



Self-Deception and Morality

Mike W. Martin

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This book systematically explores the moral issues surrounding self-deception. While many articles and books have been written on the concept of self-deception in recent years, Martin's gives much greater emphasis to self-deception as a significant topic for both ethical theory and applied ethics.

"Self-deception is . . . perplexing from a moral point of view. It seems tailor-made to camouflage and foster immorality. . . . Does all self-deception involve some guilt, and is it among the most abhorrent evils, as some moralists and theologians have charged? Or is it only wrong sometimes, such as when it has bad consequences? Could it on occasion be permissible or even desirable to deceive ourselves, just as we are sometimes justified in deceiving other people? Are self-deceivers perhaps more like innocent victims than perpetrators of deceit, and as such deserving of compassion and help? Or, paradoxically, are they best viewed with ambivalence: culpable as deceivers and simultaneously innocent as victims of deception?"
(from the introduction)

Martin develops a conception of self-deception as the purposeful evasion of acknowledging to oneself truths or one's view of truth. He details a systematic framework for understanding the main moral perspectives and traditions concerning self-deception that have emerged in western philosophy. In so doing, he clarifies related concepts like sincerity, authenticity, honesty, hypocrisy, weakness of will, and self-understanding. Ranging across traditions both philosophical (Kant, Kierkegaard, and Sartre) and non-philosophical (Freud, Eugene O'Neill, and Henrik Ibsen), Martin shows why self-deception is as morally complex as any other major form of behavior.

The appeal of this book is broad. The volume will challenge professional philosophers and psychologists, yet it is organized and written to be accessible to students in courses on ethics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of literature. Martin's numerous literary examples should also interest literary critics.



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