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Famine, Affluence, and Morality

Peter Singer

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In 1972, the young philosopher Peter Singer published "Famine, Affluence and Morality," which rapidly became one of the most widely discussed essays in applied ethics. Through this article, Singer presents his view that we have the same moral obligations to those far away as we do to those close to us. He argued that choosing not to send life-saving money to starving people on the other side of the earth is the moral equivalent of neglecting to save drowning children because we prefer not to muddy our shoes. If we can help, we must--and any excuse is hypocrisy. Singer's extreme stand on our moral obligations to others became a powerful call to arms and continues to challenge people's attitudes towards extreme poverty. Today, it remains a central touchstone for those who argue we should all help others more than we do.

As Bill and Melinda Gates observe in their foreword, in the age of today's global philanthropy, Singer's essay is as relevant now as it ever was. This attractively packaged, concise edition collects the original article, two of Singer's more recent popular writings on our obligations to others around the world, and a new introduction by Singer that discusses his current thinking.

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