

Health, Development, and Human Rights

The “Singer Solution” to World Poverty

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Readings

- Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”.

Questions

1. Singer presents two premises to justify his conclusion that we have a moral obligation to assist those in poverty? What are these two premises? How are these justified by him? Notice that one of these premises comes in a “qualified” and “unqualified” form. So what is the difference between these two forms, and how does this difference impact Singer’s conclusion?
2. Singer believes that there are two controversial aspects of this argument. One concerns proximity, and the other concerns whether there are also others who are capable of providing assistance as well. What are these controversial aspects and how does Singer respond to them?
3. Singer claims this argument challenges the traditional distinction between duty and charity when it comes to poverty. How so?
4. Singer presents two objections to his argument. What are these objections and how does his respond to them?
5. So in the final analysis, what does Singer say we must do to assist those in poverty? Do you find this a compelling position?