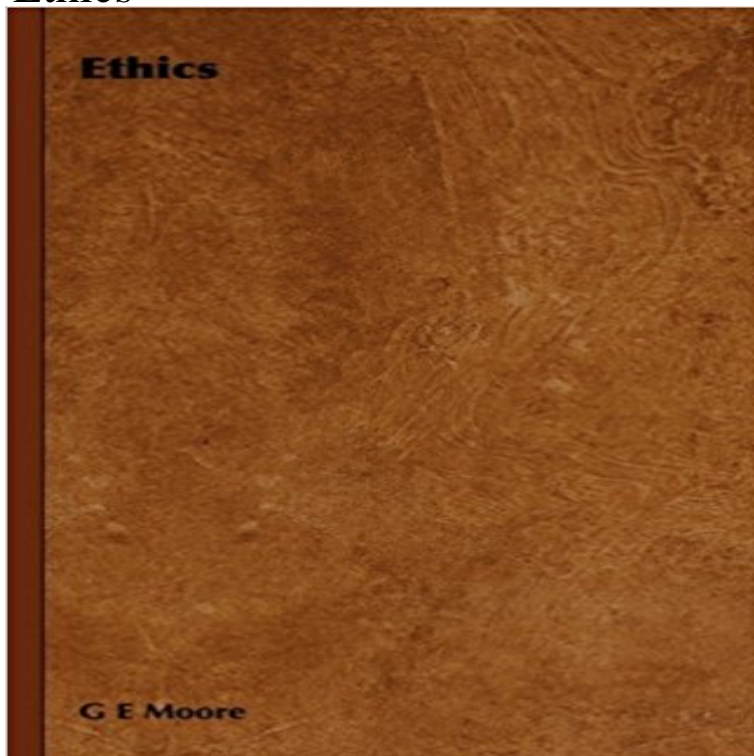


Ethics



ETHICS by G. E. MOORE. Contents include: UTILITARIANISM 7 UTILITARIANISM concluded 40 m THE OBJECTIVITY OF MORAL JUDGEMENTS . 79 IV THE OBJECTIVITY OF MORAL JUDGMENTS concluded 133 V RESULTS THE TEST OF RIGHT AND WRONG . 170 VI IRBB WILL 196 VU ISTTBINSIO VALTTB 223 NOTE ON BOOKS 253 INDEX ,,,,,, 255. ETHICS. CHAPTER I: UTILITARIANISM.

ETHICS is a subject about which there has been and still is an immense amount of difference of opinion, in spite of all the time and labour which have been devoted to the study of it. There are indeed certain matters about which there is not much disagreement. Almost everybody is agreed that certain kinds of actions ought, as a general rule, to be avoided and that under certain circumstances, which constantly recur, it is, as a general rule, better to act in certain specified ways rather than in others. There is, moreover, a pretty general agreement, with regard to certain things which happen in the world, that it would be better if they never happened, or, at least, did not happen so often as they do and with regard to others, that it would be better if they happened more often than they do. But on many questions, even of this kind, there is great diversity of opinion. Actions which some philosophers hold to be generally wrong, others hold to be generally right, and occurrences which some hold to be evils, others hold to be goods. And when we come to more fundamental questions the difference of opinion is even more marked. Ethical philosophers have, in fact, been largely concerned, not with laying down rules to the effect that certain ways of acting are generally or always right, and others generally or always wrong, nor yet with giving lists of things which are good and others which are evil, but with trying to

answer more general and fundamental questions such as the following. What, after all, is it that we mean to say of an action when we say that it is right or ought to be done And what is it that we mean to say of a state of things when we say that it is good or bad Can we discover any general characteristic, which belongs in common to absolutely all right actions, no matter how different they may be in other respects and which does not belong to any actions except those which are right And can we similarly discover any characteristic which belongs in common to absolutely all good things, and which does not belong to any thing except what is a good Or again, can we discover any single reason, applicable to all right actions equally, which is, in every case, the reason why an action is right, when it is right And can we, similarly, discover any reason which is the reason why a thing is good, when it is good, and which also gives us the reason why any one thing is better than another, when it is better Or is there, perhaps, no such single reason in either case On questions of this sort different philosophers still hold the most diverse opinions. I think it is true that absolutely every answer which has ever been given to them by any one philosopher would be denied to be true by many others. There is, at any rate, no such consensus of opinion among experts about these fundamental ethical questions, as there is about many fundamental propositions in Mathematics and the Natural Sciences. Now, it is precisely questions of this sort, about every one of which there are serious differences of opinion, that I wish to discuss in this book. And from the fact that so much difference of opinion exists about them it is natural to infer that they are questions about which it is extremely difficult to discover the truth. This is, I think, really the case. The probability is, that hardly any positive proposition, which can as yet be offered in answer to them, will be strictly and absolutely true...

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