Morality and Utility
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This is an essay on the subject of the criterion of morality, a subject which was, for some time and in some of the most influential quarters of the English-speaking philosophical world, virtually in abeyance, even among those philosophers who concerned themselves with ethical questions. That period and those theorists are not to be belittled, though it is popular to do so in some other quarters today. Concern with the meanings or functions of ethical terminology, in the narrowest senses of the words 'meaning' and 'function,' is entirely proper and even logically prior to the kind of task undertaken here; my debt to these theorists will be evident to the reader. The view advanced in this book is by no means new, give or take a few details of formulation (important though these may be to the theorist); neither, I think, are the broad outlines of the manner in which it is to be defended. The purpose of this essay is merely to bring things up-to-date.

The history of utilitarianism subsequent to the mighty labors of Mill and Sidgwick is an unfortunate one. Objections—which to the minds of the philosophically untutored, seem as trivial as to the philosophers influenced by them, they seem unanswerable—have diverted and often suppressed the otherwise wholehearted acceptance of this point of view. That an act's moral rightness is proportional to its utility, its tendency to promote the general happiness, strikes many minds with all the force of self-evidence, upon its first pronouncement. Further reflection on matters of detail, however, especially when induced by some sharp-witted student of philosophy, tends to perplex the would-be adherent, and in the end to put him to rout. An aura of suspicion has always hung over these philosophical objections. So far as I'm con-
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cerned, this book is the outcome of my efforts to hunt down its sources. In general, my assessment is that the objections are due to inattention to principles of application which are not themselves normative in nature, such inattention resulting in the "deduction" of what does not actually follow, and in failure to deduce what does, from the utilitarian hypothesis. Whether I am right in this, of course, the reader must judge for himself.

One's debts in a work of this kind are bound to be many and diverse. To my former teachers at Harvard University, especially Roderick Firth and Henry Aiken, and also to J. O. Urmson of Oxford, I owe thanks for stimulation on virtually all of the matters discussed in this book, though I daresay none would agree very extensively with its results. An enormous debt is of course due to the labors of my various predecessors and contemporaries in ethical philosophy; it was both encouraging and chastening to discover, after beginning on this project, to what extent my views have been anticipated or independently arrived at by others. Finally, my gratitude is extended to the secretarial force of the University of Waterloo, Department of Philosophy (Mrs. Una Vincent and Miss Margaret Ann Cole) for their considerable labors on the text, to the University in general for its generous allotment of time for such pursuits as this to its ordinary staff members, and to the editors and readers of the Johns Hopkins Press for helpful criticism and suggestions, and for continual encouragement.