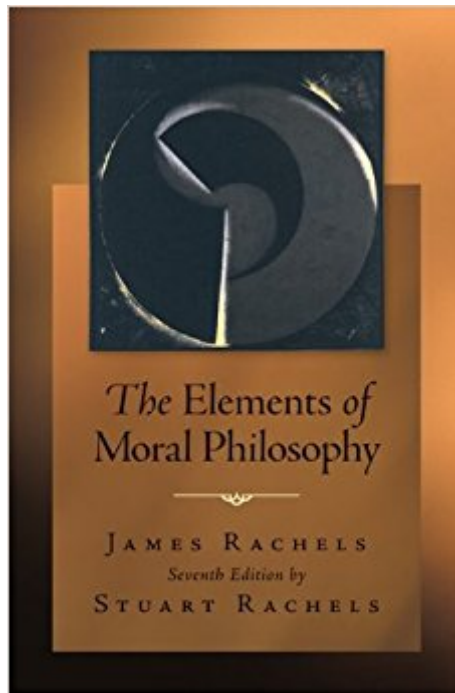




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# The Elements Of Moral Philosophy



## Synopsis

Firmly established as the standard text for undergraduate courses in ethics, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels's *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* introduces readers to major moral concepts and theories through eloquent explanations and compelling, thought-provoking discussions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

James Rachels, the distinguished American moral philosopher, was born in Columbus, Georgia, graduating from Mercer University in Macon in 1962. He received his Ph.D. in 1967 from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He taught at the University of Richmond, New York University, the University of Miami, Duke University, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he spent the last twenty-six years of his career. 1971 saw the publication of Rachels's groundbreaking textbook *Moral Problems*, which ignited the movement in America away from teaching ethical theory towards teaching concrete practical issues. *Moral Problems* sold 100,000 copies over three editions. In 1975, Rachels wrote "Active and Passive Euthanasia," arguing that the distinction so important in the law between killing and letting die has no rational basis. Originally appearing in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, this essay has been reprinted roughly 300 times and is a staple of undergraduate education. *The End of Life* (1986) was about the morality of killing and the value of life. *Created from Animals* (1990) argued that a Darwinian world-view has widespread philosophical implications, including drastic implications for our treatment of nonhuman animals. *Can Ethics Provide Answers?* (1997) was Rachels's first collection of papers (others are expected posthumously). Rachels's

McGraw-Hill textbook, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, is now in its fourth edition and is easily the best-selling book of its kind. Over his career, Rachels wrote 5 books and 85 essays, edited 7 books and gave about 275 professional lectures. His work has been translated into Dutch, Italian, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian. James Rachels is widely admired as a stylist, as his prose is remarkably free of jargon and clutter. A major theme in his work is that reason can resolve difficult moral issues. He has given reasons for moral vegetarianism and animal rights, for affirmative action (including quotas), for the humanitarian use of euthanasia, and for the idea that parents owe as much moral consideration to other people's children as they do to their own. James Rachels died of cancer on September 5th, 2003, in Birmingham, Alabama. STUART RACHELS is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alabama. He has revised several of James Rachels's books, including *Problems from Philosophy* (second edition, 2009) and *The Right Thing to Do* (fifth edition, 2010), which is the companion anthology to this book. Stuart won the United States Chess Championship in 1989, at the age of 20, and he is a Bronze Life Master at bridge. His website is [www.jamesrachels.org/stuart](http://www.jamesrachels.org/stuart).

I know a lot of educational programs are using this "textbook", but the real winner is the author. It is expensive for simply reading somebody's opinion on different philosophical concepts without many footnotes to even refer to.

This is the main book we use in my Introduction to Ethics class at the University of Kansas and it does a very good job at disproving the 4 common "failed" ethical theories that most people know about and provides an understandable explanation of the viable ethical theories today such as Utilitarianism and Social Contract Theory. It does not read like a textbook, it is very captivating and I would recommend it to anyone that is interested in a general understanding of ethical theory.

I rented this book for my Intro to Ethics class. I thought the class and this book were going to be boring, but I was wrong. I really enjoyed the class and this book. Every chapter was really interesting and I learned a lot from reading this book. Because of this book I now understand morality and ethics a little better and some of my views and beliefs even changed thanks to this book. I might just buy this book just so I have it in case I want a refresher on what I learned or if I just want to read it for fun.

I still have not finished the book - I will be using it for a class in the Spring and am pre-reading the

book to help design the course and choose what chapters to read. The book is very easy to read, and the easily accessible logical structure is going to be very helpful for the students. I have only one minor critique, and that is there could be an introduction or glossary so that students that have no philosophy/ethical training can understand the terms that are used and have examples given of each term. If using this text in an introductory course I would recommend making a terms list and explaining the terms. Overall, the book is excellent as an introduction to moral philosophy as well as logical argument.

In today's world, we can all benefit from understanding this topic. This is a frequently cited college text and is very deep and broad in its coverage of the topic. I much prefer the Jonathan Sanford series which presents the same material using the context of pop culture references: My favorite two are: "Spider-Man and Philosophy: The Web of Inquiry" & "Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul" This is more of a textbook and as such is dryer but, is one of the highest rated on the topic you can find.

I am not widely read in ethics or philosophy in general. I took an introductory philosophy course as an undergrad and did not return to studying ethics until graduate school, which is where I came into contact with this book. For me, as a novice in ethics, I found Rachels' text enlightening. He neither dwells on theory too long nor dabbles too much in case studies. He provides enough to give you a foundational understanding of the big theories in ethics. Sure, there are probably holes in the material and you probably won't be able to dazzle others with your sudden powers of ethical thought, but it does get you to think about ethics in ways that are almost exciting. Compared to the other textbooks I had in my ethics class, this was a joy to read. The price, as others have said, is too high. But if you have to study it in class, you can't really get around that anyway.

This is an amazing read! I rented it for a Philosophy class and am tempted to buy it for myself. I am not a huge fan of the dense dry papers that are typical. Rachels & Rachels do a GREAT job at breaking down different ethical stances with contrasting views and real life examples. This book is a super easy and enjoyable read that will leave you thinking, you won't want to put the book down. Highly recommend to beginners and those who don't like the dense philosophy papers.

Although this book has great information, it is very basic and can be found in other texts that are much less expensive. When I received this in the mail, I could hardly believe how small and short it

was in comparison to the price. If you have the extra 60 bucks to spare, it's worth it. Otherwise, I would suggest finding a book that more bang for your buck.

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