

For further study

This selection has excerpts, sometimes simplified in wording, from Richard B. Brandt's "Toward a credible form of utilitarianism," in *Morality and the Language of Conduct* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda and George Nakhnikian, pages 107–43. Other works by Brandt include "The definition of an 'ideal observer' theory in ethics" and "Some comments on Professor Firth's reply," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 15 (1955): 407–13 and 422–3; *Ethical Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959); "Rational desires," in *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 43 (1970): 43–64; "Rationality, egoism, and morality," in *Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1972): 681–97; "The psychology of benevolence and its implications for philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 429–53; *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); and "The concept of rational action," *Social Theory and Practice* 9 (1983): 143–65. For an attempt to combine the best features of act- and rule-utilitarianism, see R. M. Hare's *Moral Thinking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). Harry Gensler's *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) discusses rule-utilitarianism in Chapter 10 (Sections 10.5 and 10.6).

Related readings in this anthology include Mill (the classic utilitarian); Smart (who prefers act- over rule-utilitarianism); and Finnis, Rawls, Ross, Slote, O'Neill, and Williams (who criticize utilitarianism).

Note

- 1 J. O. Urmson, "The Interpretation of the Philosophy of J. S. Mill," *Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1953): 33–9. [Note from Brandt]

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Objective *Prima Facie* Duties

Ross's earlier reading selection on page 90 gave a classic defense of two views of different sorts:

- 1 the intuitionist view that the basic moral principles are self-evident truths known through our moral intuitions,
- 2 the nonconsequentialist view that some kinds of action (such as breaking a promise) are wrong in themselves, and not just wrong because they have bad consequences.

His first view proposes an intuitionist method for picking out moral principles. Since this fits best in Part II, we put his reading selection there. But his second view, which proposes specific nonconsequentialist moral principles, fits better into Part IV – where we are now. So you might at this point want to look at Ross's earlier reading selection again, but this time for its defense of nonconsequentialism and criticism of utilitarianism.