
FOREWORD

When thinking about ethics, I often reflect on a traditional Asian parable. In it, a young samurai is seeking a new sword, and his master takes him to a sword smith whose forge is near a river. The master takes a sword from the smith, placing its point first in the flowing river. He then releases a papyrus upstream; it sails downstream, hits the sword, and, by virtue of its sharpness, is cleanly severed. A second sword is then placed in the river and the ritual is repeated. This time, though, the bluntness of the sword merely diverts the papyrus, leaving it unscathed. The master asks the student to choose a sword, and the student chooses the sharper. The instruction lies in revealing the source of error: the blunt sword is preferable because it avoided conflict.

Some might disagree with the conclusion, arguing that a dull sword serves no function. Regardless, the brilliance of the parable isn't its substantive outcome, but rather how it invites us to think about moral education. We learn, not by considering (just) abstract theories, but rather through practice and by example. In this way, applied ethics becomes immediately and critically important: it takes us directly to the contexts that matter most, namely those that we face in our everyday lives. Theory matters, of course, but theory matters insofar as it helps us decide how to act. It matters in and of itself, too, but that's for academics to worry about; the instruction of ethics can unapologetically adopt a more practical stance.

It is from this standpoint that writing the foreword for the seventh edition of *Ethics Applied* becomes a great privilege. This text—in production for decades—serves as a wonderful introduction to its areas of coverage, and the contributors have done excellent work in making these areas broadly accessible to students. As the book has evolved, a premium has been placed on its use in the classroom, as well as the clarity and exposition of the core ideas; these merits are on high display in the current edition.

The editorial team at St. Petersburg College's Applied Ethics Program deserves high praise, but the institution's historical context also bears note. While ethics has become more commonly taught in higher education, St. Petersburg College pioneered the practice, becoming the first state college in Florida to integrate ethics into its curriculum as a general education requirement. And this requirement emerged not as many in the wake of corporate scandals of the 1990s, but rather almost thirty years ago. As an open-access institution, St. Petersburg College also takes seriously the idea that ethics education is important for everyone; this is particularly commendable at a time when higher education is less widely available than it should be.

Ethics Applied comprises three principal parts. The first introduces students to the basics of ethics; this provides critical foundation for the substantive issues that are subsequently engaged. But not only does it cover traditional ethical theories, it also covers ethical *thinking*, as

well as critical thinking more generally. This coverage will be particularly useful for introductory students. Once introduced, students then move on to a range of major social issues; these are well selected and logically organized. Whether considering war, bioethics, or environmental ethics, students will have the opportunity to critically evaluate their own positions, as well as to develop new ones. Finally, the third part considers ethics in the workplace. With ethics courses drawing students from a range of professional programs—and with workplace ethics increasingly under the public eye—this part finds an appropriate home in the text.

Throughout, the text evinces a commitment to clarity. For introductory students, this commitment is paramount. Other texts—and, in particular, standard anthologies—simply do not make as good of teaching tools, particularly insofar as the ideas are just pitched at the wrong level. After completing a course using *Ethics Applied*, students will have the analytic tools to engage with primary-source material. Furthermore, they will also have been rewarded by the wealth of material that this text imparts.

The study of ethics is a critical one, and it is encouraging to see this curricular emphasis emerge in recent years. By studying ethics, students learn not only some of intellectual history's greatest accomplishments, but they also learn how to live their lives. They learn how to be better citizens, friends, family members, and coworkers—and, overall, more thoughtful people. *Ethics Applied* offers a great starting point for the formal study of ethics, and to the myriad ends that such studies confer. I congratulate the editors on their accomplishment, faculty members on adopting this text, and, most importantly, the students in choosing to study ethics.

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