

PHI 202 | Study questions 1

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Readings:

Shaw, W. (2006). The Consequentialist Perspective.

Singer, P. (1972). Famine, Affluence, and Morality.

INTUITIONS

(i) In the first lecture, Johann presented a number of hypothetical scenarios such as *Grenade*, *Scarce Drug*, and *Trolley*. He then asked you whether you think that particular actions are required, permissible, or impermissible. He was not asking you to report whether you are consequentialists, Kantians, or whatever. Instead, he was asking you what *intuitions* you. What are intuitions?

(ii) In his article, Singer appeals to intuitions in his 'Argument by Analogy'. Can you identify where? He also addresses a possible objection to his argument that it has counter-intuitive results. Can you identify where? What does this tell us about the role of intuitions in ethics?

(iii) Do we all have the same intuitions? If not, does it undermine their role in ethics?

SINGER'S ARGUMENT BY ANALOGY

(i) What are the premises and the conclusion of Singer's *Argument By Analogy*?

(ii) Do you find the second premise compelling?

(iii) Singer's conclusion is by many people considered far-reaching: You should spend a large amount of your income on charitable organisations. Can we push his argument even further? Can you think of a similar case in which it's not yours, but someone else's money at stake?

SUPEREROGATORY ACTIONS

(i) Singer imagines that the pond in which the child is drowning is shallow. Why is this feature important?

(ii) Consider the following case due to Shelly Kagan (1989):

A building across the street is on fire. You know that there is a child trapped inside. You take the risk and enter the building. Inside, you find the child as well as a beautiful parrot. As it happens, you are a lover of birds and saving this parrot would bring you a lot of joy. Unfortunately, you can only save either the child or else the parrot. Is it permissible for you to save the parrot?

(iii) What does this case have in common with giving to charitable organisations?

EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM

(i) Which charitable organisations should we donate to if we want to do the most good? Note that some causes may be more important than others and that some organisations may be more effective than others. Compare your intuitive responses with the recommendations of Give Well.

(ii) You will spend roughly 80,000 hours at work in your life. This will be the single most time-consuming activity in your life. In most cases, you will choose a career early on and stick to it until retirement. Thus, your career choice is really important. What career should you choose if you want to do the most good?