## Global Poverty – Peter Singer

### Background

* In 1971, people in East Bengal are dying from famine
* Singer believes that people in relatively affluent countries need to change the way they respond to situations like the one in Bengal
  + Neither governments nor individuals are responding effectively to the crisis, although people are aware of the situation
* Initial assumption: suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad

### Singer’s “Uncontroversial Principle”

* If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing **anything of** **comparable moral importance**, we ought to do it
  + Comparable moral importance:
    - Causing something comparably bad to happen
    - Doing something that is wrong in itself
    - Failing to promote some moral good that is comparably significant to the bad that would be prevented
  + This principle requires us to only prevent what is bad, not promote what is good

### The “Moderate” Version

* If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing **anything morally significant**, we ought to do it
  + The less moderate version requires that we reduce ourselves to the level of marginal utility where we should do everything in our power unless something of equal consequence would result from our actions
  + This version suggests that we should prevent bad things from happening unless a morally significant sacrifice needs to be made

### The Pond Example

* Illustrates the moderate version of the uncontroversial principle
* If you walk past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it, it is your moral responsibility to wade in and save the child
  + Your clothes might get muddy, but this is morally insignificant compared to the death of the child, which is presumably bad

### Distance and Moral Significance

* The uncontroversial principle makes no distinction between distance/proximity – treats cases where you are the only person and cases where you are one in a million people who can help, in the same way
  + Proximity may make us more likely to actually help, but it doesn’t mean we ought to help someone closer rather than someone further away
    - We may be in a better position to judge what needs to be done, and be in a better position to take action to help, if the person is closer
    - Singer argues that **instant communication** and **swift transportation** have enabled us to send aid as efficiently around the world as around the block
  + Any principle of impartiality or equality wouldn’t allow us to discriminate against someone because of distance – it shouldn’t be morally relevant

### Individual Action

* According to Singer, it doesn’t matter if you are the only one who can help, or if you are part of millions of people who can – makes no difference in **moral obligations**
  + People feel less guilty about doing nothing when they see others, in similar positions as them, also doing nothing – but this is just an excuse for inactivity
  + E.g. poverty, overpopulation, and pollution are all problems where everyone is almost equally involved
* Donation example:
  + If everyone in circumstances like mine were to donate $5 to the Bengal relief effort, I would have no moral obligation to donate more than $5
  + However, in reality not everyone in similar circumstances to me will give $5; thus, I am morally obligated to give more than $5, since it will relieve more suffering

### Duty vs. Charity

* **Supererogation**: an act that is good to do, but not wrong not to do
* Because we traditionally regard giving money as acts of charity, we don’t think there is anything wrong with not giving
  + E.g. when spending money on new clothes that aren’t necessary to our survival, instead of giving to famine relief, we feel no shame or guilt
    - According to Singer, we ought to donate the money, since we would not be sacrificing anything morally significant by wearing our old clothes, and the money would go towards relieving suffering
    - Furthermore, this would be **neither charitable nor generous**, but a duty

### Utilitarianism

* The right action is one that maximizes wellbeing and happiness, and overall “utility”
* Utilitarianism is a form of **consequentialism** – the right action is the one that produces the best overall consequences
  + Doesn’t matter if the actions themselves are good/bad, only the consequences matter
* **Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests (PECI)**
  + Everyone’s wellbeing (satisfaction of interests) counts for the same amount
  + Every ethical judgement should go beyond personal interests and account for the interests of everyone involved

### Challenges

* **Impartiality** is easily discussed in theory, but in reality, no one can be completely impartial
* **Community values** mean that people who have ties to their community are more willing to help those closer to home
* **Long vs. short term consequences** – actions that maximize short-term wellbeing can be very different from those that maximize long-term wellbeing
* **Fairness** – is it really fair to treat everyone equally?

## Global Poverty – Onora O’Neill

### Kantian Ethics

* Promote the autonomy of all rational beings as individuals – everyone has **self-rule** over their own interests
* Focuses on the **maxims**, the underlying principles of actions, rather than their consequences
  + Maxims guide other, more superficial parts of actions
  + They are principles of obligation that people ought to follow as part of acting like rational human beings
* Utilitarians aggregate (create best outcomes for most number of individuals) while Kantians focus on creating best outcomes for individuals

### The Formula of the End in Itself

* Always treat humanity, whether yourself or others, never simply as mere means, but always at as an end in itself
  + We should avoid acting on maxims that use others as mere means
  + We should act on maxims that treat others as ends in themselves

### Using Others as Means vs. Mere Means

* We use others as means when each party can and does consent to taking part in the action
  + E.g. teacher/student, or consensual contractual agreements
  + In this case, each party assumes that the other has maxims of action and aren’t just **props** to be used/manipulated
* We use others as **mere means** when what we do reflects some maxim where they cannot in principle consent
  + Deception – when we make someone agree to a false promise, they are kept ignorant of the underlying principle/maxim of what they’re agreeing to
  + Violence or coercion– victims have no chance of opposing/refusing what is being done onto them
* However, is lying always morally wrong?
  + Not all situations are black and white – e.g. murderer at the door example
* Can people be treated as autonomous individuals in their entirety?
  + There are always circumstances beyond our control
  + Our own decisions are often influenced by outside factors

### Treating Others as Ends in Themselves

* We cannot just avoid treating others as mere means, we must also treat them as **rational and autonomous beings** with their own maxims – ends in themselves
* To treat others as ends in themselves, we should act on principles that sustain/extend one’s capacity for autonomous actions
  + A general refusal to help amounts to failure to treat others as ends in themselves

### Justice and Beneficence

* Justice is a perfect duty, while **beneficence** is an imperfect duty – unlike justice, it must be selective
* Since those who are hungry or poor are more vulnerable to deception, violence, and coercion, Kantians are required to do what they can to avert/reduce hunger
  + Kant would advocate for not just giving food to the hungry, but helping programs that allow people to become more autonomous in supporting themselves

### Kantian vs. Utilitarian Perspectives on Global Poverty

* Theoretical differences
  + Individual vs. aggregate
  + Reason/maxim of action vs. consequences
  + Autonomy vs. wellbeing/happiness
  + Benevolence based on desire to help vs. regardless of motives, making the most impact
* Practical differences
  + Kinds of actions to take – supporting local programs vs. donating food
  + Who to help

## Euthanasia – James Rachels

### Euthanasia

* The killing or letting die of a person for their own good, e.g. to relieve suffering or because they want to die
  + **Active** – deliberate act causing someone to die
  + **Passive** – withdrawing treatment
  + **Voluntary** – person expresses wish to die
  + **Non-voluntary** – person cannot express their own interests (e.g. infant, person in coma)
* **Assisted suicide** – aiding a person in killing themselves

### Canadian Law

* Canada legalized active euthanasia in 2016; before then, only passive euthanasia was legal
* Physician-assisted suicide is now restricted to those who are dying/suffering, and those deemed mentally competent
* **Carter vs. Canada**: Kay Carter, a lady with a spinal cord injury, was in constant pain and required 24/7 care; no longer wanted to live out her life
  + Shewanted to seek medically-assisted suicide in Switzerland
  + Her daughter and her husband joined the fight to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Canada

### Active vs. Passive Euthanasia

* According to the AMA, the intentional termination of the life of one human being by another is contrary to what the medical profession stands for
* On the other hand, the cessation of means to prolong life, where death is irrefutably imminent, is a decision of the patient and their family
* Rachels believes that inaction, i.e. ceasing of treatment, is morally an action itself, and thus morally the same as intentional termination of life

### Euthanasia and the Relief of Suffering

* Active euthanasia is, in many cases, more humane than passive euthanasia
  + If the purpose of euthanasia is to relieve suffering, then it may take the patient longer to die / be in more prolonged pain by passive euthanasia
  + Rachels argues that once the decision has been made to not prolong life, active euthanasia is more preferred as a means to end suffering

### Killing vs. Letting Die

* Conventional doctrine leads to decisions concerning life and death on irrelevant grounds
* Is killing, in itself, morally worse than letting die?
  + **Smith and Jones example**: Smith and Jones both have same motives to kill their nephew; Smith intentionally drowns the kid in a bathtub, while Jones stands by the bathtub and does nothing as the kid accidentally drowns himself
* If the motive and end in view are the same, then does the method really matter?
* Rachels argues that if the doctor makes the human decision, the method itself is not important

### Moral Significance

* The distinction between killing and letting die has no moral significance
  + If a doctor let a patient die when they could’ve be en treated, they would certainly be to blame, as much as if they’d needlessly killed the patient
* Killing is considered bad because death is often regarded as a great evil; but if euthanasia is found to be desirable, then instant death is no greater an evil than the patient’s continued existence

### Potential Challenges

* Utilitarian: if a person had potential to do a lot of good in the remainder of their life, it would be morally wrong to actively kill them as it removes the potential good that they can do
  + By this argument, is it more morally permissible to kill people whose lives are “of no value”? What right do we have to determine how valuable someone’s life is?
* Kantian: killing someone removes their right to making future autonomous decisions
  + But if autonomy and respecting the individual’s choice is a main motive for euthanasia, then why set so many restrictions such as age, mental competency, etc.
* End-of-life care: allowing active euthanasia removes society’s motivation to improve palliative care such that perhaps people would no longer seek euthanasia
  + Everyone’s circumstances and definitions of suffering are different, and for most people who seek euthanasia, it isn’t merely physical pain but more so the loss of control over their body
* Moral responsibility: people are responsible for what they do; thus, the moral responsibility in deliberately causing someone to die is different from letting them die
  + But if it relieves more suffering, it could be argued that active euthanasia causes greater wellbeing prior to end of life than passive euthanasia

## Euthanasia – Daniel Callahan

### Rationality of Euthanasia

* Callahan believes that euthanasia goes against reason, emotion, tradition, all at the same time
* Euthanasia is often presented as a **“rational”** choice for someone in a lot of pain or feeling hopeless
  + Callahan believes that rationality implies some **predictability** of behaviour – reasonable certainty that people will act in some way under certain circumstances
  + But this would mean that euthanasia is irrational because we cannot accurately predict who will commit suicide
* Life is full of pain and tribulation, so we shouldn’t tempt others to see suicide as a way to deal with it
  + It is very hard to feel good about suicide as a way of relieving suffering or getting out of a burdensome life
* Callahan believes that **background experiences/reactions** are telling about human nature, traditions, and values
  + But these are likely based on culturally and socially engrained norms; just because it is the norm, does it mean that it should be accepted? Ethics, much like the law, changes over time

### Three Arguments for Euthanasia

1. Right to self-determination (autonomy) is important
2. We should relieve suffering when we can
3. There is no moral distinction between killing and letting die

### Self-Determination

* Callahan challenges the idea that euthanasia is a personal and private matter of only self-determination, and that only impacts a single life
* Instead, he thinks that it is more of a **social act**, since a physician is involved, which would require more regulation and legal oversight
  + It can be argued that our personal decisions are never fully autonomous – any number of factors or people can influence it at any time; but this doesn’t take away from self-determination and the act of making the decision itself
  + Callahan fears that it may give physicians too much power
* Furthermore, it adds to the acceptable range of killing in society, which goes against long-standing efforts to limit the occasions where socially sanctioned killing is permitted
  + This argument is based on the idea that longstanding traditions are more morally correct than proposed change

### Relief of Suffering

* Callahan believes that the duty of relieving suffering should not override moral objections
* Over time, physicians have increased capabilities of good palliative care to relieve most pain and suffering – without killing the patient
  + This argument treats suffering in a very generalized way, with no distinction between physical and mental suffering
  + Everyone’s definition of suffering is different; currently available methods will never meet every single person’s needs/desires of end-of-life care

### Killing vs. Letting Die

* Callahan argues that when the physician chooses to stop treatment, the **disease takes over** and kills the patient – cause of death is the disease, not the physician
  + This argument is based on the idea that inaction isn’t an action in itself
  + If this is the case, couldn’t physicians also justify refusing to provide treatment even if a patient requests it?

### Euthanasia and the Law

* Moral acceptance of euthanasia would legitimize physicians as having the power to end life
* Due to the privacy of physician-patient relationships, it would be hard to enforce euthanasia laws and detect abuse

### Dutch Case Study

* Abuse of court-established rules
  + Less than 50% of euthanasia cases were reported as euthanasia
  + Nearly 1/3 were non-voluntary

### Motives for Euthanasia

* The major motive for requesting euthanasia was loss of autonomy and diminished ability to enjoy life – based on one’s values rather than physical pain
  + Many people fear loss of bodily function or control, but this is something that can be endured
* How should physical and mental illnesses be treated differently when determining if euthanasia is a valid choice?
  + If we limit the choice, we are putting more value on certain lives or certain illnesses as opposed to others
* How do we strike a balance between when we should inform people of euthanasia being a valid choice vs. trying to prevent undue harm onto people?

## Abortion – Mary-Anne Warren

### Abortion

* When a pregnancy is intentionally interrupted, and involves the intentional destruction of the fetus
* Typical reasons:
  + Personal – rape, accidental pregnancy, etc.
  + Socioeconomic – can’t afford to support a child
  + Eugenics – gender, disability

### Canadian Law

* Abortion was legalized in 1988 after the Supreme Court found it to infringe on a woman’s right to “life, liberty, and the security of person”
* No legislation was created to regulate abortion after it was legalized – it is treated like any medical procedure, and governed by provincial medical regulations

### Warren on the Standard Pro-Life Argument

1. It is wrong to kill innocent human beings
2. Fetuses are innocent human beings
3. Thus, it is wrong to kill fetuses

* This argument only works if “human” is defined in the same way across premises 1 and 2
* But “human” in a **moral sense** is very different from “human” in a **genetic sense**
* If fetuses are only human in the genetic sense, and there is no evidence that they are human in the moral sense, then the argument fails

### Moral Personhood

* Warren argues that “person” in the moral sense is very different from “human” in the genetic sense
* She lays out a set of traits that are central to humanity in the moral sense:

1. Consciousness
2. Reasoning
3. Self-motivated activity
4. Capacity to communicate
5. Self-awareness/self-concepts

* By this definition, some human beings are not persons, and not all persons are human beings
  + E.g. comatose people would not be considered persons
  + E.g. some animals or AI could be considered persons if they demonstrate communication or reasoning
* No being with none of these is a person, and so since only persons have **full moral rights**, non-persons do not
  + Fetuses fall under this category
  + Warren argues that the right to life of a fetus could never override a woman’s right to obtain an abortion at any stage of her pregnancy
  + Even if potential persons had a right to life, the rights of an actual person should always outweigh the rights of potential ones whenever they conflict
    - It may be indecent for a woman to terminate her pregnancy at nine months, but it would not be immoral under this definition

### Space Explorer Example

* Aliens capture a space explorer and wish to use his cells to create fully developed human beings
* In this situation, regardless of whether or not he consented in the first place, Warren notes that the space explorer should have every right to escape whenever he wanted
* The explorer is not morally obligated to remain captured, even though potential lives are at stake
  + This example reinforces the premise that a fetus is not yet a person, and that persons have greater moral rights than potential or non-persons
  + However, it is very specific and calculated, and in many ways, unrelatable to some of the more contested consequences of abortion

### Infanticide

* Infants are also not yet persons – does this mean that killing infants is permissible?
* Warren details some differences:
  + People want and value infants, and they are close to becoming persons
    - What if people didn’t value infants? What if they also value fetuses?
  + People don’t want infants killed, and are willing to pay for support
    - What about instances where support is not available, i.e. outside of Western societies? Would infanticide then be justifiable?
  + Once the infant is born, it can no longer pose any serious threat to the woman’s health
    - Maybe not physically, but what about mentally?