAL REASONS

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Morality and Practical Reasons

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Abstract: As Socrates famously noted, there is no more important question than how we ought to live. The answer to this question depends on how the reasons that we have for living in various different ways combine and compete. To illustrate, suppose that I've just received a substantial raise. What should I do with the extra money? I have most moral reason to donate it to effective charities but most self-interested reason to spend it on luxuries for myself. So, whether I should live my life as I have most moral reason to live it or as I have most self-interested reason to live it depends on how these and other sorts of reasons combine and compete to determine what I have most reason to do, all things considered. This Element seeks to figure out how different sorts of reasons combine and compete to determine how we ought to live.

Keywords: morality, rationality, reasons, normativity, self-interest

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