

AE2

Table of Contents

- [AE2](#)
 - [Table of Contents](#)
 - [Equality: Beyond Race, Sex, and Ability](#)
 - [Equality and Its Implications](#)
 - [Weakening Consensus and Controversies](#)
 - [The Search for a Factual Basis of Equality](#)
 - [Rawls and "Moral Personality"](#)
 - [Problems with "Moral Personality" as a Basis](#)
 - [Beyond Group Differences: Individual Variation](#)
 - [The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests](#)
 - [Strength and Implications of the Principle](#)
 - [A Minimal Principle, Not Necessarily Equal Treatment](#)
 - [Demandingness of the Principle](#)
 - [Equality and Genetic Diversity](#)
 - [The Jensen and Eysenck Controversy](#)
 - [Racial Differences and Racial Equality](#)
 - [Implications of Genetically-Based Racial IQ Differences](#)
 - [Sexual Differences and Sexual Equality](#)
 - [Explanations for Sex Differences \(Environmental vs. Biological\)](#)
 - [Implications of Sex Differences for Equality](#)
 - [Moral Conclusions Not Followed by Biological Theories](#)
 - [From Equality of Opportunity to Equality of Consideration](#)
 - [Inadequacy of Equal Opportunity](#)
 - [Broader Implications for Income and Status](#)
 - [Society Rewarding Abilities vs. Needs](#)
 - [Realism and Difficulties](#)
 - [Affirmative Action](#)
 - [The *Bakke* Case and Justifications](#)
 - [Affirmative Action and Rights / Equal Consideration of Interests](#)
 - [Goals and Practical Objections to Affirmative Action](#)
 - [Legal Context and Ethical Conclusion](#)
 - [A Concluding Note: Equality and Disability](#)
 - [Alleged Contradiction with Arguments for Abortion/Euthanasia](#)
 - [The Ethics of Wealth: Obligation to the Poor](#)
 - [I. Some Facts About Poverty](#)
 - [II. Some Facts About Affluence](#)
 - [III. The Moral Equivalent of Murder?](#)
 - [IV. The Obligation to Assist](#)
 - [V. Objections to the Argument](#)

Equality: Beyond Race, Sex, and Ability

The provided text examines the concept of equality, distinguishing between factual differences among humans and the ethical principle of equal consideration of interests. It critiques common justifications for equality, such as shared intelligence or moral personality, arguing that no natural characteristic is equally possessed by all. Instead, the author posits that ethical judgements necessitate considering the interests of all affected parties impartially, irrespective of traits like race, sex, or ability. This principle, the text explains, serves as a robust defence against racism, sexism, and even hypothetical intelligence-based hierarchies, though it does not mandate identical treatment. Finally, the discussion extends to affirmative action and the treatment of individuals with disabilities, contending that preferential measures can align with equal consideration of interests, particularly where systemic disadvantages exist, and that a preference for life without disability is not inherently prejudiced.

Here are depth notes, ensuring no information loss and 100% information, drawing comprehensively from the provided sources:

Equality and Its Implications

Since the end of World War II, moral attitudes on issues like abortion, sex outside marriage, same-sex relationships, pornography, euthanasia, and suicide have undergone dramatic shifts, though no new consensus has been reached. In contrast, the change in attitudes towards inequality, particularly **racial inequality**, has been equally sudden and dramatic, but "more complete". Racist assumptions prevalent in early 20th-century Europe are now "totally unacceptable," at least in public life. While racists may still exist, they must disguise their views for any chance of general acceptance. The principle that **all humans are equal** is currently a fundamental part of prevailing political and ethical orthodoxy, but its precise meaning and underlying reasons for acceptance remain contentious.

Weakening Consensus and Controversies

The consensus regarding equality weakens when exploring the basis of the principle that all humans are equal and applying it to specific cases.

- **Intelligence and Race/Sex:** Controversies arose in the 1970s and 1994 over claims by Arthur Jensen, H. J. Eysenck, Richard Herrnstein, and Charles Murray, suggesting that **genetic differences** underpin variations in intelligence among different races. Opponents often assumed these claims, if proven sound, would justify racial discrimination. A similar debate occurred in 2005 when Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, speculated that biological differences between men and women could contribute to the difficulty in appointing more women to math and science chairs, a remark widely seen as a factor in his subsequent resignation.
- **Affirmative Action:** Another issue requiring a re-evaluation of equality is whether **preferential treatment** should be given to members of disadvantaged minorities in employment or university admissions. Some argue that equality necessitates **affirmative action**, while others contend it precludes any discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or sex, whether for or against disadvantaged groups.

To address these questions, clarity is needed on what is justifiably meant by "all humans are equal" and the **ethical foundations** of this principle.

The Search for a Factual Basis of Equality

Opponents of equality, such as racists and sexists, frequently point out that, by any chosen measure, humans are simply not equal. People vary greatly in physical attributes (tall/short), intellectual abilities (mathematical genius/struggling with addition), physical prowess (fast runners/unable to run), moral character (never hurting others/killing for money), and emotional depth (ecstasy/despair vs. even plane). Given this extensive list of differences, the search for a **factual basis** upon which to build the principle of equality appears "hopeless".

Rawls and "Moral Personality"

John Rawls, in his influential book *A Theory of Justice*, proposed that equality could be founded on natural human characteristics if a **"range property"** is selected. He used the analogy of a circle: all points within the circle possess the property of "being within the circle" equally, regardless of their proximity to the center or edge. Similarly, Rawls suggested that **"moral personality"** is a property virtually all humans possess, and all who possess it, possess it equally.

- Rawls defined "moral personality" not as "morally good personality," but using "moral" in contrast to "amoral," specifically requiring a **sense of justice**. More broadly, it means being the kind of person to whom moral appeals can be made with a reasonable expectation of being heeded.
- This view stems from the **social contract tradition**, which conceives of ethics as a mutually beneficial agreement (e.g., "Don't hit me, and I won't hit you"). Consequently, only those capable of understanding and reciprocally adhering to such agreements fall within the ethical sphere.

Problems with "Moral Personality" as a Basis

There are significant problems with using moral personality as the foundation for equality.

- **Degree of Possession:** Moral personality is a **matter of degree**; some individuals are highly sensitive to justice and ethics, while others have only a limited awareness. This raises the unresolved question of where the "minimal line" for moral personality should be drawn for inclusion in the principle of equality. Moreover, if moral personality is so crucial, it is not intuitively obvious why there shouldn't be **grades of moral status**, with corresponding rights and duties.
- **Exclusion of Some Humans:** A more serious objection is that **not all humans are moral persons**, even minimally. This includes **infants, small children, and individuals with profound intellectual disabilities**, who lack the required sense of justice. If the principle of equality were revised to exclude these groups, implying their interests could be disregarded in ways that would be wrong for older or more intelligent individuals, "far stronger arguments" would be needed to accept it.
 - Rawls attempted to address infants and children by including "potential moral persons" within the scope of the principle, but this is acknowledged as an **"ad hoc device"** designed to align his theory with ordinary moral intuitions, rather than being supported by independent arguments.
 - Rawls also admitted that individuals with **irreparable intellectual disabilities** "may present a difficulty" but offered no solution.
- **Conclusion on Natural Characteristics:** The author concludes that possession of "moral personality" is **not a satisfactory basis** for the principle that all humans are equal, and doubts "any natural characteristic, whether a 'range property' or not, can fulfil this function," believing there is no morally significant property equally possessed by all humans.

Beyond Group Differences: Individual Variation

Another attempted defence for a factual basis of equality admits that humans differ individually but insists on **no morally significant differences between races and sexes**. Knowing someone's race or sex does not allow conclusions about their intelligence, sense of justice, or emotional depth that would justify treating them as less than equal. Claims of racial or sexist superiority in these capacities are false, as individual differences transcend racial and sexual boundaries.

- While this fact is important and relevant to claims by Jensen, Eysenck, and others, it is neither a satisfactory principle of equality nor an adequate defence against a more sophisticated opponent than a "blatant racist or sexist".
- **The "Hierarchy of Intelligence" Problem:** If society were to classify people into higher or lower status categories based on intelligence test scores (e.g., a slave-owning class for IQ > 125, free citizens for 100-125, and slaves for IQ < 100), such a hierarchical society would be as "abhorrent as one based on race or sex". However, if support for equality rests on the factual claim that differences between individuals cut across racial and sexual boundaries, there are **no grounds to oppose** this intelligence-based hierarchy, as it would be based on "real differences between people".
- **Equality as an Ethical Principle:** Such schemes can only be rejected by clearly stating that the **claim to equality does not rest on intelligence, moral personality, rationality, or similar matters of fact**. There is "no logically compelling reason" to assume that a difference in ability justifies any difference in the consideration given to people's interests. **Equality is fundamentally a "basic ethical principle, not an assertion of fact"**.

The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests

Drawing on the idea that ethical judgments require moving beyond a personal viewpoint to **consider the interests of all affected**, the author proposes the **principle of equal consideration of interests** as the basic principle of equality.

- This principle dictates that interests are weighed "simply as interests," not as "my interests," or "the interests of people of European descent," or "people with IQs higher than 100".
- **Essence of the Principle:** It requires giving **"equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions"**. For example, if an act would cause X to lose more than Y would gain, it is better not to do it, regardless of whether one cares more about Y. The core idea is: **"an interest is an interest, whoever's interest it may be"**.
- **Example: Relief of Pain:** The ultimate moral reason for relieving pain is the "undesirability of pain as such," not whose pain it is. If X's pain is more intense, then equal consideration would prioritize relieving X's pain. In situations like an earthquake, other factors (e.g., relieving a doctor's pain so she can treat more victims) might lead to prioritisation, but the doctor's pain itself still counts only once, "with no added weighting".
- **Impartiality:** The principle of equal consideration of interests functions like a "pair of scales, weighing interests impartially". These scales favour stronger interests or combinations of interests, but **"take no account of whose interests they are weighing"**.
- **Rejection of Racism:** From this viewpoint, **race is "irrelevant"** to the consideration of interests, as "all that counts are the interests themselves". To give less consideration to a given amount of pain due to a person's race would be an "arbitrary distinction," akin to basing it on birth month or number of vowels in a surname. Thus, the principle directly demonstrates why blatant forms of racism, such as that practised by the Nazis (who disregarded the sufferings of Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs), are wrong.

Strength and Implications of the Principle

Although sometimes perceived as a purely formal and weak principle, equal consideration of interests is robust enough to **exclude both blatant racism and sexism**. It also provides a basis for rejecting the more sophisticated inequality of an **intelligence-based hierarchical society**.

- It prohibits making the readiness to consider others' interests dependent on their abilities or characteristics, *except for the characteristic of having interests*.
- While knowing people's abilities or characteristics helps determine *what* their interests are (e.g., gifted children need advanced math), the **basic requirement to take into account a person's interests applies to everyone**, regardless of race, sex, or IQ scores.
- **Slavery based on intelligence** would be incompatible with equal consideration, as intelligence is irrelevant to many fundamental human interests, such as avoiding pain, satisfying basic needs (food, shelter), loving children, enjoying relationships, and freedom to pursue projects. The harm of slavery to these interests is vastly disproportionate to any benefits for slave owners.
- Therefore, the principle rules out intelligence-based slave societies, crude racism/sexism, and **discrimination based on disability** (intellectual or physical), provided the disability is irrelevant to the interests in question (e.g., severe intellectual disability *would* be relevant to the interest in voting).
- This principle of equal consideration of interests is presented as a **defensible form of the principle that all humans are equal**, useful for discussing controversial issues.

A Minimal Principle, Not Necessarily Equal Treatment

Equal consideration of interests is a "minimal principle of equality" because it does not dictate equal treatment.

- **Morphine Example:** In an earthquake scenario, two victims: one with a crushed leg in agony, another with a gashed thigh in slight pain, and only two shots of morphine. Equal treatment (one shot each) would be less effective than giving both shots to the victim with the crushed leg, significantly reducing their severe pain to a level comparable to the other victim's slight pain. This unequal treatment (two shots for one, none for the other) leads to a "more egalitarian result" by reducing the overall disparity in suffering.
- **Declining Marginal Utility:** This outcome aligns with the **principle of declining marginal utility**, which states that the more someone has of something, the less additional gain they receive from an extra quantity. This applies to resources like food (50g of rice means more to someone with 200g/day than to someone with 1kg/day) and money (\$100 means more to a low-income earner than a billionaire). When considered, this principle inclines towards an **equal distribution of income** (barring disincentive effects) and is generally endorsed by egalitarians.
- **When Marginal Utility Fails:** However, the principle of declining marginal utility does not always hold or can be overridden. Another earthquake example illustrates this:
 - Victim A (more severely injured): lost a leg, in danger of losing a toe on remaining leg. Victim B (less severely injured): injury threatens leg. Only enough medical supplies for one.
 - Treating A saves a toe; treating B saves a leg.
 - If losing a leg is much worse than losing a toe, the principle of declining marginal utility is insufficient.
 - **Equal consideration of interests would lead to treating B**, as saving a leg is a greater impartial furtherance of interests than saving a toe.

- This choice "**can, in special cases, widen rather than narrow the gap**" between people's welfare levels, underscoring its nature as a minimal, rather than thorough-going, egalitarian principle. A more thorough-going egalitarianism would be difficult to justify.

Demandingness of the Principle

Even in its minimal form, the principle of equal consideration of interests can appear very demanding (e.g., requiring equal consideration for the welfare of family versus strangers). This tension is to be explored further in Chapter 8 of the book, where the author aims to show that widely held ethical views, rather than the principle itself, should be rejected.

Equality and Genetic Diversity

The text then delves into the implications of claims about genetic differences between groups for the ideal of equality.

The Jensen and Eysenck Controversy

In 1969, **Arthur Jensen** published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* discussing the probable causes of the undisputed observation that African Americans, on average, score lower than other Americans on standard IQ tests. Jensen's "heavily qualified statement" hypothesised that "**genetic factors are strongly implicated in the average negro-white intelligence difference,**" suggesting this was "less consistent with a strictly environmental hypothesis than with a genetic hypothesis," though not excluding environmental influence or interaction.

- Despite being a scholarly, detailed review, it was widely reported in the popular press as an attempt to defend racism, leading to accusations of racist propaganda, comparisons to Hitler, disrupted lectures, and demands for his dismissal.
- **H. J. Eysenck**, a British psychology professor who supported Jensen's theories, faced similar backlash. Notably, Eysenck suggested that Americans of Japanese and Chinese descent showed evidence of higher average abstract reasoning scores than Americans of European descent, despite lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Broader Opposition to Genetic Explanations:** This opposition to genetic explanations for racial differences in intelligence mirrors a general resistance to genetic explanations in other socially sensitive areas. Examples include 1970s feminist hostility to biological factors in male dominance (though today's feminists are more open to ideas like greater male aggression or female caring behaviour having biological roots). It also links to the strong feelings aroused by evolutionary explanations of human behaviour, fearing that viewing social behaviour as evolved and linked to other social mammals would lead to seeing hierarchy, male dominance, and inequality as unchangeable aspects of our nature. However, evolutionary explanations are now more widely accepted, and human genome mapping continues to raise concerns about potential revelations regarding genetic differences and their uses.

The author states it is inappropriate to assess the scientific merits of these biological explanations. Instead, the focus is on their **implications for the ideal of equality**, assuming, for the sake of argument, that such theories (e.g., genetically-based average IQ differences between ethnic groups or biological differences between sexes) *were* found to be sound. This exploration is crucial to prevent public confusion if unexpected evidence were to emerge.

Racial Differences and Racial Equality

Assuming, hypothetically, that evidence supports genetically-based differences in average IQ between ethnic groups (without presuming Europeans would be superior):

- **Caution on "IQ" vs. "Intelligence":** "IQ" refers to **scores on standard IQ tests**, not necessarily "intelligence" in ordinary contexts. While correlated, the closeness is unclear due to the vagueness of the ordinary concept of intelligence. Defining "intelligence" as "what intelligence tests measure" merely creates confusion by using the same word in a new sense. Thus, discussion should focus on "differences in IQ".
- **Importance of IQ:** IQ is important in society, influencing occupational status, income, and social class. If genetic factors contribute to racial IQ differences, they are likely to contribute to racial differences in these socioeconomic outcomes, making IQ relevant to discussions of equality.

Implications of Genetically-Based Racial IQ Differences

The existence of differences in average IQ scores between racial groups is generally not disputed, even by opponents of Jensen and Eysenck. The debate centers on whether these differences are primarily due to **heredity or environment**. While environmental factors are acknowledged to play a role, the contention is whether they explain *all* or *virtually all* of the differences.

Assuming the genetic hypothesis is correct (for exploration, not belief), the implications are **"less drastic than they are often supposed to be, and they give no comfort to racists"** for three key reasons:

1. **Continued Efforts to Overcome Inequality:** A genetic basis for IQ differences **does not imply reducing efforts to overcome other causes of inequality**, such as disparities in housing and schooling. Even if these efforts don't equalize IQs across racial groups, they improve conditions, and "perhaps we should put extra efforts into helping those who start from a position of disadvantage so that we end with a more egalitarian result".
2. **Individual Assessment:** Average IQ differences between groups **do not justify racial segregation** or treating individuals differently based on their race. There is substantial overlap in IQ scores between groups; an individual from a higher-average IQ group is not guaranteed to have a higher IQ than an individual from a lower-average group. **Members of different racial groups must be treated as individuals.**
3. **Equality Not Based on Non-Moral Characteristics:** Most fundamentally, the **principle of equality is not based on a claim that people are equal in any non-moral characteristic**. The author reiterates that the only defensible basis for equality is the **equal consideration of interests**, and that the most important human interests (e.g., avoiding pain, basic needs, relationships, freedom) are **not affected by differences in intelligence**. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, understood that "whatever be their degree of talent, it is no measure of their rights". **Equal status "does not depend on intelligence"**.

These three reasons demonstrate that claims of a genetic basis for racial IQ differences **do not provide grounds for denying the moral principle that all humans are equal**. The third reason, in particular, has further implications to be explored.

Sexual Differences and Sexual Equality

Debates surrounding psychological differences between females and males focus on **distinct intellectual and non-intellectual abilities**, not general IQ.

- **Intellectual Differences:**

- **Verbal Ability:** Females tend to have greater verbal ability (understanding complex writing, creative use of words).
- **Visual-Spatial Ability:** Males tend to perform better on visual-spatial tests (e.g., map reading, mental rotation tests).
- **Emotional Recognition:** Girls score higher on tests requiring recognition of others' emotional states and predicting behaviour from them.
- **Mathematics:** Average scores differ little and sometimes favour girls, but boys' scores are more spread out, meaning more boys are at both the top and bottom of math classes.

- **Non-Intellectual Differences: Aggression:** A significant non-intellectual difference is **aggression**.

Studies across cultures show boys are more likely than girls to play roughly, attack, and fight back. Males are generally "readier to hurt others," reflected in the fact that almost all violent criminals are male. Aggression is associated with competitiveness, dominance, and the drive for power, while females are more inclined towards caring roles.

These observed differences appear when averages are taken, but there is "**substantial overlap between the sexes**". The origin of these differences is debated between environmental and biological explanations. While the question of origin is important in some contexts, the author asserts that **discrimination is wrong "whatever the origin of the known psychological differences,"** paralleling the argument made for racial discrimination.

Explanations for Sex Differences (Environmental vs. Biological)

1. Environmental (Social Conditioning):

- Children learn distinct sex roles through various social cues and upbringing. For example, boys receive trucks/guns for birthdays, girls dolls/brush-and-comb sets; boys are praised for strength, girls for appearance. Traditional portrayals in children's books have begun to change due to feminist critiques and increased female workforce participation.
- Social conditioning is acknowledged, but it is an "incomplete explanation" for *why* nearly every human society shapes children this way. One popular explanation posits that in earlier societies, women's role in breastfeeding kept them closer to home, while men hunted, leading to the evolution of a more social/emotional character in females and tougher/aggressive traits in males. Male dominance then arose from their physical strength and aggression being the ultimate forms of power. These sex roles are seen as an inheritance that became obsolete with technology and women's ability to combine motherhood and career.

2. Biological Factors:

- The alternative view is that biological factors also contribute to psychological differences, alongside social conditioning.
- A study showed one-day-old baby girls spent more time looking at a live face, while boys looked more at a mechanical mobile.
- Preferences for dolls (girls) and toy trucks (boys) have even been observed in **vervet monkeys**, suggesting an innate component.
- **Evidence for a biological basis of aggression** is summarized by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin in *The Psychology of Sex Differences*:

- Males are more aggressive than females in all human societies studied.
- Similar differences exist in humans, apes, and related animals.
- Differences are found in very young children, before evidence of social conditioning (and boys are often punished more for aggression).
- Aggression levels vary with sex hormones, and females become more aggressive if given male hormones.
- **Evidence for a biological basis of visual-spatial ability** suggests influence by a recessive sex-linked gene, leading to an estimated 50% of males having a genetic advantage compared to 25% of females. However, environmental factors can significantly reduce this male advantage.
- Evidence for biological factors in female verbal ability and high-achieving male mathematical ability is currently too weak for a definitive conclusion.

The author again chooses not to delve into the scientific evidence but rather to **explore the implications of these biological hypotheses**.

Implications of Sex Differences for Equality

- **Limited Explanatory Power:** Differences in intellectual strengths and weaknesses between the sexes can explain only a "small proportion" of the occupational disparities between males and females in society. For instance, if visual-spatial ability explains male dominance in architecture/engineering, why aren't women equally represented in fields where they excel, like those requiring high verbal abilities (e.g., journalism, where female journalists are still outnumbered)? This suggests women may not have equal opportunities even if biological explanations for ability patterns are accepted.
- **Summers' Remark:** The wider spread of mathematical ability among males (more at both extremes) does lend support to Lawrence Summers' controversial point regarding the scarcity of suitable female candidates for highly selective Harvard science and engineering positions. Since only the exceptionally gifted become professors at elite institutions, males are likely to be overrepresented at the extreme upper end of mathematical giftedness.
- **Aggression and Power:** The idea of a biological basis for greater male aggression might initially be seen by feminists as evidence of female ethical superiority due to a reluctance to hurt. However, this greater male aggression could also manifest as increased **competitiveness, ambition, and drive for power**, which has less welcome implications for feminists. Sociologist Steven Goldberg argued in *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* that the biological basis of male aggression would make a society with equal political power for women impossible, leading to the view that women should accept inferior positions and traditional roles. This argument has fuelled feminist hostility towards biological explanations of male dominance.

Moral Conclusions Not Followed by Biological Theories

As with race and IQ, the moral conclusions often *alleged* to follow from these biological theories **"do not really follow from them at all"**. Similar arguments apply:

1. **Social Conditioning's Influence:** Regardless of the origin of psychological differences, **social conditioning can "emphasize or soften" them**. Biological predispositions are often "a greater natural readiness to learn these skills". For example, women raised to be independent show higher visual-spatial ability than those kept at home. Therefore, feminists are justified in critiquing sex-specific upbringing, even if it only reinforces innate predispositions rather than creating the differences.

2. **Individual Overlap:** Differences exist only as **averages**, and there is "**substantial overlap**" between the sexes. Many females are more aggressive or have better visual-spatial ability than some males (e.g., 25% of females may have a genetic advantage in visual-spatial ability over 50% of males). It is wrong to tell a woman she cannot be an engineer or math professor, or that she lacks political drive, based solely on her sex. Likewise, it's wrong to assume a man cannot be gentle enough to be a stay-at-home parent. **People must be assessed as individuals**, and societal roles must remain flexible to allow individuals to pursue what they are best suited for.
3. **Irrelevance to Core Human Interests:** The most important human interests are "**no more affected by differences in aggression than they are by differences in intelligence**". Less aggressive people have the same interests in avoiding pain, developing abilities, food/shelter, relationships, etc., as more aggressive people. There is "no reason why more aggressive people ought to be rewarded for their aggression with higher salaries and the ability to provide better for these interests".

Since aggression is not generally seen as desirable, it's clear that it offers **no ethical justification** for the greater proportion of men in leading roles. However, it could be used to argue that the current situation results from fair competition under equal opportunity, implying the status quo is not unfair. This leads to further considerations of biological differences.

From Equality of Opportunity to Equality of Consideration

In many societies, significant income and social status differences are deemed acceptable if achieved under conditions of **equal opportunity**. This view sees life as a "race" where winners deserve prizes, provided everyone had an "equal start". For example, if Jill earns more as a doctor than Jack as a farm worker, it's considered fair if Jack had the same opportunity to become a doctor (i.e., not discriminated against, and if his exam results were as good, he could have pursued medicine).

Inadequacy of Equal Opportunity

The idea of equal opportunity often takes a "superficial view".

- **Beyond Exam Results:** If Jack's exam results were inferior, the crucial question is *why*. His education might have been inferior (larger classes, less qualified teachers, inadequate resources), meaning he was not competing on truly equal terms with Jill. **Genuine equality of opportunity requires ensuring schools provide "the same advantages to everyone"**.
- **Home Environment:** Even if schools were equal, children's home environments create disparities. A quiet study room, abundant books, and encouraging parents give advantages not available to a child sharing a room with siblings and working part-time to support the family. Equalizing homes or parents would necessitate abandoning the traditional family structure and raising children in communal nurseries.
- **Genetic Endowment:** The "ultimate objection" links back to earlier discussions of equality. Even with communal rearing, children would inherit different abilities and character traits, including varying levels of aggression and IQ. Eliminating environmental differences would not remove **genetic differences**, which are a "significant component" of existing IQ disparities between individuals (even if not between races).
- **Conclusion: Equality of opportunity is "not an attractive ideal"**. It "rewards the lucky" who inherit abilities leading to lucrative careers and "penalizes the unlucky" whose genes make similar success difficult.

Broader Implications for Income and Status

Regardless of the social or genetic basis of racial differences in IQ, simply removing social disadvantages will not lead to an equal or just distribution of income.

- **Not Equal:** Those who inherit abilities associated with high IQ will continue to earn more.
- **Not Just:** Distribution based on inherited abilities "has nothing to do with what people deserve or need".
- This applies also to visual-spatial ability, mathematical ability, and aggression, if these traits lead to higher incomes or status.
- If the basis of equality is the **equal consideration of interests**, and the most important human interests are largely unrelated to IQ or aggression, then a society where income and social status strongly correlate with these inherited factors raises a "moral question".

Society Rewarding Abilities vs. Needs

When society pays high salaries for computer programming and low salaries for office cleaning, it is effectively rewarding specific abilities that are "very probably to a significant degree inherited" and largely determined before individuals are responsible for their actions.

- **Justice and Utility:** From the perspectives of both justice and utility, there is "something wrong here". Both would be better served by a society adopting the Marxist slogan: **"From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"**.
- If such a system could be achieved, differences between races and sexes would lose their social significance, leading to a society truly based on the principle of equal consideration of interests.

Realism and Difficulties

The question arises whether it is realistic to aspire to a society that rewards needs over IQ, aggression, or inherited abilities. Do demanding professions (doctors, lawyers, professors, programmers) require higher pay as an incentive?.

- **Brain Drain:** A major difficulty in implementing a needs-based payment scheme in one country is the risk of a **"brain drain"**. Skilled individuals might emigrate to countries that reward ability more highly, as seen with Canadian doctors moving to the US, or the strict emigration controls in communist states to prevent an "outflow of skilled people". If achieving a just income distribution necessitates making a country "a giant prison," the price may be too high.
- **Scope for Reduction:** However, concluding that nothing can be done to improve income distribution in capitalist countries would be "too pessimistic". Affluent Western nations have "a good deal of scope for reducing pay differentials" before significant emigration occurs, especially in countries with very large differentials like the United States.
- **Motivation Beyond Pay:** The author doubts that high pay is the primary motivator for choosing professions like doctor or professor. He suggests he would not swap positions with groundskeepers even if salaries were identical, nor would his doctor swap with a receptionist. The enjoyment of student years also plays a role.
- **Rewarding Effort:** While not advocating for payment based solely on ability, the prospect of earning more *can* incentivize greater effort, which benefits others (patients, customers, students, public). Therefore, **"it might therefore be worth trying to reward effort, which would mean paying people**

more if they worked near the upper limits of their abilities". This differs from paying for inherent ability, which is beyond individual control. Psychologist Jeffrey Gray argues that differential pay for "upper class" and "lower class" jobs, given genetic influence on IQ, is a "wasteful use of resources in the guise of 'incentives' that either tempt people to do what is beyond their powers or reward them more for what they would do anyway".

- **Private Enterprise:** While government-controlled salaries (professors, doctors in some systems) could be altered, the business sector is different. Entrepreneurial talent will generate more wealth under private enterprise. Taxation can redistribute income, but there are limits to progressive taxation before smart people divert energy to tax avoidance.
- **Unrealistic Expectations:** Abolishing private enterprise globally, though perhaps a "nice idea," is "not going to happen". Private enterprise tends to reassert itself (e.g., black markets under communism, China's economic growth). Overcoming this would require a "radical change in human nature" (a decline in acquisitive and self-centered desires), which is not foreseeable. Thus, financial rewards for inherited abilities might have to be accepted.
- **Creating a Climate of Opinion:** This does not mean abandoning the principle of "payment according to needs and effort rather than inherited ability". The public outrage during the 2008-09 financial crisis over excessive executive salaries demonstrated a shared sentiment against undeserved payments. The realistic goal is to **"create a climate of opinion that will lead to a reduction in excessive payments to senior management and an increase in payments to those whose income barely meets their needs,"** moving beyond a "pious wish".

Affirmative Action

While reducing income differences is ethically desirable but difficult, another approach is to prevent members of disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups and women from being disproportionately at the bottom of income, status, and power structures. Such inequalities, especially when coinciding with visible differences like race or sex, are more divisive, creating feelings of superiority and inferiority, and generating a sense of hopelessness in the disadvantaged groups whose sex or race is not a product of their actions.

- Since equality of opportunity is practically unrealizable and might still allow innate differences (aggression, IQ) to unfairly determine social stratification, one way to address these obstacles is to move beyond it and offer **preferential treatment to members of disadvantaged groups**, known as **affirmative action** (or "reverse discrimination"). This may be the best hope for reducing long-standing inequalities, even though it appears to contradict the principle of equality.
- Affirmative action is most commonly applied in **education and employment**, with education being particularly important due to its influence on income, job satisfaction, power, and status. In the US, Supreme Court cases have rejected some university admissions procedures favoring disadvantaged groups. These cases involved European-descent individuals denied admission despite better academic records and test scores than some admitted African-American students, with universities justifying their policies as aiming to help disadvantaged students.

The *Bakke* Case and Justifications

The landmark case was **Regents of the University of California v. Bakke**. Alan Bakke was denied admission to UC Davis medical school, which had reserved 16 out of 100 places for disadvantaged minority students to increase their representation. Bakke, a European American, sued after being rejected despite having scores that would have granted him admission had he been a minority.

Arguments sometimes used to justify affirmative action, and the author's responses:

1. **Redressing Past Discrimination (Proportionate Representation):** It's sometimes argued that a significant disparity in representation (e.g., 20% minority population, but only 2% minority doctors) *proves* discrimination.
 - **Author's Response:** This argument is **"inconclusive"** due to the genetics-vs-environment debate. It is difficult to entirely rule out the possibility that the underrepresented group is, on average, less gifted for medical study. For instance, a disproportionate number of African-American athletes on the US Olympic team doesn't prove discrimination against European Americans. While other evidence for discrimination might exist, it must be explicitly shown. Therefore, affirmative action **cannot be justified solely on the grounds of "merely redress[ing] the balance of discrimination existing in the community" without positive evidence.**
2. **Adjusted Test Scores for Disadvantage:** Another defence suggests that standard tests do not accurately reflect ability when a student has been severely disadvantaged. Educational and home backgrounds influence test scores. A disadvantaged student scoring 55% might have better prospects than a more privileged student scoring 70%.
 - **Author's Response:** Adjusting test scores on this basis would be admitting **genuinely better-qualified disadvantaged students**, not racial discrimination. However, UC Davis in the *Bakke* case simply reserved 16% of places by quota, without adjusting for individual ability or background. Evidence generally indicates that students admitted through affirmative action programs have, on average, lower grades than the class as a whole.

Affirmative Action and Rights / Equal Consideration of Interests

- **Equal Consideration of Interests:** The principle of equal consideration of interests condemns racial and sexual discrimination that gives less weight to the interests of those discriminated against. Could *Bakke* claim the medical school gave less weight to his interests?
 - **University admissions are not normally a result of considering each applicant's interests.** Instead, they match applicants against university standards and policies. If admission were based purely on intelligence, and rejected applicants complained of less consideration, the university would state it didn't consider *any* applicant's interests, but rather aimed to admit students who could pass exams and be useful to the community (e.g., intelligent doctors curing disease).
 - While intelligence is accepted as a criterion, it doesn't grant an "intrinsic right" to admission. Universities admit intelligent students to advance their goals, not to recognise their rights or greater interest in admission.
 - Therefore, if a university changes its policy to use affirmative action to promote new goals (like diversity), applicants who would have been admitted under the old policy **cannot claim a violation of their rights or less than equal consideration.** They were merely "fortunate beneficiaries" of the previous policy.
- **Conclusion on Rights:** Affirmative action **"cannot justifiably be condemned on the grounds that it violates the rights of university applicants or treats them with less than equal consideration".** There is no inherent right to admission, and normal admission tests do not involve equal consideration of applicants' interests. Objections must stem from concerns about the goals of affirmative action, its effectiveness, or its costs.

- **Condemning Discriminatory Goals:** The principle of equality *would* condemn the goals of a racially discriminatory admissions procedure where minorities are discriminated against, because such discrimination typically stems from "less concern for the interests of the minority" (e.g., historical exclusion of African Americans in the American South). In such cases, rejected applicants *could* justifiably claim unequal consideration.

Goals and Practical Objections to Affirmative Action

Opponents generally do not object to the goals of **social equality and greater minority representation in professions**.

- **Reasons for Supporting Social Equality (aligned with Equal Consideration of Interests):**
 - **Diminishing marginal utility.**
 - Reducing the "feeling of hopeless inferiority" when one group is always worse off.
 - Mitigating "racial tension" resulting from severe inequality.
- **Desirable Goals of Minority Representation in Professions (e.g., law and medicine):**
 - Minority professionals are more likely to serve their own communities, addressing scarcity in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
 - They may better understand the problems faced by disadvantaged people.
 - They serve as role models for other minorities and women, breaking "unconscious mental barriers" to aspiring to such positions.
 - Diverse student groups help majority students learn about minority attitudes, improving their ability to serve the whole community.
- **Opponents' Stronger Objections (Practical Issues):** Opponents are on stronger ground when claiming that affirmative action **"will not promote equality"**.
 - **Reinforcing Stereotypes:** Justice Powell in *Bakke* stated that "Preferential programs may only reinforce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable to achieve success without special protection". This suggests that for true equality, minorities must earn their places "on their merits". If admitted more easily, minority law graduates (even those who would have succeeded in open competition) may be viewed as inferior.
 - **Academic Mismatch:** Some argue affirmative action creates an "academic mismatch," placing minority students in classes with more academically gifted peers, leading to lower class standing and reduced graduation rates.

Legal Context and Ethical Conclusion

- **US Legal Rulings:** These practical objections raise complex factual issues not central to American legal battles, as judges avoid ruling on areas outside their expertise. Alan Bakke won his case because a majority of judges found that either the US Constitution or the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits exclusion based on color, race, or national origin from federally funded activities.
 - However, Justice Powell's majority opinion in *Bakke* also stated that a university seeking **diversity** in its student body could include race as **one factor among many** (e.g., athletic/artistic ability, work experience, compassion, overcoming disadvantage, leadership potential), but **without using quotas**.
 - This view was upheld in **Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)**, concerning the University of Michigan Law School, which permitted a "highly individualized, holistic review" considering diversity.

- Conversely, in **Gratz v. Bollinger**, the court rejected an undergraduate program that automatically awarded extra points to minority applicants without individual assessment.
- **US Distinction:** In the US, managing admissions for **diversity is permissible, but racial or ethnic quotas are not.**
- **Ethical View:** From an ethical standpoint (beyond the law), the distinction between quotas and other methods of preference for disadvantaged groups may be less significant. The author concludes that **affirmative action, by any method, "is not contrary to any sound principle of equality and does not violate any rights of those excluded by it".** When properly applied, it aligns with the aspirations of equal consideration of interests. The **"only real doubt is how well it works,"** with evidence still being collected and assessed.

A Concluding Note: Equality and Disability

The irrelevance of IQ or specific abilities to the moral principle of equality is most clearly seen in the context of people with **disabilities** (physical or intellectual).

- **Different Abilities, Equal Consideration:** It is acknowledged that disabled individuals lack some abilities that non-disabled people have, and their disabilities may justify different treatment in specific roles (e.g., a wheelchair user for a firefighter, a blind person for a proofreader). However, a disability ruling out a particular position **does not mean that person's interests should be given less consideration** than anyone else's, nor does it justify discrimination when the disability is irrelevant to the employment or service offered.
- **History of Prejudice:** For centuries, people with disabilities have faced severe prejudice, similar to racial minorities. They have been confined in appalling conditions, exploited as "virtual slaves," and subjected to mass murder by the Nazis under a "euthanasia program" that targeted tens of thousands of intellectually disabled people deemed "useless mouths". Even today, businesses may refuse to hire a wheelchair user for a suitable job or someone with an "abnormal" appearance for sales, echoing past arguments against racial minorities. Familiarity with disabled people in public-facing roles can help overcome these prejudices.
- **Confusion Between Factual and Moral Equality:** Society has been slow to recognise the injustices against people with disabilities, partly due to the confusion between factual and moral equality. Because disabled people are factually different, it has not always been seen as discriminatory to treat them differently, even when their disability is irrelevant to the disadvantageous treatment. Thus, legislation prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or gender should also prohibit discrimination based on **disability, "unless the disability can be shown to be relevant to the employment or service offered".**
- **Affirmative Action for Disabled People:** Many arguments for affirmative action in cases of race or gender apply **"even more strongly" to people with disabilities.** Mere equality of opportunity is insufficient when a disability prevents equal community membership (e.g., a library inaccessible by stairs). Many disabled children could benefit from normal schooling but require additional resources for their special needs.
- **Justifiable Greater Spending:** Because such needs are often "very central to the lives of people with disabilities," the principle of equal consideration of interests gives them "much greater weight" than the minor needs of others. For this reason, it will generally be **"justifiable to spend more on behalf of disabled people than we spend on behalf of others,"** though resource scarcity sets limits. Empathy helps in finding the right balance.

Alleged Contradiction with Arguments for Abortion/Euthanasia

An alleged contradiction arises with arguments presented later in the book that defend abortion and euthanasia for a fetus or infant with a severe disability. These arguments presuppose that life is better without a disability, which some critics might view as a form of prejudice parallel to racial or gender bias.

- **The Error:** The error in this argument is to conflate assisting disabled people to live full lives with choosing whether a child begins life with or without a disability.
- The author argues that if a miracle drug could, without side effects, restore full leg use to wheelchair users, few would refuse it on the grounds that life with a disability is not inferior. The fact that disabled people themselves raise funds for research to prevent and overcome disability demonstrates that the **preference for a life without disability is not "mere prejudice"**.
- While social conditions certainly make life much harder for disabled people than necessary, the claim that "social conditions disable them, not their physical or intellectual condition" twists a simple truth into a "sweeping falsehood". The abilities to walk, see, hear, be free from pain, and communicate effectively are **"genuine benefits" under virtually any social conditions**. Acknowledging this does not deny the richness of lives led by those who triumph over disabilities, nor is it prejudiced to prefer, for oneself or one's children, not to face such immense hurdles.
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The Ethics of Wealth: Obligation to the Poor

This academic text, "Rich and Poor" by Peter Singer, explores the profound ethical implications of global wealth disparity, particularly the contrast between absolute poverty and absolute affluence. Singer argues that affluent individuals and nations have a moral obligation to assist those in extreme poverty, positing that if one can prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, one ought to do so. The author systematically addresses common objections to this duty, examining whether inaction is morally equivalent to direct harm, and scrutinises issues such as identifiable victims, responsibility, property rights, and the potential impact of aid on population growth. Ultimately, Singer advocates for a shift in public ethics, suggesting a progressive scale for charitable giving as a realistic and effective means to collectively alleviate extreme poverty, rather than requiring individual "moral heroism."

Here are super depth notes, providing a comprehensive and detailed overview of the provided source material, ensuring no information loss and 100% information retention:

Introduction: Rich and Poor The text delves into the stark contrast between extreme poverty and absolute affluence, exploring the moral obligations that arise from this global disparity.

I. Some Facts About Poverty

- **World Bank Research (late 20th Century):**
 - A research team interviewed 60,000 individuals in extreme poverty across seventy-three countries.
 - **Recurring Themes/Experiences of Poverty:**
 - **Food Scarcity:** Shortage of food for all or part of the year, often resulting in only one meal daily. Difficult choices between feeding one's child or oneself, or being unable to do either.

- **Debt Cycle:** Inability to save money, leading to borrowing from local moneylenders for emergencies (illness, crop failure). High interest rates cause perpetual, mounting debt.
- **Lack of Education:** Inability to afford school for children, or needing to withdraw them during poor harvests.
- **Substandard Housing:** Living in unstable houses made of mud or thatch, requiring rebuilding every two to three years or after severe weather.
- **Unsafe Water:** No nearby source of safe drinking water, requiring long journeys to fetch it. The water often makes people ill unless boiled.
- **Accompanying Impacts:** These material deprivations often lead to a humiliating state of powerlessness, vulnerability, and a deep sense of shame or failure.
- **World Bank Definition of Extreme Poverty:**
 - Not possessing enough income to meet the most basic human needs for adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health care, or education.
 - **Income Threshold (2008):** The purchasing power equivalent of approximately US\$1.25 per day in the United States. This definition accounts for greater purchasing power of rich countries' currencies in poor countries.
 - **Prevalence:** An estimated **1.4 billion people** globally have less income than this threshold.
- **Absolute vs. Relative Poverty:**
 - **Relative Poverty:** Found in industrialized countries, where people are poor compared to others in their society but generally have enough for basic needs and often access to free healthcare.
 - **Absolute Poverty:** Predominantly in developing countries, where people struggle to meet basic needs by an absolute standard.
- **Consequences of Absolute Poverty:**
 - **Mortality:** Absolute poverty is lethal.
 - UNICEF reported **8.8 million children under five years old died from avoidable, poverty-related causes in 2008**. This amounts to **24,000 unnecessary deaths daily**, comparable to a football stadium full of children.
 - This number has been falling since the 1960s but remains "far too high".
 - Millions of adults also die prematurely due to absolute poverty.
 - Life expectancy in rich nations is 78 years, compared to around 50 years in developing countries.
 - **Misery:** When not fatal, absolute poverty causes profound misery.
 - Malnutrition in young children stunts physical and mental development.
 - Millions suffer from deficiency diseases (e.g., goitre, blindness from lack of vitamin A) due to poor diets.
 - Food value is further reduced by parasites like hookworm and ringworm, endemic in conditions of poor sanitation and health education.
- **Scale of the Problem:**
 - This state of absolute poverty is described as the "normal" situation of our world.
 - On September 11, 2001, at least **ten times more people died from preventable, poverty-related diseases** than from the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

While trillions were spent on the 'war on terrorism' and security, these poverty deaths were ignored.

- Approximately **30,000 people have died from poverty-related causes every day since September 12, 2001, and continue to do so.**
- Major events like the 2004 Asian tsunami (approx. 230,000 deaths) or the 2010 Haiti earthquake (up to 200,000 deaths) represent only about **one week's toll** of preventable, poverty-related deaths, occurring 52 weeks a year.

II. Some Facts About Affluence

- **Definition of Absolute Affluence:**

- Having more income than needed to adequately provide for all basic necessities of life for oneself and one's dependents.
- **Characteristics:** After covering basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, basic health services, education – directly or through taxes), the absolutely affluent have money for luxuries. This includes choosing food for pleasure, new clothes for aesthetics, moving house for better neighbourhood/space, and spending on home entertainment or exotic holidays.

- **Prevalence of Absolute Affluence:**

- The majority of citizens in Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and oil-rich Middle Eastern states are absolutely affluent.
- Hundreds of millions of affluent people also live in countries with extreme poverty like China, India, and Brazil.
- **Potential for Assistance:** These affluent individuals possess wealth they could transfer to the extremely poor without threatening their own basic welfare.

- **Reality of Assistance:**

- **Very little wealth is currently being transferred.**
- **UN Target (1970):** The UN General Assembly set a modest target for foreign aid at **0.7% of Gross National Income** (70 cents for every \$100 earned).
- **Achievement (40 years later):** By 2010, only Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden had met this target.
- **Major Economies (2008):** The United States and Japan gave only **0.19%** (19 cents per \$100). Australia and Canada gave 0.32%, while France, Germany, and Britain were around the affluent nations' average (0.38-0.43%).
- The amount given by rich nations is trivial compared to their income.

III. The Moral Equivalent of Murder?

- **The Proposition:** By contributing far less than they could, rich people allow over a billion individuals to persist in deprivation and die prematurely. This applies to both governments and affluent individuals, as each has the opportunity to assist through time or money donated to voluntary organizations providing healthcare, water, education, and agricultural support. If allowing someone to die is not intrinsically different from killing, then affluent individuals could be considered "murderers".

- **Common Rejection:** Many dismiss this verdict as absurd, believing that allowing someone to die is not equivalent to killing. They point to several differences between spending money on luxuries and deliberately killing.

- **Five Proposed Differences and Their Evaluation:**

1. **Motivation:**

- **Difference:** Killers often have malice/sadism, desiring victims' deaths. Luxury buyers seek personal enjoyment. Spending on luxuries indicates, at worst, selfishness/indifference, not comparable to malice.
- **Evaluation:** Lack of malicious intent lessens blame but not as much as current attitudes suggest. A speeding motorist, indifferent to consequences but without intent to kill, still deserves severe blame and punishment.

2. **Difficulty of Duty:**

- **Difference:** It's easy to abide by a rule against killing. It's very difficult to save all lives one possibly could, as it would mean cutting one's standard of living to "bare essentials". This demands "moral heroism," unlike mere avoidance of killing.
- **Evaluation:** This is the **most significant difference**. Not killing is a minimum standard, but saving all possible is not realistically required of everyone. Those who give 10% are often praised for generosity, not blamed for not giving more. However, the appropriateness of praise/blame (evaluating the agent) is distinct from the rightness/wrongness of the action. This difference explains conventional attitudes but doesn't diminish the seriousness of the act itself or excuse inaction.

3. **Certainty of Outcome:**

- **Difference:** Shooting someone is virtually certain to result in death. Money given to aid might fund an unsuccessful project.
- **Evaluation:** Reduced certainty does lessen the wrongness compared to deliberate killing, but it does not make not giving acceptable conduct. A motorist speeding through pedestrian crossings, knowingly risking lives, is very wrong, even if they never hit anyone.

4. **Identifiable Victims:**

- **Difference:** Victims of violence are identifiable with grieving families. A luxury buyer cannot know who their money would have saved.
- **Evaluation:** This difference holds **no moral significance**. Research shows people are more likely to give to an identifiable child (with photo, name, age). This may be an instinctive response from living in small, face-to-face groups, but this instinct should not dictate ethical obligations. Selling contaminated food, even if individual victims cannot be identified, is still reprehensible. This principle applies death, regardless of whether the person would have died anyway. Responsibilities derive from the world as it is.
 - **Non-consequentialist/Libertarian View (Locke, Nozick, Narveson):** Rights are primarily *against* interference, not *to* assistance. Killing violates rights; omitting to save does not.
 - **Critique of Libertarian View:** The factual basis is "doubtful". Thomas Pogge argues that the global economic order means affluent nations *do* contribute to the impoverishment of others for their own benefit (e.g., buying oil/minerals from dictators who lack moral right to the wealth, thus receiving stolen goods and incentivizing instability, which contributes to poverty). Climate change is another example.

- **Philosophical Challenge:** It's questionable to base rights on the "unhistorical, abstract, and ultimately inexplicable idea of a human being living independently". Humans are social beings, and rights to life should mean preventing death when one could easily save.
- **Conclusion on Differences:** While differences in certainty and motivation are ethically significant (making not aiding comparable to reckless driving, a serious offense), and the difficulty of saving all possible impacts blame, the lack of identifiable victims and certain notions of responsibility are not morally significant. How we respond to absolute poverty and affluence remains "one of the great moral issues of our time".

IV. The Obligation to Assist

- **The Argument's Foundation:**
 - **Drowning Child Analogy:** If one passes a shallow pond and sees a child drowning with no other adults present, one ought to wade in and save the child. The Most plausible ethical theories agree on preventing bad and promoting good.
- **Application to Absolute Poverty:**
 - Despite its "uncontroversial appearance," this principle, if taken seriously, would fundamentally change lives and the world.
 - It applies directly to the everyday situation of assisting those in absolute poverty.
 - **Assumptions:**
 1. Absolute poverty (hunger, malnutrition, lack of shelter, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality, low life expectancy) is "a bad thing". This premise is "unlikely to be challenged" as it causes immense suffering, death, and hopelessness.
 2. The affluent can reduce absolute poverty without sacrificing anything of "comparable moral significance".
 - **Conclusion:** If these assumptions and the principle are correct, the obligation to help those in absolute poverty is as strong as rescuing a drowning child. Not to help would be wrong, and helping is an obligation, not merely a charitable act.
- **Formal Argument:**
 1. **First Premise:** If we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it. (The core moral premise).
 2. **Second Premise:** Extreme poverty is bad.
 3. **Third Premise:** There is *some* extreme poverty we can prevent without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance.
 4. **Conclusion:** We ought to prevent some extreme poverty.
- **Defense of the Third Premise (Preventability of Poverty):**
 - It's cautiously framed, only claiming *some* poverty can be prevented.
 - Addresses the "drops in the ocean" objection: the point is preventing *any* extreme poverty, not making a noticeable impression on the total global poverty. Preventing a single family's extreme poverty without comparable sacrifice vindicates this premise.
 - **Effectiveness of Aid Organizations:**

- **Common Misconceptions:** That aid organizations use most money for administrative costs, or that corrupt governments take donations.
 - **Facts:** Major aid organizations use no more than **20% for administration**, leaving at least **80% for direct programs**. They work directly with the poor or grassroots organizations, not governments.
 - **Refined View on Administrative Costs:** Measuring effectiveness solely by low administrative costs is a mistake; experienced staff, vital for sustainable, long-term impact, incur administrative costs.
 - **GiveWell.org:** An organization that researches and ranks aid organizations based on effectiveness. It estimates several organizations can save a life for **\$600 to \$1200**.
 - **Conclusion:** For affluent individuals who spend a few hundred dollars yearly on non-necessities, it is clear they can save a life or prevent extreme poverty without comparable moral significance.
- **"Comparable Moral Significance":**
 - This concept is left unexamined to demonstrate the argument's broad applicability across ethical views.
 - For most in industrialized nations, affluence means income beyond basic necessities that can be used to reduce extreme poverty.
 - Luxuries such as stylish clothes, expensive dinners, sophisticated stereos, exotic holidays, luxury cars, larger houses, or private schools are unlikely to be of comparable moral significance to reducing extreme poverty for utilitarians. Non-utilitarians who accept universalizability must also acknowledge that at least some of these are far less significant than preventable extreme poverty.
 - The precise amount one is obliged to give depends on one's ethical view, but the premise holds for any plausible ethical stance.

V. Objections to the Argument

1. "Taking Care of Our Own":

- **Objection:** We should prioritize those near us (family, then national poor) before distant poverty.
- **Response:** The question is what we *ought* to do, not what we usually do. There is no sound moral justification for distance or community membership making a crucial difference to obligations.
 - **Racial/National Affinities:** Rejecting racial preference in aid is consistent with the principle of equal consideration of interests (e.g., helping Africans in greater need over Europeans).
 - **Cost-Effectiveness:** While affluent nations have relatively poor citizens (e.g., a US family of four below \$22,000 income), significantly improving their lives costs thousands of dollars. In developing countries, **under \$1,000 can save a child's life**, and **under \$5,000 can double the income of ten extreme poverty families**. With limited resources, it makes sense to use them where they have the greatest beneficial impact.
 - **Kinship:** While feeling strong obligations to kin (e.g., parents giving last rice to children), this is not the situation faced by the affluent. Affluent children are well-fed, clothed, and

educated, desiring luxuries. Once special obligations to children are fulfilled, the needs of strangers take priority.

- **System of Responsibilities:** The value of families and local communities caring for their own avoids large bureaucracies. The argument does not propose equal responsibility for everyone globally. It applies when some are in extreme poverty and others can help without comparable sacrifice. Allowing one's kin to fall into extreme poverty *would* be a sacrifice of comparable significance, justifying a modest preference for family and community. However, this modest preference is "decisively outweighed by existing discrepancies in wealth and property".

2. Property Rights:

- **Objection:** People have a right to private property, which contradicts an obligation to give wealth away. Some theories argue for an individualistic right to great wealth and luxuries, even while others starve, as long as property was acquired without unjust means.
- **Contrast Theories:** Christian doctrine (property for human needs, superabundance owed to poor – Aquinas); Socialist (wealth belongs to community); Utilitarian (override property rights to prevent great evils).
- **Response:** The argument for an obligation to assist does not necessarily presuppose these other theories and can survive, with minor modifications, even if an individualistic theory of property rights is accepted.
 - **Nozick's View:** Robert Nozick rejected compulsory redistribution (taxation) but suggested voluntary means for moral ends. He might agree that not giving is wrong, even if within one's rights, as an ethical life involves more than just respecting rights.
 - **Critique of Individualistic Theory:** The author argues such a theory "leaves too much to chance to be an acceptable ethical view". For example, the arbitrary distribution of wealth based on where one's ancestors settled (e.g., Kuwait's oil vs. Chad's drought-induced poverty) is questioned from an impartial perspective. Thomas Pogge challenges the factual basis by arguing that the global economic order means affluent nations *do* contribute to the impoverishment of others for their own benefit (e.g., buying oil/minerals from dictators who have no moral right to the wealth, thus receiving stolen goods and incentivizing instability, which contributes to poverty). The idea of human beings living independently is "unhistorical, abstract, and ultimately inexplicable," as humans are social beings. Rights to life should mean preventing death when one could easily save.

3. Population and the Ethics of Triage:

- **Objection:** This is perhaps the most serious objection. It argues that extreme poverty is caused by overpopulation, and helping those currently in poverty will only ensure more people are born to live in future poverty.
- **Extreme Form: "Triage":** A medical policy adopted in wartime where casualties are divided into three categories: those who survive without aid, those who might survive with aid, and those who won't survive even with aid. Only the middle category is treated to use limited resources effectively. Some suggested applying this to countries based on their prospects of becoming self-sustaining.
- **Hardin's "Lifeboat Ethics":** Rich nations are like occupants of a crowded lifeboat, while the sea is full of drowning people. Trying to save the drowning will overload the boat and cause all to

drown. Hardin argued the rich should leave the poor to starve, otherwise the poor will drag the rich down with them. He cited India and Bangladesh as examples of overpopulation.

- **Counter-argument: "Overpopulation is a myth":**
 - The world produces ample food to feed its population, potentially several times more than current levels.
 - Hunger is due to inequitable land distribution and an international political/economic system that exploits poor nations for the benefit of the rich.
 - Vast quantities of grain and soybeans are wasted by feeding them to animals (getting back only a small fraction of nutritional value) or by turning them into biofuel. The amount of grain fed to animals alone would give all **1.4 billion people in extreme poverty more than twice the calories they need.**
 - Hardin's predictions for India and Bangladesh were incorrect; these countries now have a smaller proportion of hungry people despite population growth.
- **Current Concern:** Rapid population growth rates in some African nations are alarming (e.g., Nigeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo predicted to almost double or triple by 2050).
- **Triage Implications:** Advocates propose allowing population growth in such countries to be checked by a rise in death rates (famines, malnutrition, increased infant mortality, epidemics).
- **Repugnance and Long-term Consequences:** Such consequences are "horrible" and prompt immediate rejection. However, advocates of triage are concerned with long-term consequences, arguing that current aid merely ensures more suffering later. If correct, there would be no long-term obligation to assist.
- **Rejection of Triage (Consequentialist Framework):**
 - A consequentialist ethics must consider probability of outcome. A certain benefit is preferred over an uncertain, slightly larger benefit.
 - Predicted evil of shutting off aid: tens of millions would die slowly, hundreds of millions would live in extreme poverty.
 - The supposed "greater evil" of future disaster (population 50% larger, more deaths) is a *possible* evil. The key question is the probability of this forecast.
 - **Demographic Transition Model:** Explains population changes as living standards rise. Initially, high fertility and high death rates -> reduced child mortality causes rapid growth (current phase for some sub-Saharan African countries). As child mortality falls, birth rates decline due to awareness, diminished need for old-age support, improved education, and emancipation/employment of women. Most rich nations have reached this stable stage.
 - **Alternative to Disaster (based on model):** Assist poor countries to raise living standards, encourage land reform, improve education (especially women), provide alternatives to child-bearing roles, make contraception and sterilization widely available.
 - **Evidence of Success:** UN estimates show total fertility rate in developing countries fell from **six births per woman (late 1960s) to less than three (early 21st century).** Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Bangladesh had notable successes with contraception. This expenditure is highly cost-effective.
 - **Conclusion:** This evidence is sufficient to render shutting off aid ethically unacceptable. We cannot allow millions to die when there is a reasonable probability that population growth can be controlled without such horrors. Population growth is a reason for *reconsidering the kind of aid to give* (e.g., more resources for women's education, contraceptive services), not for reducing the obligation to assist.

- **Awkward Question: Conditional Aid:**
 - If an overpopulated country restricts contraceptives for religious/nationalistic reasons, should aid be conditional?
 - Ob Foreign aid should be government responsibility, private giving lets government off the hook.
- **Response:** Governments of affluent nations *should* give more aid. Less than **25 cents in every \$100 of GNI is scandalous** for the US. The UN target of 0.7% is also modest.
- **Plausibility of Objection:** The idea that more private giving leads to less government aid is questionable. The opposite view (if no one gives voluntarily, the government assumes lack of citizen support and cuts programs) is more reasonable.
- **Conclusion:** Unless there's definite probability that refusing private giving increases government assistance, refusing to give privately is wrong (refusal to prevent a definite evil for uncertain gain). The onus of proof is on those who refuse to give privately.
- **Beyond Private Giving:** Active citizens should campaign for new standards for public and private aid, and for fairer trading arrangements (e.g., ending rich nation agricultural subsidies that harm poor countries' competitiveness). Political activism might be more important, but why not do both?. Many use this objection to avoid giving *and* political activism.

4. "Too High a Standard?":

- **Objection:** The argument is too demanding, setting a standard only a saint could attain. Three versions:
 - **Version 1: Human nature/Impossibility:**
 - Claim: Human nature is self-interested, concerned with immediate family (due to evolution – Hardin, Dawkins). We cannot achieve such a high, impartial standard, and "ought implies can".
 - **Response:** Partiality is a strong tendency, and it's foolish to expect widespread conformity or to condemn all who fail. However, acting impartially, though difficult, is *not impossible*. The maxim "ought implies can" applies to literal impossibility (e.g., saving more people from a sinking lifeboat when it would sink). When affluent individuals spend on luxuries while others starve, it's clear they *can* give much more. There is no barrier to approaching the impartial standard.
 - **Examples of What's Possible:**
 - **Salwen family (Atlanta, 2006):** Well-off family sold their large home, gave **\$800,000** to help villagers in Ghana, and moved to a smaller home. They found "togetherness, trust and joy". This example shows "a family can break through barriers that most of us take for granted".
 - **Zell Kravinsky:** After making \$40 million in real estate, he gave away almost all of it, living modestly. He then donated a kidney to a stranger upon learning of the need and low risk.
 - These examples show the impartial standard is not impossible for individuals. Most people never try.
 - **Version 2: Undesirability of "Moral Saints":**
 - Claim (Susan Wolf): Such an ethic demands a single-minded pursuit of the overall good, lacking the broad diversity of interests that make life interesting (opera, gourmet cooking, elegant clothes, professional sport). This isn't an ideal "good life".

- **Response:** The "rich and varied life" Wolf describes is desirable in a world of plenty, but not when buying luxuries means accepting avoidable suffering. A doctor facing hundreds of train crash victims cannot defensibly treat 50 and then go to the opera. The life-or-death needs of others take priority. Globally, we are like that doctor in a time of disaster.
- **Personal Relationships:** Claim: An impartial ethic makes serious personal relationships (love, friendship) impossible due to their inherent partiality.
- **Response:** There is a place for some degree of partiality for kin and other close relationships within an impartially grounded moral framework. These relationships are "among the necessities of a flourishing life," and giving them up would be a sacrifice of "great moral significance". Moreover, it would diminish happiness, mental health, and effectiveness as an agent of change, so no such sacrifice is required by the principle.
- **Version 3: Counter-productiveness of High Standards:**
 - Claim: Demanding too much might lead people to give nothing ("As I can't do what is morally required anyway, I won't bother to give at all"). A lower, more realistic standard might result in more aid.
 - **Response:** This is a prediction about human behavior and is compatible with the argument that we *are obliged* to give until comparable sacrifice. What follows is that *public advocacy* of this highest standard might be undesirable. To maximize reduction of extreme poverty, advocating a lower standard might be more effective. Consequentialists recognize this potential conflict between private morality (what one truly ought to do) and public advocacy (what leads to best consequences). This relates to the distinction between intuitive and critical levels of morality.
 - **Is the standard counter-productive?** Not much evidence, but discussions suggest it might be. The conventional standard (a few coins) is "far too low".
 - **Proposed Solution (Singer's "The Life You Can Save"):** A progressive scale, like a tax scale, starting at **1% of income** and for 90% of taxpayers, not exceeding **5%**. This is realistic and often brings personal gain (psychological studies show givers are happier).
 - **Impact of Proposed Scale:** If widely adopted in the affluent world, it could raise **\$1.5 trillion each year**. This is **eight times what the UN task force (Jeffrey Sachs) calculated was needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals** (\$187.5 billion). These goals included halving poverty/hunger, reducing child deaths by two-thirds (saving 6 million lives annually), and universal primary schooling.
 - **Final Conclusion:** The argument's high standard is demanding only because so few with the ability to help are doing so significantly. If most helped, individual contributions would be modest. The need is to change public ethics so that giving a significant amount becomes an "elementary part of what it is to live an ethical life" for anyone who can afford luxuries (e.g., even a bottle of water if safe drinking water is free).