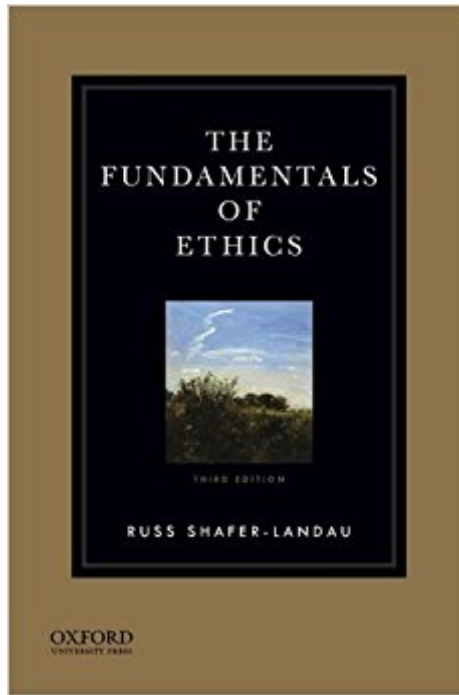


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# The Fundamentals Of Ethics



## Synopsis

In *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Third Edition, author Russ Shafer-Landau employs a uniquely engaging writing style to introduce students to the essential ideas of moral philosophy. Offering more comprehensive coverage of the good life, normative ethics, and metaethics than any other text of its kind, this book also addresses issues that are often omitted from other texts, such as the doctrine of doing and allowing, the doctrine of double effect, ethical particularism, the desire-satisfaction theory of well-being, and moral error theory. Shafer-Landau carefully reconstructs and analyzes dozens of arguments in depth, at a level that is understandable to students with no prior philosophical background. The text is supplemented by an online Instructor's Manual and Computerized Test Bank and a Companion Website with student self-quizzes and additional resources. Ideal for courses in introductory ethics and contemporary moral problems, this book can be used as a stand-alone text or with the author's companion reader, *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, Third Edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After reading this Shafer-Landau's 1st edition of the "The Fundamentals of Ethics" in its entirety, I can say it is definitely a very good survey text of ethical theory. That said, it also has a few weaknesses that deserve noting. Generally speaking, "The Fundamentals of Ethics" has several advantages over some of its competitors. The introductory discussion is quite good, I think; the book splits up the discussion of psychological and ethical egoism into two separate chapters, which makes the topic more manageable; it includes a chapter on desire-satisfaction theory, which most

ethics texts ignore; it covers particularism, doing and allowing, and other issues often ignored in survey texts of this kind; and it does a consistently fine job of defining and explaining terms and principles. And as one reviewer (on the OUP site) pointed out, Shafer-Landau's book is better organized than his primary competitor's (James Rachels' "The Elements of Moral Philosophy"), much more comprehensive, and covers some essential meta-ethics. Most of the discussions are easy to follow and most chapters (not all--see below) cover the essentials of each theory. And Landau is an engaging and cogent writer who is a pleasure to read. But the text also has some minor and major flaws that reviewers have ignored. What I consider the minor problems are these: 1. the book's conversational tone borders, at times, on being a bit annoying 2. the book sometimes divides up its discussion of normative theories into two chapters rather than one--a chapter addressing strengths and a chapter addressing weaknesses--when in most cases those considerations belong together 3.

This is just the first edition and I notice that the second edition came out only two years later, however I still think this book is worth the cheap price that it is being sold for. Shafer goes over the basics in this introductory book in ethics as he goes over different ethical theories such as: Hedonism, Desire Theory, Divine Command Theory, Natural Law Theory, Psychological Egoism, Feminist Ethics, Ethical Egoism, Consequentialism, Kantian ethics, Social contract theory and Virtue ethics. Shafer spends a good deal of time giving arguments for and against these views with a good amount of fairness. He then takes on the status of morality whilst giving us a good primer on the metaethical positions such as ethical objectivism and moral relativism, and moral nihilism. Moral nihilism is broken up into two parts: Error Theory and Expressivism, both views IMO are the toughest to take down, and I say this as someone who holds to a version of Divine Command Theory. Shafer shows its flaw, but I think more work is. Shafer really lets it rip on moral relativism and definitely takes off the gloves in his criticism. Russ Shafer Landau explains "Subjectivism is unable to explain the existence of moral disagreement. In order to avoid generating contradictions, subjectivists have to understand all moral judgments as reports of whether I approve of something or not. The claim that meat-eating is wrong becomes the claim that I disapprove of meat-eating....but on this line, moral debates that seem to involve intense disagreement become something completely different. In fact now it becomes IMPOSSIBLE for people to morally disagree with one another.

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