

peter unger living high and letting die

Peter Unger Living High and Letting Die: Exploring Ethical Boundaries and Moral Responsibility

peter unger living high and letting die is a profound philosophical examination that challenges our intuitions about morality, responsibility, and the ethical obligations of individuals living in affluent societies. Unger's provocative arguments compel us to reconsider the moral distance we place between ourselves and those suffering from preventable deaths due to poverty, famine, or lack of medical care. Diving into his work reveals a compelling discussion about the ethics of "letting die" versus "killing" and the demands that living a "high" standard of life places on our moral duties.

Understanding Peter Unger's Ethical Challenge

Peter Unger, a prominent philosopher, introduced his reflections on morality in a way that shakes the foundations of everyday ethical thinking. His essay "Living High and Letting Die" contrasts the comfortable lives enjoyed by many in developed countries with the preventable suffering endured by people in impoverished regions. Unger's central thesis is unsettling: if it is within our power to prevent harm without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, then failing to do so is morally equivalent to causing that harm.

The Core Argument: Moral Demands Beyond Charity

At the heart of Unger's argument is a challenge to conventional views on charity and moral responsibility. Most people believe that donating to famine relief or medical aid is supererogatory—that is, praiseworthy but not morally required. Unger disputes this by arguing that when affluent individuals continue to live extravagantly while others die from preventable causes, they are, in effect, "letting die" in a morally indefensible way.

He uses thought experiments to illustrate his point. For example, imagine you see a child drowning in a shallow pond. Most would agree you are morally required to save the child, even if it means ruining your expensive clothes. Unger extends this analogy to global poverty, suggesting that failing to aid those in dire need when it costs us relatively little is just as blameworthy.

The Distinction Between Killing and Letting Die

One of the pivotal ethical distinctions Unger explores is between actively killing someone and passively letting them die. Traditional moral frameworks often treat these acts differently, typically condemning killing more harshly than letting die. Unger challenges this dichotomy by arguing that in many cases, the moral difference is negligible.

Why Does This Distinction Matter?

The distinction matters because it influences how society views responsibility. If letting someone die is considered less blameworthy than killing, it can justify inaction in the face of preventable harm. Unger urges readers to reconsider this stance, emphasizing that omission can carry as much moral weight as commission depending on the circumstances.

This has profound implications for public policy, philanthropy, and personal ethics. If the moral difference is minimal, then failing to act when one can prevent suffering becomes a form of moral wrongdoing equivalent to causing harm directly.

Living High: The Ethics of Affluence

“Living high” refers to the lifestyle enjoyed by many in developed nations—characterized by excess consumption, luxury, and relative comfort. Unger’s critique is not just about charitable giving but about the ethics of living well when others suffer needlessly.

Is It Immoral to Live Comfortably While Others Suffer?

Unger provocatively suggests that it is. His argument is that the resources spent on luxuries could be redirected toward saving lives without significantly diminishing one’s well-being. For instance, giving up a luxury vacation or a new gadget could fund medical treatment for those in desperate need.

This raises questions about the obligations of individuals, corporations, and governments in wealth redistribution and global aid. Unger’s work encourages a shift from seeing aid as optional generosity to recognizing it as a moral imperative.

Practical Implications for Everyday Life

For many readers, Unger’s challenge may seem overwhelming or impractical. However, his philosophy invites reflection on practical steps individuals can take:

- Reevaluating personal spending habits to prioritize essential needs over luxury.
- Supporting organizations that provide effective aid to impoverished communities.
- Advocating for policies that address global inequalities and improve access to basic resources.
- Engaging in ethical consumerism by choosing products that promote fair labor and environmental sustainability.

These actions represent ways of living more ethically “high” without necessarily sacrificing personal

happiness.

Critiques and Responses to Unger's Position

While Peter Unger's essay is influential, it has also faced criticism. Some argue that his demands are too stringent and unrealistic, potentially leading to moral burnout or paralysis. Others question whether individuals truly have the means to alleviate global suffering or if systemic changes are required instead.

Addressing the Practicality Objection

Critics often claim that expecting individuals to relinquish significant comforts is impractical. Unger and his supporters respond by emphasizing that even small sacrifices can collectively save lives, and that moral progress often requires challenging established norms.

Systemic vs. Individual Responsibility

Another critique is that global poverty and preventable deaths are systemic issues that require political and economic reforms rather than individual charity alone. Unger acknowledges this but insists that individual moral responsibility is not diminished by systemic complexity. Instead, individuals should contribute what they can while advocating for broader change.

Why Peter Unger's Living High and Letting Die Still Matters Today

In an increasingly interconnected world, Unger's reflections remain deeply relevant. With global awareness at an all-time high, the ethical questions about wealth, suffering, and moral responsibility continue to provoke debate.

Linking Philosophy to Global Challenges

From climate change to pandemic responses and humanitarian crises, the tension between "living high" and "letting die" is evident. Unger's framework encourages us to confront uncomfortable truths about our complicity in global suffering and consider how our choices impact others far beyond our immediate surroundings.

Inspiring Ethical Reflection and Action

Ultimately, Peter Unger's "Living High and Letting Die" is more than a philosophical treatise; it is a call to conscience. It pushes us to examine the ethical dimensions of our lifestyles, to recognize the power of individual action, and to rethink what it means to live a good and responsible life in the modern era.

By grappling with these ideas, readers can move toward a more compassionate, engaged, and morally aware existence—one that honors the interconnectedness of humanity and the profound responsibilities that come with privilege.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Peter Unger and what is his main argument in 'Living High and Letting Die'?

Peter Unger is a philosopher known for his work in ethics. In 'Living High and Letting Die,' he argues that people in affluent societies have a moral obligation to prevent suffering and death caused by poverty and lack of resources, suggesting that failing to do so is morally equivalent to allowing harm.

What ethical theory does Peter Unger use in 'Living High and Letting Die'?

Peter Unger employs a form of utilitarianism and consequentialism, emphasizing the moral duty to reduce suffering wherever possible, especially when one can do so without significant sacrifice.

How does 'Living High and Letting Die' challenge common views on charity and moral responsibility?

The book challenges the notion that charity is supererogatory (above and beyond duty) by arguing that affluent individuals are morally required to help those in extreme need, rather than merely encouraged or praised for doing so.

What examples does Peter Unger use to illustrate his points in 'Living High and Letting Die'?

Unger uses thought experiments such as the 'shallow pond' analogy, where a person must decide whether to save a drowning child at minor personal cost, to illustrate the moral imperative to prevent harm and suffering in real-world contexts.

What criticisms have been raised against Unger's arguments in 'Living High and Letting Die'?

Critics argue that Unger's demands are overly demanding and impractical, potentially leading to burnout or neglect of personal responsibilities. Others question the feasibility of enforcing such stringent moral obligations universally.

How has 'Living High and Letting Die' influenced contemporary discussions on global poverty and ethics?

The book has significantly influenced debates on global justice, philanthropy, and the ethics of aid, encouraging a more rigorous examination of individual and collective responsibilities to alleviate poverty and suffering worldwide.

Additional Resources

Peter Unger *Living High and Letting Die: An Analytical Review of Moral Philosophy and Ethical Responsibility*

peter unger living high and letting die presents a provocative exploration into the ethics of affluent societies and their moral obligations toward global suffering. Unger's philosophical inquiry challenges conventional understandings of charity, responsibility, and the moral calculus of aiding distant strangers, framing a compelling dialogue on the duties of the wealthy in a world rife with inequality and preventable death.

This article delves into Unger's influential essay "Living High and Letting Die," dissecting its core arguments and ethical implications. It situates Unger's work within the broader discourse of moral philosophy and applied ethics, examining how his propositions resonate with contemporary issues such as global poverty, humanitarian aid, and effective altruism. By analyzing the nuances of Unger's thesis and its reception, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ethical challenges posed by living comfortably amid widespread suffering.

Understanding Peter Unger's Ethical Argument

Peter Unger's "Living High and Letting Die" is a seminal work that scrutinizes the moral permissibility of affluent individuals living comfortably while ignoring the plight of those suffering from preventable harm or death. Unger argues that the conventional moral distinction between "killing" and "letting die" is often morally irrelevant when it comes to the duty to rescue or aid others.

At the heart of Unger's argument is the assertion that if one can prevent serious harm or death without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, then failing to act is morally indefensible. This challenges the common intuition that passive inaction ("letting die") is less blameworthy than active intervention ("killing"). Unger insists that allowing preventable suffering due to indifference or prioritizing comfort undermines ethical consistency.

Core Themes and Philosophical Foundations

Unger's essay draws heavily on utilitarian principles, emphasizing the maximization of well-being and the minimization of suffering. He critiques the moral complacency of "living high" — enjoying luxury and comfort — while "letting die" reflects the neglect of distant victims of poverty, famine, or disease. This theme intersects with Peter Singer's earlier advocacy for effective altruism, where affluent individuals bear significant responsibility for global aid.

Key concepts central to Unger's thesis include:

- **Demandingness of Morality:** Unger's argument implies a highly demanding moral standard, requiring substantial personal sacrifice for the sake of others' lives.
- **Global Justice and Proximity:** The essay challenges parochial views that prioritize helping those geographically or socially closer over distant strangers.
- **Redefining Moral Blame:** Unger questions the validity of moral distinctions based on action versus omission in life-and-death contexts.

Comparative Analysis: Unger and Contemporary Ethical Theories

To fully grasp the significance of Peter Unger living high and letting die, it is instructive to compare his stance with related philosophical positions, particularly utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

Utilitarianism and the Ethics of Aid

Unger's approach aligns closely with classical utilitarianism, which evaluates actions by their consequences in promoting overall happiness or reducing suffering. Like utilitarians, Unger advocates for impartiality and the moral imperative to alleviate suffering regardless of social ties.

However, Unger's emphasis on the moral equivalence of killing and letting die pushes utilitarian thought further, demanding more radical lifestyle changes from the affluent to prevent harm. This raises critical questions about the practicality and psychological feasibility of such demanding ethical standards.

Deontological Concerns and Moral Boundaries

From a Kantian or deontological perspective, moral duties are grounded in principles and respect for persons rather than outcomes alone. Critics argue that Unger's utilitarian-inspired demands risk overriding important moral boundaries related to individual autonomy and rights.

For instance, the idea that one must sacrifice personal projects or comforts extensively to aid others may conflict with deontological views that emphasize respecting one's own rational agency and duties toward oneself.

Virtue Ethics and Character Development

Virtue ethics focuses on cultivating moral character traits like compassion and generosity. Unger's essay implicitly challenges the virtues of moral sensitivity and justice by spotlighting societal apathy toward suffering.

This perspective suggests that beyond strict moral obligations, fostering virtues that encourage proactive engagement with humanitarian crises is crucial. It also raises questions about how realistic or sustainable such virtues are in affluent societies.

The Impact of “Living High and Letting Die” on Ethical Discourse

Peter Unger's essay has significantly influenced academic debates on moral responsibility and global justice. It has become a touchstone in discussions about the ethics of poverty alleviation and the moral duties of the wealthy.

Influence on Effective Altruism Movement

The essay's insistence on moral rigor resonates strongly with the effective altruism movement, which calls for evidence-based and cost-effective charitable giving. Unger's arguments underscore the movement's emphasis on prioritizing aid to save or improve lives in the most impactful way.

Public and Policy Implications

Beyond academia, Unger's critique informs debates on international aid policies, refugee assistance, and ethical consumerism. It challenges policymakers and individuals alike to reconsider the extent of their moral commitments in a globally interconnected world.

Critiques and Controversies

Despite its influence, “Living High and Letting Die” has faced criticism for its demandingness and perceived impracticality. Some argue that such stringent moral expectations risk alienating individuals or fostering moral burnout. Others question whether moral philosophy should impose such radical duties without considering psychological and social constraints.

Key Takeaways from Peter Unger Living High and

Letting Die

In summary, Unger's essay:

- Questions the moral distinction between active harm and passive neglect, especially in life-or-death situations.
- Calls for affluent individuals to prioritize global suffering above personal comfort when possible.
- Challenges parochial attitudes toward moral responsibility, advocating for impartial concern for distant strangers.
- Provokes ongoing debate about the scope and limits of moral obligations in affluent societies.

Peter Unger *Living High and Letting Die* remains a foundational text for those grappling with the ethics of global inequality and humanitarian responsibility. Its enduring relevance reflects the persistent moral challenges posed by vast disparities in wealth and well-being worldwide. By interrogating our complicity in suffering through inaction, Unger's work pushes the boundaries of ethical thought and calls for a reevaluation of how we live and what we owe to others.

Peter Unger Living High And Letting Die

peter unger living high and letting die: Living High and Letting Die Peter Unger, 1996-06-20
In this contentious new book, one of our leading philosophers argues that our intuitions about ethical cases are generated not by basic moral values, but by certain distracting psychological dispositions that all too often prevent us from reacting in accord with our commitments. Through a detailed look at how these tendencies operate, Unger shows that, on the good morality that we already accept, the fatally unhelpful behavior is monstrously wrong. By uncovering the eminently sensible ethics that we've already embraced fully, and by confronting us with empirical facts and with easily followed instructions for lessening serious suffering appropriately and effectively, Unger's book points the way to a compassionate new moral philosophy.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Eine Theorie der globalen Verantwortung* Valentin Beck, 2016-07-11 Auch zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts lebt ein großer Teil der Menschheit in bitterer Armut. Daraus ergibt sich die brennende Frage, was die Bürger wohlhabender Länder extrem armen Menschen moralisch schulden. Valentin Beck beantwortet sie im Rahmen einer umfassenden Theorie der globalen Verantwortung. In seinem glänzend geschriebenen Buch behandelt er zentrale Fragen der Theorie globaler Gerechtigkeit, unterzieht unsere Verflechtung in globale soziale Strukturen einer detaillierten Analyse und wirft so ein neues Licht auf eine der größten moralischen Herausforderungen unserer Zeit. Wir müssen mit Blick auf den politischen und individuellen Umgang mit der Weltarmut umdenken, so lautet die zentrale Forderung dieser Studie.

peter unger living high and letting die: Living High and Letting Die Peter K. Unger, 1996
The view known as Liberationism, which holds that moral intuitions are often unreflective of basic values, contrasts with the more common view known as Preservationism, which maintains that our moral intuitions accord with our basic moral values. This book explores the inconsistencies in the

Preservationist position.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Doing and Allowing Harm* Fiona Woollard, 2015
Fiona Woollard presents an original defence of the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing, according to which doing harm seems much harder to justify than merely allowing harm. She argues that the Doctrine is best understood as a principle that protects us from harmful imposition, and offers a moderate account of our obligations to offer aid to others.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Is There a Duty to die?* James M. Humber, Robert F. Almeder, 2000-01-03 The question of whether there might be a duty to die was first raised by Margaret Battin in 1987 in her ground-breaking essay, *Age Distribution and the Just Distribution of Health Care: Is There a Duty to-Die?* In 1997 the issue was reprised when two new articles appeared on the topic written by John Hardwig and the other by former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm. Given the renewed interest in the topic, as well as its undeniable importance, *Biomedical Ethics Reviews* sought to initiate an in-depth discussion of the issue by soliciting articles and issuing a general call for papers on the topic *Is There a Duty to Die?* The twelve articles in this volume represent the ultimate fruits of those initiatives. The first seven essays in this text are sympathetic to the claim that there is a duty to die. They argue either: (a) that some form of a duty to die exists, or (b) that arguments that might be offered against the existence of such a duty cannot be sustained. By way of contrast, the last five articles in the text are critical of duty-to-die claims: The authors of the first three of these five articles attempt to cast doubt on the existence of a duty to die, and the writers of the last two essays argue that if such a duty did exist, severe problems would arise when ever we attempted to implement it.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Ending Life* M. Pabst Battin, 2005-05-05 This is a collection of articles covering a wide range of topics in the area of bioethics and end-of-life issues, centering on issues of withdrawing or withholding treatment, physician assisted suicides and euthanasia.

peter unger living high and letting die: *The Moral Demands of Affluence* Garrett Cullity, 2006-09-21 Given that there is a forceful case for thinking that the affluent are morally required to devote a substantial proportion of what they have to helping the poor, Garrett Cullity examines, refines and defends an argument of this form. He then identifies its limits.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Objectivism, Subjectivism, and Relativism in Ethics: Volume 25, Part 1* Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred Dycus Miller, Jeffrey Paul, 2008-01-28 This book discusses whether we desire things because they are good, or whether they are good because we desire them.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Cosmopolitanism* Anthony Appiah, 2007-01-30 Reviving the ancient philosophy of Cosmopolitanism, a school of thought that dates to the Cynics of the fourth century BCE, Appiah traces its influence through history to show how Western intellectuals and leaders have wildly exaggerated the power of difference--and neglected the power of one.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Domination and Global Political Justice* Barbara Buckinx, Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, Timothy Waligore, 2015-02-11 Domination consists in subjection to the will of others and manifests itself both as a personal relation and a structural phenomenon serving as the context for relations of power. Domination has again become a central political concern through the revival of the republican tradition of political thought (not to be confused with the US political party). However, normative debates about domination have mostly remained limited to the context of domestic politics. Also, the republican debate has not taken into account alternative ways of conceptualizing domination. Critical theorists, liberals, feminists, critical race theorists, and postcolonial writers have discussed domination in different ways, focusing on such problems as imperialism, racism, and the subjection of indigenous peoples. This volume extends debates about domination to the global level and considers how other streams in political theory and nearby disciplines enrich, expand upon, and critique the republican tradition's contributions to the debate. This volume brings together, for the first time, mostly original pieces on domination and global

political justice by some of this generation's most prominent scholars, including Philip Pettit, James Bohman, Rainer Forst, Amy Allen, John McCormick, Thomas McCarthy, Charles Mills, Duncan Ivison, John Maynor, Terry Macdonald, Stefan Gosepath, and Hauke Brunkhorst.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Philosophical Interventions* Martha C. Nussbaum, 2012-01-24 This volume collects the notable published book reviews of Martha C. Nussbaum, an acclaimed philosopher who is also a professor of law and a public intellectual. Her academic work focuses on questions of moral and political philosophy and on the nature of the emotions. But over the past 25 years she has also written many book reviews for a general public, in periodicals such as *The New Republic* and *The New York Review of Books*. Dating from 1986 to the present, these essays engage, constructively and also critically, with authors like Roger Scruton, Allan Bloom, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, Richard Posner, Catharine MacKinnon, Susan Moller Okin, and other prominent intellectuals of our time. Throughout, her views defy ideological predictability, heralding valuable work from little-known sources, deftly criticizing where criticism is due, and generally providing a compelling picture of how philosophy in the Socratic tradition can engage with broad social concerns. For this volume, Nussbaum provides an intriguing introduction that explains her selection and provides her view of the role of the public philosopher.

peter unger living high and letting die: *Intricate Ethics* F.M. Kamm, 2008-09-18 Reading F.M. Kamm's latest book is like watching a brilliant astronomer map an uncharted galaxy--the meticulousness and the display of mental stamina must inspire awe. There is a kind of beauty in the performance alone. *Intricate Ethics* is a major event in normative ethical theory by a living master of the subject.... In the end, professional moral philosophers cannot reasonably ignore *Intricate Ethics*.... Kamm continues to prove herself the most imaginative, detail-oriented deontologist writing in English today... Professor Kamm is in a class by herself.--Jeffrey Brand-Ballard, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* The operative word in this masterful work is 'intricate.' Watching Kamm's mind dissect and reconstruct different cases is like watching a juggler, riding a unicycle, carrying on a conversation, while getting dressed. It is a glorious celebration of what moral philosophy does best, and what one of its most gifted practitioners can do to enlighten our understanding of the most pressing ethical issues of our time. But it is also a rich playground for empirically minded philosophers and psychologists who want to play with the clever class of dilemmas that Kamm has created, dilemmas that will both amuse and torture generations of people.--Marc Hauser is a Harvard College Professor and author of *Moral Minds* Frances Kamm once again proves herself to be an astonishingly subtle and creative defender of a deontological outlook. Anyone at all interested in normative ethics will find something of value in *Intricate Ethics*. There are striking and original views on a wide range of topics. And no one--absolutely no one--compares to Kamm when it comes to constructing relevant test cases and carefully assessing our intuitive reactions to them. This is a master at work, at the height of her powers.--Shelly Kagan, Clark Professor of Philosophy, Yale University *Intricate Ethics* fully justifies its title. It is as deep, subtle, imaginative, and analytically rigorous as any work in moral philosophy written in a great many years. It is dense with highly original and fertile ideas supported by powerful and ingenious arguments. This book amply confirms Frances Kamm's standing as one of the greatest living philosophers.--Jeff McMahan, Rutgers University Kamm's virtuosity in hypothesizing cases in defense or refutation of moral principles remains unsurpassed. *Intricate Ethics* is also a testament to the fruitfulness of this rarefied method of ethics. One might have thought that, having already devoted several hundred path-breaking pages to the topic of nonconsequentialism in her earlier two-volume *Morality, Mortality*, it would have been impossible to break much new ground in this sequel. Yet what Kamm has to say here on the topics of harming and saving from harm is as novel, arresting, and insightful as ever.--Michael Otsuka, Professor of Philosophy, University College London Kamm ...is the most sophisticated of the contemporary exponents of intuitionist or nonconsequentialist ethics...No one else makes such extraordinarily meticulous and penetrating attempts to extract the principles behind our ordinary moral intuitions...I highly recommend it as an inclusive and subtle attempt to work out nonconsequentialism on an intuitionist basis. As a bonus, *Intricate Ethics* also offers searching

analyses of the work of Peter Unger, Peter Singer, Bernard Gert, T.M. Scanlon, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky.--Ingmar Persson, Times Literary Supplement

peter unger living high and letting die: The Atrocity Paradigm Claudia Card, 2005 What distinguishes evils from ordinary wrongs? Is hatred a necessarily evil? Are some evils unforgivable? Are there evils we should tolerate? What can make evils hard to recognize? Are evils inevitable? How can we best respond to and live with evils? Claudia Card offers a secular theory of evil that responds to these questions and more. Evils, according to her theory, have two fundamental components. One component is reasonably foreseeable intolerable harm -- harm that makes a life indecent and impossible or that makes a death indecent. The other component is culpable wrongdoing. Atrocities, such as genocides, slavery, war rape, torture, and severe child abuse, are Card's paradigms because in them these key elements are writ large. Atrocities deserve more attention than secular philosophers have so far paid them. They are distinguished from ordinary wrongs not by the psychological states of evildoers but by the seriousness of the harm that is done. Evildoers need not be sadistic: they may simply be negligent or unscrupulous in pursuing their goals. Card's theory represents a compromise between classic utilitarian and stoic alternatives (including Kant's theory of radical evil). Utilitarians tend to reduce evils to their harms; Stoics tend to reduce evils to the wickedness of perpetrators: Card accepts neither reduction. She also responds to Nietzsche's challenges about the worth of the concept of evil, and she uses her theory to argue that evils are more important than merely unjust inequalities. She applies the theory in explorations of war rape and violence against intimates. She also takes up what Primo Levi called the gray zone, where victims become complicit in perpetrating on others evils that threaten to engulf themselves. While most past accounts of evil have focused on perpetrators, Card begins instead from the position of the victims, but then considers more generally how to respond to -- and live with -- evils, as victims, as perpetrators, and as those who have become both.

peter unger living high and letting die: Deparochialising Global Justice Aejaz Ahmad Wani, 2024-08-27 This book offers a deparochial account of global justice and addresses disenchantment stemming from its West-centricity and provincial theoretical formulations. As the recurring global poverty debate restricts the duties of alleviating poverty and inequality to the developed world, this book attempts to broaden the spectrum of duties to the superrich of the developing world. Drawing from the case study of India's superrich as an exemplar of the potent agency of rising powers, the book examines the structural relationship between unbridled affluence and the (un)realisation of the human rights of the poor. It contends that India's superrich, like their counterparts in other powerful developing countries, both contribute as well as benefit from the highly decentralised global economic order that (re)produces affluence of the few and deprivation of the many within these countries. In doing so, this book argues that the superrich have a positive duty to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality beyond their free-standing moral responsibility for philanthropy.

peter unger living high and letting die: The Good, the Right, Life and Death Jason R. Raibley, Michael J. Zimmerman, 2017-09-29 Fred Feldman, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is widely recognized for his subtle defense of hedonistic consequentialism and for his plain-spoken and exact philosophical style. This book collects new and original articles from an international team of scholars to celebrate his philosophical contributions. The three main topics of the book - moral goodness, moral rightness and the ethical and metaphysical puzzles posed by death - are topics that have occupied Professor Feldman throughout his philosophical career. Each contribution advances the state of the art in analytical ethics and metaphysics through critical analysis of previous work and the formulation of new positions. As a collection, these essays represent a sustained reflection on the merits and limitations of a whole, integrated research program in moral philosophy: hedonistic consequentialism.

peter unger living high and letting die: The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory Richard A. Posner, 2009-06-01 Ambitious legal thinkers have become mesmerized by moral philosophy, believing that great figures in the philosophical tradition hold the keys to understanding

and improving law and justice and even to resolving the most contentious issues of constitutional law. They are wrong, contends Richard Posner in this book. Posner characterizes the current preoccupation with moral and constitutional theory as the latest form of legal mystification--an evasion of the real need of American law, which is for a greater understanding of the social, economic, and political facts out of which great legal controversies arise. In pursuit of that understanding, Posner advocates a rebuilding of the law on the pragmatic basis of open-minded and systematic empirical inquiry and the rejection of cant and nostalgia--the true professionalism foreseen by Oliver Wendell Holmes a century ago. A bracing book that pulls no punches and leaves no pieties unpunctured or sacred cows unkicked, *The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory* offers a sweeping tour of the current scene in legal studies--and a hopeful prospect for its future.

peter unger living high and letting die: Just Babies Paul Bloom, 2013-11-14 Psychologists have long believed that we begin life as moral blank slates. Most of us take it for granted that babies are born selfish and that it is the role of society - and especially parents - to transform them from little sociopaths into civilised beings. Now, in *Just Babies*, Paul Bloom argue that humans are in fact hardwired with a sense of morality. Drawing on groundbreaking research, Bloom demonstrates that even before they can speak or walk, babies judge the goodness and badness of others' actions; act to soothe those in distress; and feel empathy, guilt, pride and righteous anger. Still, this innate morality is limited. We are naturally hostile to strangers, prone to parochialism and bigotry. Drawing on insights from psychology, behavioural economics, evolutionary biology and philosophy, Bloom explores how we have come to surpass these limitations. Along the way, he examines the morality of chimpanzees, criminals, religious extremists and Ivy League professors, and explores out often puzzling moral feelings about sex, politics, religion and race. Bloom rejects the fashionable view that adult morality is driven mainly by gut feelings and unconscious biases. Just as reason has driven our great scientific discoveries, it is reason and deliberation that makes possible our moral discoveries. Ultimately, it is through our imagination, our compassion and our uniquely human capacity for rational thought that we can transcend the primitive sense of morality we were born with, becoming more than just babies. Vivid, witty, and intellectually probing, *Just Babies* offers a radical new perspective on our moral lives.

peter unger living high and letting die: At the Heart of the Liturgy Maxwell E. Johnson, Timothy P. O'Malley, Demetrio S. Yocum, 2014-12-17 From 1991 to 2012, Nathan D. Mitchell was the author of the Amen Corner that appeared at the end of each issue of *Worship*. Readers of *Worship* grew accustomed to Nathan's columns as invitations to rethink the practice of Christian worship through a liturgical theology that was interdisciplinary, aesthetic, and attentive to history. With the soul of a poet, Nathan was always on the lookout for the turn of phrase, image, stanza, or metaphor from other classic wordsmiths that could capture the liturgical insight he wanted to explore. For the first time, this volume assembles some of the most important of these columns around the themes of body, Word, Spirit, beauty, justice, and unity. In addition, Nathan's former students offer substantive commentary through essays that invite the reader to consider how the themes raised by Nathan might develop in the coming years. This collection is a must-read both for those who admired Nathan's contribution to liturgical studies and for a newer generation of scholars seeking to discern the frontiers of liturgical theology. Nathan D. Mitchell is an emeritus professor of liturgy in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. In 1998, Mitchell was presented with the Berakah Award from the North American Academy of Liturgy for his contribution to the field. His many publications include the following books: *Meeting Mystery: Liturgy, Worship, Sacraments*, and *The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism*.

peter unger living high and letting die: Contemporary Moral and Social Issues, 2014-04-15 *Contemporary Moral and Social Issues* is a uniquely entertaining introduction that brings ethical thought to life. It makes innovative use of engaging, topically oriented original short fiction, together with classic and influential readings and editorial discussion as a means of helping students think philosophically about ethical theory and practical ethical problems. Introduces students to ethical theory and a range of practical moral issues through a combination of key

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