

Health, Development & Human Rights

Lifeboat Ethics

As you read the material for our 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 about these issues at our next class meeting.

Readings

- Garrett Hardin, "The Feast of Malthus" & "Living on a Lifeboat".

Questions

1. In "The Feast of Malthus" Garrett Hardin argues that individual rights are inconsistent with the survival of the species. What is his argument defending that claim? How is Malthus' story of the feast connected to this argument?
2. How does Hardin apply this argument in an international context, in both "The Feast of Malthus" and "Living on a Lifeboat"? In particular, nations should provide foreign aid to those in developed countries? What is his argument defending this position? How is his allegory of the lifeboats connected to this argument?
3. In what ways do Hardin's arguments have parallels to the arguments made by Thomas Hobbes?
4. Do you find Hardin's arguments convincing? Why or why not?