

Bibliography on Bernard Gert's moral theory

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¹ "In this commentary, I critically discuss the respective views of Gert and Beauchamp–Childress on the nature of so-called common morality and its promise for enriching ethical reflection within the field of bioethics. Although I endorse Beauchamp and Childress' shift from an emphasis on ethical theory as the source of moral norms to an emphasis on common morality, I question whether roughing up common morality to make it look like some sort of ultimate and universal foundation for morality, untouched by the dialectics of time and reflective equilibrium, was an equally good move. As for Gert's magisterial conception of common morality, I conclude that certain elements of his system are controversial at best and woefully inadequate at worst. He has a tendency to find in common morality what he himself put there, and his highly restricted conception of duties of assistance strikes this reader as ad hoc, inadequately defended, and unworthy of a project whose goal is to lessen the amount of misery in the world."

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² “This essay defends consequentialist approaches to moral evaluation from a charge of moral arrogance made by Bernard Gert in “Moral Arrogance and Moral Theories.” A distinction is made between a commitment to there being a right answer to moral questions and certainty about the nature of the right answers.”

³ “Julia Driver, Timm Triplett, and Kathleen Wallace challenge my account of moral arrogance, and Triplett and Wallace challenge its application to the problem of abortion. I try to show here that Driver’s attempt to defend consequentialism from my charge that it promotes moral arrogance is successful only if consequentialism explicitly gives up what has been considered one of its major virtues. I acknowledge that Triplett has uncovered some unclarity in my claim that the moral acceptability of abortion is an unresolvable moral issue. I also acknowledge that Wallace has uncovered some unclarity in my account of moral arrogance. After clarifying that account, I try to meet her challenge to defend my claim that it is not morally arrogant for a state to place some restrictions on abortions.”

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⁴ “Bernard Gert's theory of morality has received much critical attention, but there has been relatively little commentary on its practical value for bioethics. An important test of an ethical theory is its ability to yield results that are helpful and plausible when applied to real cases. An examination of Gert's theory and his own attempts to apply it to bioethics cases reveals that there are serious difficulties with regard to its application. These problems are sufficiently severe to support the conclusion that Gert's theory is unacceptable as an approach for resolving bioethics cases, even relatively noncontroversial cases.”

⁵ “Carson Strong criticizes the application of my moral theory to bioethics cases. Some of his criticisms are due to my failure to make explicit that both the irrationality or rationality of a decision and the irrationality or rationality of the ranking of evils are part of morally relevant feature 3. Other criticisms are the result of his not using the two-step procedure in a sufficiently rigorous way. His claim that I come up with a wrong answer depends upon his incorrectly regarding a weakly justified violation as one that all impartial rational persons would agree was permitted, rather than as one about which rational persons disagree.”

⁶ “Continuing the dialogue begun in the March 2006 issue of the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, I suggest that Bernard Gert's response to my paper does not adequately address the criticisms I make of his theory's application to bioethics cases.”

⁷ “Carson Strong's reply to my response to his article demonstrates what happens when there is unacknowledged disagreement about the facts of a case or about the meaning of the terms used to describe those facts. I hope that our dialogue will help reduce this disagreement.”

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⁸ “Bernard Gert argues that, while the moral system contains a procedure for resolving most moral disagreements, it does not allow for such resolution in all cases. For example, it does not allow for the resolution of disputes about whether animals and human fetuses should be included within the scope of those to whom the moral rules apply. I agree with Gert that not all moral debates can be resolved, but I believe that Gert does not use all the argumentative resources available to philosophers to resolve them. I argue that considerations outside the moral system proper can be used to provide argumentative support favoring some positions over their rivals in moral controversies that Gert regards as intractable. I illustrate this with reference to the abortion debate. I also argue that reaching such conclusions about the superiority of one position over rivals need not result in moral arrogance.”

⁹ “Julia Driver, Timm Triplett, and Kathleen Wallace challenge my account of moral arrogance, and Triplett and Wallace challenge its application to the problem of abortion. I try to show here that Driver's attempt to defend consequentialism from my charge that it promotes moral arrogance is successful only if consequentialism explicitly gives up what has been considered one of its major virtues. I acknowledge that Triplett has uncovered some unclarity in my claim that the moral acceptability of abortion is an unresolvable moral issue. I also acknowledge that Wallace has uncovered some unclarity in my account of moral arrogance. After clarifying that account, I try to meet her challenge to defend my claim that it is not morally arrogant for a state to place some restrictions on abortions.”

¹⁰ “Bernard Gert argues that legitimate moral disagreement calls for tolerance and moral humility; when there is more than one morally acceptable course of action, then intolerance and what Gert calls “moral arrogance” would be objectionable. This article identifies some possible difficulties in distinguishing moral arrogance from moral reform and then examines Gert's treatment of abortion as a contemporary example of moral disagreement that he characterizes as irresolvable.”

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¹¹ “Julia Driver, Timm Triplett, and Kathleen Wallace challenge my account of moral arrogance, and Triplett and Wallace challenge its application to the problem of abortion. I try to show here that Driver's attempt to defend consequentialism from my charge that it promotes moral arrogance is successful only if consequentialism explicitly gives up what has been considered one of its major virtues. I acknowledge that Triplett has uncovered some unclarity in my claim that the moral acceptability of abortion is an unresolvable moral issue. I also acknowledge that Wallace has uncovered some unclarity in my account of moral arrogance. After clarifying that account, I try to meet her challenge to defend my claim that it is not morally arrogant for a state to place some restrictions on abortions.”