



Wittgenstein and Ethical Inquiry: A Defense of Ethics as Clarification (Continuum Studies in British Philosophy)

J. Jeremy Wisnewski

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While commentators have sometimes taken up the question of Wittgenstein's view of ethics, none has offered a sustained treatment of what positive contributions Wittgenstein has yet to offer contemporary ethics. In this important new book, Jeremy Wisnewski argues that Wittgenstein, though himself often silent on particular ethical matters, gives us immense resources for understanding the aims appropriate to any philosophical ethics. Using Wittgenstein as a point of departure, Wisnewski re-examines some of the landmarks in the history of moral philosophy in order to cast contemporary ethical philosophy in a new light. Of particular interest is the unique approach to Kant's moral philosophy afforded by seeing him through Wittgensteinian eyes: Wisnewski gives distinct and intriguing analyses of the categorical imperative, arguing that our obsession with a certain brand of ethical theory has led us to misread this most famous contribution to moral philosophy. By seeing the doctrines of historical ethical philosophers anew (particularly those of Kant and Mill), Wisnewski shows a new way of engaging in ethical theory - one that is Wittgensteinian through and through. Rather than assuming that ethical inquiry yields knowledge about what we must do, and what rules we must follow, we should regard ethics (including our historical ethical theories) as clarifying what is involved in the complicated 'form of life' that is ours.

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