

WE DON'T OWE THEM A THING!
A TOUGH-MINDED BUT SOFT-HEARTED VIEW
OF AID TO THE FARAWAY NEEDY

Introduction

The discovery that people far away are in bad shape seems to generate a sense of guilt on the part of many articulate people in our (“wealthy”) part of the world, even though they are no worse off now that we’ve heard about them than they had been before. I will take it as given that we are certainly responsible for evils we inflict on others, no matter where, and that we owe those people compensation. Not all similarly agree that it is not in general our duty to make other people better off, and therefore not in general our fault when people are not better off than they happen to be, even if perhaps we *could have* made them so by efforts of our own. Nevertheless, I have seen no plausible argument that we *owe* something, as a matter of general duty, to those to whom we have done nothing wrong. Still, morally commendable motives of humanity and sympathy support beneficence, and if we wish to call those “duties,” there is something to be said for that, too. I shall, in fact, try to say it later in this essay.

A further clarificatory point is in order: I also take it that if we did have any such duties, they would not be, as such, to people who are merely “worse off than ourselves.” Americans don’t owe anything to Canadians or Englishmen, even though Americans have a higher real income. Our subject, I presume, is people who are, by some reasonable criterion, *badly* off, and not merely worse off than we. It is not clear how we would identify this reasonable criterion, but I will assume that there are plausible answers; a duty to needy people, if we had one, would be to try to get them up to that relevant standard, rather than to a condition of equality with ourselves. I will say no more about egalitarianism here.¹

Another clarificatory remark: I take it to be a central question here whether we have an *enforceable* obligation to assist the badly off. But there is also the question whether assisting those badly off has any special moral status at all. Like “most people,” I certainly think it does: we *should* help others, and I will so argue. Moreover, the cost to the helper is decidedly relevant. In general, we have a duty of this type only if we can discharge it at small cost to ourselves. Those willing to help at larger or immense cost to themselves qualify for our admiration in so doing, but go far beyond what duty requires.

The special question being addressed here is how the factor of distance affects whatever duties there may be along this line. Do we have a stronger duty to those nearby? This is to be distinguished from the question whether we have a stronger duty to fellow citizens than to foreigners. Near neighbors across a national boundary, a few miles away, may be in more severe need than fellow citizens 3,000 miles distant.² Current views call for taxes to keep fellow citizens above a high “welfare floor,” while foreign aid is optional. This strong distinction makes doubtful moral sense; but that is not our subject.

Aid, Mutual and Otherwise

Let’s begin with some fundamental discussion about aiding others. When do we have any sort of duty to do this? As we have implicitly seen, there are three significantly different categories to distinguish here:

a) *Reparation*. This applies when the recipients are people we have previously harmed. We may owe such people reparation, and that duty is enforceable. But it has nothing to do with the antecedent welfare of the injured party: I could owe Bill Gates reparation, but none to some starving people.

b) *Dire Need*. This is our focus case: when putative recipients will die, say, or at least be pretty miserable, unless we or someone helps out.

c) *Helping*. The project we help with may not be essential to life or continued health, but simply enhances further, in some way, the already good life of the individual in question, as when we help the neighbors with their reception.

Case (a), as noted, is not in general the situation of distant peoples in need, and so is essentially irrelevant to the present discussion. Our distant sufferers aren’t so because we made them so. It could have been, to be sure;

it just happens not to be. Some, wanting to argue a case along this line, may have special information that would alter our perception of the situation—did we inject something into the atmosphere that brought drought on those people? Or they may argue, philosophically, that there is no real difference between killing and letting-die. If so, we would be into a very different discussion. I assume here that such claims fail; space does not permit arguing the matter.³ But for the typical case of distant need, the thesis is obviously false. The gap between not killing someone ten thousand miles away and helping him back on his feet is enormous and obvious.

(b) Your wife goes into labor, your car fails, and if I don't drive her to the hospital now, she might not make it—there have been problems, life is at stake. Do I help out? You bet! *Ought* I to help? Of course. Do I refuse on the ground that your income is thrice mine? Certainly not. Do I have an *enforceable duty* to help her? No. Ordinary humanity impels anyone who can help in such a case, and who doesn't have pressing business elsewhere, to do so. And we generally will—that being one of the nice things about people. But what when the subject is not our neighbor, and when her inability to help herself is pervasive? That is our question here.

(c) Ordinary people help each other not only in time of need, but on plenty of occasions when need, at the level we are focussing on, is hardly in question. If you want my advice about which recording of Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata to get, I stand ready to help; but neither you nor I really think there is a "moral duty" to do this sort of thing. Still, it is true of virtually any of us that if we can help in these ways—as, typically, we cannot—and could do so at small cost to ourselves, then we should. Or at least, it would be nice of us; and most of us want to be nice. The 'should' here is weak, but not trivially weak; moreover, 'nice' is a moral predicate here. General helpfulness to others is a specifically moral virtue; it is not like being funny, which may be a virtue but certainly not a moral one.

How much difference is there between cases (b) and (c)? Firstly, the difference in the level of costs we should be willing to bear in order to do these desirable things is considerable. If I have to sacrifice most of a day to save the life of my neighbor whom I've known for three decades, I will. If I have to sacrifice three months of my life, however, I won't, though there are some who would. We certainly don't have an *enforceable duty* to do either, though the small-cost case is much more morally significant than the large-cost case.

Costs are relevant. But why? That needs to be explained, not assumed. I shall provide an explanation in what follows. A leading point about this inquiry is this: benefits are relevant. Anyone who claims that we have a duty to help the needy must agree with that. But if he does, then he is stuck with agreeing that costs are relevant. For benefit is got at cost, and more benefit is available if costs can be lowered for the production of a given kind of benefit. Cost is unignorable.

Recipients and Efficiency

Given the choice to save one life or save a hundred, is there any reason why we should do the latter?⁴ The answer is simple: Yes. For the chances that *you* are one of those to be saved is, abstractly, much greater if a hundred are saved than if only one is, other things being equal—which they often aren't, to be sure.

This is not a veil-of-ignorance argument. We are talking here about general attitudes and principles: what should *any* human be disposed to do, regarding any⁵ other human? To reason about this, we must consider it from a general point of view. And to do that, we must pay heed to probabilities. Insofar as humans have general dispositions toward their fellows engraved on their souls, such dispositions must be framed on the basis of general considerations. The consideration in the present case is that someone might be in tough shape and in need of someone else's help, and the way he is is a way that you or I might be some day. If doing X helps one person but Y helps a hundred, the chance that a randomly selected person benefits from the actions of another human equipped with a disposition to help is 100 times higher with Y than with X; thus the chance that I am one of that larger group is correspondingly greater. The disposition to be efficient in one's helping activity is therefore, *prima facie*, to be commended.

However, helping specific individuals whom one knows or has close connections with is another matter. I will save my daughter rather than a hundred others, despite the above arguments; and so will almost any member of that 100. But talking generally and abstractly, if there's a choice between saving one stranger or a hundred, the latter is strongly to be preferred.

Duties: The General Theory

When is something a duty? In general terms, it is so when there is good reason, interpersonally considered, to require the person in question

to do or refrain from the act in question. The interpersonal consideration in question has the structure of a “social contract.” Is it in the rationally considered interest of each to accept the requirement in question? The only thing that can generate the relevant interpersonal status is mutual agreement. If you don’t accept its basis, I can hardly expect you to comply with an alleged duty; if you do, I can. In turn, we will not accept what we don’t see to be for the better. So we look for what will work out best from each of our points of view, and then agree to perform as required, provided others do too. Or even if they don’t, we may do well to set an example.

The matters on which it is easiest to envisage such agreement refer to proposed activities of persons that *worsen* the situation of the other. Whatever I want, I, by definition, don’t want to be worse off than I already am, and similarly with you. A general acceptance of a norm forbidding interpersonal worsenings is in order. If we both want our backs scratched, by each other, we’ll agree to mutual scratching—but there’s a very good chance that we don’t, so matters like that must be left to individual arrangement. On the other hand, we certainly don’t want our backs stabbed, and since we can all do that if we’ve a mind, we do well to prohibit backstabbing.

Duties that involve doings rather than refrainings are harder to come by, as my back-scratching example illustrates. Prospects for a universal agreement to help others when they need help, as an enforceable duty, are poor. However, weaker categories are amply important. What might it be reasonable to expect of one another even if we can’t actually enforce it, especially in the way of general dispositions?

It is widely supposed that the social-contract idea applies only to duties of justice. Not so. Another very important sort of moral involvement can still be a subject of general agreement among diverse people. We need to focus, not on out-and-out duties to perform specific actions on specific occasions, on pain of punishment for noncompliance, but on *dispositions to favor* the doing of certain sorts of things on relevant occasions. We can agree that such-and-such is a nice thing for people to do, a sign of general merit, with recognition by the carrot rather than by the stick—the latter being the province of justice. Beyond strict justice lies a region of morals where we reward people for doing, rather than punish them for omitting.

Some areas of human action reflect special interests—the bowling league or the chamber-music society. But there are also areas pertaining to the doings of people generally. We must distinguish between rewarding for efforts from special viewpoints, and doing so on the basis of general human considerations; the latter belong to morals, not the former. For example, take the general disposition of benevolence. Benevolent actions are ones we should *all* applaud, even if we aren't particularly benevolent ourselves or hardly ever need the assistance of others. Cultivating the disposition to reward it is a modest investment that can be repaid handsomely when our time does come—as, in every person's life, there is a fair chance of its coming. In short, the cost of such a behavior pattern is quite low, and the potential benefit from others very high. It could be worth one's life.

In claiming that costs are “low,” two factors are to be distinguished. First, there is the cost of talk, such as praise. This I take to be low, but admittedly for some it could be psychologically high, and for others—laryngitis, say—it could be high for other reasons. Second, my proposal is not confined to talk. A benevolent *disposition* is a tendency to perform, not merely to praise others for performing. Costs of performance are very variable, not always high—not even always higher than the costs of awarding praise or blame. But this is a normative proposal, and part of the package is that it be low-cost in principle. Someone will be regarded as meriting the adjective ‘benevolent’ who is benevolent to a certain suitable degree. Beyond that degree, where costs get high, we must shift to another level of moral vocabulary. People who risk their lives or spend a great part of their lives helping others without recompense are not just benevolent, but exceptionally meritorious—even heroes, or saints.⁶

Broad Duties and Marginal Costs

It is familiar to invoke a distinction of Kant's, between “strict” and “broad” duties. The idea was that strict duties are to be done on each and every occasion on which they can be done: whenever it is possible for me to kill some innocent person, I must refrain. But, says Kant, broad duty allows latitude. I should help some people, but how many and how much is up for grabs.⁷ Kant's idea is plausible, in some ways, but it is theoretically uncomfortable. We might like to know whether it is, or is not, my duty to do *this, now*; if it *never* is, how could it nevertheless be my duty to do something at some time or other?

We can make some progress on this. Each time we have an opportunity to help, it would be at some cost on that occasion. If we actually do the helping on that occasion, and thus bear the cost at that time, does this have any relevance to further occasions? Yes, generally. First, paying this cost leaves a little less in my budget for future occasions. It needn't be financial: frequent helping makes the soul weary, and leaves less time for writing one's next treatise.

There is, of course, the most fundamental question of how big my budget for this sort of thing should be in the first place. We'll consider that next. Meanwhile, given a budget, and assuming that there are marginal-cost functions of the type we have been discussing, we can then say, roughly, that we morally ought to render help whenever the marginal benefit as we see it exceeds the marginal cost on that occasion.

This is not Utilitarian in spirit. What measures the relevant marginal benefit to the recipient is not cardinal interpersonal utility, but intuitive assessment by the agent doing the contributing. So a formal solution to the Kantian problem is at hand. The thesis that we have a "broad" duty is that it is to some undefined extent a matter of choice how much we do and when. The reason that it's true is that we will choose to do it on an occasion when (a) we *feel* enough like doing it to make the marginal balance of psychic costs fairly low; and (b) other situational factors render the expected ratio of benefit to cost positive. For those whose psychical and other budgets are small, and whose marginal cost-functions are quite sensitive to the number of instances in a given amount of time when we can help, we will be able to say that we have done our duty by performing in a certain smallish number of cases. Moreover, those cases can be a random subset of the available field. If I don't choose to help in *this* case, then the marginal cost of the next case is unaffected; if I do, however, it is increased. Consequently, my modest duty to do something is dischargeable in any number of distinct ways.

The Beneficence Budget

This brings us to the budgetary question. How much should we, as reasonable people, devote to the assistance of miscellaneous other people? As noted, we reject the Utilitarian stance here, not just because the claim to have the sort of measures it requires is extremely shaky, but more important, because we do not, by nature, *care* about the general utility.

Your utility means, so far as our basic natures are concerned, little or nothing to me, nor mine to you. Yet most of us do care about most others, to some modest degree. Why? And how much?

The answer to this is most reasonably supplied by two things. First, there is affective reinforcement in early life, stimulating a degree of sympathy and concern for people in general. To be sure, that is not in the most obvious sense “rational.” What is in that sense rational is the second thing—the Social Contract. A good deal with others is one in which both they and we stand to make a net gain by the arrangement, as compared with its best alternatives, including the satisfaction of sympathetic interests among possible gains. Morality is a general understanding among people, who must be presumed to be self-interested, whatever else they are. The moral understanding requires mutual interest. In the case of aiding others, then, we look for expected benefits and expected costs, and assess duties where it would be, on the whole, beneficial to everyone to accept a duty to aid, reinforceable by some amount of social pressure. The question is, then: When is that?

The Golden Rule says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The only relevant question is whether I *would* want it if I were in your situation. That calls for this comment: No doubt I “would have” others do quite a lot for me—wouldn’t that be nifty! But it would be irrational for me to be ready to do as much for others as I would *like* to have them do for me, and I have no doubt that they feel the same way. The Golden Rule suffers from bias toward the recipient.

The Leaden Rule says, “Do to others as they do to you!” But what do they do? In a Tit for Tat strategy, we do the nice thing, then wait and see, and respond in kind. Here a bit of silver creeps into the lead. The leaden rule may stop things dead in their tracks.

The Silver Rule takes a longer view than Leaden, but a soberer view than Golden. It asks us to consider the *likelihood* that we will be in situations where others could help us, as well as the likelihood that we will be in situations where we could help. In the former situation, where others “could” help, the question is whether I should ask for it, and even whether I should accept it if rendered. I can’t reasonably *ask* for it unless I am prepared to do likewise, along some measure of likelihood. I should try to make it worth other people’s while to help me, and I do this by being willing to help them—up to some point. But what point?

The following points are important. First, to what extent is the individual who would be in the donor position self-subsistent? How likely is he ever to need the relevant kind of help from others? This is not a desert-island question. Rather, we are asking when he might ever need the *charitable* help of others—help that he can't readily get, say, by simply buying it. Well-off persons whose incomes are secure might be quite independent in this sense—but even then, not completely. We'll fall among strangers who don't take our credit cards, or fall and hurt ourselves when nobody with services for sale is nearby, and so on. Occasions for non-commercial services of others are frequent in most lives—money buys a lot, but not everything. The cliché says “You never know”—but like so many clichés, it has truth. We are all vulnerable to accident, disease, and what-have-you, and there's a fair chance that we will need somebody's help, without room for commercial arrangement.

Consider Sam, who couldn't survive more than a day without the serious assistance of others, and who can offer no significant service in return. His probability of need is essentially 1.0. Hilda, in turn, has a probability of need close to 0. If these two particular individuals deal purely on the basis of uncoerced interest, Sam's survival depends entirely on the sympathy and good will of Hilda.

Hilda's budget is likely to have a good-will component, and this component is readily appealed to in interesting supplementary ways. For example, Hilda is likely to attend the Charity Ball or a performance by some famous artist, the cost of attendance being largely a contribution to the cause of relieving Sam's malady or sustaining him and others like him in life. Attending the ball, meeting the other glitterati, noting their attire, current partners, is fun, and Hilda's attitude toward the 75% of the ticket cost that goes to helping Sam is likely to be one of enthusiasm. She needn't go at all, after all. The rest of us lower-end folks are also ready for charity concerts, lotteries, bake sales—they all work. Such mixed-motive occasions are not to be sneezed at. They are far preferable to compulsory contribution, as in state provision—charity balls are more fun than paying taxes, and, being genuinely charitable, also far more commendable.

State Aid?

The latter methods work so well that there would arguably be no need for state support even if there weren't a moral case against it. But

there is. Taking involuntarily from Jim to be “charitable” to Judy is not right; nor is taking from first-world taxpayers in order to feed starving folks on the other side of the globe.

Some readers of this essay won’t see it that way. In their view, taxpayers’ money is up for grabs, to be spent as enlightened intellectuals direct, rather than as the unenlightened earners of that money would spend it if they had their choice. Myself, I side with the unwashed. I do not accept the view that money earned by ordinary people in their work or from investments isn’t really theirs. It is, and we have no business taking it from them by force even for good causes, such as the building of better halls in which to play Mozart or to feed victims of political violence or droughts on the other side of the world.

Mutual Aid Insurance

There has been, let us say, an earthquake, a prolonged drought, or an enormous flood; people are temporarily in great need of food, clean water, medicines, without which many will die. In the short term, at least, they can’t pay it back; even in the long term, any payment is unlikely to affect much the individuals who donate. Why, then, should they help, and how much? Common folk-wisdom supplies the right answer: these are fellow people, it doesn’t cost us much, and when they get back on their feet they’ll be grateful, and there’s much to be said, looking to the broad future, for being on people’s good side. My Silver Rule is silver in two ways. First, it’s shiny, and looks on the bright side. Second, though it shines, it doesn’t blind us as the Golden rule does. The Silver Rule calls upon us to be ready to help those nearby who need our help a lot, because You Never Know; and it calls upon us to be ready to help those farther away, somewhat, partly on the same general principle but more especially in anticipation of general good relations in future. The Silver Rule also stipulates, of course, that the people we help be ready to help others in their turn—perhaps even us if the situation arises. We should help the helpful. The unhelpful we should be rather less forthcoming with, though in the end there is a fair case for helping them too, provided nonmalevolence can be expected in response. The Silver Rule does this *via* a broad informal social insurance scheme. I help you when you are in need; you help somebody in need; that somebody helps somebody else in need; eventually, somebody helps me when in need, or perhaps when I am not

really in need but can benefit anyway. When donor participation is low-cost, the aid given is of a general type that the donor is possibly or probably going to stand in need of or otherwise to be able to benefit from, and benefits to the recipient are large relative to costs, participation makes sense.

Some theorists will point out that I have not demonstrated that compliance is rational. Why not be a free-rider? That's a fair question, especially in abstract theory. But in the real world, posing this as a one-shot Prisoner's Dilemma is invoking the wrong model. Indefinite iteration is the right model. It makes the main answer this: So go ahead—be a tightfisted, narrow-visioned, cold fish. Nobody—on my account of the matter—is going to hit you for being a dumb-ass or a scrooge—but they are going to *call* you that, and you will, after all, deserve it. And of course, when your turn comes and the shoe is on the other foot, you're going to look pretty silly. *We are* all in this together.

In technical terms, the whole thing is a collective public-goods problem, with the usual properties: all are better off if all comply, but any one is better off if others comply and he doesn't, and we cannot demonstrate that any single person will, definitely, rationally maximize by participating. To this, the correct response is: So what? We may also think what we will of the uncharitable, and it isn't going to be nice. That's all we're entitled to do—but it's also all we need. Accepting the principle and participating is rational in real-world probabilistic terms, and people who refuse to reason that way, insisting on Cartesian precision instead, are *not* rational—they're dummies. But they can be ignored. It's not as though the whole project founders for lack of participation from a few tightwads.

Distance

What, then, about distance? It is often held that distance is *morally irrelevant*. I am puzzled at that view. Even if I have a duty to go an inch for you, I may not have a duty to go a mile—the difference between the mile and the inch *matters*. Perhaps those who say that it doesn't mean that distance *as such* makes no difference. And that is quite true, too; but it doesn't prove much. Probably what is meant is that in order for distance to make a difference to the moral modality of a case, it must do so for some relevant reason that is only correlated with the difference we are considering, not logically entailed by it. Agreed: Distance makes a differ-

ence only *because* and therefore *if* greater distance increases the cost of our doing things at that distance. Which it doesn't always, but does usually: for creatures such as we, it is, indeed, very difficult for it not to make a difference.

To see how it might make no difference, consider the Internet. From my office, a message arrives from South Africa—taking an indiscernibly greater amount of time and energy than if it had been sent by my colleague next door. And possibly the way I can help, despite being 10,000 miles off, is by supplying information, technical help or even the right choice of soothing words. Of course, I am not usually in a position to “do something” morally important at either distance; when it comes to shipping tons of food, clothing and medicine, diaphanous digital communication doesn't suffice, though it will be very useful in making the arrangements. So although distance usually makes a difference in cost, when it doesn't, distance has no differential effect on our duties.

Of course, even sending messages takes time and mental energy, and those too are costs. The mental distance between you and me is a much greater cost factor than the thousands of miles separating your computer from mine: I may take an hour to think of just how to put something to you, though the electrons arrive in milliseconds. Our time and effort is often the main cost; the recipient is not in general entitled to it; and I am entitled to ration it and in any case to use my budget efficiently. They're not *entitled* to it—they just *need* it, and good people will be disposed to help.

The once-popular idea that people on the other side of the world are incompetent to feed themselves, or that their environment is incapable of supporting them has been exploded; Malthusian arguments popularized by Ehrlich⁸ and others are both theoretically and empirically wrong. Starvation in the 20th century, apart from a very few isolated cases, has been due to politics, not insufficient resources. Mao, Stalin, Kim Jong Il, have managed to bring about widespread starvation for their people, by depriving them of free use of agricultural resources.⁹ Given opportunity to produce, people produce. An occasional natural disaster will cause short-term emergencies, and those are the occasions for charity to kick in, as it always does, given a chance. But the occasions for such charity are not so extensive as readers may think. Even if enforced charity were justified, it would be unnecessary.

Aid and Nationalism

What difference do national borders make in these matters? In principle, none. Some indeed think that we owe our fellow citizens not only a bare sufficiency but a living that would be downright luxurious in most parts of the world. But that's politics, not need. Let us recall the terms of reference of this essay: some distant people are "in need": starving, or with horrible but curable diseases. Neither stomachs nor genes respect national boundaries. Rain, drought, and plagues befall not only the just and the unjust alike, but Americans and Patagonians indifferently. If such misfortunes deserve our help, they deserve it irrespective not only of the victims' color, but also of the color of their country on the map. Many political regimes have done much to promote the evils we are concerned with here, including hindering efforts to do something for the unfortunate victims. The existence of such regimes poses enormous political problems and dilemmas for us in the West, and for would-be care-givers such as Oxfam. But the thesis that fellow-countrymen, just as such, are more deserving of life-saving aid than others is *prima facie* incredible, and morally absurd.

Cultural Variables

On the other hand, the needy may have tribal practices the side effect of which is, perhaps, low life expectancy. Do we respect their cultural or religious beliefs, and let them die early? Or do we help despite the fact that they don't want our help or don't see it as help? While I have no respect for oppressive political regimes, whose claims to it consist mainly in military prowess and skulduggery, in these cases I incline against the "help" and in favor of respect. The Inuit and the Bantu don't need rational justification for their particular culture practices and characteristics. That's simply the way those peoples *are*. They probably should, and will, consider whether various changes might not be a good idea. But the choice is theirs—not ours.

The difference made by cultural factors isn't just another cost factor in the aid equation: rather, it affects the very meaning of "aid." No one sees sickness, starvation, and early death as positively desirable, but many have been ready to put up with a higher incidence of those evils in order to sustain what they take to be valuable ways of life. We should be *very*

hesitant to barge in with Western calories, medicines, and especially schooling, with such people.

We need decent solutions to these cultural problems, and I do not have such. But when cultural factors do not complicate the situation, or at least do not seriously affect the considerations I have been exploring above, then political considerations are of a different kind altogether. They greatly affect our capability of rendering aid, and often cause the whole problem in the first place, but they have no fundamental bearing on the category of need. That is human, not political.

Conclusion

In summary, I hold the classical view, that our basic human rights are negative, and thus that the basic human duties—the ones that our fellows may insist on, with threats of punishment for noncompliance—are to avoid inflicting evils on people. The duty to help those in need is not like that. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to talk of a less stringent duty of mutual aid, on the ground that we are all vulnerable to assorted misfortunes, and when those do befall us, assistance from others is going to be our only recourse. But the size of the commitment this imposes is limited and variable, and the higher the cost to the agent, other things being equal, the less stringent is that duty. Distance is normally a cost factor, and so it matters.

Very distant people are unlikely ever to be in a strictly reciprocal relation to us. Even so, we should all be disposed to approve of action to aid persons, however distant, even though such action is not required of us. In a world of increasing interrelation, the having of good relations with all people everywhere is a worthy general objective. Besides, it's just plain nice.

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NOTES

1. I have said much about it elsewhere, e.g., in "On Recent Arguments for Egalitarianism," Chapter 4 in *Respecting Persons in Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman

and Littlefield, 2002), and in "Egalitarianism: Partial, Counterproductive, and Baseless," *Ratio* 1997; also in Andrew Mason, ed., *Ideals of Equality* (Blackwell, 1998), pp. 79–94.

2. My fellow Canadians will appreciate the point. Needy Mexicans might be closer to someone in Vancouver than fellow citizens in St. John's, Newfoundland.

3. I discuss it in my *Moral Matters* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1993) pp. 67–70; in the 2nd edition (1999), pp. 69–71.

4. See John Taurek, "Should the Numbers Count?," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Summer 1977, vol. 6, no. 4.

5. Again, let's set aside our relations to homicidal persons, and other extremely abnormal cases. Our generalization here is about "any normal person," at least, and no doubt to many non-normal ones, pending special discussion.

6. The modern classic on this matter is surely J. O. Urmson's "Saints and Heroes," originally in A. I. Melden, ed., *Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1958; now conveniently reprinted in Steven M. Cahn and Joram G. Haber, *20th Century Ethical Theory* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 322–31).

7. Kant discusses this in his *Tugendlehre*, translated by James Ellington as *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), esp. pp. 48 ff (Introduction, Sects. VII and VIII.)

8. Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantyne, 1968).

9. See Nicholas Eberstadt, "Population, Food, and Income" in Ronald Bailey, ed., *The True State of the Planet* (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 7–48; see p. 39 in particular, regarding politically-induced starvations, and the entire article for the relevant facts about global food production. See also the next article, "Saving the Planet with Pesticides: Increasing Food Supplies While Preserving the Earth's Biodiversity," by Dennis Avery, pp. 49–82.