



# Distant Strangers: Ethics, Psychology, and Global Poverty

*By Judith Lichtenberg*

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**Distant Strangers: Ethics, Psychology, and Global Poverty** By Judith Lichtenberg

What must affluent people do to alleviate global poverty? This question has occupied moral and political philosophers for forty years. But the controversy has reached an impasse: approaches like utilitarianism and libertarianism either demand too much of ordinary mortals or else let them off the hook. In *Distant Strangers* Judith Lichtenberg shows how a preoccupation with standard moral theories and with the concepts of duty and obligation have led philosophers astray. She argues that there are serious limits to what can be demanded of ordinary human beings, but this does not mean we must abandon the moral imperative to reduce poverty. Drawing on findings from behavioral economics and psychology, she shows how we can motivate better-off people to lessen poverty without demanding unrealistic levels of moral virtue. Lichtenberg argues convincingly that this approach is not only practically, but morally, appropriate.

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#### Review

"... Lichtenberg is doing the much-neglected and difficult work of integrating theoretical and practical scholarship ... Her work should be embraced as a novel roadmap for the kind of scholarship that global ethics needs - one that is responsive to the practical wisdom of the social sciences ... Distant Strangers is an obvious choice for scholars working in global ethics, and it may generate research ideas for those working at the crossroads of moral philosophy and social psychology."

Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews

"Lichtenberg has produced in a fairly short volume an intuitively compelling, empirically informed work on a vitally important topic. It's a book that has meaty conceptual and evaluative claims for philosophers as well as practically useful suggestions for policymakers and a comfortably-off public. It's a wonderful contribution to global justice debates."

Kimberly Brownlee, The Philosophical Quarterly

#### About the Author

Judith Lichtenberg is Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University. She is editor of Democracy and the Mass Media (1990) and co-author of Leveling the Playing Field: Justice, Politics, and College Admissions (with Robert K. Fullinwider, 2004).

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