

[Free and download] How are We to Live? : ethics in an age of Self-Interest

How are We to Live? : ethics in an age of Self-Interest

Peter Singer

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Peter Singer : How are We to Live? : ethics in an age of Self-Interest before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How are We to Live? : ethics in an age of Self-Interest:

83 of 90 people found the following review helpful. An audacious undertaking, and Singer pulls it off By A Customer Singer tackles "the big one," the meaning of life, in this book, and damned if he doesn't figure it out. In my opinion. (Your mileage may vary.) His approach is take you through a few thousand years of philosophy/economics/political science to get to the answer that a life spent trying to help others and reduce suffering is really the most moral, and most fulfilling one. It's a fascinating, and important, book. OK. I do have one small quibble. (Forgive me, I'm a quibbler.) Singer, correctly, I think, sees some uses of psychotherapy as self-indulgent and an attempt to rationalize away the moral emptiness that comes from leading a materialistically oriented life. However, I think he underestimates the need for people to come to terms with the forces that create a self that can't keep its "owner" from suffering. You have to be able to help yourself as well as others. The process of individuation, of becoming your own creative person, is important in human happiness. It's not as moral as purely devoting yourself to others, but I think there is room for both. I don't think Singer would disagree (maybe he would?). That, I think minor, quibble aside, I think the book is a really cool exploration of a really important question that we all ask ourselves, but that few (non-religious types) have spent enough time thinking about. I, for one, am glad that Peter Singer is around and thinking about it. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A worthwhile book to read and ponder By Karl I. Nordling In this book Peter Singer posits as an existential problem the question of the meaning of one's life and asserts almost as a given that the pursuit of material success is not a satisfying answer to this question. The pursuit of

self interest is individually and collectively self-defeating he writes. A better answer to the question of what do I live for is to live ethically. "The ethical life is the most fundamental alternative to the conventional pursuit of self interest." By living ethically he essentially means to live for others with the rest of your resources and capabilities once you have secured for yourself only as much as needed for a simple but not burdensome life. In other words he recommends altruism as the path to a happy, satisfying life, and proposes that the first instinctive objection that you will feel this to be an onerous sacrifice for you is mistaken, that the satisfaction, and peace of mind, and philosophical fulfillment you gain more than makes up for any loss of material pleasures. The reader can readily agree with this sentiment, but then Singer introduces the fly in the ointment; although each of us in our quiet self reflection recognize the validity of this outlook, were we to espouse it openly to those around us we would be viewed as fools or suckers. This fear of being thought a sucker keeps most of us from making the fundamental decision to live in this way. After introducing this basic idea the author devotes the majority of the book to analyze the issue of self-interest versus public interest in a review of religious and philosophical thought, evolutionary theories, social research, and cultures in different countries. The author closes with a chapter entitled The good life where he describes some individuals who to him represent the ethical life and then passionately argues that the huge prevalence of unimaginable preventable suffering in the world demands that we take that decision to live for more than our self interest, not just to have a worthwhile cause to live for but because the need is so great. This is a well-reasoned and worthwhile book, which definitely adds to the amount of good in the world. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Don't read this if you don't want your life to change. By F.Lynch Forces one to really think about "what makes my life worth living".