

## ETHICS : FROM ELYSEUM TO MARKET PLACE

Moral philosophers used to inhabit lofty places. Traditionally, they dealt with virtues and sins; during the so-called Age of Analysis they specialized in studying the "grammar of moral words". In either case they seldom ventured to tread where ordinary people walk, suffer, or make others suffer. All this ~~was~~ changed radically since about 1960, under the influence of the threat of nuclear war, the degradation of the environment, and a heightened consciousness of the economic cycles and the fight for civil rights. Moral philosophy has finally descended from the Elysium to the market place. This descent has been healthy on the whole: there is less rhetoric and hypocrisy. But ~~as~~ it involves the risk of corruption; in fact a number of moral philosophers have undertaken to defend the most ferocious and primitive form of capitalism, the need to keep the nuclear deterrence policy <sup>and</sup> that of dismantling the welfare state; they have seen only the positive aspects of business, while overlooking its negative ones; they praise patriotism, etc. We should keep making frequent visits to the agora, but we should not live in it.

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