

# Preface: How to Use this Book, the Intended Audience, and Acknowledgments

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## **How to Use this Book**

The heart of this *Companion* is the 13 newly commissioned chapters on central topics in metaethics and normative theory. Readers interested in a comprehensive and rich treatment of a given topic are advised to turn directly to that particular chapter. Note as well that there are three chapters on “New Directions in Ethics,” which are devoted to moral particularism, experimental ethics, and biology, evolution, and ethics, respectively.

This *Companion* has a number of features which set it apart from other “Handbooks” and “Guides” to ethics:

- An “Overview of Contemporary Metaethics and Normative Ethical Theory,” which goes into extensive detail about how to formulate and organize the various positions in the two fields.
- A “Chronology of Ethics” by J. B. Schneewind, one of the leading contemporary historians of philosophy, which provides a very thorough timeline of philosophical milestones in the West, as well as important cultural, political, scientific, literary, and religious developments more broadly.
- A section on “Methodological Issues,” which offers a comprehensive and highly informed treatment of the main approach to doing ethical theorizing, reflective equilibrium, written by one of the leading experts on the topic.
- Newly commissioned entries for “Important Technical Terms in Ethics,” with extended characterizations for those looking for a quick and accessible guide to some of the most important terminology.
- An extensive overview of “Internet Resources for Research in Ethics,” which provides website addresses for ethics centers and institutes, research fellowships in ethics, ethics societies, research projects on ethical

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topics, websites with ethics content, ethics-related blogs, regular ethics-related conferences, print journals related to ethics, electronic journals related to ethics, and classic works in ethics available online.

- A resource entitled “Selected Works in Contemporary Metaethics and Normative Theory,” with lists of familiar and influential contemporary books and articles pertaining to constructivism, error theory, moral methodology, moral epistemology, moral psychology, moral realism, noncognitivism, practical reason, consequentialism, ethical concepts, feminist ethics, care ethics, Kantian ethics, contractarianism, contractualism, moral pluralism, moral particularism, natural law theory, the structure of ethical theories, theological voluntarism, and virtue ethics.

I hope that these resources will prove to be of great assistance to the further study of ethics.

## The Intended Audience

Authors for this volume were instructed to write their chapters in such a way that they would be accessible to nonspecialists in metaethics and ethical theory, and I am thrilled that they have done so without exception. At the same time the entries are also rich in philosophical content, and not only survey the relevant positions but break new philosophical ground as well. Hence I see this volume as being very helpful to at least the following audiences:

- Graduate students and faculty who work in other areas but who want to get up to speed on contemporary work in ethics.
- Advanced undergraduates and early graduate students who want to develop a good comprehensive understanding of contemporary ethics.
- Philosophers who work in metaethics and/or ethical theory and who are interested in the new insights offered by a given author on a particular topic.
- Philosophers who work in applied ethics and who are interested in the approaches, arguments, and objections offered by the authors on the different topics in theoretical ethics.
- Others outside of academic philosophy would wish to develop a good understanding of contemporary ethics for their own personal or professional enrichment.

Please note that those who have not studied ethics before beyond, say, an introductory undergraduate course are advised to start with the “Overview of Contemporary Metaethics and Normative Ethical Theory.”

This *Companion* does not cover either applied ethics or the history of ethics in detail, since to do so properly would have required a volume which is two to three times as long.

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