

O'Neill, Onora S. (b. 1941), British philosopher known for her constructivist interpretation of Immanuel Kant and her contributions to Kantian moral and political theory as well as bioethics and media ethics. She interprets Kant as arguing that a critique of reason cannot start from indubitable first principles but must construct its own principles (*Acting on Principle*, 1975 and 2013, and *Constructions of Reason*, 1989). The only legitimate standard for construction is negative. It is expressed in Kant's Categorical Imperative, according to which no principle is justified unless it can be understood and adopted by all persons, regardless of their particular interests or convictions. O'Neill argues that the Imperative presents the supreme law of both theoretical and practical reason and expresses the norm for autonomy in thinking and acting.

In her moral and political work, O'Neill rejects the dichotomy between universalist theories of justice and particularist theories of virtue in favor of a constructivist conception of practical reason, which grounds duties of both justice and virtue (*Faces of Hunger*, 1986, *Towards Justice and Virtue*, 1996, and *Bounds of Justice*, 2000). Turning to concrete moral and political controversies, she argues that the focus on individual autonomy in contemporary bioethics should be replaced by a concern for the duties of agents and institutions and an epistemology of trust (*Autonomy and Trust, in Bioethics*, 2002, *Rethinking Informed Consent*, 2007 [with N. Manson], *A Question of Trust*, 2002). She also stresses that press freedom is not an end in itself but subordinate to the higher end of accountably providing reliable information to the public.

Educated at Oxford and Harvard, O'Neill obtained her PhD under John Rawls and taught at Harvard, Columbia, Essex, and Cambridge, where she was Principal of Newnham College. She is a crossbench member of the House of Lords and has held numerous public offices, including Presidency of the British Academy, Chair of the Nuffield Foundation, and of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK).

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