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Elements in Ethics

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Contractarianism

Elements in Ethics

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Abstract: This Element provides a systematic defense of moral contractarianism as a distinct approach to the social contract. It elucidates, in comparison to moral conventionalism and moral contractualism, the distinct features of moral contractarianism, its scope, and conceptual and practical challenges that concern the relationship between morality and self-interest, the problems of assurance and compliance, rule-following, counterfactualism, and the nexus between morals and politics. It argues that, if appropriately conceived, moral contractarianism is conceptually coherent, empirically sound, and practically relevant, and has much to offer to contemporary moral philosophy.

Keywords: assurance, compliance, multilevel social contract theory, multistage social contract theory, self-interest

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Contractarian Moral Theory	1
1.2	Core Features of Moral Contractarianism	7
1.3	Core Challenges for Moral Contractarianism	12
2	The State of Nature and Social Moral Order	19
2.1	Rational Choice Theory and Moral Philosophy	19
2.2	The State of Nature and Assurance	23
2.3	The Social Contract and Compliance	28
3	Moral Principles and Decisions	32
3.1	Bargaining Theory and Morality	32
3.2	The Rationale for Rule-Following	35
3.3	Moral Original Positions	39
4	A Reconciliation of Contractarian Moral Theory	45
4.1	Moral Diversity and Multilevel Theory	45
4.2	Moral Agency, Autonomy, and Compliance	52
4.3	Contractarianism and Moral Philosophy	57
	Bibliography	65