

## 16. PETER UNGER

In these two excerpts from *Living High and Letting Die*, Unger aims to support Singer's claim that those of us who live in rich countries are morally obligated to give substantial sums of money to aid agencies (see chapter 1 of this volume). In certain cases, Unger points out, we tend to think that individuals in a position to help others in grave need are morally required to do so, while in other cases—including appeals for funds from aid agencies—we tend to think that they are not. According to some, such different reactions reflect important moral differences between the cases in question. Unger argues, however, that such reactions often reflect morally irrelevant factors that cloud our judgment, and lead us to underestimate the moral importance of the needs of those who are far away from us. He illustrates this claim by looking in some detail at two such cases.

### Sections 1-3 of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of

### *Living High and Letting Die*

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### CHAPTER 1: ILLUSIONS OF INNOCENCE: AN INTRODUCTION

Each year millions of children die from easy-to-bear diseases, from malnutrition, and from bad drinking water. Among these children, about 3 million die from dehydrating diarrhea. As UNICEF has made clear to millions of us well-off American adults at one time or another, with a packet of oral rehydration salts that costs about 15 cents, a child can be saved from dying soon.

By sending checks earmarked for Oral Rehydration Therapy, or ORT, to the US Committee for UNICEF, we Americans can help save many of these children. Here's the full mailing address:

United States Committee for UNICEF  
United Nations Children's Fund  
333 East 38th Street, New York, NY 10016

Now, you can write that address on an envelope well prepared for mailing. And, in it, you can place a \$100 check made out to the *US Committee for UNICEF* along with a note that's easy to write:

WHERE IT WILL HELP THE MOST, USE THE  
ENCLOSED FUNDS FOR ORT.

So, as is reasonable to believe, you can easily mean a big difference for vulnerable children.

Toward realistically thinking about the matter, I'll use a figure far greater than just 15 cents per child saved: Not only does the US Committee have overhead costs, but so does UNICEF itself; and, there's the cost of transporting the packets, and so on. Further, to live even just one more year, many children may need several saving interventions and, so, several packets. And, quite a few of those saved will die shortly thereafter, anyway, from some sadly common Third World cause. So, to be more realistic about what counts most, let's multiply the cost of the packet by 10, or, better, by 20!

For getting one more Third World youngster to escape death and live a reasonably long life, \$3 is a more realistic figure than 15 cents and, for present purposes, it will serve as well as any. Truth to tell, in the light of searching empirical investigation, even this higher figure might prove too low. But, as nothing of moral import will turn on the matter, I'll postpone a hard look at the actual cost till quite late in the book.<sup>1</sup> As will become evident, for a study that's most revealing that's the best course to take.

With our \$3 figure in mind, we do well to entertain this proposition: If you'd contributed \$100 to one of UNICEF's most efficient lifesaving programs a couple of months ago, this month there'd be over thirty fewer children who, instead of painfully dying soon, would live reasonably long lives. Nothing here's special to the months just mentioned;

similar thoughts hold for most of what's been your adult life, and most of mine, too. And, more important, unless we change our behavior, similar thoughts will hold for our future. That nonmoral fact moved me to do the work in moral philosophy filling this volume [*Living High and Letting Die*]. Before presenting it, a few more thoughts about the current global life-and-death situation.

## 1.1 SOME WIDELY AVAILABLE THOUGHTS ABOUT MANY EASILY PREVENTABLE CHILDHOOD DEATHS

As I write these words in 1995, it's true that, in each of the past thirty years, well over 10 million children died from readily preventable causes. And, except for a lack of money aimed at doing the job, most of the deaths could have been prevented by using any one of many means.

Before discussing a few main means, it's useful to say something about the regions where the easily preventable childhood deaths have been occurring. First, there's this well-known fact: Over 90 percent of these deaths occur in the countries of the so-called Third World. By contrast, here's something much less widely known: Though almost all these needless deaths occur in the materially poorest parts of the world, the poverty itself is hardly the whole story. For a good case in point, take the poverty-ridden Indian state of Kerala. While per capita income in this state of about 30 million is notably lower than in India as a whole, life expectancy in Kerala is higher than in *any other* Indian state. And, the childhood mortality rate is *much* lower than in India as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Why? Without telling a long historical story, most of the answer may be put like this: In this vibrantly democratic and responsive state, Kerala's millions have food security, safe drinking water, and very basic health care. By contrast, many of the richer Indians *don't* have their basic needs met, and don't have their *children's* needs met. So, while often a factor, poverty itself hardly explains why millions of kids needlessly die each year.

In one direction, I'll amplify that remark.<sup>3</sup> As is well known, many millions of children don't get enough to eat. These related truths are less well known: First, for each child that dies in a famine, several die from *chronic malnutrition*. Second, even if she gets over 80 percent of the calories needed by a youngster of her age for excellent health, a child who regularly gets less than 90 percent is so malnourished that she'll

have a dangerously inadequate immune system. Third, what happens to many such vulnerable children is that, because she's among the many millions who haven't been vaccinated against measles, when she gets measles she dies from it. So, fourth, each year mere measles still kills about a million Third World kids.<sup>4</sup>

Several means of reducing measles deaths are worth mentioning, including these: Semiannually, an underfed child can be given a powerful dose of vitamin A, with capsules costing less than 10 cents. For that year, this will improve the child's immune system. So, if she hasn't been vaccinated, during this year she'll be better able to survive measles. What's more, from her two capsules, she'll get a big bonus: With her immune system improved, this year she'll have a better chance of beating the two diseases that take far more young lives than measles claims, pneumonia and diarrhea.

Though usually all that's needed to save a child from it is the administration of antibiotics that cost about 25 cents, pneumonia now claims about 3.5 million young lives a year, making it the leading child-killing disease. And, in the text's first paragraph, I've related the score for diarrhea. But, let's again focus on measles.

Having already said plenty about vitamin A, I'll note that, for about \$17 a head, UNICEF can vaccinate children against measles. On the positive side, the protection secured lasts a lifetime; with no need for semiannual renewal, there's no danger of failing to renew protection! What's more, at the same time each child can be vaccinated for lifetime protection against five other diseases that, taken together, each year kill about another million Third World kids: tuberculosis, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, and polio. Perhaps best of all, these vaccinations will be part of a worldwide immunization campaign that, over the years, is making progress toward *eliminating* these vaccine-preventable diseases, much as smallpox was eliminated only a decade or two ago. Indeed, with no incidence in the whole Western Hemisphere since 1991, polio is quite close to being eliminated; with good logistical systems in place almost everywhere, the campaign's success depends mainly on funding.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the vast majority of the world's very vulnerable children live in lands with UNICEF programs operating productively, including all 13 developing countries lately (1992) ranked among the world's 20 most populous nations: China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, Iran, Turkey and Thailand.<sup>6</sup> By now, we've seen the main point: Through the likes of UNICEF, it's well within your power, in the coming months and years, to lessen serious suffering.

For even modestly well-informed readers, what I've just related doesn't come as a big surprise. All they'll have learned are some particulars pertaining to what they've learned long ago: By directing donations toward the worthy end, well-off folks can be very effective in lessening serious suffering and loss. Indeed, so well accustomed are they to this thought that, when reading the presented particulars, the worldly individuals won't make any notable response. For far fewer readers, what I've related will be something completely new. From many of them, my remarks will evoke a very notable response, even if a fairly fleeting one, about how we ought to behave: The thought occurs that each of us ought to contribute (what's for her) quite a lot to lessen early deaths; indeed, it's *seriously* wrong not to do that.

But, soon after making such a strict response, the newly aware also become well accustomed to the thought about our power. And, then, they also make the much more lenient response that almost everyone almost always makes: While it's good for us to provide vital aid, it's *not even the least bit wrong* to do *nothing* to help save distant people from painfully dying soon. (The prevalence of the lenient response is apparent from so much passive behavior: Even when unusually good folks are vividly approached to help save distant young lives, it's very few who contribute anything.)<sup>7</sup>

Which of these two opposite responses gives the more accurate indication of what morality requires? Is it really seriously wrong not to do anything to lessen distant suffering; or, is it quite all right to do nothing? In this book [*Living High and Letting Die*], I'll argue that the first of these thoughts is correct and that, far from being just barely false, the second conflicts strongly with the truth about morality.

## 1.2 SINGER'S LEGACY: AN INCONCLUSIVE ARGUMENT FOR AN IMPORTANTLY CORRECT CONCLUSION

While directly concerned more with famine relief than with the children's health issues just highlighted, it was Peter Singer who first

thought to argue, seriously and systematically, that it's the first response that's on target.<sup>8</sup> Both early on and recently, he offers an argument for the proposition that it's wrong for us not to lessen distant serious suffering. The argument's first premise is this general proposition:

If we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it.<sup>9</sup>

So that it may help yield his wanted conclusion, Singer rightly has us understand this premise in a suitably strong sense, with its consequent, "we ought to do it," entailing "it's *wrong* for us *not* to do it," not just the likes of "it's better for us to do it than not." But, in such a strong sense, many think the premise to be unacceptable. Briefly, I'll explain why that's so.<sup>10</sup>

Wanting his first premise to find favor, Singer offers a compelling example that's an instance of the general proposition. Using his words, and some of my own, here's that justly famous case.<sup>11</sup>

*The Shallow Pond.* The path from the library at your university to the humanities lecture hall passes a shallow ornamental pond. On your way to give a lecture, you notice that a small child has fallen in and is in danger of drowning. If you wade in and pull the child out, it will mean getting your clothes muddy and either cancelling your lecture or delaying it until you can find something clean and dry to wear. If you pass by the child, then, while you'll give your lecture on time, the child will die straightaway. You pass by and, as expected, the child dies.

Now, when responding to this example, almost everyone's intuitive moral judgment is that your conduct's abominable. Does this reflect a strong obligation to aid that's quite general? Needed for Singer's first premise, the thought that it does is a pretty plausible proposition. But, also pretty plausibly, many think our response to the Shallow Pond doesn't reflect anything very general at all.

What moves them most here is the fact that, to other cases with people in great need, our intuitive responses are markedly different. Indeed, from typical thoughts about UNICEF, there's suggested:

*The Envelope.* In your mailbox, there's something from (the US Committee for) UNICEF. After reading it through, you correctly believe that, unless you soon send in a check for \$100, then, instead of each living many more years, over thirty more children will die soon. But, you throw the material in your trash basket, including the convenient return envelope provided, you send nothing, and, instead of living many years, over thirty more children soon die than would have had you sent in the requested \$100.

To this example, almost everyone reacts that your conduct isn't even wrong at all. Just so, many hold that, well indicated by our disparate responses to the Shallow Pond and the Envelope, there's a big moral difference between the cases. As they pretty plausibly contend, rather than any general duty to aid folks in vital need, there are only more limited obligations, like, say, a duty to *rescue* certain people.

Since what I've just related has considerable appeal, there's no way that, by itself, any such general argument for Singer's importantly correct conclusion will convince those who'd give more weight to the response the Envelope elicits than they'd give his general reasoning's first premise, or any relevantly similar statement. So, for many years, there's been a stand-off here, with little progress on the issue.<sup>12</sup>

Deciding this philosophical issue amounts to the same thing as deciding between our two quite opposite responses to the thought that it's within a well-off person's power to lessen serious suffering significantly, the strict response made when first aware of that thought and the lenient response regularly made later. This disagreement between philosophers mirrors a difference, then, that many experience without the benefit of philosophy. It's important to provide the discrepancy with a rational resolution.

### 1.3 TWO APPROACHES TO OUR INTUITIONS ON PARTICULAR CASES: PRESERVATIONISM AND LIBERATIONISM

Toward that important end, we'll examine vigorously our moral reactions to many *particular cases*. And, we'll explore not only many cases where aiding's the salient issue, but also many other ethically interesting examples. Briefly, I'll explain why. As we've observed, a few philosophers think that, while some of our responses to aiding examples are good

indications of morality's true nature, like our strict reaction to the Shallow Pond, others are nothing of the kind, like our lenient reaction to the Envelope. And, as we've also observed, many other philosophers think that (almost) all our responses to aiding examples are good indications of morality's true nature, including our response to the Envelope. Rather than being narrow or isolated positions, when intelligently maintained each flows from a broad view of the proper philosophical treatment for (almost) all of morality. Thus, the majority thinks that, or has their morally substantive writing actually guided by the proposition that, not just for aiding, but right across the board, our untutored intuitions on cases (almost) always are good indications of conduct's true moral status; by contrast, we in the minority think that, and have our morally substantive writing guided by the proposition that, right across the board, even as our responses to particular cases *often are* good indications of behavior's moral status, so, also, they *often aren't* any such thing at all.

Though few of them may hold a view that's so very pure, those in the majority hold a position that's a good deal like what's well called *Preservationism*. At least at first glance, our moral responses to particular cases appear to reflect accurately our deepest moral commitments, or our *Basic Moral Values*, from which the intuitive reactions primarily derive; with all these case-specific responses, or almost all, the Preservationist seeks to *preserve* these appearances. So, on this view, it's only by treating all these various responses as valuable data that we'll learn much of the true nature of these Values and, a bit less directly, the nature of morality itself. And, so, in our moral reasoning, any more general thoughts must (almost) always accommodate these reactions.

To be sure, our intuitive responses to particular cases are a very complicated motley. So, for Preservationism, any interesting principle that actually embodies our Values, and that may serve to reveal these Values, will be extremely complex. But, at the same time, the view has the psychology of moral response be about as simple as possible. For now, so much for Preservationism's methodological aspect.

Just as the view itself has it, the morally substantive aspect of Preservationism is whatever's found by employing the method at the heart of the position. So, unlike the minority view we're about to encounter, it hasn't any antecedent morally substantive aspect. For now, so much for Preservationism.<sup>13</sup>

By contrast with Preservationists, we in the minority hold that insight into our Values, and into morality itself, won't be achieved on an approach to cases that's anywhere near as direct, or as accommodating, as what's just been described. On our contrasting *Liberationist* view, folks' intuitive moral responses to many specific cases derive from sources far removed from our Values and, so, they fail to reflect the Values, often even pointing in the opposite direction. So, even as the Preservationist seeks (almost) always to *preserve* the appearances promoted by these responses, the Liberationist seeks often to *liberate* us from such appearances.

Not by itself, nor even when combined with our intuitive judgments for the Envelope and for the Shallow Pond, will much of moral substance follow from the methodological aspect of Liberationism, barely sketched just above. But, that's certainly no problem with the view. To the contrary, it's the position's substantive side that, in the first place, moves Liberationists to be so skeptical of many of our case-specific responses. Just so, on the Liberationist view, a sensible methodology for treating our responses to examples will be guided by some morally substantive propositions, even as it will guide us toward further statements with moral substance. While our formulations of it are all fair game for much revision, most of the substantial moral core will be taken correctly to defeat any opposing propositions.<sup>14</sup>

Very briefly, here's a fallible formulation of a fair bit of Liberationism's substantive side:<sup>15</sup> Insofar as they need her help to have a decent chance for decent lives, a person must do a great deal for those few people, like her highly dependent children, to whom she has the most serious sort of special moral obligation. Insofar as it's compatible with that, which is often very considerably indeed, and sometimes even when it's not so compatible, she must do a lot for other innocent folks in need, so that they may have a decent chance for decent lives. For now, so much for Liberationism's morally substantive side.

Just that much substance suffices to move the Liberationist to hold that, even as (in the morally most important respects) the Envelope's conduct is *at least as bad* as the Shallow Pond's behavior, so (in those most important respects) that conduct is seriously wrong.<sup>16</sup> Now, even if he merely judged the Envelope's conduct to be somewhat wrong, the Liberationist would want to provide a pretty ambitious account of why

our response to the case is lenient. And, since he goes much further, the account he'll offer is so very ambitious as to run along these general lines: Not stemming from our Values, the Envelope's lenient response is generated by the work of *distortional* dispositions. But, concerning the very same moral matter, there are other cases, like the Shallow Pond, that don't encourage the working of those dispositions. Accurately reflecting our Values, and the true nature of morality, our responses to these other cases *liberate* us from the misleading appearances flowing from that distortional work.<sup>17</sup>

## CHAPTER 2: LIVING HIGH AND LETTING DIE: A PUZZLE ABOUT BEHAVIOR TOWARD PEOPLE IN GREAT NEED

Let's explore a puzzle about our behavior toward people in great need. Centrally, it concerns our untutored reactions to two cases, the two *puzzle cases*. For the cases to pose a puzzle, they must be similar in many ways even while they differ in many others. For the puzzle to pack a punch, the cases should be pretty simple and realistic. And, there should be a strong contrast between our intuitive responses to the cases. Now, one of our two puzzle cases will be the Envelope. For a case to pair with it, there should be an example that, though similar to the Shallow Pond in many respects, goes well beyond it in a few. For instance, in the Shallow Pond there's *very little cost* to you, the case's agent; so, in a newly instructive contrast case, there'll be very *considerable* cost to you.

### 2.1 A PUZZLE ABOUT BEHAVIOR TOWARD PEOPLE IN GREAT NEED

With those thoughts in mind, this is the first of our cases:

*The Vintage Sedan.* Not truly rich, your one luxury in life is a vintage Mercedes sedan that, with much time, attention and money, you've restored to mint condition. In particular, you're pleased by the auto's fine leather seating. One day, you stop at the intersection of two small country roads, both lightly travelled. Hearing a voice screaming for help, you get out and see a man who's wounded and covered with a lot of his blood. Assuring you that his wound's

confined to one of his legs, the man also informs you that he was a medical student for two full years. And, despite his expulsion for cheating on his second year final exams, which explains his indigent status since, he's knowledgeably tied his shirt near the wound so as to stop the flow. So, there's no urgent danger of losing his life, you're informed, but there's great danger of losing his limb. This can be prevented, however, if you drive him to a rural hospital fifty miles away. "How did the wound occur?" you ask. An avid bird-watcher, he admits that he trespassed on a nearby field and, in carelessly leaving, cut himself on rusty barbed wire. Now, if you'd aid this trespasser, you must lay him across your fine back seat. But, then, your fine upholstery will be soaked through with blood, and restoring the car will cost over five thousand dollars. So, you drive away. Picked up the next day by another driver, he survives but loses the wounded leg.

Except for your behavior, the example's as realistic as it's simple. Even including the specification of your behavior, our other case is pretty realistic and extremely simple; for convenience, I'll again display it:

*The Envelope.* In your mailbox, there's something from (the US Committee for) UNICEF. After reading it through, you correctly believe that, unless you soon send in a check for \$100, then, instead of each living many more years, over thirty more children will die soon. But, you throw the material in your trash basket, including the convenient return envelope provided, you send nothing, and, instead of living many years, over thirty more children soon die than would have had you sent in the requested \$100.

Taken together, these contrast cases will promote the chapter's primary puzzle.

Toward having the puzzle be instructive, I'll make two stipulations for understanding the examples. The first is this: Beyond what's explicitly stated in each case's presentation, or what's clearly implied by it, there aren't ever any bad consequences of your conduct for anyone and, what's more, there's nothing else that's morally objectionable about it.<sup>1</sup> In effect, this means we're to understand a proposed scenario so that it is as boring as possible. Easily applied by all, in short the stipulation is: *Be boring!*



Also easily effected, the other stipulation concerns an agent's motivation, and its relation to her behavior: As much as can make sense, the agent's motivation in one contrast case, and its relation to her conduct there, is like that in the other. Not chasing perfection, here it's easy to assume a motivational parallel that's strong enough to prove instructive: Far from being moved by any malice toward the needy, in both our puzzle cases, your main motivation is simply your concern to maintain your nice asset position. So, even as it's just this that, in the Envelope, mainly moves you to donate nothing, it's also just this that, in the Sedan, similarly moves you to offer no aid.

Better than ever, we can ask these two key questions: What's our intuitive moral assessment of your conduct in the Vintage Sedan? And, what's our untutored moral judgment of your behavior in the Envelope? As we react, in the Sedan your behavior was very seriously wrong. And, we respond, in the Envelope your conduct wasn't even mildly wrong. This wide divergence presents a puzzle: Between the cases, is there a difference that adequately grounds these divergent intuitive assessments?

Since at least five obvious factors favor the proposition that the Envelope's conduct was *worse* than the Sedan's, at the outset the prospects look bleak: First, even just financially, in the Vintage Sedan the cost to the agent is *over fifty times* that in the Envelope; and, with *nonfinancial* cost also considered, the difference is greater still. Second, in the Sedan, the reasonably expected consequences of your conduct, and also the actual consequences, were that *only one* person suffered a serious loss; but, in the Envelope, they were that *over thirty* people suffered seriously. Third, in the Sedan the *greatest loss suffered* by anybody was the loss of a *leg*; but, in the Envelope the *least loss* suffered was *far greater* than that.<sup>2</sup> Fourth, because he was a mature and well-educated individual, the Sedan's serious loser was *largely responsible* for his own serious situation; but, being just little children, none of the Envelope's serious losers was *at all responsible* for her bad situation. And, fifth, the Sedan's man suffered his loss owing to his objectionable trespassing behavior; but, nothing like that's in the Envelope.

Now, I don't say these five are the only factors bearing on the morality of your conduct in the two cases. Still, with the differential flowing from them as tremendous as what we've just seen, it seems they're almost bound to prevail. So, for Preservationists seeking sense for both

a lenient judgment of the Envelope's conduct and a harsh one of the Sedan's, there's a mighty long row to hoe.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER: DISTINGUISHING THE PRIMARY FROM THE SECONDARY BASIC MORAL VALUES

In the next section, we'll start the hard work of investigating the "apparently promising" differences between the puzzle cases. Here, I'll provide an overview of how it will proceed and where it may lead.

There are enormously many differences, of course, between the two examples: Only one of them involves a Mercedes automobile. On the other side, only the Envelope involves the postal system. But, as is evident, very nearly all of these enormously many differences haven't any chance of helping to ground a stricter judgment for the Sedan's behavior than the Envelope's. So, the job at hand may well be manageable. First, we'll try to look at genuine differences one by one. But, sometimes we'll confront thoughts that, though they might first appear to locate differential factors, really don't find any. With some of these thoughts, the fault's that the idea doesn't really fasten on any factor at all. With others, the fault's that the factor's really present in both puzzle cases, not just the one where it's obvious.

Going beyond all such confusions, we'll note some factors that do differentiate between our puzzle cases. Each time that happens, we'll ask: Does *this* difference do much to favor a harsh judgment only for the Sedan's conduct, and not for the Envelope's? In trying to answer, each time we'll consult our two main guides. On the one hand, we'll note our *moral intuitions on particular cases*. On the other, we'll note the deliverance of what I'll call our *general moral common sense*, since this second sensibility is directed at matters at least somewhat more general than the first's proper objects. Pitched at a level somewhere between the extremely general considerations dominating the tenets of traditional moral theories, on one hand, and the quite fine-grained ones often dominating the particular cases philosophers present, on the other, it's at this moderately general level of discursive thought, I commonsensibly surmise, that we'll most often respond in ways reflecting our Values and, less directly, morality itself. Not yet having much confirmation, that's now just a sensible working hypothesis. At all events, after seeing what

both these guides say about each of nine notable differences, we'll ask: Does any combination of the differences ground a harsh judgment just for the Sedan?

Increasingly, we'll see that, for the most part, the deliverance from our two guides will agree. Occasionally, however, we'll see disagreement. What will explain that discrepancy? Though we won't arrive at a fully complete answer, we'll see a partial explanation full enough to be instructive: Even while the imperiled folks peopling certain cases have absolutely vital needs to be met, since their dire needs *aren't* conspicuous to you, the examples' agent, our intuitive response has your conduct as quite all right. Rather than anything with much moral weight, it's this that largely promotes the lenient response to the Envelope's behavior. Correspondingly, our harsh response to the Sedan's conduct is largely promoted by a serious need that's so salient.<sup>4</sup>

To avoid many confusions, a few remarks should suffice: Generally, what's most conspicuous to you is what most fully attracts, and what most fully holds, your attention. Often, what's very conspicuous to you is distinct from what you perceive clearly and fully. Thus, while we may clearly and fully perceive them, the needs of a shabby person lying in one of New York City's gloomiest streets *aren't* very conspicuous to us. But, when someone's nicely groomed and dressed, and he's in a setting where no such troubles are expected, then, generally, his serious need is conspicuous.

As matters progress, these points about salience will become increasingly clear: When it's present in spades, as with the Vintage Sedan, then, generally, we'll judge harshly our agent's unhelpful behavior; when it's wholly absent, as with the Envelope, then, generally, we'll judge the agent's conduct leniently.

When the intuitive moral responses to cases are so largely determined by such sheer salience to the examples' agent(s), do they accurately reflect our Values? Straightforwardly, Preservationism's answer is that they do. By contrast, the best Libertarianist answer isn't straightforward. Briefly, I'll explain.

At times, some people's great needs may be highly salient to you and, partly for that reason, it's then *obvious* to you that (without doing anything the least bit morally suspect) you can save the folks from suffering serious loss. Then, to you, it may be *obvious* that your letting them

suffer *conflicts very sharply* with your Basic Moral Values (and, so, with the very heart of morality). To highlight this, let's say that, for you then, there's an Obvious Sharp Conflict. Now, since you're actually a quite decent person, when there's such an Obvious Sharp Conflict, generally it will be *hard* for you, psychologically, *not* to help meet people's great needs, even if you must incur a cost that's quite considerable. So, then, usually you won't behave in the way stipulated in the Vintage Sedan; rather, you'll behave helpfully.

In sharp contrast with that, there's this: When you let there be more folks who suffer serious loss by failing to contribute to the likes of UNICEF, then, even to you yourself, it's *far* from obvious that you conduct conflicts sharply with your Values, and with much of morality; indeed, as it usually appears, there *isn't* any such conflict. To highlight this contrasting situation, let's say that, for you *then*, there's No Apparent Conflict. Now, even though you're a decent person, when there's No Apparent Conflict, generally it will be *all too easy* for you, psychologically, not to help meet people's great needs. So, then, as with most decent folks, you'll behave in the unhelpful way stipulated for the Envelope.

With the difference between there being an Obvious Sharp Conflict and there being No Apparent Conflict, we've noted a contrast between the Envelope and the Sedan that *isn't* always morally irrelevant. Indeed, perhaps particularly when thinking whether to praise or to damn some conduct, *sometimes* it's appropriate to give this difference *great* weight. But, until the last chapter, in most of this book's [*Living High and Letting Die*] pages, even the mere mention of the difference would be misplaced. For, here the aim is to become clearer about what really are the Basic Moral Values and, perhaps less directly, what's really morally most significant. And, since that's our aim, it's useful to *abstract away* from questions of what psychological difficulty there may be for us, in one case or another, to behave in a morally acceptable manner. Thus, until the book's last chapter, I'll set contexts where, as is there perfectly proper, no weight at all will be given to such considerations.

For a good perspective on this methodological proposal, it's useful to compare the Libertarianist's thoughts about the Envelope's behavior to a reasonably probing abolitionist's thoughts, addressed to an ordinary "good Southerner" some years before the Civil War. No Jefferson he, our Southerner thinks that, especially as it's practiced by so many nice



enough folks all around him, slaveholding isn't so much as wrong. Now, without seeking to dole out blame, our abolitionist may compare a typical white slaveholder's conduct with respect to his black slaves and, say, the conduct of a white person who, without any good reason for assaulting anyone, punches another white hard on the jaw, rendering his hapless victim unconscious for a few minutes. (Perhaps, because he abstained from alcoholic beverages, and said as much, the victim refused to drink, say, to the puncher's favorite Virginian county.) As the abolitionist might painstakingly point out, first focusing on one contrast between the two behaviors, then another, and another, and another, in the morally most important respects, that bad assaulting behavior *wasn't as bad* as the much more common slaveholding behavior.

Paralleling the difference in psychological difficulty noted for the Envelope and the Sedan, there's a difference in the slaveholding conduct and the assaulting behavior. For the ordinary Old Southerners, there's No Apparent Conflict between common slaveholding conduct and the Basic Moral Values, whereas, even for them, there's an Obvious Sharp Conflict between the gratuitous punching conduct and the Values; and so on, and so forth. For both parties to the discussion, *that's* common knowledge right from the outset. Indeed, attempting to focus the discussion on any *such* difference is, really, just a move to opt out of any serious discussion of the moral status of the slaveholding. Now, what that abolitionist was doing with such controlling conduct as was then widespread, this Liberationist author is doing, or is going to try to do, with such unhelpful conduct as the Envelope's currently common behavior. So, as decently sensible readers will see, it's inappropriate to focus on the thought that there's an Obvious Sharp Conflict only with the Sedan, and not with the Envelope; for, that will be just a move to opt out of seriously discussing the moral status of such vitally unhelpful conduct that, with No Apparent Conflict, is now so commonly exemplified. Not perfect, the parallel between the abolitionist and the Liberationist is plenty strong enough for seeing the sense in my modest proposal.

By now, I've made all the section's main points. So, it's with hesitation that, in what remains, I try to say something of interest to readers who enjoy, as I do, making philosophical distinctions, and enjoy exploring what utility may derive therefrom. Hesitantly, I'll offer a distinction

between our *Primary* and our *Secondary* Basic Moral Values, a contrast that may have only heuristic value.

I'll begin with some remarks about the Primary Values: Among them is, plainly, a value to the effect that (like any well-behaved person) you not contribute to the serious suffering of an innocent other, neither its initiation nor its continuation. In the Envelope, your conduct *didn't* conflict, apparently, with this obviously important Value; so vast is the sea of suffering in the world and so resolutely efficient are UNICEF's health-promoting programs that, even if you'd made as large a donation as you could possibly afford, there *still wouldn't* have been *anyone*, apparently, whose serious suffering *you'd* have averted, or even lessened much. Concerning an equally "ground level" moral matter, is there some *other* Primary Value the Envelope's conduct *did* contravene? Well, there's none that's obvious.

But, as Liberationists may suggest, perhaps the Envelope's conduct conflicts with an *unobvious* Value, near enough, a Primary Value to the effect that, about as much as you possibly can manage, you *lessen the number of (the world's) innocent others who suffer seriously*. Though it encompasses, apparently, your relations with many millions of needy people, this unobvious Value might be *just as central* to your Values as the obvious one so prominent in the previous paragraph.

As I'll trust, that's a useful start toward indicating the domain of the Primary Values. Perhaps a helpful indication of this domain can be given, briefly and roughly, along these more general lines: Knowing everything you ought about what's really the case morally, and knowing all that's relevant to your situation, it's in the domain of the Primary Values that you look when, being as morally well motivated as anyone could wish, you deliberate about what you morally ought to do. So, motivation needn't be a stranger to the Primary Values' domain: When someone has his conduct conflict with what morality *obviously* requires and, so, with what even a *modestly* cognizant moral agent *knows* it requires, then, (at least) for being motivated so poorly, the person's behavior does badly by his good Primary Values.

Well, then, what's in the domain of the Secondary Values? Here's a step toward an answer: As has long been recognized, part of morality concerns our *epistemic* responsibilities. Here, morality concerns what we *ought* to know about the *nonmoral facts* of our situation. A simple

example: In an area frequented by little kids, when you park your car quickly, without taking care to know the space is free of kids, then, even if you cause no harm, there's *something morally wrong* with your behavior. Now, another step: Far less well recognized, another part of morality concerns what we ought to know about our *Values* and, perhaps less directly, about what's really *morally* the case. Again, suppose it's true that central to the Primary Values is a Value to the effect that, roughly, you have the number of innocents seriously suffering be as small as you can manage. Then, even though it may be hard to do, it may be that you ought to know that. And, should you fail to know it, you've failed your Secondary Values.

Further, our Secondary Values concern how our conduct *ought to be moved* by our knowing what's really the case morally. Generally, in an area of conduct, one must first do well by the epistemic aspect of these Values, just introduced, before one's in a position to do well by their motivational aspect, now introduced: In the area of slaveholding conduct, during their mature years Washington and Jefferson did well, apparently, by the epistemic aspect of the Secondary Values. This put them in at least some sort of position to do well, in this area, by the motivational aspect of these Values (and, so, to do well by the Primary Values). But, they did badly by this other aspect; and, so, they contravened the Primary Values.

In the area of the Envelope's conduct, the Liberationist suggests, we do badly even by the epistemic aspect of the Secondary Values. So, we're far from doing even modestly well by their motivational aspect (and, so, by the Primary Values). By abstracting away from questions of how well we may do by our Secondary Values, we can learn about our Primary Values. So, until the last chapter, I'll set contexts where weight's rightly given only to how well an agent does by the Primary Values. At that late stage, it will turn out, I'll do well to give the Secondary Values pride of place.

Both the Primary and the Secondary Values are concerned with motivational matters. What the Secondary Values alone concern is, I'll say, the *unobvious* things someone ought to know about her Values and *those* motivational matters most closely connected with *those* things. Now, this notion of the Secondary Values may harbor, irremediably, much arbitrariness: (1) Through causing doubts as to what's really the

case in certain moral matters, a person's social setting may make it hard for her to know much about the matters and, so, she may know far less than what, at bottom, she ought to know. (2) Insofar as she knows what's what morally about the matter, the setting may make it hard for her to be moved much by what she does know and, so, she may be moved far less than what, at bottom, she ought to be moved. For both reasons, (1) and (2), someone may fail to behave decently. Of a particular failure, we may ask: Did it derive (mainly) from a failure of awareness; or did it derive (mainly) from a failure of will? Often, it may be arbitrary to *favor either* factor, (1) *or* (2), and *also* arbitrary to say they're *equally* responsible. So, with the offered contrast, I don't pretend to mark a deep difference.

Recall this leading question: When they reflect little more than the sheer conspicuousness, to this or that agent, of folks' great needs, how well do our case-specific responses reflect our Basic Moral Values? In terms of my heuristic distinction, the Liberationist answers: When that's what they do, then, properly placing aside Secondary matters, our intuitions on the cases promote a badly distorted conception of our *Primary* Values. In line with that useful answer, the chapter's inquiry will lead to this Liberationist solution of its central puzzle: According to the Primary Values, the Envelope's behavior is at least as badly wrong as the Sedan's. But, first, the Preservationist gets a good run for the money.

## 2.3 PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, SOCIAL PROXIMITY, INFORMATIVE DIRECTNESS, AND EXPERIENTIAL IMPACT

What might ground judging negatively only the Sedan's behavior, and not the Envelope's? Four of the most easily noted differences cut no moral mustard.

Easily noted is the difference in *physical distance*. In the Vintage Sedan, the wounded student was only a few feet away; in the Envelope, even the nearest child was many miles from you. But, unlike many physical forces, the strength of a moral force doesn't diminish with distance. Surely, our moral common sense tells us that much. What do our intuitions on cases urge?

As with other differential factors, with physical distance *two* sorts of example are most relevant: Being greatly like the Envelope in many

respects, in one sort there'll be a *small* distance between those in need and whoever might aid them. Being greatly like the Sedan, in the other there'll be a far greater distance. To be terribly thorough, for each factor I'd have an apt example of *both* its most relevant sorts. Mercifully, with most factors, I won't have both, but just one. But, to show what could be done with each, with physical distance I'll go both ways. First, I'll present this "Envelope" case:

*The Bungalow Compound.* Not being truly rich, you own only a one-twelfth share in a small bungalow that's part of a beach resort compound in an exotic but poor country, say, Haiti. Long since there's been much strife in the land, right now it's your month to enjoy the bungalow, and you're there on your annual vacation. In your mailbox, there's an envelope from UNICEF asking for money to help save children's lives in the town nearest you, whichever one that is. In your very typical case, quite a few such needy kids are all within a few blocks and, just over the compound wall, some are only a few feet away. As the appeal makes clear, your \$100 will mean the difference between long life and early death for nearby children. But, of course, each month such appeals are sent to many bungalows in many Haitian resort compounds. You contribute nothing and, so, more nearby children die soon than if you'd sent \$100.

As most respond to this case, your behavior isn't so much as wrong at all.<sup>5</sup> Next, a "Sedanish" example:

*The CB Radio.* Instead of coming upon the erstwhile student at a crossroads, you hear from him on the CB radio that's in your fine sedan. Along with the rest of his story, the trespasser informs you, by talking into his own much cheaper CB radio, that he's stranded there with an old jalopy, which can't even be started and which, to boot, is out of gas. Citing landmarks to each other, he truthfully says you're just ten miles from where he's stranded. He asks you to pick him up and take him to a hospital, where his leg can be saved. Thinking about an upholstery bill for over \$5000, you drive in another direction. As a foreseen result of that, he loses his leg, though not his life.

As most react to this other case, your behavior was seriously wrong.

In the Bungalow Compound, you were only a short distance from the needy children; in the CB Radios, you were ten miles from the needy trespasser. Thus, our responses to relevant cases jibe with the deliverance from our more general moral common sense. So much for physical proximity.

Often, physical distance correlates with what we might call *social distance*. Following the instruction to be boring, we've thus supposed that the Sedan's trespasser was your compatriot and, so, he was socially somewhat close. As we've also supposed, the Envelope's children are all foreigners, all socially more distant. Can that difference matter much? Since all those children become dead little kids, our common sense says, "Certainly not." What do we get from examples?

As usual from now on, I'll hit the issue from just one side. Here, we'll confront a Sedanish example:

*The Long Drive.* Rather than going for a short drive, you're spending the whole summer driving from your home, in the United States, to the far tip of South America and back. So, it's somewhere in Bolivia, say, that you stop where two country roads cross. There you confront an erstwhile Bolivian medical student who tells you of his situation, in Spanish, a language you know well. As you soon learn, he wants you to drive him to a hospital, where his leg can be saved. Thinking also of your upholstery, you drive elsewhere and, as a result, he loses a leg.

To the Long Drive, almost all respond that your behavior was abominable.

Perhaps it's only within certain limits that social proximity's morally irrelevant. But, insofar as they're plausible, such limits will leave so very much leeway as to be entirely irrelevant to our puzzle: Where those in need are socially *very* close to you, like your closest family members, there may be a very strong moral reason for you to meet *their* dire needs. But, in the Sedan, it wasn't your father, or your sister, or your son whose leg was at stake. Indeed, as we've been boringly supposing, the trespasser was a complete stranger to you. So much for social proximity.

A third difference concerns how the agent learns of the great need he can help meet. In the Sedan, much is learned by your direct perception of

the wounded man. In the Envelope, the information is acquired far more indirectly, by your reading something that was produced by someone who herself collated reports, and so on. In this differential factor of *informative directness*, will there be much to favor a Preservationist solution? Well, when their information is only indirectly acquired, sometimes people aren't very sure of things, or they aren't very reasonable in being sure. But, nothing remotely like that's going on in the Envelope. So, our common sense now tells us this: Since you're quite certain of what will happen if you don't contribute to UNICEF, and since you're quite reasonable in being so certain, the fact that your information's indirectly acquired is morally insignificant. What's more, our responses to relevant cases often agree, as with our severe reaction to the CB Radios.

A fourth difference, *experiential impact*, often goes along with informative directness: In the Vintage Sedan, both the needy man himself and the condition of his great need entered into your own experience. But, that's not so in the Envelope. About this difference, common sense is clear: While the need may seem more compelling in the Sedan than with folks behind a wall, there's no moral weight here. And, our reactions to cases can agree with that good common sense: In the CB Radios, the man's awful plight doesn't enter your experience. Even the sounds you hear aren't the real deal: Electronics had as much to do with your audition as he. And, suppose the trespasser had signaled you in Morse code, with nonvocal "dots" and "dashes." It would still be seriously wrong to favor your leather over his leg.

Having considered four differences, we haven't moved one inch along the row to be hoed for a comfortably Preservationist solution. Might we fare better by looking in quite another direction?

## 2.4 THE THOUGHT OF THE DISASTROUS FURTHER FUTURE

When thinking about cases like the Envelope, many often have this *thought of the disastrous further future*: "If I help prevent some of these young children from dying soon, then, years from now, they'll produce yet more children, worsening the population explosion that, more than anywhere else, goes on precisely where there are so many imperiled children. If I donate to UNICEF, I'll just help create a situation, in the further future, when there'll be disastrously more little kids painfully

dying. So, it's actually *better* to throw away the envelope. At the very least, it's not wrong."

As we'll soon see, this thought of the disastrous further future is a fallacious rationalization, at odds with the great bulk of available evidence.<sup>6</sup> More to the present point, even if the thought were true, it wouldn't help with our puzzle: Just as we wisely followed the instruction to be boring, so there's no clear implication, from the statement of our puzzle cases, to any disastrously large future population. And, when responding to cases, we directly comply with that instruction.

Recall the Long Drive. Now, you're right there at the crossroads with the Bolivian and, all of a sudden, you're thinking mainly of how your conduct can bear on the further future: "If I take this guy to the hospital, then, as he'll long continue to have both his legs, he'll long be a reasonably attractive guy and, even worse, a very mobile fellow. Whether in wedlock or not, he then may well father far too many little Bolivians. But, if he'll have only one leg, he probably won't contribute nearly as much, if anything at all, to a disastrous dying of Bolivians many years hence. Playing the odds well and thinking also of the *further* future, it's *better* to let him lose a leg. At the least, if I do that, I won't behave badly." Finally, we'll suppose that, moved mainly by those thoughts, you drive away and let him suffer the loss. Now, was *that* in the example to which we recently responded? Certainly not. And, if it *were* in our original specification, our response would still be severely negative.<sup>7</sup>

Since it doesn't bear on our puzzle, we needn't examine the data bearing on population in the further future. But, since the matter's of broad importance, it's important to know this: The available evidence strongly supports the thought that *decreasing* childhood mortality *stabilizes* population! To be sure, the increasingly widespread availability of modern contraceptives is partly responsible for the recent big decreases in how fast the world's population is growing, as many studies show. This is one reason, even if perhaps not the most important reason, to support the International Planned Parenthood Federation, or IPPF.<sup>8</sup> For us, that effective group's most relevant address is:

International Planned Parenthood Federation,  
Western Hemisphere Region, Inc.  
902 Broadway - 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10010

[Mail Donation:  
[www.ipfwhr.org/donate/donate\\_mail\\_e.html](http://www.ipfwhr.org/donate/donate_mail_e.html)  
 IPF/WHR  
 120 Wall Street, 9th Floor  
 New York, NY 10005-3902

Online Donation:  
<https://secure.gd0.org/02/IPF/WHR>

Still, for population to stabilize, much more is needed than any fine group like that will provide.

What's also needed can be seen from many perspectives. For continuity, I'll again focus on the Indian state of Kerala: Since the Total Fertility Rate's already down to 1.9, or even lower, population won't just stabilize there; it will decline! Beyond widespread availability of contraceptive means, there are other reasons that fully 80 percent of Kerala couples actually use family planning measures: Because they know the *childhood mortality rate there is very low*, Keralans can be confident that, without having many kids, they'll have some surviving children. And, since they know the community will make sure their basic needs are met, Keralans know that, even without children to rely on, their *life expectancy is high*. And, since the *female literacy rate is very high*, marking much respect for women's interests, it's no surprise that in Kerala there's a population success story.<sup>9</sup> Not only does the thought of the disastrous further future bypass our puzzle, but it's also undermined by the evidence. So much for that unhappy thought.

## 2.5 UNIQUE POTENTIAL SAVIORS AND MULTIPLE POTENTIAL SAVIORS

To many people, the most promising difference between our contrast cases is this: In the Vintage Sedan, you're the only one who can get the trespasser's leg saved; using jargon to highlight that, you're his *unique potential savior*. But, in the Envelope, there are more than enough well-off people to get the distant children saved; in kindred jargon, they're all the children's *multiple potential saviors*: "Because you're his unique potential savior, mightn't you have a great responsibility toward the trespasser? That may be why, in the Sedan, your behavior was wrong.

Because you're only one of their multiple potential saviors, you might not have much responsibility toward the Envelope's children. This may be why, in that case, your behavior wasn't wrong."

But, to our moral common sense, that's nonsense: You knew full well that, even though they *could* do so, almost all the other well-off folks *wouldn't* aid the needy children. You knew that, for all they'd do, there'd still be kids in dire need. So, while many others behaved very badly, you did, too.

Often, that much of our moral common sense is reflected in our intuitions on particular cases. Building on the preceding section, one case in point is:

*The Wealthy Drivers.* In addition to you, there are three other drivers in the area with CB radios, all four of you hearing the pleas from the wounded trespasser. Even this much quickly develops on the air: Each of the others is less than five miles from the erstwhile student, while you're fully ten miles from him. And, each of the others is far wealthier than you. But, as each of the three complain, she doesn't want to get involved. So, none of you help the wounded man. Since those who can aid him don't, he loses his injured leg.

With multiple potential saviors, none is unique. But, as most react, even your conduct was badly wrong.

In closing the section, I'll note this: By pretty high epistemic standards, in the Wealthy Drivers you knew your help was needed. But, by *much higher* epistemic standards, in the Envelope you knew that (since the likes of UNICEF get far less than can be put to vital use), your money was needed.

## 2.6 THE THOUGHT OF THE GOVERNMENTS

When thinking of the likes of the Envelope, many entertain the *thought of the governments*: "Toward aiding the distant needy children, a person like me, who's hardly a billionaire, can do hardly anything. But, through taxation of both people like me and also billionaires, our government can do a great deal. Indeed, so wealthy is our country that the government can do just about everything that's most needed. What's more, if ours joined with the governments of other wealthy nations, like France and

Germany and Japan, then, for any one of the very many well-off people in all the wealthy nations, the financial burden would be very easily affordable. And, since making one's tax payments is a routine affair, the whole business would be nearly automatic. Just so, these governments really ought to stop so many children from dying young. And, since they really ought to do the job, it's all right for me not to volunteer. What are we to make of this common line of thought?

Well, whatever it precisely means, I suppose those governments ought to contribute, annually, the tens of billions of dollars that, annually, would ensure that only a tiny fraction of the world's poorest children suffer seriously. And, whatever it means, it's even true that their conduct is seriously wrong. But, what's the relevance of that to assessing your own behavior, and mine? There isn't any. For we know full well that, for all the governments will do, each year millions of Third World kids will die from easily preventable causes. And, knowing that, we can make use of the previous section.

In the morally important respects, in the Envelope your situation is the same as in the Wealthy Drivers: Since it was harder for you to help, and since the real cost to you would have been greater, it's credible that, in the Wealthy Drivers, your conduct wasn't *as bad* as the others' behavior. Even so, your conduct also was very bad. Similarly, in the Envelope it was harder for you to do much for distant needy children than it was for the wealthy governments, and perhaps the cost to you was greater. So, it's also credible that, in the Envelope, your behavior wasn't *as bad* as the wealthy governments' conduct. Yet further, it's also credible that the behavior of these wealthy governments wasn't *as bad* as the conduct of the German government, under Hitler, in the 1940s. So much for the thought of the governments.

## 2.7 THE MULTITUDE AND THE SINGLE INDIVIDUAL

When thinking of the Envelope, we may feel overwhelmed by the enormous multitude of seriously needy people: "In the face of that vast multitude, I'm almost impotent." With this feeling of futility, is there something to distinguish between the Envelope and the Sedan? At first, it may seem so: "In the Sedan, there was just a *single individual* in need; in the Envelope, there were *so many altogether in a vast multitude*.

Though I had to help the single individual, mayn't I simply leave be such a vast multitude?"

But, just as were each of the world's most badly endangered children, the trespasser was also one of the very many greatly needy people in the world. And, while there are certain perspectives from which he'll seem an especially singular figure, that's also true of every last one of the needy children. So, in point of even mathematical fact, neither thoughts of the multitude nor thoughts of particular individuals can mark any distinction at all between our puzzle cases. So much for those confused thoughts.

## 2.8 THE CONTINUING MESS AND THE CLEANED SCENE

Related to thoughts of the multitude, there's the *thought of the continuing mess*: "Even if I do send the \$100 to UNICEF, there'll still be many children very prematurely dying. Indeed, *no matter what I do*, there'll still be, for very many years, very many children dying from easily preventable causes." In this thought, is there something to distinguish between our puzzle cases? At first, it may seem so: "Unlike the Envelope's distant children, the Sedan's trespasser presented me with a particular distinct problem. If only I got him to the hospital, the problem would have been completely resolved. Starting with just such a problem, I'd finish with nothing less than a completely *cleaned scene*. How very different that is from the *continuing mess* involving all the distant children!"

But, this appearance also is illusory: Just as much as any distant child's diarrheal dehydration, the trespasser's infected leg was part of the "continuing mess in the world." As has long been true, and as will long be remain true, the world has many people with infected legs, many of whom will lose them. If distant children were part of a "continuing mess," *so was the trespasser*. No more than the Envelope does the Sedan offer the chance to have the world be a cleaned scene. So much for this confusion.

## 2.9 EMERGENCIES AND CHRONIC HORRORS

Rather than any genuine differences between our puzzle cases, in the previous few sections we've seen only some confusions. It's high time to observe a real difference between the Envelope and the Vintage



Sedan: In the Vintage Sedan, there's an *emergency*, while in the Envelope there's none. But, does that mean any moral ground for favoring the Envelope's conduct?

Our moral common sense speaks negatively. First, on the Vintage Sedan: Shared with many other emergencies, what are the main points to note about the bad bird-watching incident? Well, until recently, the erstwhile student was doing reasonably all right; at least, his main needs were regularly met. And, that was also true of the other people in his area. Then, all of a sudden, things got worse for him, and, for the first time in a long time, he had a big need on the verge of not being met. Next, the Envelope: The distant little children always were in at least pretty bad straits. And, in their part of the world, for a long time many people's great needs weren't met and, consequently, those many suffered seriously. But, then, even as there's no emergency in the Envelope, that situation's *far worse* than almost any emergency; to highlight this, we may say that, in the Envelope, there's a *chronic horror*.

Of course, their living in a chronic horror is no reason to think that, by contrast with the previously fortunate trespasser, it was all right to do nothing for long-suffering children. Indeed, such a thought's so preposterous that, indirectly, it points to a *sixth* factor favoring *stricter* judgment for the Envelope: During the very few years they've had before dying, those children were among the worst off people in the world, while the trespasser had quite a few years of a reasonably good life. (And, insofar as the exam-cheater's life was less than very happy, that was due mainly to his own bad behavior.) So, it's just for the Envelope's unhelpful conduct that *justice* wants an especially strict judgment. At all events, from our moral common sense, there's no good news for Preservationism.

Before remarking on our intuitive responses to particular emergency cases, I should say something about how, during the past thirty-five years, the world's chronic horrors have become less horrible, though there's still a long way to go. For the big picture, most of what's wanted comes when seeing the worldwide progress, from 1960 onward, in four basic categories:<sup>10</sup>

	1960	1970	1980	1990	1990-95
Life expectancy in years	46	53	58	62	64.4
Under-five deaths per 1000 births	216	168	138	107	86
Average births per woman (TFR)	6.0	5.7	4.4	3.8	3.1
Percentage of 6-11-year-olds in school	48	58	69	77	NA

(As population's been increasing most in the Third World, the more recent the numbers, the more they're determined by events there. So, there's been *more* progress *there* than these figures indicate.)

Especially as this section features emergencies, for a more fine-grained picture I turn to the cyclone-prone country of Bangladesh, where about 15 million people, out of about 115 million, live in the vulnerable coastal region. The victim of 7 of the century's 10 worst cyclones, in the past twenty-five years 3 big ones struck Bangladesh. When 1970's big cyclone struck the unprepared country, the windstorm killed about 3 *million*, about 2.5 million succumbing, in the storm's devastating aftermath, to waterborne disease. Far beyond just helping to prompt the writing of Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" [reprinted herein 1-14], this disaster "sparked the founding of Oxfam America," about twenty-five years after the original Oxfam was founded in Oxford, England.<sup>11</sup> With help from such foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and with hard work by Bangladeshi groups and individuals, by 1991 a lot was done to make the country's people less vulnerable to killing winds; when a big cyclone hit Bangladesh that year, only(?) about 130 *thousand* folks were killed, a dramatic improvement.<sup>12</sup> But, come to think of it, a great many poor folks still had to bury their children, or their parents, or their spouses, or their siblings, or their best friends. So, with continued support from far and near, Bangladeshis continued to work hard. So, by 1994 those Third Worlders had built nine hundred cleverly designed cyclone shelters, each able to protect thousands of people. Expressing a misleadingly *high* estimate, I'll end the paragraph with the first sentence of the piece in *Oxfam America News* so recently cited, with only the italics being my creation: On May 2, a 180 mph

cyclone pummeled southeastern coastal Bangladesh, claiming just *under 200* lives.<sup>13</sup> Though it looks like there's a misprint, that's as well ordered as it's well warranted.

For ever so many years, really, but, especially in more recent years, most in the world's poorest countries, including Bangladesh, have lives that are actively effective, socially committed, and part of a palpable upward trend; their lives are clearly well worth living. When thinking whether to help these materially poor folks, so that more and more of them will bury fewer and fewer of their children, it's useful to have that in mind.

Just as UNICEF works effectively both to make chronic horrors less horrible and to address emergency situations, OXFAM, as Oxfam America is popularly known, is also effective across the board. Now, the 1994 cyclone left about 500,000 Bangladeshis homeless, many of whom still need help; so, in 1995 there's still something of an emergency even there. And, as every several months the group must address a brand-new emergency, I think you should know how to help the good group aid many folks newly in great need. All you need do is make out a sizable check to *Oxfam America* and mail it to this address:

Oxfam America  
26 West Street  
Boston, MA 02111

[[www.oxfamamerica.org/contact\\_us](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/contact_us)]

Oxfam America  
226 Causeway St., 5th Floor  
Boston, MA 02114]

With this added to the US Committee's address and IPPF's, you now know more than enough, I think, about how to be an effectively helpful person.

In closing the section mercifully, I'll help you escape from the Real World by taking you back to the Philosophy Room: Regarding *emergencies*, what's to be found in our responses to the cases? For good instruction in our Happy Room, I'll contrive a case where, first, there is an emergency, and, second, you *can* help folks in dire need, but, third, people's dire needs are *inconspicuous* to you:

*The Emergency Envelope.* UNICEF informs you of the terrible effects of a recent hurricane on, say, Haiti: Now, there are many additional Haitian kids who, without outside help, will soon die.

By Haitian standards, these are upper-middle-class children. While they were doing quite well before the hurricane, now, they, too, are in mortal danger. So, if you don't soon send \$100 to a special fund set up by UNICEF, within the next few weeks, not only will more poor Haitian kids die, but so will more of these others. Even so, you send nothing and, in consequence, that happens.

As most respond to this case, you didn't do anything so much as wrong. So much for emergency.

## 2.10 URGENCY

Often, it's especially important to act when matters are *urgent*. Along with that idea, there comes this line of thought: "When someone will lose life or limb *very soon* unless you help him, it's morally *required* that you aid. But, if there's lots of time before anything much happens, aiding isn't morally required. Mightn't this be ground for judging the Envelope's conduct more leniently than the Sedan's?"

It's plenty obvious that, in the Vintage Sedan, there's plenty of urgency: If you don't soon take him to the hospital, the trespasser will soon lose a leg. And, it appears that, in the Envelope, there's no urgency: Even if you put \$100 in the mailbox just a minute from now, it will take at least a couple of weeks for that to translate into lifesaving aid for anyone. What's more, if you don't send anything right away, you can do it later, say, next month. Soon or not so soon, just as many will be vitally aided.

In these thoughts of a contrast, however, there's illusion and confusion. This isn't to deny that, in many cases, it's important both to act promptly and to have one's conduct determined by a clear sense of who's in the most imminent danger. Rather, it's to say that, even as the Sedan's a case with morally important urgency so is the Envelope.

Toward seeing that, I'll present two cases that really do differ in morally important urgency. For both, we'll make these suppositions: In room A, there's a man tied down with rope and, next to him, a time bomb's set to go off in just an hour. Unless he's untied and released from

the room, its explosion will kill him. The same for room B, but the time is 24 hours. You can save either man, but not both.

For the first case, we'll go on to make the most natural further assumptions: After you save the man in A, not only will there still be time for someone to save the man in B, but, during the extra 23 hours, B's man enjoys *extra chances* for rescue that A's could never have.

For the second case, we'll make more unusual assumptions: As you know with absolute certainty, beyond what you'll do soon, there *aren't any* extra chances even for the man in B. So, simply and surely, you're to choose who'll live and who'll die.

In the first case, clearly you must save the man in A. But, what of the second case? Well, in some sense, perhaps it's still true that A's man's in a more urgent situation than B's. But, still, there's little reason to favor aiding him.

What have we learned? Well, at least for the most part, what moral weight attaches to urgency is due to the lesser chances of avoiding serious loss that, normally but not inevitably, are found in situations where there's little time to save the day. But, between the Sedan and the Envelope, there's never any such difference in the chances. Since that's not easy to see, I'll try to make enlightening remarks.

There's a continual flow of aid from some of the world's well-off folks to many of the most seriously needy. At it's far end, every day there are thousands of children on the very brink of death. Today, their vital need is *very* urgent. In the case of over 30,000 of these kids, this will be proven by the fact that, even as their need won't be met today, by tomorrow they'll be dead. Of course, just as urgent are the needs of thousands of others who, only through receiving today some *very* timely ORT, won't be dead tomorrow or, happily, anytime soon. To be sure, there are many more thousands of children whose vital needs today *aren't so very* urgent: For over 30,000 of these, in just two days, their needs *will be* that urgent. And, for over 30,000 *others*, in just three days they'll have such terribly urgent needs; and so on. Just so, for over 30,000 still other needy youngsters, their last day alive with danger will be in 30 days, or 31, that is, just a month from now.

Consider these "monthers." In some sense, it may be true that, over the next month, their needs will become more and more urgent. But, since we can be *certain* that, if you don't donate to UNICEF soon, more

of these "monthers" will die, what moral relevance can *any such* increase in urgency have for your behavior? Clearly, none at all. By contrast, what matters is that, very soon, you begin to lessen the number of children who die a month from now and that, then, you help lessen the number who die shortly after that, and so on. So, facts like its taking a month for your mailed check to have a vital impact aren't morally significant. To think otherwise is like thinking that, in our second case with the two rooms, saving the man in A is morally much better than saving B's man.

In morally relevant respects, each greatly needy child is like a man in a room, tied down with a rope, with a time bomb set to explode. Some children's bombs are set to go off around noon tomorrow; others are set for five days hence; still others' are set for a month from now. But, since it's certain that, for all everyone else will do, even in a month's time, many of the children *still won't* have their ropes untied, in these different settings there's precious little moral weight. Because the ways of the world are slow to improve, for quite a while remarks like these will be quite true. And, *that's* more certain than that you yourself will be alive a day from now. So, our moral common sense delivers the message: As for morally weighty urgency, there's plenty in the Sedan *and* in the Envelope.

Hoping you won't forget that main thought, I'll present this less important idea: When not mixed with factors that help it promote the salience of vital needs, often urgency doesn't even influence our responses to particular cases. To see that, it's best to confront a case with *all sorts* of urgency, some as weighty as it's easily overlooked, and lots as slight as it's blatantly obvious:

*The Super Express Fund.* The most bizarre thing in your mail today is an appeal from the SEF. By calling a certain number and using any major credit card, you can donate \$500 to the SEF right away, night or day. The effect of such a prompt donation will be that one more child will receive ORT this very day and, in consequence, won't soon die. Of course, the SEF's appeal makes clear the reason that it will cost so much to provide ORT to just one child: Upon hearing from you, your credit card donation is attended to personally, directly, and completely. So, moments after your call, a certain ORT packet is rushed to the nearest international airport,

speeded to the next jet bound for Africa, and so on. Eventually, in a remote region, a paramedic rushes from a speeding vehicle. After examining several moribund children, he chooses one that, certainly, is today on the very brink of death. Then, he rapidly mixes the solution and administers it to just that most urgently needy little child. But, you don't ever make such a call and, in consequence, one more child soon dies than if you'd made the requested donation.

As everyone responds, you didn't do wrong. So, for now, we've learned enough about urgency.

## 2.11 CAUSALLY FOCUSED AID AND CAUSALLY AMORPHOUS AID

From discussing thoughts bound to occur to many, I turn to some esoteric distinctions. Perhaps the most notable concerns *causally focused* aid and, by contrast, *causally amorphous* aid. First, a few words about causally focused aid: If you'd provided aid to the trespasser in the Vintage Sedan, your helpful behavior would've been causally focused on that particular needy person. In an enlarged but parallel case, you might helpfully take, in your large vintage Mercedes bus, fully thirty greatly needy trespassers to a hospital. In the *Vintage Bus*, the aid you'd provide would be causally focused on *each one* of those thirty people. Next, causally amorphous aid: In the Envelope, even if you'd behaved helpfully, there'd never be *anyone* for whom *you'd* have made the difference between suffering a serious loss and suffering none; there'd never be a child of whom it would be true that, had you sent in \$100, she wouldn't have died prematurely. Rather, on one end of a causal chain, there are many donors contributing together and, on the other, there are all the people saved by the large effort they together support. The more support given, the more folks saved, and that's all she wrote.<sup>14</sup> Does this favor the Envelope's conduct?

As our moral common sense directs, there's no chance of that. Rather, since there's nothing morally objectionable about proceeding to aid greatly needy folks amorphously, no moral weight attaches to the precise character of the causal relations between the well-off and those whom, whether collectively or not, they might help save. Morally, the important thing is that the vulnerable don't suffer. And, with a well aimed case, our intuitive reactions confirm that decent deliverance:

*The Special Relations Fund.* You receive material from a group that assures you they'll find a moribund little child that your money, if you contribute, will prevent from dying prematurely. Since very many moribund little kids are out there, this won't be terribly difficult, or costly, but neither will it be very cheap and easy to have your vital aid be causally focused: So, if you donate \$100 to the SRF, while only one less child will die soon, the group will ensure that your donation makes the big difference for the one child. But, you send nothing and, in consequence, one more child soon dies than if you'd made the requested donation.

Here, it's clear that any aid will be causally focused. But, as all respond, your conduct wasn't the least bit wrong. So, on our reactions to cases, this esoteric factor doesn't have any great effect.

## 2.12 SATISFYING NICE SEMANTIC CONDITIONS

Before noticing another esoteric distinction, I'd like to discuss a family of quite ordinary ideas that's closely related to, but that's not quite the same as, the one just considered. Just as the common concepts are well placed under the head *satisfying nice semantic conditions*, so the family's most salient notion prompts this suggestion: "When you can *save* folks from much suffering, it's wrong not to aid. But, perhaps, if you'll merely *help to prevent* folks from suffering seriously, you needn't help. Mightn't that ground a big difference between our puzzle cases?" Hardly. First, by contrast with the Shallow Pond, had you been helpful in the Vintage Sedan, a doctor's services would still be needed to save the leg; so, in strict truth, the very most we could have said for you would be that, then, *you and a doctor* would have saved the leg. Second, and much more important, there's this: Whatever their precise character, these semantic niceties don't matter morally; at any rate, abandoning the wounded man was wrong.

About other members of *saving's* family, the same points hold true. For example, when you've the chance to be only a partial enabler of someone who might save a needy person, but you're needed, then, just as surely as the one who has the chance to star as the saver, you must play your supporting role. Certainly, our moral common sense tells us that.

Plenty well enough, we can also see the point by way of apt examples. As with many cases where a great need is conspicuous, this happens with:

*The Indian Sewer.* While vacationing in India, you come upon a child who's on the verge of drowning in the waters of a sewer. When the child fell in, she knocked away the bar propping up the sewer's trapdoor grating, which is also now down in the sewer. So, the heavy door's now closed. For the child to be saved, three able adults are needed. One person, who's both strong and agile, must go down into the sewer and bring up the child. Being strong but not agile, you can't do that. Still, there's someone else there who can. For the agile man to play the central role in a rescue, two others must hold open the filthy, strangely-shaped grating, one holding it by one edge and the other by another. A third person is able and willing to hold one of these edges and, so, it's now all up to you. But, not wanting to soil your new suit, you walk away and, so, the child drowns.

As all strongly react, your behavior was monstrous. Now, recall the Shallow Pond, where you had a chance to *save* someone from suffering a serious loss. Was your behavior in the Indian Sewer any better? Very widespread is the comparative intuition on the cases: Your behavior in this new example is just as abominable as in that old one.

Of course, in the Envelope, you never had even the chance to fill any such fairly fulfilling supporting role as the one just noted; rather, you had, at most, only the chance to *contribute to enabling others* to save children. But, it's only a confusion to think that could give you even the slightest moral license.

Underlying the confusion, sometimes there may be the idea that, much as with writing poetry, for example, what we do for needy people constitutes personally fulfilling projects. To fulfill ourselves, each of us wants to write her own poems, or to grow her own garden, or whatever: If I'm just a pretty fair poet, not greatly talented, a poem written mainly by a great poet, with just marginal input from me, might well be much better than any I'd write by myself, or with only some help. But, quite rationally, my attitude is that it's not enough for there to be excellent poems in whose writing I had only a marginal role. By contrast with

poetry, however, toward *people in serious trouble*, it's crazy to have an attitude that's even *remotely like that*, and for our conduct toward them to be determined by any such attitude.

## 2.13 EPISTEMIC FOCUS

Analogous to the distinction between aid that's causally focused and aid that's causally amorphous, there's a distinction between *epistemically focused* aid and *epistemically amorphous* aid. Even if you donated the \$100 requested in the Envelope, and even if you thereby helped save some people, you *wouldn't know which* folks you helped save from an early death, or even aided at all. In the Vintage Sedan, by contrast, if you took the trespasser to the hospital and his leg was saved, you'd know whom you aided.<sup>15</sup> Can this favor the Envelope's behavior? Our common sense says that, morally, it doesn't matter whether you come to know whose dire needs you help meet. And, our reactions to cases can chime in nicely.

Though I resolved not to cover you with cases, here I'll bother to go both ways. First, here's an Envelope case that's very like other recent examples:

*The Very Special Relations Fund.* Not only does the VSRF make sure your \$200 will go to save the life of a certain particular child, but it makes sure you'll get to know which kid that is. By providing you with her name and a picture of the child saved, you'll know precisely which child's life just your donation served to spare. Still, you don't send anything and, in consequence, one more child soon dies than if you'd made the requested donation.

To this epistemically focused case, we respond that your conduct was all right. Indeed, with lenient responses in mind, many *actually* refrained from donating to groups enormously like the VSRF. And, here's a suitable Sedanish example:

*The Vintage Boat.* Your one real luxury in life is a vintage power boat. In particular, you're very happy with the fine wood trim of the handsome old boat. Now, there's been a big shipwreck in the waters off the coast where your boat's docked. From the pier, in plain

view several hundred are struggling. Though both Coast Guard boats and private boats are already on their way to the people, more boats are needed. Indeed, the more private boats out and back soon, the more people will be saved. But, it's also plain that, if you go out, still, owing to all the melees, nobody will ever know which people will have been benefited by *you*. Indeed, for each of the folks whom you might bring in, it will be true to say this: For all anyone will ever know, she'd have been brought in by *another* boat, in which case some *other* person, whom some other boat rescued, would've perished. On the other hand, this you do know: While there's no risk at all to you, if you go out, your boat's wood trim will get badly damaged, and you'll have to pay for expensive repairs. So, you leave your boat in dock and, in consequence, a few more plainly struggling folks soon die.

As almost all respond to this epistemically amorphous case, your conduct was seriously wrong.

It's worth noting, briefly, an extended form of this distinction: In the Vintage Sedan, even *beforehand* you know whom you'll aid, if only you bother to provide the aid there relevant; but, in the Envelope, you *certainly wouldn't* know *beforehand* whom you'll aid. Can *that* mean much for a comfortably Preservationist solution? Again, our moral common sense speaks negatively. As with the Vintage Boat, reactions to many cases can confirm that decent deliverance. So much for epistemic focus.

## 2.14 MONEY, GOODS, AND SERVICES

In the Sedan, to provide apt aid you must perform a *service* for a needy person. Moreover, one of your *goods* would be needed in the performance of the service, namely, your vintage car. By contrast, in the Envelope all you must contribute is *money*; and, beyond the trivial effort needed to mail the money, the monetary cost is all you'd incur. Can this difference favor the Envelope's behavior?

Often, the difference between mere money and, on the other side, actual goods and services, has a psychological impact on us: When there's a call for our money, generally we think of what's going on as just charity. And, when thinking this, it seems all right to decline. But,

at least in blatantly urgent situations, when there's a call for services, or one of our especially apt goods, a fair number of us think we must rise to the occasion. Does this difference have much moral relevance?

On this point, our moral common sense is clear: It doesn't matter whether it's money, or goods, or services, or whatever, that's needed from you to lessen serious suffering. There isn't a stronger moral call on you when it's your goods or services that are needed aid than when it's just your money.

In everyday life, that's confirmed by our reactions to very many cases: When disasters strike, like earthquakes, hurricanes, or floods, organizations work to aid the imperiled victims. On many of us, these groups often call only for our money. But, on some, they call for goods or services: For example, one good group may suggest that, since you're well placed in the pharmaceutical industry, you might make calls to your associates, asking them to donate medicines needed by victims of last week's disaster. But, plenty often, in these ordinary cases, the needs *aren't salient* to the agent approached and, then, our uncritical reactions are lenient. So, plenty often, the fact that what's needed is an agent's services, or her goods, doesn't affect even our responses to cases.

## 2.15 COMBINATIONS OF THESE DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS

Though no single one of the most notable factors differentiating the puzzle cases can carry much moral weight, mightn't certain *combinations* of them carry great weight? If that's so, then our puzzle might have, after all, a comfortably Preservationist solution. But, it's not so.

To get a good grip on the matter, we'll list explicitly the notable differential factors. Besides sheer conspicuousness, we've noted nine. In the order of their first appearance, and "viewed from the side of the Vintage Sedan," they are: (1) physical proximity, (2) social proximity, (3) informational directness, (4) experiential impact, (5) unique potential savior, (6) emergency, (7) causal focus, (8) epistemic focus, and (9) goods and services.<sup>16</sup> What does our general moral common sense say about those nine factors? Just as it's already done, it keeps telling us, about every single one, that it's *morally irrelevant*. Quite as clearly, this common sense says the same thing about any more complex difference the simpler ones combine to form, namely, that it's *morally irrelevant*.<sup>17</sup>



Concerning this question of their combination, what do our untored responses to examples tell us about the nine listed factors? For relevantly interesting data, we're to look only at cases, of course, where people's great needs are inconspicuous to the cases' agents. For, if there's one thing we're *not* concerned now to explore, it's the extent to which our nine factors can combine to promote sheer conspicuousness of people's terrible troubles.

Now, it might be very difficult to confront a case that, at once, both included all nine "Sedanish" features and had only such great needs to meet as were quite inconspicuous. But, however that may be, it doesn't much matter. For, even with decidedly fewer than all nine, we can get the right idea quite clearly enough and, from the examples we've already confronted, we've already done that. So, for the energetic reader, I'll leave the exercise of constructing a complex case of the sort lately indicated. For the less energetic, there's the note appended to this very sentence.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.16 HIGHLY SUBJECTIVE MORALITY AND OUR ACTUAL MORAL VALUES

In our Primary Values, how much weight's accorded to psychologically powerful salience? Of course, there may be great weight given to certain things *often associated* with it: Often, the people whose needs are most conspicuous to you are your closest relatives and friends. And, someone might have extra strong moral reason to meet the great needs of folks who, socially and personally, are extremely close to her. But, even as it remains when their needs become very obscure to you, as can occur when you travel, such extra reason won't derive, of course, from the salience of these folks' needs. So, we've yet to see any reason to think that moral weight's given to conspicuousness of need itself.

In at least two ways, we can see that the reverse is true. First, consider the choice between certainly saving 99 strangers whose dire needs are highly salient to you and, on the other side, certainly saving 100 whose equally dire needs are very *inconspicuous*. As our Primary Values direct, you ought to save the 100. Second, consider the choice between an attempt that has a 90 percent chance of success in saving a stranger whose dire need is highly salient to you and, on the other

side, an attempt that has a 91 percent chance of success in saving one whose equal need is very inconspicuous. Here, our main Values direct you to make the attempt with the slightly greater chance of success.

According to the Values of certain possible people, and maybe even a few actual people, you'll be directed oppositely. Then, *just because* their dire needs are more conspicuous, you ought to favor saving *fewer* people over more folks; and, *just because* his dire need's more conspicuous, you ought to favor making the *less likely* attempt to meet someone's dire need. Those possible Values may be well called *Highly Subjective Primary Values*.

According to such Highly Subjective Values, conspicuousness to a particular agent is a factor that, in and of itself, has substantial moral weight. But, as we've just clearly seen, that's enormously different from our Primary Values. So, now, that fact will surprise few. What may remain surprising is an implication of the fact: In our Primary Values, nothing favors the Envelope's conduct over the Sedan's.

No doubt, our discussion's furthered our appreciation of the implication. Even so, there remains much resistance to thinking the Envelope's conduct is wrong. Accordingly, in the chapter's final sections, I'll make an attempt, to be further pursued in later chapters [of *Living High and Letting Die*], rationally to reduce this persistent resistance.

## 2.17 RESISTANCE TO THE PUZZLE'S LIBERATIONIST SOLUTION: THE VIEW THAT ETHICS IS HIGHLY DEMANDING

Here's one main line of persistent resistance: By contrast with judging the Sedan's conduct severely, if we do that with the Envelope's, then, since we can't reject certain boring truths we all know full well, we'll have to accept a certain general position that's very strict and demanding. Composed partly of purely moral propositions and partly of propositions relating moral ideas to our actual circumstances, it may be called the *View that Ethics Is Highly Demanding*, and it may be seen to have these implications: To behave in a way that's not seriously wrong, a well-off person, like you and me, must contribute to vitally effective groups, like OXFAM and UNICEF, most of the money and property she now has, and most of what comes her way for the foreseeable future.

Is there much substance in this line of resistance? To answer well, we'll proceed systematically. And, for that, we'll distinguish two statements that, if true, can each undermine the line. One is categorical:

- (1) The View that Ethics Is Highly Demanding is the correct view of our moral situation.

And, the other is a conditional proposition:

- (2) (Even) if this View isn't correct, a strict judgment for the Envelope (still) won't do any more toward committing us to the View than will a strict judgment for the Vintage Sedan.

Much later, in chapter 6 [of *Living High and Letting Die*], I'll argue for the View that Ethics Is Highly Demanding.<sup>19</sup> But, at this early stage, we'll learn most by focusing on the conditional. So, I'll argue that, if a strict judgment for the Sedan *doesn't* commit us to anything very costly, then neither does a strict judgment for the Envelope.

Now, even before looking for any such argument, we know that its conditional conclusion must be correct. How so? Well, we've *stipulated* that, to the cases' agent, the helpful conduct requested in the Sedan is *over fifty times* as costly as in the Envelope. Still, observing details can be instructive.

Often, it's good to treat morality as an infinity of moral *principles*, or *precepts*, each entailing infinitely many others, more and more specific. On that approach, I'll first present this relatively general principle:

*Lessening (the Number of People Suffering) Serious Loss.* Other things being even nearly equal, if your behaving in a certain way will result in the number of people who suffer serious loss being less than the number who'll suffer that seriously if you don't so behave (and if you won't thereby treat another being at all badly or ever cause another any loss at all), then it's seriously wrong for you not to so behave.<sup>20</sup>

To indicate the scope I mean the maxim to have, I'll make some remarks about the intended range of "serious loss." First, some positive para-

digms: Even if it happens painlessly, when someone loses her life very prematurely, she suffers a serious loss. And, if someone loses even just a foot, much less a leg, she also suffers seriously. And, it also happens when, without losing any of his parts, someone loses his eyesight. Next, some losses less than serious: There's your losing just a tooth. And, there are financial losses from which you can recover. Anyway, this precept clearly applies to both puzzle cases.

Clearly, this maxim makes no provision for financial costs to the agent. And, so, many will resist the idea that it's a genuine moral principle. By the book's [*Living High and Letting Die*] end, we'll see that such cares for costs conflict with any truly decent moral thinking. But, now, it's good to see how they can be accommodated.

How might it be ensured that, even when followed fully, a precept won't ever mean a terribly burdensome cost? Of course, we must see to it that, *in the principle itself*, there's a logical guarantee to that effect. So, I'll do that straightaway and, to save space, I'll make other obvious changes when going from Lessening Serious Loss to this more specific precept:

*Pretty Cheaply Lessening Early Death.* Other things being even nearly equal, if your behaving in a certain way will result in the number of people who *very prematurely lose their lives* being less than the number who'll do so if you don't so behave and *if even so you'll still be at least reasonably well off*, then it's seriously wrong for you not to so behave.<sup>21</sup>

Before moving to a yet more appealingly lenient specific maxim, we'll notice two points about this one: First, complying with it can't have you be less than reasonably well off! And, second, while the Envelope's conduct gets a severe judgment from the precept, *not* so the Sedan!

Few truly rich folks, if any at all, will fully comply with Pretty Cheaply Lessening Early Death. So, for any particular billionaire, the cost of compliance will be very great: If the toll's not taken all at once, then a decently progressive sequence will soon turn any into someone who's just reasonably well off.<sup>22</sup> So, for a maxim that's appealing even to the very rich, we must have a precept that's a lot like:

*Very Cheaply Lessening Early Death.* Other things being even nearly equal, if your behaving in a certain way will result in the

number of people who very prematurely lose their lives being less than the number who'll do so if you don't so behave and if even so you'll still be both (a) at least reasonably well off and (b) *very nearly as well off as you ever were*, then it's seriously wrong for you not to so behave.

Even for rich folks, this precept's full observance can't ever be very costly. And, since you're not very poor, you'll see clearly that, while it yields a strict judgment for the Envelope's conduct, it doesn't yield any for the Sedan's.<sup>23</sup> So, it's very clearly indeed that we see the soundness of the section's main point: If a strict judgment for the Sedan doesn't commit us to anything onerous, then a strict judgment for the Envelope is *fully compatible* with a View that Ethics is Highly Undemanding.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.18 FURTHER RESISTANCE: DIFFERENT SORTS OF SITUATION AND THE ACCUMULATION OF BEHAVIOR

A good closing for the chapter can come from considering this other line of resistance: "In the Vintage Sedan, *the sort of situation* I encountered was a very *unusual* sort, and a quite *rare* sort. And, so, if I'd behaved well in the Sedan, then, pretty surely, I'd be off a certain moral hook for a good long while. By contrast, *the sort of situation* I faced in the Envelope was a very *common* sort of situation, a sort that's all too *frequent*, so, all too surely, I'll face a situation of *this other* sort again pretty soon. So, even if I'd behaved well in the Envelope, I wouldn't be off this other moral hook for long at all. Though hard to detail, that's a weighty moral difference between the cases." What's more, it seems this line may be furthered by a thought that, as was made clear by this text's very first page, we should all endorse: The fact that, in the Envelope, you failed to respond to an *appeal* has only minuscule moral weight. So, the line then continues like this: "With the sort of situation where I'll help save lives by contributing to UNICEF, there's hardly ever any stopping. But, nothing remotely like that holds for the sort in the Sedan. So, between the two cases, there's a huge moral difference."

Though it has a certain appeal, in this line there's really nothing more than in, say, the thought that people in a vast multitude are quite different from single individuals, that is, there's nothing whatsoever. But, since it's not obvious, I'll take pains to explain: Right at the line's start, we find

the assumption that, in the Vintage Sedan, there actually is something that's *the one and only sort of situation* you encountered. But, that's as far from the truth as can be; for, in truth, you there encountered a situation of, or belonging to, *enormously many sorts*. For example, you confronted a situation of the sort *situations involving vintage automobiles* and, for another, *situations where there's the chance for someone to take another to a hospital*, and, for a third, *situations where someone's dire need is conspicuous to you*. Compounding errors, moments later there was made the equally defective assumption that, in the Envelope, there's something that's *the one and only sort of situation* you there encountered.

An appreciation of those twin troubles has us ask a properly pointed question: Perhaps rather rarely instanced, (and perhaps *not* rarely instanced) is there a *sort of situation* that (even as it is instanced by the Sedan and *not* by the Envelope) *can* ground strict judgment for the Sedan, but *can't* for the Envelope? At first glance, this question may seem to introduce new issues. But, for a simple reason, it really doesn't: If some such *sort* can effect this grounding, then certain *factors* must be similarly potent, namely, those serving to distinguish such a potent sort from less potent sorts. So, the question fails to locate anything we haven't already worked to investigate.

So far, the section's discussion has been very general and abstract. For a fuller sense of its main point, I'll illustrate with material more specific and concrete: Suppose that, though far from rich, you've already donated fully a fourth of your income this year to support effective programs conducted by OXFAM, UNICEF, and IPPF. Largely, you did this by responding quite positively to the many appeals that, during the year, you've received from the organizations. (As I'll bother to observe, unless you're "one in a million," this supposition is *wildly false*. Yet, because we've made it, we're set to hear a helpfully concrete little story.)<sup>25</sup> Near the year's end, it's now late December. Before the year's over, there appears in your mail, complete with material about ORT and a return envelope, yet another appeal from UNICEF. Throwing up your hands, you think this: "Even forgetting about the thousands I've given to OXFAM and IPPF this year, I've already sent UNICEF itself thousands of dollars. Now, I don't want to be a Scrooge, you understand; but, holy moly, enough is enough!" With that exasperating thought in mind, you throw away the most recent material.

Of course, there's another half to this little story: Later the same day, you go for a drive in your vintage Mercedes sedan. At a rural crossroads, you come upon a trespasser, evidently a harmless bird-watcher, with a badly wounded leg. After hearing his elaborate appeal, you throw up your hands and have the same thoughts as a few hours before. Finishing with another token of "Now, I don't want to be a Scrooge, you understand, but, holy moly, enough is enough!"—you drive away and he loses a leg.

For your conduct in this two-scene story, what are our intuitive moral assessments? For the scene where you tossed UNICEF's envelope in the trash, our response is lenient. But, for your conduct in the second scene, our response is strict. Of course, in a slightly different form, that's just our old puzzle.

As I've suggested, some may try to ground the divergent responses along a certain "sortal" line: "In the story's first part, I confronted a situation of *the same sort* I already often encountered this year. So, taking together all the situations of *that sort*, I'll have behaved quite well during the whole year. But, in the story's second part, I confronted a situation of a *new sort*. Now, taking together all the situations of this second sort, we find that, since there's only one of them, for my letting the trespasser lose his leg, I'll have acted very badly, during the whole year, in *all those* situations."

At this point, the absurdity of these sortal thoughts becomes clear quickly. In both the story's first part and its second, there was a situation belonging to enormously many sorts. Now, with the "Envelope" situation faced first, it's only certain of its *morally irrelevant* sorts that do much to promote your quickly grouping it with other situations, for example, the sort *situations where you receive appeals from organizations that aid the vitally needy*. But, for accurate moral assessment, it's only certain *other* of its sorts that are relevant, for example, the sort *situations where behaving helpfully has no morally bad aspects and results in fewer folks suffering serious loss*. Of course, the Sedanish situation second in the story *doesn't* belong to the morally *irrelevant* sort just noted for its Envelope predecessor, nor to ever so many *other* such irrelevant sorts. But, so what? It *does* belong to the ethically *relevant* sort lately noted. Indeed, (with our Secondary Values' domain rightly remaining to the side), as this chapter's work has helped show, *all* its morally relevant sorts are *also* instanced by its Envelope predecessor.

Like the points surviving scrutiny in previous sections, the few here surviving support only a Liberatorist solution to the chapter's puzzle, not a Preservationist answer. But, even now, many will think the Envelope's conduct isn't wrong at all, much less seriously so. With that in mind, in the next chapter [chap. 3 of *Living High and Letting Die*] I seek a deeper understanding of such commonly, but perhaps terribly, unhelpful behavior.

## NOTES

### 1. *Illusions of Innocence: An Introduction*

1. In the summer of 1995, I fervently sought to learn how much it really costs, where the most efficient measures get their highest yield, to get vulnerable children to become adults. Beyond reading, I phoned experts at UNICEF, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health and, finally, the World Bank. As I say in the text, nothing of moral import turns on my search's findings. For those to whom that isn't already clear, it will be made evident, I think, by the arguments of chapter 6 [of *Living High and Letting Die*]. Partly for that reason, it's there that I'll present the best empirical estimates I found.

2. Most of what I say about Kerala was first inspired by reading Frances Moore Lappé and Rachel Schurman, *Taking Population Seriously*, the Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1988. Almost all is well documented in a more recent book from the Institute, entirely devoted to the Indian state: Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chasin, *Kerala: Radical Reform as Development in an Indian State*, 1989. Still more recently, these statements are confirmed by material on pages 18–19 of the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 1993*, Oxford University Press, 1993.

3. Much of what I'll say about causes of childhood death, and about the interventions that can nullify these causes, is systematically presented in James P. Grant's *The State of the World's Children 1993*, published for UNICEF by the Oxford University Press in 1993. To a fair extent, not more, I've cross-checked this against the (somewhat independent) material I've skimmed in the more massive *World Development Report 1993*, published for the World Bank by the OUP in 1993.

4. But, happily, UNICEF's worldwide immunization campaign has been making great strides against measles for years. So, while just a few years ago measles claimed over 1.5 million young lives, in the past year, 1994, it claimed about 1 million.

5. In "Polio Isn't Dead Yet," *The New York Times*, June 10, 1995, Hugh Downs, the chairman of the U.S. Committee, usefully writes, "The United States spends \$270 million on domestic [polio] immunization each year. For about half that amount polio could be eliminated worldwide in just five years, according to experts from Unicef and the World Health Organization. If the disease is wiped off the earth, we would no longer need to immunize American children and millions of dollars could be diverted to other pressing needs."

6. The widely available table I use is presented on page 135 of *The 1993 Information Please Almanac*, Houghton Mifflin, 1993. The statement that each of these countries has a well-established UNICEF program in place, and that it's currently (1995) easy for the program to work well in large parts of the nation, was told me by a US Committee staffer.

7. In a typical recent year, 1993, the US Committee for UNICEF mailed out, almost every month, informative appeals to over 450,000 potential donors. As a Committee staffer informed me, the prospects were folks whose recorded behavior selected them as *well above* the national average in responding to humanitarian appeals. With only a small overlap between the folks in each mailing, during the year over 4 million "charitable" Americans were vividly informed about what just a few of their dollars would mean. With each mailing, a bit less than 1 percent donated anything, a pattern persisting year after year.

8. See his landmark essay, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1972 [reprinted herein 1–14].

9. See page 169 of the original edition of his *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 1979. Without any change, this first premise appears on page 230 in the book's Second Edition, published by the CUP in 1993.

10. Now, without departing from its original spirit, the premise may be reformulated so that, at least at first sight, there are more appealing arguments for its importantly correct conclusion, that it's wrong for us not to lessen serious suffering, and even for the wanted stronger conclusion that it's *seriously* wrong. For example, one more appealing formulation has us replace Singer's original first premise with this proposition that, briefly, will be discussed in chapter 2, section 17 [of *Living High and Letting Die*, herein 365–68]:

*Pretty Cheaply Lessening Early Death.* Other things being even nearly equal, if your behaving in a certain way will result in the number of people who *very prematurely lose their lives* being less than the number who'll do so if you don't so behave and *if even so you'll still be at least reasonably well off*, then it's seriously wrong for you not to so behave.

But, in any event, at least one of the argument's premises will be a general proposition many will think unacceptable.

11. The case first appears in "Famine, Affluence and Morality" [reprinted herein 3–5]. The words I use come from the Second Edition of *Practical Ethics*.

12. For a complementary explanation of the impasse, see the subsection "The Methodological Objection," on pages 104–5 in Garrett Cullity's recent paper, "International Aid and the Scope of Kindness," *Ethics* 105: 1 (October 1994): 99–127. Taking the paper's text together with its footnotes, there's a useful overview of the discussion that, in the past couple of decades, pertains to Singer's contribution.

13. Many contemporary ethicists are *pretty close* to being (pure) Preservationists, prominently including Frances M. Kamm, in papers and, more recently, in *Morality/Mortality*, Oxford University Press, Volume 1, 1993 and Volume 2, 1996; Warren S. Quinn, in papers collected in *Morality and Action*, Cambridge University Press, 1993; and, Judith J. Thomson, in papers collected in *Rights, Restitution and Risk*, Harvard University Press, 1986 and, more recently, in *The Realm of Rights*, Harvard, 1990.

Whatever the *avowed* methodological stance, it's a radically rare ethicist who'll actually advocate, and continue to maintain, a morally substantive proposition that's strongly at odds with his reactions to more than a few cases he considers.

Of course, many gesture at the propositions presented in John Rawls's Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics, "Philosophical Review" (1951), fashionably uttering the words "reflective equilibrium". With the Liberationist this book [*Living High and Letting Die*] develops, perhaps there's a step toward putting some meat on some such schematic bones; in any case, there's more than just a gesture.

14. As I'll suppose, my fellow Liberationists, including Peter Singer, are reasonably flexible here.

15. The Liberationism whose moral substance is now to be spelled out, very incompletely, is the sort I myself favor. Others, like Peter Singer, will profess somewhat different guiding substantive moral beliefs, or Values. While those differences are important in certain contexts, in the context of this inquiry they aren't.

16. The expressions just bracketed in the text are to allow for certain nice ways these matters can be complicated by considerations of our *Secondary* Basic Moral Values, which Values aren't introduced in the text till the book's second chapter [herein 334–71]. For now, don't bother with that, but just note this: Even the staunchest Liberationist can establish semantic contexts in which it's *correct to say* that only the Shallow Pond's conduct is badly wrong, and even that the Envelope's isn't wrong at all. (It's not until the book's [*Living High and Letting Die*] last chapter that I'll provide the sort of semantic account that supports this note's qualification.)

17. On a third view, our responses to *both* cases fail to reflect anything morally significant: Just as it's all right not to aid in the Envelope, so, it's also perfectly all right in the Shallow Pond. Aply named *Negativism*, this repellently implausible position has such very great difficulties that, in these pages,

I'll scarcely ever consider it. To keep the text itself free from mentions of such a hopeless view, on the few occasions when Negativism's addressed at all, the brief notices will be confined to footnotes.

## 2. *Living High and Letting Die: A Puzzle about Behavior toward People in Great Need*

1. To understand our cases according to this usefully simplifying stipulation, we should have a good idea of what's to count as clearly implied by the statement of an example. Toward that end, perhaps even just a few words may prove very helpful. First, some fairly general words: To be clearly implied by such a statement, a proposition needn't be logically entailed by the statement. Nor need it be entailed even by a conjunction of the statement and a group of logical, mathematical, analytical or purely conceptual truths. Rather, it's enough that the proposition be entailed by a conjunction of the statement with others that are each commonly known to be true. Second, some more specific words: With both our puzzle cases, it's only in a *very boringly balanced* way that we're to think of the case's relevantly vulnerable people. Thus, even as we're not to think of anyone who might be saved as someone who'll go on to discover an effective cure for AIDS, we're also not to think of anyone as a future despot who'll go on to produce much serious suffering.

2. Among other reasons, this accommodates the friends of John Taurek's wildly incorrect paper, but highly stimulating essay "Should the Numbers Count?" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1977. But, as even some of the earliest replies to it show, no accommodation is really necessary; flawed only by some minor errors, a reasonably successful reply is Derek Parfit's "Innumerate Ethics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1978. So, my making this accommodation is an act of philosophical supererogation.

3. For the moment, suppose that, as the five factors indicate, your conduct in the Envelope was at least as bad as in the Sedan. From a purely logical point of view, there's naught to choose between the two salient ways of adjusting our moral thinking: (1) *The Negativist Response*. While continuing to hold that your conduct in the Envelope *wasn't* wrong, we may hold that, despite initial appearances, your conduct in the Sedan *also wasn't* wrong. (2) *The Liberationist Response*. While continuing to hold that your conduct in the Sedan *was* wrong, we may hold that, despite initial appearances, your conduct in the Envelope *also was* wrong. But, since we've more than just logic to go on, we can see that the Liberationist Response is far superior. So, unless there's a sound way to hoe that mighty long row, we should conclude, with Liberationism, that the Envelope's conduct was very seriously wrong.

4. As I'll use the term "salience" in this book [*Living High and Letting Die*], it will mean the same as the more colloquial but more laborious term, "conspicuousness." So, on my use of it, "salience" *won't* mean the same as "deserved conspicuousness."

5. Throughout this work [*Living High and Letting Die*], my statements about how "most respond" are to be understood like this: Informally and intermittently, I've asked many students, colleagues and friends for their intuitive moral assessments of the agent's behavior in a case I've had them just encounter. Even as this has been unsystematic, so, at any given point, I'll use reports about how "most respond" to a certain case mainly as a guide for proceeding in what then appears a fruitful direction. Without ever placing great weight on any one of the reports, it may be surprisingly impressive to feel the weight of them all taken together.

Trying to be more systematic, I asked a research psychologist at my home university to read an early draft of the book [*Living High and Letting Die*], with an eye to designing some telling experiments. Good enough to start with that, he asked graduate students to take on the project, and its onerous chores, as a doctoral dissertation, but, he found no takers. Having limited energy, I've left the matter there.

6. For an excellent analysis of population issues that's accessible even to laymen like me, I'm grateful for Amartya Sen's lucid essay, "Population: Delusion and Reality," *The New York Review of Books*, September 22, 1994 [reprinted herein 259-90]. As Sen there does much to make clear, our thought of the disastrous further future is little better than an hysterical fantasy.

7. More directly, a variant case chimes in with the same results: Suppose that, because he has a very large wound, our Bolivian's very life is greatly in danger. For him to live, you must take him to a hospital. Thinking about population problems and the further future, you drive away and let him die. As we intuitively react, your conduct's morally outrageous.

8. What's just been mentioned is only one of the good reasons to support IPPF. Here are others: First, with maternal mortality still standing at about 500,000 women a year, IPPF is cutting down the number and, so, lessening the number of children, still in the millions, who each year become motherless. Second, in IPPF clinics, many Third Worlders receive the basic health care they need. Right now I'll stop with this third point: Perhaps the greatest of all IPPF affiliates, Colombia's PROFAMILIA supports some clinics for men only. Owing to that, the terribly macho attitudes of many Colombian men have become much less macho, a big benefit to many Colombian women. At all events, in Colombia there's occurring a population success story.

9. Presented in literally graphic form, this paragraph's facts, and other fascinating data, cover page 49 of *The State of the World's Children 1995*, just off the press from the OUP at the time of this writing. For other fascinating facts, see Sen's essay, "Population: Delusion and Reality" [reprinted herein 259-90]. As careful readers will note, presenting data from India's Ministry of Home Affairs, on page 70 of his paper [herein 284], Sen's Table 2 shows Kerala to have even a slightly lower TFR, 1.8 rather than 1.9. But, of course, anything under 2.0 is happily remarkable.



Much more than living in a region with a high per capita income, and very much more than living in one where a liberal religion prevails, it's the factors I've just stressed that are important in determining the numbers of children that the region's women will bear. Just so, and very well worth noting, of all the world's pretty populous places, it's Italy, where even the Pope himself resides, that has the lowest Total Fertility Rate. With a TFR of just 1.3, Italy's set for a big decline in population!

10. For 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990, I use the figures graphically presented on page 55 of *The State of the World's Children 1995*. For the estimated average year in the range 1990–95, the latest reliable estimate, I use the three figures found in *World Population Prospects: The 1994 Revision*, Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations, New York, 1995. As a reliable estimate for more recent school enrollment is not available to me now, there's the "NA."

11. The quoted phrase, and much of the information about Bangladesh and cyclones here related, is from Fauzia Ahmed, "Cyclone Shelters Saving Lives," *Oxford America News*, summer 1994, page 5.

12. For those skeptical of what's to be found in such obscure places as *Oxfam America News*, I'll cite a piece in "the paper of record." From Sanjoy Hazarika, "New Storm Warning System Saved Many in Bangladesh," *New York Times*, May 5, 1994, I offer this sentence, "A major cyclone in 1991 killed an estimated 131,000 persons, wiping out entire villages and islands and leaving human corpses littering the countryside." As Oxfam's main source in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, is closer to the ground than the *Times'* main source, apparently just the Bangladesh Government, their *News'* estimate for the 1991 toll, 138,000, is probably closer to the actual number of people killed then.

13. This is well in line with what's in the Hazarika piece, loc. cit., a Special to *The New York Times*. Here's its first sentence: "The comparatively low death toll in the huge storm that whipped across parts of southeastern Bangladesh on Monday night with winds of up to 180 miles an hour was attributed today to a combination of modern technology and simple steps that led to the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of villagers to high ground and storm shelters." Next, here's a scrap from later in the piece: "... according to Bangladesh Government officials, took the lives of 167..." Finally, the piece's real kicker comes with its final sentence: "Most of the victims in the storm Monday were not Bangladeshis but Muslim refugees from Myanmar, formerly Burma, who had fled an army crackdown against followers of Islam in that country." So, without those unlikely and unlucky foreigners, the toll would have been under 100.

To my mind, far better than anything the *Times* offers on Bangladesh and its cyclones, there's a marvelous, and marvelously short, video on this amazing true story, called "Shelter," available from Oxfam America. Americans willing to make a contribution to OXFAM can get Shelter by calling this toll-free number: 1 - 800 - OXFAM-US, easily dialed as 1 - 800 - 693 - 2687.

14. On one logico-metaphysical view, there can't be causally amorphous relations. Though it appears false, it just might be true. If so, then this distinction marks no real difference. But, of course, it might well be false. And, since I should see if Liberationism prevails even on a "worst case scenario," I'll suppose that, in the Envelope, any aid would be causally amorphous.

15. Even here, some possible philosophers deny there's any real difference between the cases; skeptics about knowledge hold that, since we don't ever know anything, you'll never know anything about the fate of the trespasser. But, this can be passed over. And, from now on, I won't bother with philosophical views that deny an apparent difference between our two cases is a real one.

16. We've also discussed, of course, some candidates for being additional differential factors that proved unsuccessful. In the order discussed, and this time "viewed from the Envelope's side," they are: (a) worsening the further future—both factually false and contrary to our main stipulation, (b) leaving matters to the wealthy governments—at best just a modestly interesting instance of multiple potential saviors, (c) aiding only a very small part of an enormous multitude, as opposed to aiding a particular needy individual—a mere ethical illusion, (d) making only a decrease in the continuing mess rather than cleaning the scene—an even crazier illusion, (e) lacking important urgency—another illusion, and (f) failing to satisfy a nice semantic condition—not a genuinely differential factor, since, with a doctor's work needed, in the Sedan you couldn't really save someone's leg.

17. Perhaps, I may note a purely logical point: Those favoring stricter judgment for the Sedan aren't the only ones who can talk about combinations. Just as well, it can be done by those favoring a stricter judgment for the Envelope. But, since our common sense so clearly says that there's nothing substantial in any of this, it's silly to make a big deal about this logical symmetry.

18. In section 6 of the next chapter [chap. 3 of *Living High and Letting Die*], "Combination of Factors and Limited Conspicuousness," I work up a complex case with all the Sedan's listed factors, and with salience of need kept low. The example, the African Earthquake, has an obvious variant that's directly relevant to the present question. And, to this variant, we'll respond that unhelpful conduct isn't wrong.

19. Even while the View that Ethics Is Highly Demanding allows few exceptions to the sort of transfer of wealth just indicated, none will give you any substantial license to pursue your own happiness, or your own (nonmoral) fulfillment. Insofar as it gets you to be more helpful to those in direct need, as with earning more money to be given toward saving children's lives, not only may you spend money on yourself, but you positively must do that. And, insofar as it's needed to meet your strictest special moral obligations, as with getting your child a costly lifesaving operation, you must do that. In some detail, we'll discuss this in chapter 6 [of *Living High and Letting Die*] when, based on material from chapters that precede it, I'll argue that morality's far more demanding than we commonly suppose.

20. It's with thoughts about the causally amorphous aid you might have provided in the Envelope that I bother to formulate precepts, like this one, with rather lengthy locutions.

21. For economy, I haven't again inscribed the long bracketed clause, "(and if you won't thereby treat another being at all badly or ever cause another any loss at all)," But, as context makes clear, its thought's in all the section's precepts.

22. Though many may find this to be excessively demanding on rich folks, I think the maxim really doesn't make any excessive demand. But, biding my time till chapter 6 [of *Living High and Letting Die*], I won't argue that now.

23. While not poor, it may be that you're not rich, either. Then, there'll be at least two reasons why this precept doesn't yield a strict judgment for your conduct in the Sedan. Of course, one has been in play for a fair while: Unlike in the Envelope, in the Sedan there was never any question of any life being lost. Independent of that, another reason's this: Unlike when you're out only \$100, when you're out over \$5,000, it's probably fair to say you *aren't* very nearly as well off as you ever were.

24. As I hope you're coming to agree, at least for us in a world like this, any decent morality must be, at the very least, a *Pretty Highly Demanding Ethics*. And, while in chapter 6 [of *Living High and Letting Die*], I'll advance a View that's even much more ambitious than that, in the section now closing, all I needed to do, and all I aimed to do, was something extremely unambitious.

25. While quite a few give a lot to elite institutions, and while many give much to local religious groups, hardly anyone gives even a fortieth of her annual income toward anything even remotely as important, ethically, as those programs. Just so, each year well-off Americans give far more to Harvard University than to all three mentioned groups combined, UNICEF and OXFAM and IPPF, and far more to Yale than all three combined, and they also give more even to my less elite home institution, NYU, than to all combined. Owing to facts like these, what's in the text is a gross understatement.

## 17. THOMAS HURKA

Hurka considers whether nationalism, understood as partiality to one's own nation, is morally justified. After criticizing certain other attempts to provide such a justification, including that of Alasdair MacIntyre (chapter 7 in this volume), he argues that nationalism typically involves two different forms of partiality: a partiality to one's individual conational as individuals, and a partiality to one's nation's impersonal good (for example, its survival as a nation). He then focuses on the first kind of partiality, arguing that it is indeed morally justified when it is based on a shared history of working together to produce significant benefits.

### The Justification of National Partiality

*First published in The Morality of Nationalism, ed. Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (Oxford University Press, 1997), 139–57.*

The moral issues about nationalism arise from the character of nationalism as a form of partiality. Nationalists care more about their own nation and its members than about other nations and their members; in that way nationalists are partial to their own national group. The question, then, is whether this national partiality is morally justified or, on the contrary, whether everyone ought to care impartially about all members of all nations. As Jeff McMahan emphasizes in "The Limits of National Partiality," a philosophical examination of this question must consider the specific features of nationalism as one form of partiality among others. Some partiality—for example, toward one's spouse and children—seems morally acceptable and even a duty. According to commonsense moral thinking, one not only may but also should care more about one's family members than about strangers. But other instances