

Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures
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Human Values

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Human Values Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Volume XI (1976-77)

GODFREY VESEY (ed.)

THIS NEW volume of Royal Institute of Philosophy lectures reflects the depth of feeling about the current state of moral philosophy, in the context of debate about substantial practical issues.

Devoted to moral philosophy, the book reflects the division between those whose approach is broadly subjectivist, prescriptivist and consequentialist (on the one hand), and those for whom there are absolute values (on the other).

Linguistic philosophy interprets questions about moral values as questions about the function of moral language. Do we say things are good or bad, right or wrong, to express our feelings about them, or to get other people to do what we want them to do, or what?

Two answers philosophers have given to this question — ‘emotivism’ and ‘prescriptivism’ — have dominated moral philosophy for a generation. They are answers which go hand in hand with subjectivism, the denial that anything is intrinsically good or bad, and with consequentialism, the doctrine that the rightness or wrongness of an act is a matter of its consequences. On this view of morality a computer could be programmed to be moral. Some philosophers are content with ‘computational’ morality. Others are far from content, and the contributions in this book — of the consistently high level now expected of this series — provide statements and explorations of these various positions.

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