

Peter Singer

- Argument

- Obligations concerning the distant needy

Premise 1) "Suffering + death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad"

→ Singer does not argue this principle, he takes it explicitly for granted

Premise 2) it is within the power of the average person "in relatively affluent countries" to reduce the death + suffering in the world

- Americans are (likely) people who live in a modern industrialized society, and (likely) are not extraordinarily poor

→ Singer argues that the world is set up so that we can easily give aid to the distant needy

Premise 3) "If it is within our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it"

- Consider: if you see a child drowning, you ought to save them even if it means getting muddy (insignificant to the child dying)

↳ ~~The premise does not discriminate between proximity + numbers~~

- Proximity makes no moral difference (may make it more likely that we assist, but doesn't concern whether we ought to → proximity doesn't increase obligation; distance doesn't decrease it)

- Numbers

- of people who can help: if you are in a position to help, you are obligated to help, whether you are the only one who can, or one of many who can help

- Singer doesn't discuss recursion

- Most philosophers accept supererogatory duties. (actions that extend beyond what morality requires) but ~~Singer denies the distinction between obligation + supererogatory~~

→ Singer claims charity is required (if you don't, you are blamed for the death/suffering of those you could have helped)

Singer acknowledges what is required of you depends on the type of world you live in, and the state of your own personal life (strong- "...without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance" → level of marginal utility; moderate- "w/out sacrificing something morally significant")

Conclusion) We ought to act so as to reduce bad things (death + suffering) in the world without "sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance" → we are morally obligated to reduce or prevent death + suffering in the world b/c we can (ex: by donating)

Animal Liberation

Central Claims

- Speciesism: view that it is permissible to treat other species differently simply b/c they are another species

↳ Singer's argument against speciesism by appeal to an equalitarian principle

relevant beings deserve equal consideration → if the argument cannot be refuted, the conclusion calls for a change in human practices