**Chapter Summary**

*Ethical Choices*, Third Edition

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Chapter 5: Psychology and Morality

Chapter 5 examines issues relating moral psychology and ethics. It opens with Milgram’s experiments, which along with more recent studies, suggest psychological situationism. Situationism indicates that one’s circumstances can influence one’s moral behavior; it also raises worries about moral character. Besides such external influences, we are susceptible to many internal influences as well. Both these external and internal influences can affect how we think and act morally. We find that we are susceptible to being manipulated by others and to making potentially avoidable errors on our own. Given the ethics of belief, our susceptibilities give us all a moral responsibility to try to offset our proneness to error. These susceptibilities also shed some light on the strengths and weaknesses of moral reasoning and reflection—either of which is more likely to avoid error than spontaneous moral actions. Acknowledging that it may be sobering to recognize how prone we are to error; the text asks, could we also be prone to some morally desirable predisposition (e.g., altruism)? The final section explores some attempts by psychologists to answer this, which is an important issue for ethics in general. It is even more important for ethical egoism—the ethical theory to be addressed in the next chapter.