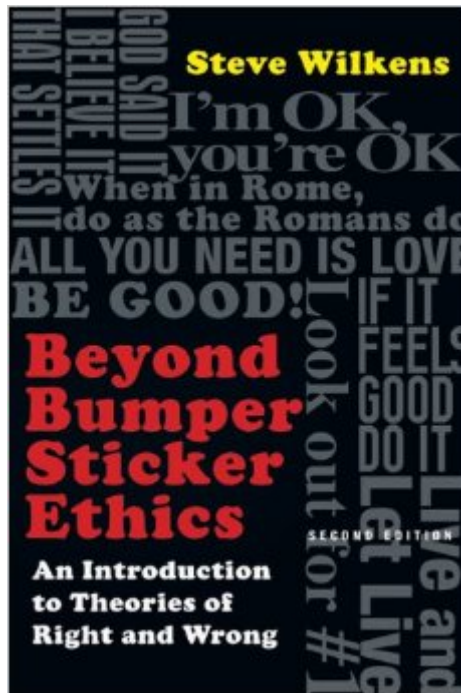


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# Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction To Theories Of Right & Wrong



## Synopsis

With this introductory text, Steve Wilkens takes a fresh, friendly approach to understanding and evaluating various ethical systems. Beginning each chapter with a "bumper sticker" slogan ("If it feels good, do it"; "God said it, I believe it, that settles it;" "When in Rome&#x85;"), he then moves on to examine the complex questions, conclusions and assumptions that lie at its heart. Wilkens acquaints students with the vast array of classic and contemporary approaches to ethics: cultural relativism, emotivism, behaviourism, hedonism, ethical egoism, atheistic existentialism, utilitarianism, categorical imperative, hierarchicalism, situation ethics, theistic existentialism, theological voluntarism, and natural law ethics. For each system, his thorough introduction explores its popular "bumper sticker" expression, its core assumptions and basic elements, the questions that give rise to it, and its strengths and weaknesses. Students, professors and general readers will welcome Wilken's engaging text which simultaneously offers a well-rounded assessment of ethical systems and shows the relevance and prevalence of ethical ideas in daily life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book was one of the main textbooks in my Introduction to Ethics class in Bible college. It proved to be an invaluable resource for pinpointing my own beliefs about ethics, and for applying them to current events. The book is a survey-type study of the various popular ethical theories in the world today. Ten theories are each evaluated according to their strengths, weaknesses, and their stature when measured by a Christian perspective. I would highly recommend this book to (1) professors searching for textbooks for introductory college ethics courses, and (2) students of ethics

to whom the general topic is confusing. An excellent resource for both the beginner who wants to learn ethics, and the advanced student who needs a quick refresher course. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Even though written from an evangelical Christian point of view, this little gem of a book provides a truly fair-and-balanced overview of our major ethical systems. While he doesn't hide his preference for a combination of natural law and virtue ethics, Mr. Wilkens is able to describe nine fairly complex ethical concepts in clear and very readable terms. Highly recommended.

I read this book after reading a similar book, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 5th ed. by Rachels and Rachels. My purpose in reading both was to gain a basic understanding of ethical theory. Both books provide brief overviews and evaluations of several ethical systems and both helped me to accomplish my purpose. While the books were similar in many ways, the targeted audiences were different. *Rachels and Rachels* is aimed at undergraduate students who are studying moral philosophy for the first time. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics* evaluates the various ethical systems against the backdrop of a Christian worldview. *Rachels and Rachels* has a bit more of an academic feel to it when compared to the Wilkens book but both books draw very similar conclusions. The conclusion seems to be that there is not one infallible ethical system that can be adopted in every circumstance. Rather, each system has its strengths and weaknesses and each system can contribute something in the search for ethical truth. *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics* challenges its readers to give more intense thought to ethical systems suggested by simplified (bumper sticker) statements of moral principle (As examples, Look out for number one; If it feels good, do it; When in Rome do as the Romans do; God said it, I believe it, that settles it). Before reading the book one might suspect that the outcome would be predetermined; divine command theory (God said it,...) wins. Actually the author is very fair in his analysis of the nine theories evaluated and, by his own admission, will probably leave some readers frustrated by the absence of a clear conclusion as to which system is best. I found this refreshing. I think it is safe to say that Wilkens wants Christians to think and to be able to defend their moral stances. This seems like a worthwhile cause.

This introduction to ethics is made very relevant by relating to concrete situation, stories, etc. and is also very rigorous in its analyses and evaluation. Wilkens has succeeded in writing a serious book that is also great fun to read!!!

I was very pleased with the fairness of this book toward ethical systems that the author did not agree with. In an ethics class I had last semester, we used this book and *Christian Ethics* by Norman Geisler. This one was far superior, as Geisler simply attacked straw-men and defended his own position. Wilkens does an admirable job of giving a short but decisive overview of most of the major ethical systems one would be likely to encounter in the West today. After introducing them he would list some apparent problems with the system, then list some possible responses to these allegations. It resulted in a wonderfully fair overview. Mind you, it is not very detailed and should not be used for anything but an introduction to these issues. There is but one brief chapter on each ethical system, so do not look here if you need a lot of information on a specific system. My only complaint is that he did not really give any indication as to what ethical system is preferable. I know that he wanted to be fair, and he was, but I should like to have seen him, in a last chapter/conclusion, present what he thought to be the ideal ethical system. Overall grade: A-

Many philosophical and theological books are written by people who are good thinkers but bad writers. Wilkens on the contrary is a very good writer. He presents the various ethical systems in a clear and logical manner, and does it in a way that makes it a joy to read. Chose this over Geisler.

This book goes to the core of several philosophical schools of thought, where it then proceeds to objectively critique their validity and/or usefulness in our lives. Very easy to read..extremely insightful.

Steve Wilkens' book is a good one for introductory studies in ethics. I have used it as a required textbook in two different courses (one grad and one undergrad), and in both cases my students loved it. Wilkens paradoxically makes difficult concepts (such as Kantian ethics) easy to understand while yet teaching students not to oversimplify complex thought. He shows genuine appreciation for various ethical approaches without being syncretistic. With that, he models the not-so-common virtue of intellectual hospitality.

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