

'Consideration for Others and Oneself'

THE FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY, by Henry Hazlitt; Van Nostrand, 386 pages. \$9.95.

What is gained by an action should be greater than what is lost by it—in other words, there should be a profit in moral actions. This is the approach of Henry Hazlitt, widely-known author and columnist on economics, as he turns to the field of ethics.

Hazlitt's approach is practical. The ultimate good he defines as long-run happiness and well-being for the individual and society. These he considers practically identical: "The society is the individuals that compose it. If each achieves happiness, then the happiness of society is necessarily achieved."

And what is to prevent an individual from making himself happy by harming others? First, there are rules—laws, manners, customs—which must be followed, because they

are for the long-range benefit of all. "The minimum purpose of moral rules is to prevent conflict and collision between individuals. The broader purpose is to harmonize our attitudes and actions so as to make the achievement of everyone's aims as far as possible compatible. . . . Social cooperation is the heart of morality. . . ."

If free enterprise, with the profit motive, is the best economic system (as Hazlitt has often declared it to be) then a similar motivation might apply to morals. However, Hazlitt qualifies at this point. He says:

"The appropriate moral attitude . . . is neither pure egoism nor pure altruism but mutualism, consideration both for others and for oneself. . . ."

Hazlitt writes with classic clarity. As for his conclusion, many may disagree, desiring some higher goal to give meaning to life through religion or other inspiration. —LANE GOLDSMITH, Chronicle Staff.