

The singer solution to world poverty



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In the New York Times Article “ the Singer Solution to World Poverty” the author Peter Singer argues that there is no reason why Americans don’t donate money to the needy when they can afford countless of luxury that are not essential to the preservation of their lives and health. Singer pursues the audience with two different situations trying to motivate the reader to donate money instantly. The first situation comes from a Brazilian film, Central Station in which a woman called Dora, a retired schoolteacher, has to persuade a homeless nine years old boy to a family that will adopt him in order to make a thousand dollars.

Dora delivers successfully the boy into his new family, and she receives the thousand dollars. After spending some of the money in a new television, she is told that the boy was too old for adoption and so he will be killed. As a consequence, Dora decided to take the boy back. The second situation that Singer uses in his argument comes from the philosopher Peter Unger’s book Living High and Letting Die. A man called Bob who has a valuable car, a Bugatti for which he has spent most of his savings on it.

Bob likes his car not only for riding it and caring for it, but also because its value is increasing and in fact the car is ensuring a stable life after Bob’s retirement. One day, Bob found himself in a dramatic situation where he could save the life of a boy who was in the way of a speedy train, but to do so he would have to sacrifice his expensive and valuable Bugatti sport car. However, he chose not to sacrifice his car and the boy is killed by the train and his Bugatti is unharmed. Singer brings up these two situations to provoke a response from the reader.

Singer emphasizes Dora's attitude of saving the boy's life arguing that if Dora hadn't taken the boy back, she would have become a "monster" in the eyes of the audience. On the other hand, Singer says about Bob that the audience will immediately condemn his decision. The author shows easily that he wants the audience to be in favor of Dora. In addition, Singer argued that the American family in the United States spend one-third of its income on unnecessary things and not essentials to the preservation of life and health.

Comparing this fact with the television's importance was for Dora. Therefore, Singer asked the audience the ethical distinction between Dora and an American family which doesn't donate money to save children's lives. Singer relates the stories of Bob and Dora to the argument about American not donating to the poor. Added to this, Singer makes a difference between Dora's situation and Bob's situation. Dora has already made contact with the little boy and Bob cannot see the boy clearly because he is too far away from him.

In addition, Singer named himself as an utilitarian philosopher, which means that he judges according to the consequences. In fact, Dora was right because she saved the child's life and Bob was wrong because the boy died. However, Singer said he doesn't expect the audience to realize that, but he highlights that: "there is a troubling incongruity in being so quickly to condemn Dora for taking the child to the organ peddlers while, at the same time, not regarding the American consumer's behavior as raising a serious moral issue."

In fact, according to Singer's belief that the results determine whether a decision is wrong or right, how come we condemn Bob's action but we don't considerate donate money instead of buying thing of luxuries and necessities when the consequence is more children dying. We have the opportunity to save children's lives as well. According to Singer's research, it takes only \$200 to save a child's life. So, the next step taken for Singer is pursuing the reader to feel guilty not only for not donating money to an organization like Unicef or Oxfam but also for comparing the reader's behavior as the same as Bob.

Singer keeps pursuing the reader by making questions like how we judge ourselves if we don't donate money. Trying to make the reader conscious that we are in the same situation as Bob, and we should go and make a phone call to donate \$200. However, Singer hesitate whether that money would reach the people who need it. The author leaves this doubt without an answer. Moreover, he tries to find a justification of why people don't donate considering fairness.

Why we should donate every surplus cent if my fair share will not donate anything. Singer reaches the assumption that we lack a clear moral line between Bob's situation and that of any reader of this article that doesn't donate \$200 to an overseas aid agency. Yet, Singer arouse the question of how much people should donate. He also said that every dinner at a restaurant could save a child life. Thus, an American family shouldn't go. Moreover, he concluded that a American middle-class family could donate \$20. 00 per year if they don't spend that money on unnecessarily items. However, only when the sacrifice become significant, people would say that

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Bob reacted correctly. He leaves us with two options, being like Bob consciously or donating every single surplus dollar to charitable organizations. Moreover, the last straw comes when Singer says : “ I accept that we are unlikely to see, in the near or even medium-term future, a world in which it is normal for wealthy Americans to give the bulk of their wealth to strangers”

Added to this, Singer concludes by saying that Americans are in no position to condemn any action and if we don't donate money we should at least know that we are failing to live a morally decent life. Through the article, Singer gets into several extreme examples that hurts his thesis leaving unanswered questions and thoughts. He demands people to sacrifice every penny of their extra wealth. He had a strong argument but he is too extremely persuasive with the audience that it would probably create irritation against his proposal.