

On Settling - Robert E. Goodin

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In a culture that worships ceaseless striving, "settling" seems like giving up. But is it? On Settling defends the positive value of settling, explaining why this disdained practice is not only more realistic but more useful than an excessive ideal of striving. In fact, the book makes the case that we'd all be lost without settling--and that even to strive, one must first settle. We may admire strivers and love the ideal of striving, but who of us could get through a day without settling? Real people, confronted with a complex problem, simply make do, settling for some resolution that, while almost certainly not the best that one could find by devoting limitless time and attention to the problem, is nonetheless good enough. Robert Goodin explores the dynamics of this process. These involve taking as fixed, for now, things that we reserve the right to reopen later (nothing is fixed for good, although events might always overtake us). We settle on some things in order to concentrate better on others. At the same time we realize we may need to come back later and reconsider those decisions. From settling on and settling for, to settling down and settling in, On Settling explains why settling is useful for planning, creating trust, and strengthening the social fabric--and why settling is different from compromise and resignation. So, the next time you're faced with a thorny problem, just settle. It's no failure.

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