

Chapter review

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



Teacher Summary and analysis of Peter Singers Chapter 8 " Practical Ethics"
book Chapter 8 of Peter Singers " practical Ethics" book, Singer discuss about poverty and how it becomes our duty to help alleviate it. He opened the chapter by dissecting global poverty into relative and absolute poverty where relative poverty means how poor a person is compared to others while absolute poverty is the kind of poverty that kills because one cannot even eat due to extreme poverty.

Singer then equated extreme poverty to murder because it is tantamount to allowing others to die when we do not do something about extreme poverty. Singer cited that motivations may not be ominous and that the outcome may differ, and that the plight of the poor may not be one's responsibility, but still, allowing person to die is just like murder. To illustrate, Singer narrated the example of a drowning child where he is confronted with the dilemma of ruining his clothes and being absent from his own lecture to letting the child drown and die. Of course the choice is obvious in this analogy to make his point understandable why extreme poverty can equate to murder and why we should help to alleviate extreme poverty.

In sum, Singer's ethical guidelines in chapter 8 posits that extreme poverty kills. That if we could do something about it, or if we could do something to prevent it, then we ought to do it. Preventing extreme poverty is a duty that each one of us has to do if it is in our power to do it.

Analysis

This chapter is one of the most useful ethical guidelines that one could use as a moral compass in today's materialistic world. Unlike other ethical guidelines which are too distant, too abstract and too philosophical to be

understood in the modern world, Singer's practical ethics book is based on the ethical dilemmas that often confronts us in real life. He used concrete situations where most of us has to deal with and confronts the moral and ethical dilemma with a course of action that is practical and responsive. Unlike the classical theorists such as Kant's deontological ethics or Aristotle's Nicomachean ethics where it is difficult to understand, Singer's ethical guidelines are based on real life and therefore can be used in real life. For example, he narrated the case of the drowning child to illustrate how to resolve the ethical dilemma of poverty.

In proposing his argument, Singer anticipated the possible response why people will dismiss extreme poverty to be an equivalent to murder as we allow a person to die. And as a rebuttal, he provided the example of the drowning child thought experiment. The rebuttal clearly showed the ethical dilemma of how allowing a person to die to be equivalent of murder. The child is drowning and it is only him who could save the child but it will ruin his clothes and possibly cancel his lecture. But these inconveniences are nothing compared "with the avoidable death of a child" (Singer 199). This is the same situation where we are in a position to save people from extreme poverty but would hesitate to do it due to the inconveniences or hopelessness attached to the ethical dilemma.

This approach of drawing ethical guidelines from concrete ethical dilemma is something that modern day people could relate, understand and hopefully, follow Singer's prescription on how to be ethical in today's world to alleviate the suffering of others especially if it does not take too much out of us but could mean between the life and death to others. This is an ethical theory

where people can really act upon to make a difference in the lives of other people.

Work Cited

Singer, Peter. Practical Ethics. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979. Print.