

Should We Try to Save Strangers? Debating Ethics

In an increasingly interconnected world, the question of whether we should try to save strangers has become a topic of heated debate. Ethical dilemmas often arise when it comes to allocating resources and making tough choices about who to help. Some argue that we have a moral duty to help others in need, regardless of their relationship to us. Others question the effectiveness and sustainability of such efforts, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing our own communities and loved ones.

The Moral Argument

Proponents of saving strangers argue that all lives have inherent value and should be treated as such. They believe in the principle of universal ethics, where the well-being of all individuals is equally important. According to this view, it is our moral duty to extend a helping hand to anyone in need, regardless of their proximity or personal connection to us.

Advocates for this position point to the Golden Rule, a fundamental principle found in many religions and moral frameworks. The Golden Rule states that we should treat others the way we would like to be treated. Applying this principle to the question of saving strangers means that we should help them as we would hope to be helped if we were in a similar situation.

Debating Humanitarian Intervention: Should We Try to Save Strangers? (Debating Ethics)

by Bas van der Vossen (1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English



File size	: 1283 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 288 pages
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Furthermore, proponents argue that helping strangers can cultivate a greater sense of empathy and compassion in society. By consistently choosing to aid those who are less fortunate, we develop a stronger sense of social responsibility and contribute to a more equitable and humane world. This can lead to positive societal changes and foster a culture of solidarity.

Practical Considerations

While the moral argument for saving strangers may be compelling, skeptics raise practical considerations that challenge the feasibility and sustainability of such efforts. They argue that finite resources should be allocated based on a principle of proximity, prioritizing those in closest proximity or who have stronger personal connections to us.

One commonly cited objection is the concept of "effective altruism." Effective altruism is the idea that we should focus our efforts on making the greatest possible positive impact, and often this means targeting our resources to where they can be most efficiently used. Instead of spreading our resources thin by trying to save strangers, proponents of effective altruism argue that it is more

effective to invest in programs that can reach a larger number of people or provide more significant long-term benefits.

Another consideration is the potential strain on local communities and resources. Saving strangers, especially in large numbers, can place a significant burden on communities already struggling with their own challenges. Critics argue that it is wiser to invest in local initiatives that address these challenges, ensuring a more sustainable and equitable distribution of resources.

A Middle Ground?

While the debate between prioritizing strangers and focusing on local communities may appear to be polarized, there is room for a middle-ground approach. Some argue that we can strike a balance between helping strangers and supporting our own communities.

This approach involves recognizing our duty to fellow human beings and promoting a sense of global citizenship, while also acknowledging the importance of supporting local initiatives. By investing in both local and global causes, we can address immediate needs within our communities while still contributing to global efforts to alleviate suffering and promote human well-being.

Furthermore, this middle-ground approach allows for the exploration of innovative programs and initiatives that can benefit both strangers and local communities. By fostering collaboration and sharing resources internationally, we can work towards sustainable solutions that address systemic issues and benefit individuals both near and far.

The Way Forward

As our world becomes more interconnected, the question of whether we should try to save strangers remains relevant and complex. While the moral argument for saving strangers is strong, practical considerations cannot be ignored. Striking a balance between helping others globally and supporting our own communities allows us to navigate this ethical dilemma in a way that acknowledges both our responsibilities as global citizens and the practical realities of resource allocation.

Ultimately, the way forward lies in continued dialogue and a willingness to critically evaluate our assumptions and biases. By engaging in open-minded conversations and seeking innovative solutions, we can strive towards a more just and equitable world, where our actions reflect our shared humanity.



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When foreign powers attack civilians, other countries face an impossible dilemma. Two courses of action emerge: either to retaliate against an abusive government on behalf of its victims, or to remain spectators. Either course offers its own perils: the former, lost lives and resources without certainty of restoring

peace or preventing worse problems from proliferating; the latter, cold spectatorship that leaves a country at the mercy of corrupt rulers or to revolution.

Philosophers Fernando Tesón and Bas van der Vossen offer contrasting views of humanitarian intervention, defining it as either war aimed at ending tyranny, or as violence. The authors employ the tools of impartial modern analytic philosophy, particularly just war theory, to substantiate their claims. According to Tesón, a humanitarian intervention has the same just cause as a justified revolution: ending tyranny. He analyzes the different kinds of just cause and whether or not an intervener may pursue other justified causes. For Tesón, the permissibility of humanitarian intervention is almost exclusively determined by the rules of proportionality. Bas van der Vossen, by contrast, holds that military intervention is morally impermissible in almost all cases. Justified interventions, Van der Vossen argues, must have high ex ante chance of success. Analyzing the history and prospects of intervention shows that they almost never do.

Tesón and van der Vossen refer to concrete cases, and weigh the consequences of continued or future intervention in Syria, Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Iraq, Lybia and Egypt. By placing two philosophers in dialogue, *Debating Humanitarian Intervention* is not constrained by a single, unifying solution to the exclusion of all others. Rather, it considers many conceivable actions as judged by analytic philosophy, leaving the reader equipped to make her own, informed judgments.



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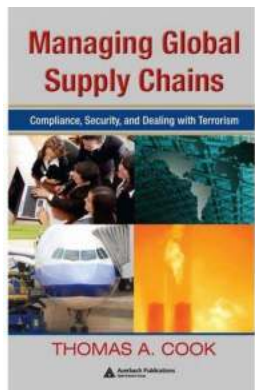
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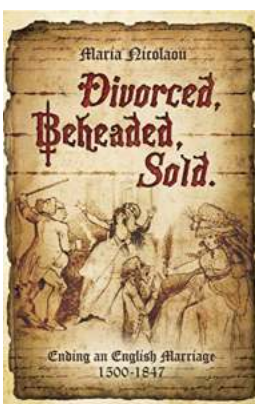
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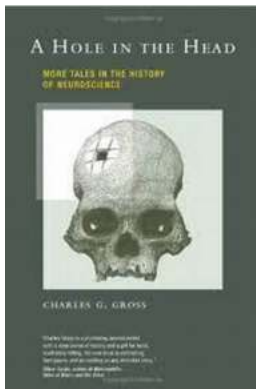
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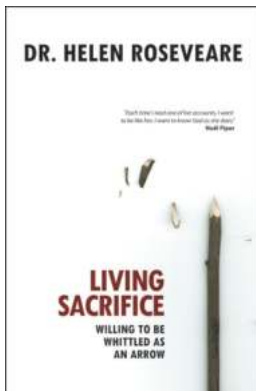
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