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Humes 103

Dr. O'Geen

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Throughout 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality,' Singer argues individuals have a moral duty to prevent the suffering of those in extreme poverty by donating—a responsibility he believes is not optional charity, but a duty. A consistent reference of the word “duty” drives a feeling of obligation, but in Singer’s terms, it is defined as a mandatory action for the betterment of society. His argument reinforces the notion that if it is accessible, people should take action if it requires little to no sacrifice. The author manages to twist everyday words to circulate around his perspective of utilitarianism, by choosing quantity over the quality of an act. Duty emphasizes Singer’s argument of moral responsibility, and through different examples shapes what steps society should follow. By defining such a frequently used term in the paper, it provides clarity to his potential justifications further on. To him, a duty is donating and serving any human to the extent we can. Statements like these only highlight the hypocrisy from this philosopher, considering he admits he did not always fund charities. This creates a potential irony, as Singer himself admits to not always adhering to the stringent moral standard he sets for others.

While it may not be incredibly distinct, Singer employs a utilitarian perspective through his paper. He insists that we “ought to give the money away,” and that “it is wrong not to do so,” stemming from his need to give back to his community, uninterested in the impacts it may have on individuals (Singer, 235.) This perspective prioritizes outcome over intention, and often ignores individual rights. Simultaneously, it is a more altruistic philosophical perspective,

ignoring emotions and rationalizing actions for the greater good. Once grasped, it sets the tone and informs readers of the context of his rash arguments. The urgency Singer often proclaims throughout the paragraph made me feel ashamed for not considering global crises, and not steadily donating. He employs rhetorical tactics like this to incite guilt and evoke a sense of personal accountability. To be very honest, it is an after thought, and capturing how exactly Singer can convey these philosophical prophecies is through his perspective. Without framing the paper, it would lack the information of what exactly reinforces Singer's claims. Through a conscious understanding of what it means to be a utilitarian, the passage presents a cleaner thesis, and general support can be applied.

As I began to collect different thoughts about the excerpt, one quote struck out to me. "The charitable man may be praised, but the man who is not charitable is not condemned" (Singer, 235.) I found myself repeating this comment frequently; not only does it solidify a point Singer has repeated multiple times, but the phrasing sticks. It could be a call out, as Singer likes to chastise those reading, and implying he may want those not charitable to be condemned. He declares a lack of proximity is not an excuse to neglect supporting other countries. Statements like these only highlight the hypocrisy from this philosopher, considering he admits he did not always fund charities. This creates a potential inconsistency, as Singer himself admits to not always adhering to the moral standard he sets for others. I feel as though it gives a purpose to the argument Singer advocates for so strongly. It also does clarify his ideals and what he finds important.

On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized information regarding this work, I have followed and will continue to observe all regulations regarding it, and I am unaware of any violation of the Honor Code by others.

Works Cited

Singer, Peter. *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1phfsgFTQozldlcxFskgpPtLkC70z69aD/view>