# Contemporary Moral Problems

## November 7, 2012

Peter Singer - Utilitarian

* **Absolute Poverty**
  + **Definition – Having less than is needed to provide oneself and ones dependents with the basic biological necessities (e.g. food, shelter, and medicine)**
  + **Absolute Affluence – Having more…**
* **The Shallow Pond**
  + There’s a child who is in a shallow pond. If nothing is done, he will die. There’s a cost to save the child because you will get your clothes wet, be late to class/work, etc.
* **The Argument**
  + *If we can prevent something very bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, then we ought to do it.*
  + *Absolute poverty is very bad*
  + *We can prevent some absolute poverty without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance*
  + *Therefore, we ought to prevent some absolute poverty*

## November 9, 2012

Singer Continued

* **Objections**
  + **Population Control**
    - If we help those in absolute poverty, then due to a massive increase in the population even more will suffer from absolute poverty in the future.
    - Singer – 4 factors correlated with lowering birth rate
      * Female Education
      * Lower Infant Mortality Rate
      * Economic Prosperity
      * Availability of Contraception
  + **Assisting is Supererogatory**
    - Singer – Assisting in the SP Case is not supererogatory.
    - There is no MRD between the SP case and the case of absolute poverty.
* **Note**
  + **Distance and proximity do not matter when it comes to your obligation!**
  + **No morally relevant distance when you’re the only one who can help and when there are millions who can help.**

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## November 12, 2012

John Arthur

* **Singer’s ‘Greater Moral Evil Principle’**
  + **Greater Moral Evil Principle**
    - If we can prevent something very bad from happening without sacrificing all of comparable moral significance, then we ought to do it.
  + **2 Points**
    - ‘Forward Looking’ -> Based on consequences
    - Involves moral equality (See Equal Consideration of Interests)
* **Moral Equality – 2 Views**
  + **Jeffersonian**
    - We have the right to pursue our lives without interference from others
  + **Equal Consideration of Interests (Singer)**
    - Like amounts of suffering are of equal significance no matter who is experiencing them
* **Entitlements**
  + **Rights**
    - Negative Rights – Rights of noninterference.
      * Natural – Acquired by birth (right to life, etc)
    - Positive Rights
      * Right to recipience
      * Not natural -> Defend upon a contract, promise, or agreement
  + **Deserve**
    - We deserve to keep what we’ve earned
* ‘The Ideal Moral Code’
  + Includes both entitlements and the GME principle

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## November 14, 2012

Robert Nozick

* **Libertarianism**
  + **The role of the state ought to be severely limited to**
    - National Defense
    - Local Protection – Protection from fellow citizens (police)
    - Administration of Courts of Justice – If someone wrongs you, they ought to be punished
  + **Each person has a right to life, liberty, and the fruits of their labor**
    - Liberty – Absence of unjustified interference in our lives
* **The Entitlement Theory**
  + **Historical approach to the issue of distributive justice.** 
    - Whether a distribution of holdings is just depends upon how it came about.
  + **3 Topics**
    - Acquisition
      * Nozicks Lockian view
        + 3 Steps

Each person owns him or herself (Selfownership)

By mixing our labor in, with some part of the material world, self-ownership can generate ownership of that part of the material world.

Lockian Proviso: Acquisition of the material world, if and only if, after that acquisition there’s enough and as good left for others.

* + - Transfer
      * Voluntary Exchanges – Gift giving. As long as you are entitled to your wealth you can give it to whom they want to.
      * Unjust transfers – Cohersion (blackmail) or stealing
    - Rectification of past injustices
  + Definition of Entitlement
    - One is entitled to a holding, if and only if one acquires that holding by way of a just acquisition, a just transfer, or a rectification of past injustices.
* Wilt Chamberlain Case
  + Look at handout!
  + What it’s meant to show
* Against taxation