

Justice: What's the Right Thing To Do?
by Michael J Sandel
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MICHAEL J.
SANDEL

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Michael Sandel, who gave the 2009 Reith Lectures, is an American professor of government. His subject sounds academic, but *Justice* is both readable and important: it is a masterclass on how to analyse moral issues. He argues that it is the duty of both citizens and government to reason their way through “the contested terrain of justice and injustice, equality and inequality, individual rights and the common good”. Neutrality is not an option: “we can’t remain neutral toward competing conceptions of the good life”. He rejects both utilitarianism (the greatest happiness for the maximum number) and libertarianism (leave it to individuals to decide) as models for a just society. Instead, Sandel wants a society that is not only concerned with increasing prosperity, but which cultivates virtue and engages with moral and spiritual questions for the benefit of all. He wants “a new politics of the common good” and blames the inequality of American society for undermining civic virtue. This compelling “journey in moral and political reflection” provides an essential toolkit for confronting life’s moral dilemmas.

PD Smith