Foreword

Joseph P. DeMarco has written a major contribution to ethical theory which calls for recognition of the several dimensions to our moral life. Not by principles alone do we live morally. Nor by qualities of character. Nor even by calculation of consequences of actions. Each of these dimensions, though supported by the principal philosophical traditions addressed to morality, yet is too one-sided. DeMarco offers a frank, scholarly, and probing critique of the shortcomings inherent in the distinguished traditions, as represented by such figures as Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, Bernard Gert, and Alasdair MacIntyre.

DeMarco wants nothing less than an account of the whole of moral experience. Principles, virtues, consequences—and more—meet in the contexts of our decision-making. Human beings do not act like philosophical treatises, embodying a single line of theory. DeMarco addresses the challenge of salvaging the values in the major approaches and integrating them into a comprehensive viewpoint on our humanity. The result is not an eclectic patchwork, nor a Procrustean unification, but a dynamic coherence. In revealing how we may deal with the multiplicity of theoretical approaches to morality, DeMarco helps us make better sense out of our daily lives. While philosophizing he never loses sight of us.

The book is an exemplary development of original thought in conjunction with critical scholarship. It is presented in such a straightforward, sensible, and patient way as to win the assent of the reader. What you hold in hand is not just another ethical theory, but a new level of philosophizing upon ethical theory that will reward you with an enlarged and enriched vision of our complexity as moral beings.

Robert Ginsberg
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