



Responsibility in an Interconnected World: International Assistance, Duty, and Action (Studies in Global Justice)

Susan P. Murphy

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This monograph examines the network of moral obligations, rights, and responsibilities that can arise through the act of assisting another and highlights the links between acting upon a duty to assist, responsibilities for these actions, and how such actions link with incremental moral duties that can amass as a consequence of such actions. The author examines the practices of international aid, whereby in some instances, the practice of assistance struggles to achieve the desired ends. Thus arises the question – what is going wrong with the practice of aid? The book opens with an examination of the aid industry and the claims of leading practitioners that the industry is experiencing a crisis of confidence which reflects the absence of clear moral guidelines, and which exposes an underlying philosophical tension between two dominant ethical approaches: principle-based deontology and outcome-based consequentialism. It then turns to an examination of leading accounts of the duty to aid that cut across these philosophical traditions. These include narrow, instructive accounts in the writing of John Rawls and Peter Singer; and broad, disruptive accounts in the writing of Onora O’Neill and Amartya Sen. Through a process of comparative analysis, what is termed the interconnected ethical account of the duty to assist is developed and defended. Through an elaboration of the elements of interconnection, responsible action, inclusive engagement, and accumulative duties, this approach has the potential to overcome the problems identified in other accounts and provide guidance to aid practitioners, donors and recipients in the complex contemporary circumstances of assistance

Informed by real world examples, this book grapples with complex and multi-dimensional questions concerning practices of aid and, just as important, how to deliberate about how to do so as part and parcel of the ethics of aid. The author judiciously guides us through the debate between deontological and consequentialist moral theories to arrive at a sophisticated consequentialist account that does justice to the complexity of the problems and facilitates our deliberation in discharging our duty to aid, without yielding, as it should not, a determinate answer for each specific situation. Researchers, students, and practitioners of international aid will all find this book rewarding.

Win-chiat Lee
Professor and Chair
Wake Forest University

Susan Murphy’s book offers us a sophisticated exploration of the philosophical basis for aid. It is grounded in a full understanding of the complexities and pitfalls of the aid industry, but its particular strength lies, mainly through an extensive discussion of Singer, Rawls, O’Neill and Sen, in a comparison of consequentialist and duty-based approaches, eventually endorsing a broad non-idealised, situated consequentialist account in what she calls an interconnected ethical approach to the practice of assistance. For anyone wanting to think carefully about why we should give aid, this book has much to offer.

Dr Nigel Dower (Honorary Senior Lecturer, University of Aberdeen; author of *World Ethics – the New Agenda* (2007))

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