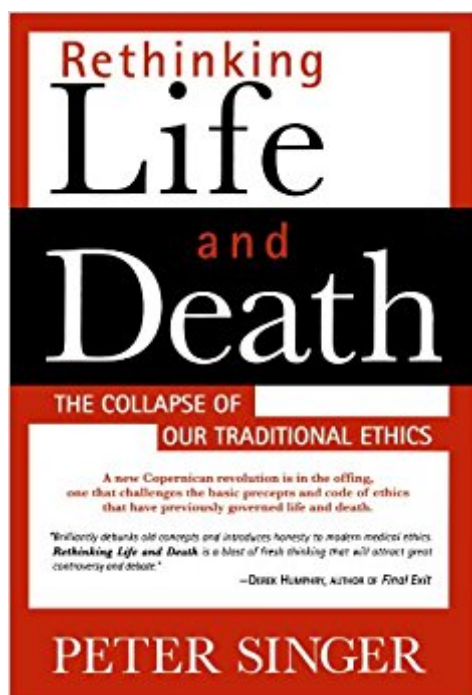


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# Rethinking Life And Death: The Collapse Of Our Traditional Ethics



## Synopsis

The new commandments according to Rethinking Life and Death. --If you must take human life, take responsibility for the consequences of your decisions.--All human life is not of equal worth; treat beings in accordance to the ethical situation at hand.--Respect a person's desire to live or die.A profound and provocative work, Rethinking Life and Death, in the tradition of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, examines the ethical dilemmas that confront us as we near the twenty-first century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In these brilliant essays, Singer (*Animal Liberation*), a founder of the Australian Animal Rights Movement, argues persuasively for a change in attitudes toward abortion, euthanasia, fetal transplants and animal rights. He considers that 20th-century advances in medicine, technology and anthropology have made traditional Judeo-Christian ethics irrelevant and hypocritical. He offers five new commandments: "Recognise that the worth of human life varies" because all life is not of equal value; "Take responsibility for the consequences of your decisions" because the old commandment "never intentionally to take innocent human life" is too absolutist to deal with all the circumstances that can arise; "Respect a person's desire to live or die" because "incurably ill people who ask doctors to help them die are not harming others

Singer (*Animal Liberation*, LJ 3/15/90. 2d ed.) calls for a revolution in ethical thinking about life and death. Human beings, in his view, form merely one species among others, and obligations to

humans do not always outweigh those to animals. Within the human species, not all life has equal worth. Singer's position has radical applications in practice, which he is at pains to spell out. In his view, people whose brains no longer function may have their vital organs removed, even if they are not legally dead. Abortion is almost always morally permissible and active euthanasia often justifiable. Even infanticide receives a sympathetic hearing. Singer writes well and offers a detailed discussion of important issues in medical ethics. But he fails to address seriously objections to his brand of utilitarianism and inclines too readily to dismiss ordinary morality as "speciesism." For academic collections. ?David Gordon, Bowling Green State Univ., Ohio Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I loved this book not because I agreed with it but that it is a thoughtful view of a corrupt philosophy. Peter Singer is an unabashed supporter of the view that humans only value is for their utility. Human sanctity? No way. This is an honest attempt to make eugenics and body part selling into a virtue. Very scary. But I liked the book as he shows the logical evolution of many of the false assumptions made in society today. Even scarier is that lots of people agree with this guy. But at least he has the honesty to say what he believes without trying to hide under a thin veneer of civility. Give him an "A" for honesty and an "F" for anything remotely human.

Very challenging concepts with real cases of highly provocative situations questioning our ethics around life and death. I loved this book for its care in research, well-presented dilemmas, and how it questioned many of our taken-for-granted assumptions about the way the world is or should be.

Basic book to understand the philosophies underpinning modern conceptions of life and death, in particular in the medical field

I never would have thought that I would come across a work of non-fiction that I couldn't put down, but here it is! Fascinating and thought provoking, in *Rethinking Life and Death*, Singer shows how and why the western world has already started moving away from the Judeo-Christian sanctity of human life ethic. He sites the emphasis on 'brain death' and the acceptance of Galileo's discovery that we (humans) are not the center of the universe as the beginnings of the break down of this ethical system. Singer reports where many western nations currently fall both legally and in mainstream medical practice with regard to controversial topics including abortion, infanticide, stem

cell research, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. Furthermore, Singer uses well-reasoned logical arguments to show why these current interpretations of the sanctity of human life ethic are unsustainable. In the last section of this book, Singer presents a working model for a new quality of life ethic and effortlessly shows how they would apply to situations in which our traditional ethic yields unsatisfactory results. Additionally, Singer shows the practical and moral justification for his most controversial stance - acceptance of infanticide. One thing I really thought was magnificent about this book is that, while Singer obviously supports a shift to whole-hearted acceptance of a quality of life ethic, he doesn't insist that as a reader you agree with him. Singer leaves perfectly open the door of maintaining a sanctity of (all) life ethic; he just makes sure the reader understands the consequences of such an ethic in its pure and unadulterated form. Once again, I have to compliment Singer on his amazing writing style. This book really reads more like a novel than a work of non-fiction. At the end of each section I was left on the edge of my seat, wondering what Singer would bring up next! Needless to say, I was never disappointed. Singer has wonderful wit and is equally critical of all sides of the argument. He also includes many telling narratives that make *Rethinking Life and Death* both entertaining and truly enlightening. It is in no way surprising that many religious types will condemn this book. After reading *Rethinking Life and Death*, there is only one reasonable conclusion that one can come to: the Judeo-Christian sanctity of human life ethic is logically and morally indefensible. As individuals we can certainly choose to put our heads in the sand and ignore the problem, but as Singer states, "The question is not whether [the Judeo-Christian sanctity of human life ethic] will be replaced, but what the shape of its successor will be."

Serves it's purpose for my ethics class. Reading was interesting

Love it.

Peter Singer is arguably the sharpest thinker about these issues. In this book he illustrates the irrationality and inconsistency of our current laws and most people's thinking about issues of life and death through varied medical examples across the world. Ethics of abortion, euthanasia, and treatment of people in comas all get a rigorous treatment within the book. The author argues that medical decisions and laws as well as the religious and political positions of the past have been incoherent - a hodgepodge of patches that more quickly demonstrate the crumbling of the framework still in use, rather than a nuanced view of life and death. Through lucid arguments, the

author shows a more coherent ethic that answers the pressing concerns of our ever-growing medical capabilities, responds in a humane way to the thousands of people who wish to end their life rather than suffer (and pull their families and doctors through suffering), and a multitude of other issues that affect millions of lives. In the end he shares a coherent set of five mutually-compatible positions that are a worthy, and a much-needed replacement to what is currently in use.

Made me think about my on life and death!

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