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ETHICAL PROBLEMS  
IN CONNECTION WITH WORLD POVERTY

FAN WING

MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

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ETHICAL PROBLEMS  
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by

FAN Wing

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## ABSTRACT

### Ethical Problems In Connection With World Poverty

by

FAN Wing

Master of Philosophy

World economy has been doing well in recent decades even taking into account the current financial crisis. However, there are even more people suffering from poverty and related issues than earlier. I am going to discuss the issue of helping poor people in the context of ethics.

In my thesis, I will firstly state the standard of absolute poverty, which will be the main focus in the remainder of the text. Then, I will present the argument given by a contemporary philosopher, Peter Singer, that urges us to give money to the poor people. I will go through his argument and his analogy between saving a drowning child and giving out our money for charity on poverty relief. Many people may think his theory controversial and difficult to accept. Afterwards, I will present main arguments against Singer. I will assess these arguments and claim that some of them fail as criticisms of Singer's central claims. However some do successfully point out the flaws of Singer's argument, and some actually aim at questioning the entire discussion of poverty relief. I will try to present and assess the effectiveness of the alternative arguments by other philosophers that avoid these criticisms and that try to support the aid in a different way.

The main question in my thesis is whether we have any moral obligation to help the poor people around the world. And if we have such duties, to what extent we are obliged to do so. I will do the literature review on different arguments and try to give my own opinions in different parts in my thesis.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

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(Fan Wing)  
24 August 2009

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH WORLD POVERTY

by

FAN Wing

Master of Philosophy

Panel of Examiners:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman)  
( Dr. Zheng Yujian )

\_\_\_\_\_ (External Member)  
( Prof. Stephen Palmquist )

\_\_\_\_\_ (Internal Member)  
( Prof. Neven Sesardic )

\_\_\_\_\_ (Internal Member)  
( Dr. Lo Kit-hung )

Chief Supervisor:

SESARDIC Neven

Co-supervisor:

RICE James Andrew

Approved for the Senate:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. Jesús SEADE  
Chairman, Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, the world economy is doing relatively well. True, in the past decades, many countries recorded large amount of inflation. There was a tsunami over the world economy in 2008, every country suffered in this great depression. It was a very large-scale recession, and indeed some countries even faced widespread difficulties. It is a truism that many people feel anxious about the decrease of their own wealth. Nevertheless, affluent countries are still generally speaking, very prosperous, at least prosperous enough to face the hard times.

But on the same globe, there is another group of people. They often do not have even enough food to live on. They do not get the minimum resources for sustaining their lives. They lack the basic necessities that any human beings need. They live in what can only be described as absolute poverty.

### **1.1 Poverty**

Many people of course live in poverty, but what is poverty exactly? How severe should the situation be that we have to give help? Generally, poverty is divided into two kinds: relative poverty and absolute poverty.

Relative poverty usually means being poor when compared to one's neighbours, or one's fellow citizens. It is defined socially. It depends on the society and its context. People living in relative poverty are those who live with the income much lower than the medium income of their community or society. It may not be necessary that these lowest income groups live without clean food, water or shelter. But they are poor when compared to most of the people in their society. Their income may not be enough for sustaining their lives when faced with the high price index in their own economies. Therefore, these people may well suffer in their community.

In my thesis, I will put aside relative poverty, not because it is not worth our concern, but because we need to go into different social contexts when tackling the problems associated with relative poverty. There is another kind of poverty that is universally described however, and this has to do with poverty in absolute terms. Absolute poverty is defined in concrete terms by international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. In my thesis, I will talk about world poverty in these absolute terms.

According to the World Bank, half of the world population is living in poverty, and nearly a quarter is living in extreme poverty. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as subsisting with US\$1/day (or less) and moderate poverty as subsisting on approximately US\$2/day. According to their investigations, in 2001, there were 1.1

billion in the world population living under US\$1/day and 2.7 billion living under \$2/day. But the threshold of extreme poverty was revised last year. In 2008, the World Bank changed the extreme poverty line to US\$1.25/day. Currently there are 1.4 billion people living under this threshold. Lifting up the threshold is not going to make more people fall in the trap. This is because the old standard was used for decades. However it should have been revised even earlier. The economic growth in the last decades did not lead to the relief of poverty. We are living well in affluent countries. It is hard for us to imagine there are such a huge number of people who cannot sustain their lives.

One may think that living in a poor country on US\$1.25/day could be sufficient to sustain their lives. But it is wrong to think this way. This indicator is calculated in terms of PPP, which refers to “purchasing power parity.” The number is converted into the equilibrium purchasing power in the US. That means if they are living in the US, they live with only less than US\$1.25 per day. And actually most of them are far from US\$1.25 a day. It is a very hard situation.

There is another indicator of absolute poverty which has been introduced by the United Nations, *“It is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information and access to services.”* The UN defines absolute poverty as

the absence of any two of these basic human needs. These are so important for sustaining their lives, especially the first few criteria: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, and shelter. However, the last three are generally regarded as something important for human well-being but it is questionable whether they should be regarded as the very basic needs. Yet disregarding these three dubious requirements, the first few are undoubtedly life necessities. The rich do not have to worry about lacking one of them. However, many people are in the condition that without more than two of these essential needs. It is a matter of life and death.

World Poverty is spreading all over the world. It is mainly distributed in South Asia, and in Africa. In 2004, about 40 percent of the households in Sub-Saharan area were subsisting under the poverty line.<sup>1</sup>

Poverty is a state that persists. If the parents are poor, the family would not suddenly become rich in the next generation. The children inherit poverty from their parents. Young children and infants suffer a lot from poverty. They need lots of nutrients for their growth. But this seems impossible to achieve for those living with less than US\$1 a day. Life expectancy is extremely low in countries in Africa. The UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimates that some 10 million children under five-year-old die of the poverty-related causes around the globe.<sup>2</sup> It is

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<sup>1</sup> Poverty. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved May 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty>

<sup>2</sup> Singer, Peter (2009). *The Life You Can Save: Acting now to end world poverty*. New York: Random House. P. 5

27,000 everyday, one every three seconds. But this number does not include the elder children or adults. They die of malnutrition and some diseases which can be easily cured in affluent countries. But they do not get these basic treatments or nutrients.

## **1.2 Objective**

I am going to discuss the issue of world poverty in the context of morality. The main question here is neither why there is poverty nor how to solve this ongoing evil. But it does not mean that these two questions are not relevant, or will not be mentioned. However, the core question I am going to address is whether we, as affluent individuals, are obliged to give or not, and if yes, how far we should go. I will discuss the issues about the duty to the poor and its limits. For the term “poverty” in this paper, I mean the absolute poverty around the world. I will also discuss the issue in the context of contemporary bioethics. Contemporary philosopher Peter Singer wrote an article “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”<sup>3</sup> in 1972, and many discussions afterwards are mainly based on his argument. I will go through his arguments, and point out the criticisms he may face. Then, I will assess those criticisms. I will argue that some criticisms are valid but some fail to refute Singer’s argument. However, I will point out that there are fatal criticisms such as the

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<sup>3</sup> Singer, Peter (Spring 1972). Famine, Affluence, and Morality. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3, 229-243.

failure of the analogy and the over-demandingness of his argument. This makes his claim much weaker, or comes close to refuting it. Moreover, I will search for other arguments that support aid, and evaluate these pro-aid arguments by other philosophers. I will argue that Garrett Cullity's argument from beneficence can avoid some criticisms of Singer. At the end of this thesis, I will reveal the general criticisms against the aid activities. These anti-aid arguments are not based on any particular philosophical basis, but rather relate to the whole issue of helping the poor. However, I would argue many of these objections are linked to practical problems, and are unsuccessful in undermining the requirement for beneficence. I will also point out that these general and practical criticisms of aid can be met if the policies could be planned and coordinated better. Therefore, in my conclusion, I will argue that we still have to give some of our money for alleviating the global poverty.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Peter Singer's Argument**

Singer is a famous contemporary philosopher expert in practical ethics, especially bioethics. In 1972, he published an article "Famine, Affluence, and Morality". He professed that we should give out all of our surplus money to the aid agencies for alleviating the astounding situation of world poverty. Spending on luxuries but not necessities is wrong morally. This is a very progressive claim, and is very controversial. It aroused lots of discussions afterwards. And the discussions spread widely between economists, social scientists, and philosophers. Some of them support Singer's claims, some reject them, and some expand the debate further. But all these contentions are mostly based on Singer's view. Therefore, it is better to begin my thesis with Singer's argument in some detail.

Singer's argument starts the discussion about our moral obligation to help poor people. Singer says that when we are spending money on luxury products, we should consider there are large numbers of people on the other side of the world who are suffering from extreme poverty. We are obliged to give the money for helping the destitute and for saving people's lives. According to this reasoning, the money spent on things that we do not necessarily need should be given away. In common sense

thinking, we think that giving our money to aid is charitable behaviour, and thus is supererogatory. But Singer considers it to be an obligation rather than an act of generosity. Regarding supererogatory acts, we are praised for them, but we are not wrong if we do nothing (e.g., altruistic charitable activities). However, for a moral obligation, we are strongly required to do it, and should not expect any special praise for doing so. If we fail to do so, we are wrong and morally blamable. How can Singer come to this controversial conclusion? Let's go into details of his carefully constructed argument.

He firstly suggests an assumption, which he thinks is hard or even not possible to refute. The assumption is that any suffering from the lack of basic necessities like food, clean water, shelter, sanitation facilities and medical care is bad.<sup>4</sup> This is simply for Singer, an unquestionable fact. And this is not dependent on any culture. It is an evil universally. Anyone across the world without these basic human needs is in a bad situation.

After starting with this undeniable assumption, he derives the Strong Principle: *"If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it."*<sup>5</sup>

There is another version of this principle, which is the weak one, *"If it is in our*

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<sup>4</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

<sup>5</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231



*power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it.”*<sup>6</sup>

There is the third version of this principle, which is the latest one. Singer makes it in his latest book concerning world poverty. In *The Life You can Save* published in early 2009, he introduces a moderate principle, *“If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without sacrificing anything nearly as important, it is wrong not to do so.”*<sup>7</sup> The term *“nearly as important”* is quite vague. Nevertheless, Singer leaves space here for people to think for themselves. He is confident about the claim that there are many things that are clearly not nearly as important as to save a child, although it is not explicitly claimed what this is.<sup>8</sup>

The weaker version, of course, is the least demanding one. The latest one is a bit weaker than the strong version. However, in most philosophical papers discussing the ideas proposed by Singer, it is generally the strong version of the principle that is taken for discussion. And in this paper, I am also going to consider this stronger version as the main one when discussing issues concerning Singer’s principle. If the principle is mentioned without specification, I am talking about the stronger version.

The principle means that when we are able to prevent the occurrence of some bad things which are just mentioned above, and by doing this we are not going to

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<sup>6</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

<sup>7</sup> (Singer, 2009). P.15-16

<sup>8</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 17-18.

sacrifice something which is morally more important, then we should offer our hands in order to help. Because the assumption says those things are so bad, and if we could prevent them from happening, then why not?

Singer points out that the argument is not going to rely on any specific standpoint in ethics. It is a general moral principle. This principle is not based on a utilitarian point of view. It is not a Kantian one either, nor an approach of virtue ethics. It is not grounded in any particular ethical theory. It is because it is derived from the most basic human needs on the necessities to sustain lives. "Death due to hunger is bad" has no controversies between different ethnic groups or nationalities. These are universal evils. But it does not mean that he is appealing here to a Kantian approach. The universality is because of its evilness for the whole human kind. Being a principle apart from special theories does not mean that it is contrary to these theories. It applies to all human beings no matter what one's moral beliefs are. It is therefore a general moral principle. As a basic moral principle apart from any specific ethical theories, it is not going to evade rejection from particular theories. It faces even more refutations. It invites criticisms from different moral beliefs. But it goes with a broader applicability, which is Singer's aim.

The principle itself is only a little bit abstract. Singer gives an example for its application. It is the famous example of a drowning child. Just imagine we are in a

hurry to work or to school in the morning, and we are dressed well. The suit is new, the shoes are expensive. However, imagine that when we are walking past a shallow pond we find that there is a child who is going to drown in the water. Although we are rushing to work, and are all dressed-up, we should jump into the water and pull the child out of the pond. It might well mean being late and getting our clothes wet and ruined, but it is not important when compared to the life of that child. It is simply absurd to say, “No! My shoes are more important!” If people were to react in this way, without any additional sufficient reason, we could well blame them for being inhumane.

But this is not the end of Singer’s argument. He goes on to build an analogy between the drowning child and global poverty, as he thinks both situations are basically the same. Singer goes forward here by claiming that there are drowning people around the globe. They are in danger. They can easily lose their lives. They are in desperate need. When we are spending money on something that is not necessary, why don’t we use this money to save those dying people? According to this reasoning there is no excuse to buy a bottle of water while tap water is free and accessible in affluent countries. There is no reason to buy expensive and fuel-wasting Ferrari while other cheaper brands are available. There should not be preference for an expensive mechanical watch rather than a cheaper and actually more accurate

quartz watch. The money spent on luxuries can be given to poverty relief organizations. It is the way to save people 10,000 miles away. Singer thinks that these organizations can do more if they had more money.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, he urges us to give away our surplus to the charities for alleviating poverty around the world. He says if we accept that we ought morally to save the sinking child in the shallow pond, we do have the same moral obligation to save those who are on the other side of the world.

People may think that there are differences in the two cases. It is different because the child is drowning near me, I can save him with my own hands. However poverty is a worldwide issue, it is far removed from us. And there are so many people that could help the poor, my effort is not that important for saving. It is usually the way that people may think. But Singer says there should not be such excuses. He states two implications of his argument, namely that proximity and the number of people involved are irrelevant. He gives reasons to defend these two implications.

Firstly, he claims that there should not be any difference because of proximity. If we accept the “*impartiality, universalizability, equality*”<sup>10</sup> there should not be a difference if the child I can save is my neighbour’s child or a child that is thousands

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<sup>9</sup> (Singer, 2009) P. 5

<sup>10</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 232

miles away from me. Impartiality, universalizability, equality are values that are generally accepted around the world. If we also accept these values, we could not say there is justifiable discrimination between neighbour's child and an African child that we do not know.

Singer defends his second implication afterwards. He admits that there might be psychological difference when people think there are others involved in the situation like us but who at the same time do nothing. We may feel less guilty of our inaction when we can point to others in the same position who have done nothing. Yes, for Singer, it is a psychological difference, but it does not make any real difference to our moral obligation. If we see other people, no further away than us, who have also noticed the child but doing nothing, we should not feel less guilty. It is absurd to think numbers lessen obligation. People may think it as an "ideal excuse for inactivity". But Singer says that most of the major evils, such as poverty, overpopulation, pollution, are problems in which everyone is almost equally involved.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, he claims that there are no differences of responsibility that would depend on proximity and the number of people involved. If these two implications are true, then for Singer, it is so obvious that we should help the global poor, no matter how far those sufferers are. And everyone on Earth is involved in the same

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<sup>11</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 232

way as the one who sees the drowning child. So, everyone has the same responsibility to save people in poverty wherever one is in the world. Everyone in affluent countries should donate money to the charity organizations working on poverty relief across nations, like UNICEF or Oxfam.

For charity, we do think that it is morally good to do so, but we think there is nothing wrong if we are not giving. However, for Singer, it is not merely charity or beneficence, and it is not supererogatory<sup>12</sup>. It is a moral obligation. We are morally wrong if we fail to meet its demand. We ought to give away the money for famine relief.

Even if we accept what Singer urges, the question remains: how much should we give? As Singer indicates, we all have the equal responsibility to the global poor. We should donate money continuously to help them if that does not require sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. Singer urges us to give as much as possible until our sacrifice is of comparable moral importance. It seems so vague, but it is a matter of principle. Anyway, Singer does give some concrete examples. In another article, “The Solution to World Poverty”, he does mention the question of *“how does my philosophy break down in dollars and cents?”*<sup>13</sup>

According to the Conference Board, a nonprofit economic research organization, in

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<sup>12</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 235

<sup>13</sup> Singer, Peter (September 05, 1999). “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”. *The New York Times Magazine*, Retrieved March 13 2008, from <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19990905mag-poverty-singer.html> , P.4

the US, an American household with an annual income of US\$50,000 spends around US\$30,000 on necessities every year.<sup>14</sup> So, this household should make the donations to help the world's poor as close as possible to US\$20,000. However, Singer thinks the standard of US\$30,000 for necessities holds also for those households that have income of US\$100,000 a year. That means they should give as close to US\$70,000 as possible. For Singer, the formula is so simple: "*whatever money you're spending on luxuries, not necessities should be given away.*"<sup>15</sup>

It is very demanding, and thus, controversial. It is, for most people, hard to accept Singer's position that we should give away all of our surplus even if we are ready to help those in global poverty. But Singer himself also anticipates its controversial aspect in the article: "*the uncontroversial appearance of the principle just stated is deceptive. If it were acted upon, even in its qualified form, our lives, our societies, and our world would be fundamentally changed.*"<sup>16</sup> Singer mentions that even if we adopted his principle moderately<sup>17</sup>, it would still make great changes to our lives. But it is worth doing so.

He admits that we may not be psychologically altruistic enough to make it plausible to sacrifice that much for strangers. It is right on the fact of human nature. However, he points out that this fact cannot lead to any moral conclusion of

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<sup>14</sup> (Singer, 1999). P.4

<sup>15</sup> (Singer, 1999). P.4

<sup>16</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

<sup>17</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 241

inactivity<sup>18</sup>. My thesis is going to explore whether we, the affluent people, are morally required to help the poor. What we are not willing to do, does not affect the moral requirement of what we ought to do. Unless we can show his argument's invalidity, or prove its unsoundness, we could not refute his argument. Otherwise, we are failing to live morally decent lives.

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<sup>18</sup> (Singer, 1999). P.5



## Chapter 3

### Criticisms on Singer and Evaluations on Criticisms

After explaining Singer's argument, you may feel that he is too radical in his conclusions. This is the feeling of many people. Singer himself also notices that, but does not regard it as an important challenge to him. He says, '*...the way people do in fact judge has nothing to do with the validity of my conclusion.*'<sup>19</sup> He thinks his argument follows from the principle that we ought to save those lives if by doing this there would not be any serious risk to us. It must stand unless the principle is rejected, or the arguments shown to be unsound. Saying 'it is too drastic, too radical' does nothing to reject the argument logically. There may be a great impact on our ordinary moral codes. However, ordinary moral rules do not mean they are the best rules ever. I think that it is alright to change the codes, if Singer's argument is proved to be true and valid. Therefore, we should criticize his argument in another way rather than just call it a drastic one. But, how to do it?

Actually, there are a number of ways. In this part, I am going to show various criticisms against Singer's arguments raised by philosophers. However, I would discuss the criticisms mainly from Neera K. Badhwar's article "International aid: When giving becomes a vice". It is not because she is the only philosopher to make

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<sup>19</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 236

those criticisms, but because she includes most of the main criticisms against Singer's argument. Some of the points she considers are also mentioned by other philosophers. But let me skip listing out all these philosophers and use Badhwar's article as the main reference for discussing most of the criticisms here. Some of the criticisms point to Singer's analogy, some are directed against his stressing the giving of money rather than using other means to help, and some are aimed at his own behaviour. I will go into details of these criticisms of his position. And then for each criticism against Singer, I will also analyze and evaluate their views and argue that some of them are successful, but some of them fail to refute Singer's stand. At the end of this part, we will see that Singer's argument will be in a hard position. The failure of his analogy between the drowning child and global poor makes his argument much weaker. He may have to change some part of his argument, otherwise it would be easily overthrown.

### **3.1.1 Monomania**

Badhwar thinks that Singer's thesis is monomaniac<sup>20</sup>. However, what is monomaniac? Monomaniac means that someone is irrationally focused on a single subject or class of subjects. Badhwar finds Singer's stand focused too much on world

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<sup>20</sup> Badhwar, Neera K. "International aid: When giving becomes a vice". Issue on *Justice and Global Politics*, Vol. 23, winter 2006, P.73

poverty without good reason while there are lots of other evils going on. She also thinks that even if we have to help the poor, Singer has put too much emphasis on giving out money and time, and has treated this means as the only way to help.

### Monomania on Money and Time

In her article “International aid: When giving becomes a vice”, Badhwar states that the world offers very rich variety of values that can make a life morally good. The world offers so many ways that could lead to morally good lives. There are many goals worth pursuing, many personalities worth developing, many ideals worth cherishing and following. Let me elaborate more. We would not deny that a good person must be to some extent a beneficent person. But being beneficent does not mean simply restricted to huge contributions of time or money towards aid agencies in order to solve the problem of global poverty. A beneficent person can help the aged, help sick people with fatal diseases, help orphans, or help save endangered animals. And to alleviate poverty, there is never only one way to achieve this end. We can give money to charity undoubtedly. However, we can also be volunteers to work with the poverty relief agencies. We can promote and provide information to people or communities around us, we can report the news concerning poverty across the world, and we can also conduct research to find the best way for poverty relief.

Singer seems to be putting too much emphasis on giving out our time, and especially our money, while there are so many possible ways to help the global poor.

### Monomania on Poverty

Singer's moral ideal is monomaniac not only with respect to the contribution of money and time, but also on the relief of poverty. Badhwar thinks that there are abundant bad things, abundant evils happening throughout the world, such as ongoing and unjust wars, absolutism and totalitarian rules, fatal and wide-spreading diseases, astonishing environmental crises, and deteriorating pollution etc. These are all the major evils on the planet. They are at least not smaller evil than the issue of global poverty. However, Singer seems only concerned about the issue of poverty. For him, giving help to poverty relief and prevention is the only way of being beneficent. In fact, the relief of poverty is only one special interest, just like a special interest of fighting fire or rebuilding houses destroyed by tornadoes<sup>21</sup>. People may like to trace their own special interest rather than follow Singer's urge. The other kind of interest can also lead to a beneficent or morally decent life. There is no point to treat the prevention of poverty as a more important interest than others. Choosing one over the others without a good reason then, makes Singer's argument a monomaniac one.

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<sup>21</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.74

### Sufficiently Beneficent

To be a morally decent person may involve being beneficent to certain extent. However, being beneficent does not mean only giving away our surplus money and time for alleviation of global poverty. One who fails to contribute to poverty relief activities can still be a beneficent person. A beneficent person need not contribute as much money and time to aid agencies as possible. She does not need to do a tremendous contribution or action against poverty in order to be beneficent. One may contribute one's effort on reducing discrimination, relieving pollution on the planet, promoting activities against global warming, or taking care of the disabled and elderly. Without being involved in any poverty reduction works, one can also be a very beneficent person undoubtedly. One can still be sufficiently beneficent if one's contributions to institutionalized charity are small or occasional<sup>22</sup>. Helping the poor may be sufficient to make one's life beneficent. But it does not mean helping poor people is necessary to be sufficiently beneficent. There are various ways of beneficence.

### **3.1.2 Evaluation of the Monomania Objection**

Badhwar thinks that Singer unreasonably focuses on the issue of world poverty among various tremendous dreadful evils on the planet. She argues that poverty is

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<sup>22</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.76

only one special interest among all, it is not necessary to put it as the only one or as the most important one. She also thinks that even if we are morally required to help the poor, it does not mean one is required to give one's entire surplus to charity. There are abundant ways to offer our hand to those desperate people.

At first we may think that Singer is not reasonable to choose poverty rather than other ongoing evils. However, after scrutiny I think his argument is not a monomaniac one. When we look through his argument clearly, we would find that he does not ban our help on other tragedies.

Let me recall the principle introduced by Singer, "*If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.*"<sup>23</sup> For Singer, this principle applies both to the case of drowning child and the issue of global dire poverty. Pulling the child from sinking in the pool is similar to giving away our money upon the basic needs to charities which are working to alleviate ongoing worldwide poverty. By giving out one's surplus for relieving activities, the lives of those people living in desperate need can be saved. Singer urges us to save those people who are in dire poverty. Does this claim imply that Singer is monomaniac? I do not think so.

Singer gives us the guidance by introducing the principle. His presentation is clear that we have to consider the situations when we have to decide what the correct

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<sup>23</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

conduct should be. He does not devalue other ongoing major evils across nations. However, the problem of poverty is so enormous. It affects about one-fifth to one-fourth of the global population living under US\$1 per day who live in absolute poverty. Under such circumstances they cannot sustain their lives. This is one among the greatest tragedies that are happening in the world. The poor populations are found on every continent, and especially in Africa. Singer never says poverty relief is the only beneficence that is worth pursuing. It is not the only calamity that requires our concerns. Following Singer's principle, you can take up other relief works if you think that they are morally worthier than alleviating global poverty. The key thing here is to weigh different goals and see if you find that there are some other things which are "*of comparable moral importance.*" Otherwise, you should give your help on poverty relief works rather than other less important tasks. He definitely chooses absolute poverty out of all of the ongoing evils on the earth. He urges us to give for the alleviation of this evil. But this does not imply he thinks other evils are not worth relieving. He does not deny other benevolent actions. Singer would not say "no" if you spend the money on other charitable movements with more significance for you, honestly and genuinely. Therefore, I think the accusation of monomania is not tenable.

For the minor charge of monomania on money as well as time, I will also say

that it is not a cogent criticism. Singer advises people to give away the surplus wealth, other than expenses for the basic necessities. I would say that it is a comprehensible and reasonable pleading. It is because in most affluent countries, people have their own occupations, and their backgrounds under conditions of great variety. The common factor between them is that they earn money, with the amounts that are much higher than what is required to sustain their lives. They can certainly give away some of their wealth. And giving out their surplus money to charitable organizations could probably be the most efficacious and easiest way to motivate the affluent people to support the relief works around the world. They do not have to become involved in saving poor people in person, and they do not have to go across the Atlantic and stay for years in African countries, nor do they have to abandon their jobs and their regular lives. They can just give the money to the transnational organizations working on poverty alleviation, such as UNICEF and Oxfam. By donating money, they can save people on the other side of the world while at the same time staying at home and watching television. If you wish to leave your affluent lives and cross oceans and do the works yourselves, it would be perfectly fine for Singer, or even better. He does not discourage people to be the life-saving volunteers or to get a job working on this. But for most people, it is not possible to do it this way. Therefore, it is conceivable that Singer introduces the easiest way to



follow, in order to convince as many people as possible. I think he would certainly appreciate if there were someone who would say, “No, I would go to Africa. I would rather choose to give the assistance by my own hand rather giving my hand indirectly through Oxfam. But these people are in small proportion. For the majority, he chooses to urge them in a simple way, which is to give away money. It does not indicate that Singer only wants us to help the poor by giving out our money. He is not monomaniacal on this.

### **3.2.1 Misanthropic Ideal**

Badhwar also thinks that Singer’s moral ideal is deeply misanthropic. Singer turns a blind eye to people’s interests. Being beneficent is morally good. Undoubtedly, it is worth pursuing. However, as stated previously, helping the poor is only one special interest among all. Being beneficent, at the same time, is only one goal that is worth pursuing in our lives. There are plenty of values which are worth following or accomplishing. There are plenty of goals which make our lives worth living. Our interests vary between different people with different backgrounds, purposes and personalities. But Singer totally ignores one’s vocation, moral personalities, individual histories, life projections and goals<sup>24</sup>. We have our own life plans. We may want to develop our careers and strive for success. We may put most

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<sup>24</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.74

of our efforts on academic research, as Singer does. We may like to live a simple life in the countryside. We would do something we love to do and something that is worth doing for us, rather than giving all our leisure time and surplus wealth to help those strangers in chronic poverty, although it is morally decent to do so.

At the same time, being morally decent is only one among all of our concerns. In reality we do have other concerns. Although we do not refuse to be a morally decent person, there are abundant ways to achieve this decency. Singer fails to identify the variety of moral ideals and of individualities. He arbitrarily ranks poverty alleviating activities by extensive self-sacrifice as the highest and very likely as the only moral value.

Badhwar points out that Singer is generally recognized as a utilitarian. Utilitarians, as well as most of us, would believe that the pursuit of happiness is *'the attempt to forge a life that is objectively meaningful, worthwhile and enjoyable to the individual concerned'*<sup>25</sup>. However, Badhwar thinks that Singer's theory claims full allegiance from all of us here and is not compatible with one's happiness. His ideal denies that we can use our money and time to lead a life that we think pleasant and significant. His demands ignore the importance of wealth creation, let alone one's integrity and moral diversity. Actually, following his position may probably result in much unhappiness.

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<sup>25</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.74

### **3.2.2 Evaluation on the Misanthropic Ideal**

It is not deniable that Singer's pleading for our response to the destitute is very demanding. Singer himself also admits that even the weaker version could make a great change to our ordinary lives and usual moral conducts.<sup>26</sup> But this would not forthrightly make Singer's ideal a misanthropic one. Singer calls on the rich to donate their income above what they spend on basic necessities. After satisfying their basic needs, they have to think about whether they should give away the surplus wealth or spend on their own yearnings. Singer is asking for quite a large contribution from all of us, the affluent people. However, we ought to give, when there is not anything of comparably moral importance. If one is thinking that buying a new and expensive second car would be very nice, he should recognize that there are many people who are suffering from lack of food, shelters, clean water etc. He has to weigh these factors before he decides where his money is to be spent. If he eventually decides to spend on a second car, it could be acceptable. But he should rationally provide a good reason. He has to show the moral importance of purchasing a new second car is greater than saving the destitute human beings from dying. Singer asks us to think before we use our money. Maybe Singer is quite demanding but he is right that most of our money is being spent on something we do not need. Obviously, the second car is not a must for sustaining our lives. Someone would

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<sup>26</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

extend Singer's argument to some extreme circumstances. They may ask whether we should help people from dying of a lack of the basic necessities or whether we should save people from mental sickness. Or indeed whether we should give away our surplus to save, let say, 10 lives in Africa, or to cure my mum for lung cancer. These are hard questions to answer. But, as I see it, posing these difficulties in human decisions could not refute Singer's argument wholly.

In his latest book *The Life You can Save* published in early 2009, he tries to show that there are many circumstances which are not that controversial. It is unlikely that everything would make people in a position of moral dilemma. He introduces a moderate principle, "*If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without sacrificing anything nearly as important, it is wrong not to do so.*"<sup>27</sup> It includes a vague component "*nearly as important*". Singer explains his use of this unclear phrase because he wants to leave the decision to you. But Singer believes that there is something which is not that controversial. Something is clearly not necessary and is even exceptionally luxurious for us. For example, Larry Page and Sergey Brin who are the cofounders of Google, purchased a Boeing 767 for a private feast, and spent millions of US dollars for ornaments<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, in the US, or any other affluent countries, people spend lots of money to buy new clothes. But it

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<sup>27</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 15-16.

<sup>28</sup> Sharkey, Joe (October 17, 2006). For the Super-Rich, It's Time to Upgrade the Old Jumbo. *The New York Times Magazine*, Retrieved April 13 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/17/business/17megajets.html>

is reported that some of these purchases have not even been worn before they are thrown away. In the daily household garbage, a large number of foods are wasted everyday. People buy excessive things that they do not need. There is something that is being wasted without doubt.

But Singer lets you make your own judgment on things. If you honestly think that there is something more important or nearly as important, Singer would ask you to do it first. If you find anything that is not clearly outweighed in moral importance by the poverty relief activities, you can do it first. You can choose depending upon your own situation.<sup>29</sup>

Singer tries to make things less demanding and make it easier for people to accept them. He is trying to be “anthropic”, in Badhwar’s words.

Badhwar thinks that Singer’s ideal is misanthropic because it disregards people’s interest and happiness. It is perhaps true when “anthropic” refers only to personal happiness of the affluent people. But I do not agree with this self-regarding interpretation of “anthropic”. Anthropic ideal is to be concerned with the well-being of all humankind, not of a particular group of people. Although Singer’s proposal is not a utilitarian suggestion, Singer’s concern can actually increase the general happiness of everyone. The general happiness here is not taken into account for the purpose of Singer’s claim. He does not need to rely on the concept of happiness here.

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<sup>29</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 17-18.

His argument works perfectly well without using the concept of happiness. However, if someone is trying to criticize Singer's argument for not being compatible with happiness, I would argue that he is wrong to do so. And actually I think it is hard to say that a person motivating people to save as many lives as possible can be called a misanthropic person. What Singer is doing here is everything about the well-being of human beings, about their happiness, although his argument is not a utilitarian one.

However, Badhwar can still argue that the general happiness cannot be achieved if the happiness of the rich was ignored. But this is why Singer tries to lower the standard. He tries to be less demanding and respect the happiness of the rich. He calls for up to 1% of income from the relatively wealthier people for their personal contribution. It is not demanding indeed. But many people from the developed countries are still far from this standard. I am not pointing to the US people, but everyone in wealthy countries.

If this kind of argument would be to a certain extent a misanthropic one, than maybe we should ask ourselves how to be an anthropic person if we are seeing so many people dying from hunger? I do not want to make Singer's argument more controversial here. We simply cannot save everyone. I just want to state that it is not appropriate to say it is a misanthropic ideal.

### **3.3.1 Ignore Property Rights**

Another criticism that is raised by many philosophers is Singer's ignorance of human rights, especially the generally accepted conception of property rights.

Singer urges us to donate money to aid agencies for the relief works of world poverty, rather than using those money to pursue our own goals or interests that seem worthy to us. This idea is different with our common knowledge of human rights. Especially, it ignores the property rights that we are generally believed to have. We are entitled to our own property, including salaries for our wages or bequests that we might get in a will. We usually and definitely believe that we have the right to own and use them. Because they are mine, I am the owner of the wealth I have got. I am the only one who has the right to possess, to expand, or to distribute my own property. And our knowledge of property rights also encourages us to spend them in compliance with our own interests. According to the general concept of property rights, just according to common sense, we can spend them freely. For example, I can buy a luxurious yacht, spend my money on an expensive dinner in a fancy hotel, or purchase the latest fashionable clothes without anyone's consent or permission. That is the reason why we work hard to create more income and wealth. To use my money according to my wishes is the motivation for my endeavour to commit myself to my occupation. But apparently, Singer's views do not allow me to do so. Singer

calls me an immoral person if I do not follow his view and give away a reasonable proportion of my wealth to help those suffering in desperate impoverishment. I have been informed by common sense to possess the innate right to use my own property. But, at the same time, I do not have it actually, because I am strictly obliged to give most of it to charity. I cannot spend it on luxuries. I cannot develop my life plan with my surplus. It is even not appropriate for me to even buy a bottle of water while tap water is free of charge and easily accessible. The creation of wealth, for Singer, seems to be merely a means for giving it away. However, I will argue later that the wealth-creation is, even not helping in lessening the number of people from chronic hunger, avoiding more people to fall below the threshold of absolute poverty. Singer is widely criticized here on his ignorance to human rights, particularly the common and basic concept of property rights.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.3.2 Evaluation on Ignorance of Poverty Rights**

Some may think that Singer is totally disregarding the general concept of property rights. It seems Singer is taking things away from them. It is not proper to say they are doing something immoral while spending on stuff that they desire and enjoy. They may think that Singer is unreasonable in this argument. However, it is

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<sup>30</sup> Arthur, John. "Famine Relief and The Ideal Moral Code". in LaFollette, Hugh (Ed.). (1996). *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publisher.



not the case. Singer does not have to be disregarding the property rights that every human being possesses.

Singer does not demand the unlimited maximization of the general happiness from us. Nor do his views need to violate the common concept of rights or any other principles that people, no matter consequentialists or not, may think of comparable moral importance.<sup>31</sup> It is all the matter of comparison. Just as I mentioned previously, you can choose between possessing your own rights or using your money on things that meet your basic needs or give them to charity in order to save lives. If you think that it is moral important or nearly as important to keep your rights not violated (as opposed to saving people's lives from dire poverty) it is suitable for you to do so. But of course this implies that you have to be genuine and sincere in your moral judgment. After every deliberation, if you still think that property rights are more morally sustainable than Singer's argument then it is morally acceptable to keep your hold on your own rights. Therefore, given all this, I do not see the validity on the criticism saying that Singer neglects human rights.

### **3.4.1 Singer's Own Donations**

Badhwar states in her article that Singer himself does not strictly follow what he himself urges. Her argument suggests that Singer suffers from a tendency toward

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<sup>31</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.78

both doublethink and doublespeak<sup>32</sup>. This argument is an ad hominem one. It points to the situation of the person advocating a given claim. However it is relevant here nevertheless. As a passionate defender of this approach, Singer truly believes in his own advocacy. However, he himself cannot live up to the level he mentioned. He does in fact give 20-25% of his income to aid agencies. It is quite remarkable for anyone to do so. But it is still far removed from what he says in his argument that we should give the entire surplus which is not required for his or his family's basic needs. Badhwar denounces Singer here that he seems to be guilty of hypocrisy and misleading people into thinking that he is living up to his claim and that he is inconsistent between his words and deeds.

Not only indulging in doublethink and doublespeak, he also makes further compromises over the course of time. He reduces the minimum requirement to 10% of their income in order to be moral decent in one book, and, later, further reduces it to 1% in another book<sup>33</sup>. The fact that he gives that concession creates the impression that he fails in his argument.

### **3.4.2 Evaluation on Singer's Own Donations**

It is hard to live up to Singer's standard, no doubt. And it is quite annoying fact

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<sup>32</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.91

<sup>33</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.91

that the great advocate himself cannot follow the actions that he calls on us to do. But it is also true that Singer himself is already very sincere to his argument. 20-25% of income is not a small number for a professor in Princeton University. It is not deniable that Singer is not doing strictly to his announced position. It makes people think it is quite impossible to follow the standard if Singer himself also fails to live up to this level. However, it does not logically lead to the failure of his argument.

Singer is not lowering the standard for his own sake. He wants people feel poverty relief is not that demanding and that they should be more willing to give more. He simply wants more people start to give away at least some of their income. He also indicates in many papers and his latest book *The Life You Can Save* that most Americans think that they and the US government gives a lot for global poverty relief. They think they are one of the most charitable nations on foreign aid, no matter on community or governmental level. But Singer says that this is not the truth. The US is the richest country on Earth. They must be doing very well on aid. If you believe in this way, you are absolutely wrong. The Americans think that the US government is spending 20% for foreign aid every year, which they think is too much. Many of them believe that 10% is acceptable. However, the actual amount is less than 1%, more precisely 0.18% of their Gross National Income (GNI). It is among the least benevolent countries when giving for foreign assistance is calculated as

percentage of Country's GNI. It is much far from what their citizens find as the reasonable percentage for foreign assistance works.<sup>34</sup> According to the Official development assistance (ODA)<sup>35</sup> statistics from the same research by DAC<sup>36</sup> from OECD<sup>37</sup>, the total amount of the official development assistance given by the US government is the highest among all countries.<sup>38</sup> Although it is only 0.18% of the GNI, the US gives US\$22.7 billions in 2006 for foreign assistance which is nearly double the amount given by the UK in the second place. Singer may find it is much better if the US government gives up to 0.7% of the GNI (the percentage urged by

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<sup>34</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 33-35.

Singer quoted in his book the statistic from OECD. It is data from *Statistical Annex of the 2007 Development Co-operation Report*, by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). However the data were not found by the link provided by Singer. The summary of the 2007 *Development Co-operation Report* can be found in the OECD website.

OECD, OECD Journal on Development: Development Co-operation Report 2007. Retrieved July 4, 2009, from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Web site:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_40056608\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37413,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/32/0,3343,en_2649_34447_40056608_1_1_1_37413,00.html)

More updated data can be obtained from *Statistical Annex of the 2009 Development Co-operation Report* on OECD website.

OECD, *Statistical Annex of the 2009 Development Co-operation Report*. Retrieved July 4, 2009, from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Web site:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_1893129\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en_2649_34447_1893129_1_1_1_1,00.html)[http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_1893129\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en_2649_34447_1893129_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>35</sup> Official development assistance (ODA) is a statistic compiled by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to measure aid. The Official Website, Retrieved July 4 2009, from <http://www.oecd.org/>

<sup>36</sup> Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a committee under the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is a forum for selected member states to discuss issues surrounding aid, development and poverty reduction in developing countries.

Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD-DAC). Retrieved July 4, 2009, from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Web site:

[http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347,en_2649_33721_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>37</sup> OECD is Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. It is an organization consisting of 30 developed countries committed to democracy and the market economy. It is founded to support sustainable economic growth, boost employment, assist other countries' economic development and maintain financial stability.

The government from different countries can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices, and co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The Official Website, Retrieved July 4 2009, from <http://www.oecd.org/>

<sup>38</sup> OECD, *Statistical Annex of the 2009 Development Co-operation Report*. Retrieved July 4, 2009, from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Web site:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_1893129\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en_2649_34447_1893129_1_1_1_1,00.html)

the UN) every year.

Someone would contest this calculation as they believe the American people are doing very well in private giving. However, together with the non-governmental assistance, the aid money that comes on average from the US community is only 0.25%. It means only 25cents of each US\$100 they are earning.<sup>39</sup> It is still far away from that of many prosperous countries. Therefore, Singer tries to urge people to contribute more. Even if he says 1% is enough, yet the Americans are still living far behind this standard. Singer thinks that the affluent people can do better.

### **3.5.1 Criticism on the Analogy**

The most controversial part of Singer's argument is the analogy between helping a drowning child and giving money to aid agencies. His argument is based heavily on this analogy. He finds that giving away all one's surplus wealth to relieve the world poverty is strictly analogous to rescuing a sinking child from a shallow pond. If we agree about that and that we ought to help this sinking child in the shallow pond, then according to Singer we should then also agree that we ought to give away our surplus to aid agencies that are working for the global poverty alleviation activities, such as UNICEF or Oxfam.

The argument is based on the similarity between these two cases. However, if

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<sup>39</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 35.

there are flaws in the analogy, the grounds of his position would be shaken, if not overthrown. Singer seems to be so confident about his analogy. He thinks we can get the same judgment from both cases. Let me examine if he is right on this or not.

#### Form of analogy: a simple thought experiment

The form of the argument is simple. Singer firstly introduces his principle and applies it to the situation of the drowning child. The child is in a very dangerous position. Then, we make judgments on this scenario that it is something really bad that is happening. We must help him immediately if we are able to do so, and helping him would not cause any significant harm to us. Therefore, we find that the principle introduced by Singer is applicable to this case. It is an acceptable principle because it matches our moral intuition to this emergency situation. So, we accept that *“If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.”*<sup>40</sup>

We accept the principle and we agree with it because we intuitively find that we are wrong to refuse to help to the drowning child. Now, Singer tries to apply this principle to another situation, that of world poverty. He thinks that the situations in both cases are similar to each other. Giving away one’s surplus money is genuinely analogous offering one’s hand to the drowning child in the shallow pond. There are

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<sup>40</sup> (Singer, Spring 1972). P. 231

many people who are suffering from dire poverty, miserable starvation, absence of medical care, lack of clean drinking water, insufficient education, inaccessibility of information and services etc. They are in desperate status. They need instantaneous assistance in order to escape from death caused by absolute poverty. And we can do something, by giving our money, without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. So we make a judgment on this situation, the same judgment as before. According to the principle drawn from the drowning child example, we should reason in the same way to reach the same conclusion, which is 'we ought morally to do it'. Singer believes that we do not have to sacrifice much. Helping those people would not cause any harm to us. We have a moral obligation to donate money to aid agencies for poverty relief in order to save their lives. This is the analogy which Singer's argument is based heavily on.

The problem of this format of analogy is whether the two situations that we make judgments of are equivalent or not, whether the principle successfully applies to both situations or not. However, Neera Badhwar, and some other philosophers, point out Singer's failure to identify the differences between emergency and ongoing evils.

### Immediacy or directness

The first thing to state here is that the immediacy or directness is not the same in the two scenarios. This point is that the immediacy and directness in the case of helping the drowning child are different from the case of donating money to the aid agencies.

In the case of drowning child, the need of the child is urgent and clear. When we are walking past the shallow pond and see the child in immediate danger, we can help the sinking child in person directly. There is a particular person we are going to help. We know there is that child we are saving but not any other. Cullity thinks that *“beneficence involves responding to the needs of particular individuals; it is different from the kind of generalized philanthropy that reacts to other people’s need in general.”*<sup>41</sup>

However, Singer’s conclusion that we should donate money to the aid agencies is neither immediate nor direct. We just give money to the charity association. It is not as if there is any particular individual I am going to help. We do not know who would get the help base on the money that is given by us. We do not know their name, their face, or the places that they are living. The relief those poor people received are delivered by the aid agencies. Our roles here are indirect and not anything like being immediate. It means there are differences of immediacy and directness between

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<sup>41</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.26



saving a drowning child and donating money to aid agencies.

### Emergencies vs. ongoing evils

Badhwar criticizes Singer that he is not able to distinguish emergencies and the ongoing evil. We can accept to the proposition of saving a drowning child. It does not pose any serious risk to us. We do not have to scarify anything of comparably moral importance. And we do kindly accept his principle. But it cannot be applied to the situation of world poverty. They are different.

In the situation of drowning child, there is an emergency to save him. Does it mean that there is no urgency on the issue of world poverty? No. But it is a very short period emergency or accident in the case of drowning child. His need is instant, urgent and immediate. It is transient. We do not have any further responsibility on that child after rescuing him from the pool. Or maybe we have to send him to the hospital, but that is all. It is a short-lived, one off incident. And in this case, we can save him directly, and we know that there is a particular individual I am saving.

However, poverty around the world is not like this. There is a chain of long term circumstances. It is an ongoing evil. There are some who are in urgent and desperate needs undoubtedly. But it is somehow different. The poverty across notions is not a short-lived emergency like the drowning child in front of me. We cannot save

the poor people one by one directly. There is no particular person we are going to salvage. We do not know their names, their faces, their backgrounds, and anything else. All we know about is that they are living in very bad circumstances.

According to Singer's argument, we can accept that we ought to save the child, and that we are obliged to give away our surplus. We should not spend our money on things that are not necessary. Accordingly we should not spend our money on fashionable clothes, large houses, extravagant dinners, quality hi-fi systems, vacations outside one's country, expensive cars, or even a bottle of distilled water, a cup of coffee from Starbucks, or other luxury items such as works of art, music performances, sporting events, movie tickets, or even books on philosophy. Following Singer's reasoning, we have to 'save every life that we could.' In fact, when we compare the situation of global poverty to anything that is above our basic need in everyday life, it is difficult to conclude that there is anything which is more important than to save one more life if we are able to do so. If we act according to what Singer says, it would be the conclusion that we have to donate everything unnecessary to poverty relief organizations, not only once, but continuously month by month. It seems hard accept this conclusion even when we initially think it is alright to lend our hand to the drowning child. But why would there be such a marked difference? It can only conclude that it is because the analogy is not

appropriate.

Even if the analogy of Singer holds, what would be the situation? What would be the scenario if world poverty is analogous to drowning child?

Poverty is continuously happening everywhere in the world, and is mainly in Africa. It is not really the same as the case of sinking child as first proposed by Singer. It amounts to a failed analogy. Singer improperly thinks that the ubiquitous situation of world poverty is genuinely analogous to the emergency of the sinking child. That suggests, that world poverty seen in terms of drowning child, there is a huge number of drowning children in ponds everywhere around the world, in every single minute of time. There are so many people suffering in poverty. They are in desperate need. There are in fact vast numbers of people that need to be saved.

There are children far away from us dying everyday from the causes of absolute poverty. But, according to Singer, distance does not matter. So, if the analogy is right, we can say that there are children drowning everyday in front of us when we are walking on the way to work<sup>42</sup>. According to Singer, we have to save them. We need to give our helping hands to them. We must pull them out from the pond.

We save one at the beginning. It means making our clothes wet and probably late for work. But these are not important when we compare these with the life of the sinking child. Therefore, we do not hesitate and save him from drowning. We

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<sup>42</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 82

successfully pull him out and, maybe, check whether he is hurt or not. After confirming that he is alright, and then we would continue to be hurry on for work. However, when want to move on, we see there is another child who is sinking in another pool which is not far away. Once again, we consider whether we choose to hurry on for work and keep our clothes from getting wetter or to save the child. When ought to save the child, considering what Singer urges us to do. But when we see clearly, there is not only a single child. In a little bit further pool, the situation is alike. We see another little kid who is also sinking. When we look further, there are quite a lot of sinking children in different pools on the way to our working place. What should we do next? We may face this question every time when we save a single child. We have to choose every time between to save one more or to let them die. Nevertheless, the only way to choose is to track Singer's contention and to save the kid every time when we see they are drowning. It means after saving one from desperate needs, we have to think of saving another one, and so on. What would be the end? The end would come when we see no one is drowning or, more precisely, no one is living in impoverishment. The end of our duty would mean the end of absolute poverty. We have to continuously give away our money if there is at least one who lives under indigence.

It is hard to accept we have this kind of duty to save each and every life. But it

is the true picture of poverty that happening in our daily life. There are myriad numbers of people living on the edge of life and death. Everyday, there would be quite a large amount of them dead. We know that, although we do not see it, countless people are poverty-stricken on the other side of the world. When we are thinking about purchasing a new car, we are definitely wicked. We should donate the money to transnational charity organizations working on poverty alleviation. But we should not feel that we are doing well to sacrifice the chance to get a new car. We should then give away the money which we are planning to spend on new stylish clothes, just because there are still lots of suffering people. The truth is that poverty would not end after we save one or two or few of the poor. It is continuously happening. It is ubiquitous. We ought to donate every cent which is not spending on necessities. It is because poverty will not end easily by simply giving away the little amount of money from a personal effort. Even if we do give our share of money, the poverty still does not end. The question would come to mind repeatedly and ask ourselves whether we should once again give away our money, or spend for our own happiness. This question recurs time after time simply because the poverty is ongoing. What should we do? Giving away our surplus without a limit? We want to help, but we do not prepare to contribute that massively. It is hard to accept this consequence. But In Singer's words, we have to save "*as much as we can*". If we

have to give away all the money otherwise spent on for luxuries, then we can only live on basic necessities. It is very likely to be an endless duty. We do accept Singer's principle at the beginning, but we cannot accept the conclusion of unlimited supports required from us. What is wrong? It is because Singer fails to identify the differences between ongoing evils and emergencies. He is wrong to think that they are strictly analogous to each other.

Let us give concession to hold that Singer is correct and that the analogy is appropriate. That means we see drowning people everywhere as the people living under ubiquitous global poverty. Does it mean we must save them all? What would be the case in the real world? Badhwar mentions in her article an example in India. She says those better-off who are living side by side with the extremely poor are simply unconcerned. She says that in India, there are relatively rich people who live with indifference as close neighbours to a large number of desperately poor people. Their attitudes tend to completely ignore those destitute people that they pass by everyday. And those needy would not think those well-off are doing something wrong in passing by dismissively and giving no assistance to their desperate need<sup>43</sup>.

This is a very terrible scenario, indeed. It is also terrible to deny that we are obliged to help. But what can we do? "*We have our own lives to lead.*"<sup>44</sup> We can

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<sup>43</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 83

<sup>44</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 82

save some of them but not all. We cannot and we would not save everyone if there are multitudinous sufferers. If we follow what Singer says, we can hardly pursue anything that is worth pursuing for my own self. It even seems hard to make my own living because I have to pass by a large number of drowning children when I go to work.

If there are drowning children in ponds all the time when you are on the way to your office, and if there are ponds with drowning children everywhere, would you always save them as it only results in your clothes constantly being ruined? I think no one would say, 'yes, I will always give them help!' I think no one, or very few people, would accept Singer's argument together with its full consequences.

### **3.5.2 The Failure of the Analogy**

I admit this criticism is a powerful and serious challenge to Singer's argument if his argument heavily relies on the analogy. It can nearly make his argument collapse. Singer's argument starts from a very simple assumption that a drastic deprivation of some basic human needs is a bad state of affairs. Then he infers from this assumption the principle that we ought to prevent a bad thing happening if doing so would not cause us any comparable disadvantage. In order to have a better understanding of the application of the principle, he gives the case of drowning child. It applies to the case

when we see a small kid playing in the shallow pond who is about to drown. In this situation we must pull him out even if it may ruin our beautiful shoes and suit. It is easy to agree about this. And now he gives us another, allegedly analogical scenario: there are many people around the world who are actually in the same situation as the drowning child (their lives in danger), and we can easily save them. Singer tells us there is not much difference between the two cases. If you agree to deliver your assistance in the first case, there is no reason to reject giving your effort in the second.

But this is not an essential component of Singer's argument. His principle does not necessarily have to rely on the analogy. His principle can be applied to both cases independently. Neither one of two cases has to rely on the other. The principle applies to the first, and also applies to the second. This criticism can diminish the importance of the analogy. Or perhaps, I should say, this criticism successfully stresses the difference between the two cases, the difference in directness of saving a life and the difference between an emergency and ongoing evil. However, this approach rejects Singer's argument only if his principle has to apply to the case of world poverty via the case of saving a drowning child. It means if his principle's applicability to the second case relies only on the applicability of the first case, his argument can be refuted by pointing to the failure of the analogy. However, in his



latest book *The Life You can Save*, Singer himself does not treat the drowning child case as an essential part of his basic argument. He regards it as one of many applications of the principle.<sup>45</sup> It can be applied to the first case, the second case, or any other similar case, separately and independently. He points out the purpose of the analogy:

“To this I would respond that the drowning child analogy is best seen as an *ad hominem*, and not as a way of grounding the argument for a demanding view of our obligation to the poor. The point of the analogy is to force people to recognize an inconsistency in their moral convictions.”<sup>46</sup>

Singer’s uses the analogy for his argument because people may psychologically agree to help in the first case, but they may think they have no duty in the second case. They have no obligation to help these extremely poor. But Singer tries to convince people they are equally wrong if they fail to save the life of a child in the shallow pond as if they fail to send money to save a Bengali kid from dying from poverty related causes. According to him, there is no relevant moral difference between the two situations.

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<sup>45</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 15-16

<sup>46</sup> Singer, Peter (September 2007). Review Essay on The Moral Demands of Affluence. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 75, no. 2, P. 475-P. 483. at P 480.

This is a carefully constructed argument. As I have said in the Chapter one, the argument depends on no particular traditional ethical theory. It is supposed to apply to everyone. Each person, therefore, should think before they spend money on luxuries.

Some philosophers think that there is a fatal fallacy in Singer's analogy. He ignores a crucial difference between ongoing evils and emergency. At first glance, this criticism seems quite convincing. However, after careful examination, I would say that it is based on a misreading of Singer's argument. His principle can still apply to the situation of global poverty without relying on the analogy, although it can no longer force people to recognize an inconsistency in their moral beliefs.

Therefore, we can conclude that although it is OK to criticize Singer's analogy he does not fail to make a strong case for a moral obligation to help the poor. His argument still stands. The criticism of the analogy cannot successfully overthrow his whole argument but only the part that does heavily rely on the analogy. However, I will show that there is another criticism that is a much stronger objection to Singer's argument.

### **3.6.1 Real Life Case in India**

Badhwar thinks that even if the analogy is correct and appropriate, the case of

poverty is similar to that of a drowning child, we would not give help, at least not much. Badhwar gives an interesting example in her article. She mentions that there are a certain number of rich people in India. There are at the same time so many people who are living in severe poverty. Their living conditions are poor, some even lack shelters. They do not have enough food; they do not have clean water. They suffer a lot, and they suffer badly. However, even though this is the case, those rich or better-off people who live nearby them often do not give any help at all. They pass through and pass over the distress of the paupers. They are nearer than us to the poor and the suffering. They may have given them immediate assistance which could possibly be more efficient than help from afar. But they see the chronic impoverishment as a part of everyday lives. These are ongoing evils happening day by day, minute by minute. They do not help, just like our intuitions of drowning children in the ponds everywhere around us which would appear in every single minute of time. And those needy people would not think those well-off are doing something wrong or bad that passing by without regard and lending no hand for their hardships.<sup>47</sup> Everyone facing such ubiquitous recurring-emergencies would do little actually, even if they are suffering just inches away in front of us. It is a terrible conclusion, but "*we have our own lives to lead.*"<sup>48</sup> It is simply the fact that we can

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<sup>47</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 83

<sup>48</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 82

not save them all.

### **3.6.2 Evaluation on the Case in India**

Badhwar shows this case as an illustration because she thinks that even if we agree we are indeed obliged to save the drowning kid and nearly moved to give away money not spent on necessities, we still would alter our actual attitudes and give no help if there are large numbers of people with urgencies similar to the drowning child. Badhwar's point is that even if the analogy is true and appropriate, we still would not give help. Imagine that we are living in India, or any place like India where hunger is happening day by day, and starvation is surrounding us, we could hardly do anything to help significantly. It could be exceedingly altruistic only in theory, only on paper, but not in the real world where the evils become part of our everyday lives. Badhwar hence brings out the situation in India that practically no one gives their help to the poor while passing through the street. And no one would blame those wealthy but unmoved souls for doing nothing.

But I would wonder if the situation in India is happening in the United States of America, will the Americans also be apathetic or not? I would say no, they will help indeed.

People may think that giving out their money to strangers is different to saving a

child in front of us because of the dissimilitude in distance. Let alone some reported instances that some give away all his bequests for charity for strangers and leave none for their descendants, and some donate their kidneys to another sicker person who they have never known rather than donate it to his less-sick relative. These cases show that living extraordinarily altruistic lives is not impossible. But people may think these are particular and exceptional cases, and that one cannot conclude that everyone would do the same. Let me give some more examples.

Just recall for a moment the sad memory of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which passed across southeastern part of the US. Many places were affected by the destructive power accompanied with Hurricane Katrina especially those living in the city of New Orleans. The Americans were not stony in the face of this catastrophe. On the contrary, the populace donated US\$6.5 billion for disaster relief. Together with the Federal government, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) international assistance, the US was able to confront this hardship.<sup>49</sup>

And remember further the astounding earthquake that happened in Sichuan Province, China on 12 May, 2008. The deadly earthquake measured as 8.0  $M_s$ <sup>50</sup> caused nearly 70,000 confirmed dead, 400,000 injured, about 4.8 million homeless,

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<sup>49</sup> Hurricane Katrina. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved June 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane\\_Katrina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Katrina)

<sup>50</sup>  $M_s$  is the surface wave magnitude scale for measuring the size of earthquakes. Surface wave magnitude. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved June 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surface\\_wave\\_magnitude](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surface_wave_magnitude)

and more than 10 millions suffering<sup>51</sup>. People donated generously in response to this disastrous catastrophe. Those people gave away their money including the more affluent citizens in Hong Kong, entrepreneurs in mainland China, as well as people in other Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and other people from all over the world including Europe and the Americas. Even the relatively poor Chinese people also give away their money. They are not rich, and many of these people just live slightly above the threshold of their basic needs. Yet some of them even gave away the money which was going to be used on their basic necessities. It is because they think those sufferers are in compelling need. They were willing to contribute something even it meant they and their families had had to face a certain period of economic hardship. This means risk to some of them yet, they give. And donations came from all walks of life. Some of them are still giving today for the reconstruction works.

One more example is the 2004 South Asia Tsunami caused by an undersea earthquake in Indian Ocean. It affected 11 countries in South Asia, caused 225,000 deaths, and made countless numbers of people injured and homeless.<sup>52</sup> South Asia is normally combined with poor countries. The Boxing Day Tsunami required quick humanitarian assistance. Billions of dollars in aid came in from communities around

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<sup>51</sup> 2008 Sichuan earthquake. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved June 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008\\_Sichuan\\_earthquake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Sichuan_earthquake)

<sup>52</sup> 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved June 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004\\_South\\_Asia\\_Tsunami](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_South_Asia_Tsunami)

the world, let alone the governmental assistance which was made available. That assistance was given by people who had never been to South Asia. Some people left their countries and came to help out as volunteers. Some of them even left their well-paid jobs to provide assistance. It was Christmas time, when many people from different parts of the world (as well as many local people) were enjoying their holidays. At the moment when the Tsunami came, people fled for their own lives. But it is reported some of them tried to rescue people nearby. They saw people suffer in front of them and they instinctively caught people in a great danger and could not easily let go their hold. Though they might not have been aware of whom they were saving, and although they might be at risk, they did it without hesitation. Some of them even regretted not saving more or for failing to catch someone's hand afterwards. They mentioned that losing them to the waves seemed to them just like killing them, even though nobody would blame them.

These cases show the altruistic response to giant disasters. These also show our altruistic action would not be limited to people that we know. If the calamity happened in front of us, we would likely do our best to save lives. If it were a distance away, we would still donate money for humanitarian relief works. We are not deaf to pleadings for help. Long after the disasters happened, there are still volunteers working for the reconstructive work like building houses, schools, and the

psychological and physical surgeries and remedies.

Badhwar thinks notwithstanding the postulated appropriateness of the analogy between global poor and sinking child, we would not offer help. However, I will argue, if the analogy is correct, we would in fact give help and give without hesitation. If the analogy is correct, people should realize that global poverty is the deadliest worldwide catastrophe of our day. Every case of famine or sickness related to poverty is the equivalent to an emergency as in the case of the drowning child. However if the emergencies caused lot of death just like or more than tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, I do not see why we choose to help the relatively small scale one rather than the immense misfortune like global poverty. People are willing to help in the big scale disasters like 2004 South Asia Tsunami, so then why not a much bigger one? The inaction of the affluent world today is due to the fact that they do not realize it is something even more disastrous than all of these other tragedies. However if the analogy is true, and people know that poverty is the most astonishing calamity happening in the world, they would not refuse to help. If they knew that dire poverty is just like the emergency of earthquakes or tsunamis, they would not refuse those who they can easily save in front of them.

Another point I want to make here is that the mere fact of 'we cannot save all' does not necessarily imply that 'we should save none.' We cannot save all, but we



can still save some. And we have to save some if there is such an emergency in extreme poverty while the sufferers can die so easily with the lack of our help. 'We cannot save everyone' is an insufficient excuse for inactivity. Actually, at the end of this paper, I will argue that pulling everyone out of absolute poverty is not impossible.

### **3.7.1 Disastrous Effects of Aid**

Following Singer's advice that the affluent people stop buying luxuries would lead to several disastrous effects. Firstly, many factories manufacturing luxury commodities are placed in developing countries. Most of these goods are produced by people living in poor countries. They earn their own living by working in the factories. The dominant factories there are set up by foreign investors. However, if we stop buying those goods, the factories and its collaborative plants would collapse. Quite a large number of people there would become unemployed. People who are not regarded as poor may fall into the poverty trap. Those under the threshold of poverty could even suffer more than before. This would clearly defeat our main purpose of teaching these people to earn their own living.

This will also happen in rich countries. In affluent countries, there are many shops selling commodities and services we do not actually need for maintaining our

ordinary lives, for example the café and tourist agencies. If we stop buying luxury goods and services, those shops selling these products would very likely collapse. People in affluent countries working in these shops and related industries would become unemployed. Then even some rich people would lose their jobs. Things would go from bad to worse. The whole western consumer economy would be destroyed, as well as the entire world economy, as a chain effect. These are foreseeable consequences if we stop buying luxuries. Although they are called luxuries, their production has a much wider impact on the world economy than just satisfying needs that may seem superficial and useless.

If we are not allowed to buy luxury products, this would encourage affluent people to abandon some of their jobs. This is because on that view we could not freely choose our own interests and ways to live our own lives. We would be allowed just to get the basic necessities and nothing more. However, the people in affluent countries would then also provide for the basic needs of the worst-off. If someone is on the border of poverty, it is likely that other people would help him. So, why should he then work for his own living at all? Everyone could only have the basic necessities. There is no reason to work if everyone is at the same level in the end, either being poor at the very beginning or reducing himself to poverty later. It is a disastrous effect. If this happens, the economy collapses, both in affluent and

developing countries.

### **3.7.2 Evaluation on the Disastrous Effects of Aid**

This is a forceful criticism of aid. It is especially focused on the extreme demandingness of the principle defended both by Singer and Peter Unger (whose argument I will discuss in the next section). The criticism implies that if we continue to give away money except what we need for mere subsistence, it could destroy the world economy. Because it would make many people lose their jobs and suffer from it. It is very forceful, especially when pointing to Singer's argument. But Singer himself also indicates that if aid has harmful effects, we should not give. However, the argument from Cullity can avoid this problem, as I will argue in the next section.

But practically, I would say that the affluent people nowadays are still far away from this disastrous effect. It is because there is a big gap between what they give and what they are required to give by Singer's demanding principle. They have never remotely approached that level of aid. As I stated before, there is a perception that Americans think that they are doing well on charity. They think their government, as well as themselves as individuals, is giving a lot of money on aid. They think that the US government should better use around 5% to 10% of the US Federal Budget on

assistance works abroad.<sup>53</sup> However, it turns out that they are far from what they think they should give. The US government only spends 0.18% of their huge Federal Reserve on foreign aid. And the US citizen as an individual among the wealthy populace, they give away only 0.25% of their income on average. It is near to the least charitable nations in the international aid league.<sup>54</sup> More importantly, it is far away from what they think they should do. They believe that the government expenditures on foreign aid should be reduced to 10%, while this expected proportion requires actually an immense increment from the government. The United Nation calls for 0.7% of the Gross National Income of each country. But there are only very few countries that meet this relatively low level. It is a standard that is very far from making their economies collapse. For ordinary people in the US, they do not even give a quarter of a dollar on every US\$100 they earn for assistance works overseas. Singer urges countries to give 1% of their income. It seems trivial, and people even think that they should give much more. But the results indicate that they are not acting in accordance with their proclamations. If Badhwar thinks that Singer, by giving away 20-25% of his income each month, is guilty of inconsistency, she may find that the ordinary citizens in affluent countries are also inconsistent as they think they should give even more.

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<sup>53</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 33-35.

<sup>54</sup> (Singer, 2009). P. 33-35.

However, indicating that the US population, as well as all the affluent people, is not giving much and is still far from what Singer urges us to do cannot refute the criticism that we are discussing. If we strictly follow what Singer's principle urges us to do, the scenario presented by Badhwar is very likely to happen. Although the failure of the analogy cannot totally refute his position, it is the demandingness that makes Singer's principle fail. Therefore, we should make some changes in Singer's principle. Or we can search for another argument which can avoid the problems that Singer faces.

## Chapter 4

### Other Arguments on Aid

After examining and evaluating Singer's argument and criticisms of it, we see there are some difficulties it has to face. It is a pretty controversial position to ask for one's surplus wealth. It is confronted with diverse objections, just as the analogy was. Especially, the most fatal criticism is directed at the foreseeable disastrous consequences following from the principle. Singer's argument is carefully constructed and clearly articulated. Singer tries to persuade people that the current impoverishment around the world is the same as the situation of the drowning child. If we accept the principle, we should have the same intuition in both cases. We should then have the same obligation to save the poor as well as the kid in the pond before us. The principle introduced by Singer is not necessarily connected with the analogy, but it does become weaker without the moral intuition of the case of the drowning child. His argument would not be wholly overthrown because of the failure of the life-saving analogy. However, it would turn out to be much weaker than before. Singer's Principle can still be applied to the case of global impoverishment and he can still call for our donation on these grounds. The argument may be as follows.

There are many people around the world desperately suffering from poverty.

They live without enough food, clean water, elementary dwelling, basic sanitation facilities, essential medical care etc. They can die easily. It is horrible. But we can do something. We can save them by giving away our surplus money that is not spent on basic necessities for us and our families. By doing this we can save their lives, while it does not cause us any comparable disadvantage. We do not know these poor people, but this should not make any difference or impose a moral boundary between them and us. Therefore, we ought to help them.

Without the analogy, the argument still works. But it is less persuasive than before. People may not be affected by the desperateness that those poor people may face, without the drama of the drowning child in front of us. People in affluent countries might not realize how urgent the circumstances are. They may not recognize their inconsistency in the two cases without an appropriate analogy. The drowning child case is a more easily understandable scenario. We do have a strong urge to save the drowning innocent kid. But without connecting it to the case of the drowning child, the case for helping the poor does not have such a strong intuitive strength.

Another criticism which I consider fatal is the excessive requirement put on the affluent people. Despite the gap between what people are giving and what they are required to give is still very big, it logically leads the affluent counties to dire poverty

if we strictly follow Singer's advocacy. If one gives out all her surplus, she is very likely reducing himself to the edge of poverty. The demandingness is so harsh that we are not allowed to keep "surplus" money or to buy luxuries. But it would probably destroy the current economies because everything about the luxury products as well as the entire world economies would collapse. It could cause more people end up in the poverty trap. It is the result of living according to Singer's standard. It frightens many people and makes them unwilling to live up to this level. Therefore, in accordance with these two crucial objections to Singer's argument, I will search for additional argument from other philosophers that try to follow his line. Some of them are based on Singer's position, and some just separately make another argument. I will generally and briefly describe some of these arguments rather than go into detail because not all of them are successful in strengthening Singer's stance. I will only consult Cullity's argument at length as I think that his perspective is useful and can successfully avoid the criticisms that Singer faces.

## **4.1 Similar arguments from Peter Unger and Onora O'Neill**

### **4.1.1 Unger's Argument**

Unger makes similar argument as Singer's. Actually he makes his own supposition in the light of Singer's 'inconclusive argument' and his 'importantly



correct' conclusion<sup>55</sup>. He admires Singer's conclusion that we ought to give away our surplus wealth for alleviating global poverty. However, he finds Singer's argument is not quite successful. He correctly points out that there is not only one child drowning on the way to work. This effort of saving endless babies could well cause us to lose our jobs. Then we are no longer able to give for the poverty relief activities.

It inspires him to advance his own argument. But his position is generally regarded as being a more controversial one. In his article "living high and letting die," he argues that if we fail to meet the requirement to save the sufferers in dire poverty but instead live a comfortable life, we are in effect, letting those people die. He uses an Envelope argument. When we receive the envelope from UNICEF, and if we toss it into the trash without hesitation, we are doing something morally wrong. We can easily save lives in distant places if we write a cheque and send it back to UNICEF. They will use this amount for relieving global poverty, and it would contribute to fewer people dying from unfulfilled desperate needs. Unger cries for substantial assistance to those poor. He even thinks that we should try our best to make as much money as we can, and send all of it after of course satisfying own basic needs. According to his position, we should try to get even better-paid jobs. It would be preferable to do something concerning the relief work, just like being a

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<sup>55</sup> Unger, Peter (1996). *Living high and letting die: our illusion of innocence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

volunteer in UNICEF or conducting research for ways to solve the astonishing global poverty. He may think that we are under a moral duty to make as much money as we can, and to try to acquire as much wealth as possible. Otherwise, we are doing something in the pursuit of our laziness in maximizing our fortunes. And of course, the money we get in excess of meeting our necessities does not actually belong to us. It belongs to the distant poor in desperate lands. Therefore the money should be spent on the starving masses of the world.

Unger offers a similar conclusion to Singer in the sense that we are letting destitute people die unless we contribute our surplus to international aid agencies. We can easily save these people. We can do it by sending a cheque to UNICEF or Oxfam. It is a view very much akin to Singer's. Yet this is not the most controvertible element. The most unacceptable part is that he thinks we ought to try our best to create wealth if possible. We should attempt to find more well-paying occupations if we have the ability to do so. But these are only the means. Gaining more money is a means for doling them out. It is only a means at relieving people living in dire poverty but not for our own sake. We should grasp every chance to get more money because, if we are not doing so, it makes us deeply immoral. High-paying jobs are not necessary to be pleasant for everyone. For example, the professors doing research in universities could probably get a more rewarding remuneration if they would be

working in private companies. But they enjoy something more than a merely materialistic return. Even if we are giving away our entire surplus, but keeping the less-paying but enjoyable jobs for us, we are, for Unger, still doing something wrong. We cannot enjoy the fruit of selling our manpower if we follow Singer's advocacy. But now, we can even not enjoy the way we are devoting our labour force. We are immoral if we fail to grip every opportunity for maximizing our assets. It is why people find Unger's advocacy hardly acceptable.

Moreover, his intuition on the Envelope '*proves too much*'.<sup>56</sup> We are living well. We find there is an envelope which is sent by UNICEF or Oxfam with leaflets inside asking for our donation. He thinks if we toss the Envelope into the trash rather than writing a cheque and sending it back to UNICEF, we are doing something morally wrong. His argument proves too much because envelopes are not only sent by UNICEF or Oxfam. There are many organizations doing different relief works may also send you the envelopes as UNICEF does. ORBIS, Médecins Sans Frontières, SPCA<sup>57</sup>, and many other organizations from different aspects may also send you the Envelope. If we are obliged to respond to the Envelope, we have to respond to all unless Unger shows the reason for the preference for UNICEF to any other NGOs. Unger does not show the reason why we should only write a cheque to a particular

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<sup>56</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P.80-84

<sup>57</sup> Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, an organization working for animal welfare in Hong Kong

organization. He does not recognize that if receiving the Envelope (and the need to respond) is really the case, it proves too much for a reasonable person and leads us to be morally required to reply to all such soliciting envelopes.

#### **4.1.2 O'Neill's Argument**

O'Neill offers an argument parallel to the one of Singer's. It is the lifeboat argument. Just imagine that you and somebody else are adrift on a lifeboat. On your boat, there is more than enough food and water which could suffice for the lives of you and your fellows until you get to shore. You can even waste some of the food. At this moment, you find some strangers on your boat. You do not know them. They hide themselves in some places when you and your companions were not aware. The problem now is that they are in extreme hunger. They simply need the food and water, but they would not force you to contribute. They pose no harm to you. However, they would die soon without any substances to allay their hunger. And even should you choose to share your edibles with them, you are very likely to have enough for the left of your journey. You can now decide whether you would give them food and water or not.

O'Neill says if you are not contributing and they die because of starvation, you are in effect killing them. You may think it is not my fault to bring them here, it is not

my fault they do not have their own food or own lifeboats. No. O'Neill finds that you are guilty because you keep your stores to yourselves. You let them die. It is the moral equivalence of killing them.

It is the same of the extensive famines across nations. The world now is a lifeboat earth. There are people suffering from dreadful hunger. They will die without our aid. We living in wealthy nations have surplus food and water. We can actually give the unnecessary stuff away in order to save some of those who are in the same lifeboat — the Earth — with us.<sup>58</sup> Even if we are not responsible for their bad situation, (we have not taken their food from them) we are still obliged to help. We have to give them our money to satisfy their basic needs. If we choose to withhold our wealth, we are killing them. You can save their lives, and you get this chance. But you do not do it.

O'Neill is even more radical than Unger. She blames those egoistic people for keeping their surplus. She calls them killers. It is an unacceptable reproach because we do nothing that leads to their death actively. But I am not trying to go into distinguishing the moral differences between killing and letting die. It is still a debatable ethical topic among philosophers. I would say O'Neill's argument fails as her analogy would face the same problem that Singer's one is confronted (as

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<sup>58</sup> O'Neill, Onora "Lifeboat Earth" in Beitz, Charles R. (Ed.). (1985). *International ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Badhwar explained). If the analogy is appropriate, there would be not a few but legions of strangers to be found in our lifeboat. We obviously cannot save all of them. Thereafter, many of them will die. Forgetting that we would be called the killers, we are once again facing the ubiquitous and countless strangers in the same lifeboat with us. We have to think again whether we should help this one, and afterwards another one. It is a tragedy without an end. What would people do if they are really in such a lifeboat? According to Badhwar's example in India, we would do nothing.

#### **4.2 Liam Murphy, an Egalitarian View**

Liam Murphy is an egalitarian. He proposes a point of view that is the same as his moral position. It is an egalitarian perspective. He thinks that we should calculate how much in the world is needed for alleviating worldwide poverty. We should therefore equally divide the required sum over the global population. Everyone on the planet would then share the same amount of this sum. Following that, every single person should give away this required quantity of money for assistance to the victims of worldwide poverty. After contributing this equal shared amount, one can stop giving. No one should be blamed if they have already met this minimal level.<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> (Murphy, 2000).

## **Evaluation**

However, what if there is somebody who has given less than their required level or they do not give at all? Murphy believes there are no reasons for one to give more merely because the others fail to do their part. One's own obligation is his equal share, no less, no more. It is typically an egalitarian point of view. But it is nonetheless a fact that a certain number of people do not give what is required from them. But this mere fact, for Murphy, makes no increment on our parts of shared duties. We can just give the same amount assigned at the very beginning. It cannot relieve the ongoing extreme poverty if some of the affluent people refuse to give. It is because the money needed is calculated on the assumption that every person pays his share. No excess donation would be asked for. I would wonder if Murphy's approach is really designed to solve the problem of desperate global poverty or not.

Let us have a thought experiment here. Imagine a portion of the world population answer Murphy's call, let say, very optimistically and very fortunately, 50% of the world populace. It is obviously not enough for saving all the poor. Some of them, lets us say 50%, still have to encounter the desperate hunger, lack of safe drinking water, illiteracy, absence of basic health care, unavailability of electricity, infrastructure etc.. No one would save them. It is because aid is stopped after some give their equal share and some refuse to do their part. These 50% of the poor

population are unfortunate and hopeless. It is horrible, but we just give what is required. Please blame those who give nothing. We feel well after fulfilling the requirement. Let me present another scenario. Imagine there are 200 drowning children around the area you are living in. After a scientific and accurate calculation, everyone in that area should save 2 children. But 50% of the populace in this area just wants to be free riders by giving no help. Therefore, there are 100 children left to die in the ponds. When you pass in the street and see some children sinking, would you feel it is alright to leave them alone and go your way simply because you had already saved 2 before? Could you escape from serious condemnation about your apathetic inactivity simply because you have done your own part? I think in both scenarios, not necessarily related or analogous to each other, we would agree that the problem we wanted to solve had not yet been worked out. Murphy seems to say that we could feel contented for fulfilling the requirement. It initially seems to be a pleasant approach, because the failure of others would not burden us to give more. However, after going into detail, it seems that this is even more unsatisfactory than a demanding proposal. Our moral intuitions in both cases are different from the way Murphy urges us to react. We believe those left out are also worth saving. Murphy's stand is counter-intuitive. It seems Murphy's position is only for making the affluent feel comfortable with their limited donations, but not for relieving people from



extreme poverty.

Another concern is the equality itself. Singer's proposal depends on one's semantic understanding of basic necessities. Equal share approach divides the amount that is essential for poverty relief to individuals, regardless of their wealth and income. Although they are living in affluent countries like the US or Britain, the difference of their wealth fluctuates. Murphy thinks that we should not ask for more from the rich. The super rich would be giving the same amount as the household just living a little bit above the basic needs. But this amount of money means different things to them. It is another reason why many people find this approach unacceptable.

### **4.3 Thomas Pogge, an Approach on Human Rights**

Pogge works with matters of global justice and the connection between world poverty and human rights. He is expert in John Rawls and Immanuel Kant. He has many publications dealing with the duties and rights associated with global economic order and world poverty. I will briefly expound his core argument that is presented in his many books and articles.

*“...I claim, then the better-off – we – are harming the worse-off insofar as we are upholding a shared institutional order that is unjust by*

*foreseeably and avoidably (re)producing radical inequality.*"<sup>60</sup>

Pogge argues that we – the affluent populace – have to help the people living in dire poverty. He thinks that everyone has positive duties to help others and, at the same time, negative duties not to harm others. Negative duties are something that we ought not to do, and Pogge focuses a good deal on this aspect. Someone who inflicts harm on others should give full compensation to the victim. Nowadays the global institutional and economic order is designed and upheld by the better-off. This global institutional order is actually harming the least well-off around the world. It leads to extensive and miserable inequality and poverty across nations. Its dreadful consequences are foreseeable. And Pogge thinks that there are feasible alternatives to this existing global order, but we do not do it that way. We are participants in this unjust global institutional order and are benefiting from it. Therefore we are responsible for the lot of the extreme poor. But we do nothing to compensate those sufferers in the current global institutional and economic order. We, the affluent peoples, are all human rights violators and are not offering due compensation.

On the other hand he thinks that all human beings have positive rights with regard to basic necessities. He goes on to argue that under the current global economic order, we the affluent people are actually imposing harm to someone living

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<sup>60</sup> Pogge, Thomas. (2005) Real World Justice. *The Journal of Ethics*, vol.9, no.1-2, P.29-53. at P.42

in dire poverty. Moreover, the affluent people are also depriving the least well-off from their positive rights on the basic necessities. We violate the social-economic rights of the least well-off. He means the current global economic order is violating human rights. Therefore we should give away our money and assist the poor as our compensation for causing harm to them.

### **Evaluation**

Pogge is trying to argue, on a global scale, that all of us (affluent people of the world) are responsible for harming the poor. We are violating our negative duty which is “not to harm the other”, others who are the least well-off in the world. We are harming the poor by depriving them of their positive rights to acquire the basic necessities. In order to atone for hurting these disadvantaged human beings, we ought to give away our money. Therefore we are violating our negative duties and others’ positive rights.

I will divide his position into two parts and deal with each separately. At first, we should ask whether we have a negative duty not to harm or not. And even if we do have this kind of duty, how much is my own contribution to these harms. Secondly, we should ask as to whether the poor, really possess the positive rights on basic necessities. And even if they do have this kind of right, how can their positive

rights dictate the actions of others?

A negative duty not to harm implies that we ought not to impose any impairment on others. However, it could be presented in a positive form that is to “prevent harm on others”. A positive duty requires an agent to do something, while a negative one requires an agent avoid doing something. This kind of duty to prevent harm is always presented in the positing of a positive duty. But it is not a problem to understand something which is not in the traditional way, and this is what philosophers always do. So, let’s accept the positive duty as well as the negative one. It means we have the duty not to harm the others. But the next question is whether we are harming the least well-off people or not. Pogge thinks it is obviously the fact that the affluent countries shape the international institutional and economic order and impose this order on the least well-off people. The least well-off are at the same time those with the least voice. They have much less influence in the international policy-making processes than do the rich. However, the rich are only concerned about the attaining the benefits for their own countries. Therefore the current global institutional arrangements are unjust and unequal. It leads to the large scale global poverty. And we are participating in it and benefiting from the system. Then, we are doing something unfavourable to the poor. We are violating our negative duty not to harm.

But I wonder how large is to be considered one's contribution as an individual in an affluent country? Nowadays, every aspect of our lives is somehow interrelated, every country or society has some discrete relationship to others. At the same time, the causes of poverty are also very complicated. For Pogge, the current institutional order seems to be the overwhelming reason for the prevalence of world poverty. It is hard to give an account for such a causal explanation. It is hard to substantiate the claim that the current economic and institutional order is sufficiently, if not solely for Pogge, contributing to the widespread impoverishments that we see in the world. It is extremely hard, or impossible, to show Pogge's causal explanation in the case of global poverty.

But let's assume that Pogge is right that the affluent population is in fact largely responsible for the harming of the global poor through its involvement in the international economic order. But for this, I think one's own contribution to harming the global poor at the global level is very small, if any. As a single citizen in a rich country among hundreds of millions of people in a similar position, our effort in contributing to the global order is at most trivial. Even if we agree that the current world order is not just and equal, we have to struggle to be in a position to actually change things. What I am saying is that we are not responsible for the tragedy. I mean if we are responsible, we are responsible for a very little part of it. If this

responsibility implies our compensation towards the world poor, the compensation would also be very trivial. If Pogge is right that we are harming the least well-off in the world, the most responsible unit is the governments of affluent countries. His theory can enforce large scale assistance from the governments of rich countries. When the responsibility and requirement for compensation breaks down into individual level, it would be much less stringent. Pogge may argue that the affluent countries are always established with democracies. For an individual, one can dismiss the government with unjust international policies. But again, I will argue, it imposes very few responsibilities at the individual level. I am not saying that wealthy inhabitants of rich countries do not have to give. However, I think Pogge cannot show that the role of an individual in the international institutional order is so important that an excessive demand of their help could be justified. Therefore, I think Pogge fails to mobilize us to give much, because of the trivial role we are playing as an individual.

Moreover, Pogge claims that every human being has a positive right to basic necessities. Having positive rights on something implies everyone has the rights to acquire something. Anyone who obstructs others to acquire these things is violating the others' human rights. It means the rich who hinder the poor's access to the natural resources and basic necessities are violating their rights. Pogge thinks that the rich

infringe upon the poor's human rights through their domination in international policies. The developing countries can only accept what the wealthy countries imposed on them, like high and unacceptable tariffs, quotas for importing goods and services from the developing world. But the prior question about this issue is whether everyone, especially the least well-off, possesses this kind of positive right whether they are basic necessities or not. It is always hard to prove human rights in positive terms.

Pogge believes that it should be obvious that human beings have rights to acquire the essential requisites of life. "*The fundamental importance of basic necessities for any human life supports the claim that there are such human rights.*"<sup>61</sup> It simply says, the stuff to sustain our lives is so important, therefore we should have rights on these things. It seems to be such a weak premise on which to base an argument. But let's us again assume the correctness of this positive human rights on necessities.

If it is true that all human beings have to rights on these commodities for sustaining their lives, then why does it follow that we have positive obligations to give to others in order to fulfill others' positive rights? Pogge thinks that the obvious

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<sup>61</sup> Pogge, Thomas. "Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation" in Pogge, Thomas (Ed.). (2007). *Freedom from poverty as a human right: who owes what to the very poor?*. New York: Oxford University Press. P.14

human rights exist, so the affluent people should give away money for helping those who are suffering in the global institutional order. It is not quite clear why others' positive rights on something entail that we should be obliged to allow them to acquire these things, namely the essential requisites of life as every human being needs. Why do others' rights impose positive actions on us? If they have such human rights on something, they can get these things themselves. The reason presumably to help those least well-off is because we are harming their human rights. The reason why we are harming is not correct is because it is our duty not to harm others. The reason why it is harmful to the poor is because of their possession of such positive rights. It is likely to entail some kind of circularity. But it is not necessary to be a circular argument. There can be correlated duties and rights. However, Pogge should offer a more clear argument as to why there are certain kind of rights and duties. And he should consolidate their grounds in order to prevent circularities. Moreover, if the positive right on basic necessities legitimately requires positive action on the others, there would not be anyone working for their own living. Imagine that everyone possessed the same positive human rights on food, and that everyone should fulfill others' rights on food immediately when there is somebody suffering from hunger. Then there is no reason to be afraid of starvation. It is because when anyone feels hungry, there should be someone comes to him and gives him a free lunch. The rich



ought to feed the poor or, put differently, the poor have to be fed the rich for free. If Pogge is correct on the positive rights on necessities, all food should be free in the end. Everyone could just wait for food. It is their human right. It is absurd to accept this kind of human right.

#### **4.4 The Failure of Beneficence**

Cullity published a book *The Moral Demands of Affluence*. He gives a comprehensive discussion of the ethical issues concerned with assisting the poor people. It includes the formulation of his argument, criticisms, countercriticisms, some meta-ethical problems, with the support of various empirical data. I will consider his argument and argue that his argument can avoid the problems that Singer's argument faced.

Cullity begins with an argument indicating that we should help poor people. He then makes a principle which is a very demanding one. However, he goes on to show that this principle could be rejected from an impartial point of view. He narrows its application to a more moderate conclusion. I will go through his argument in this part. And I would say that he can avoid the criticisms raised against Singer. Singer's argument faces different criticisms, and some of them are so crucial that make his argument nearly conclusively overthrown.

### The Failure of Singer's Argument

Although I mentioned in the previous section that Singer's argument is not based on the analogy between drowning child and global poverty, it is the most disputable part of his argument. The problems of his analogy are that he ignores the difference in directness in the two cases and the difference between ongoing evils and emergencies. I think that this is a forceful argument against his analogy. It can defeat his analogy. But I do not think that Singer's argument is completely destroyed. However, it does make the argument less persuasive. Even if his argument still stands to some extent, it has to face another problem. It is its excessive demandingness which could lead to a disastrous outcome if we follow Singer's advocacy strictly. This would destroy the economies both in the backward and affluent countries. This makes the circumstances worse.

Therefore, I will briefly show how Cullity's argument is constructed and explain that how his argument can evade the fatal criticisms of Singer's argument (the failure of analogy and the over-demandingness).

#### **4.4.1 Argument from Beneficence**

Cullity actually starts with Singer's argument because of its simplicity. Its simplicity has its advantages. It is precise and forceful. But as we see, the principle

and the life-saving analogy proposed by Singer encounter lots of criticisms. Although I have argued that some of them are not successful, there are still few of them pointing to serious problems. Cullity also sees this. Therefore after borrowing the concept from Singer's argument and life-saving analogy, he firstly tackles various criticisms.

Cullity thinks, like Singer, that we ought to save people's lives who are in great need if doing so costs us only negligible loss, no matter whether these people are in front of us or far away.<sup>62</sup> It is morally wrong not to save, even if we have done nothing to causes their suffering. Cullity introduces here the main concept in his argument, beneficence. We are wrong not to save because it is a "*failure of beneficence*".<sup>63</sup> The word "*beneficence*" means, for Cullity, the "*practical concerns for other people's interests*".<sup>64</sup> It means we do not show appropriate concerns for the others.<sup>65</sup> It is in other people's interests that their lives be saved.<sup>66</sup> But why does it imply that we have to help the others? It means we should have reasons for the moral action to help the other people. It is because of the goodness of the effect of my action for them.

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<sup>62</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.10-P.20

<sup>63</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.13

<sup>64</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.16-P.17

<sup>65</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.16-P.17

<sup>66</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.16-P.17

*“And in calling it a practical concern, I mean that there is a distinctive class of considerations that a beneficent person characteristically regards as good reasons for action. I shall call these considerations ‘a beneficent person’s reasons for action’. The core of beneficence is this: it involves helping other people, and doing so because you regard the fact that it will be good for them as a good reason for helping them.”<sup>67</sup>*

But the next question should be what the reason for us is to be beneficent. Cullity says that the word “beneficent” is not in its ordinary usage. Cullity treats it as a quality or attribute that one should pursue. The lack of the attribute “beneficence” should be criticized. Failure of beneficence means one has not given enough concern to further other’s interests, which is blameworthy<sup>68</sup>.

The argument from beneficence does not depend on any analogy. It applies to all situations. It may not have to face the same criticisms of Singer’s analogy. However, Cullity also addresses these problems. He thinks that talking about immediacy and directness in morality about the initiatives of helping other people is overtly self-regarding<sup>69</sup>. It has to be shown that the immediacy or directness plays an important and relevant role in the application of our morality. It is hard to see these two things could either lessen the poor people’s worthiness to live or weaken the

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<sup>67</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.16

<sup>68</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.16-P.18

<sup>69</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.22

requirement for helping others. However, it may provide a more pressing reason for helping others more instantly. But it does not undermine the requirements of beneficence.

One could say that helping a drowning child is different from saving people from dire poverty. There is not a particular individual I am going to save when I am giving money to aid agencies. But Cullity also regards it as not fruitful. A beneficent person has to help if there is someone I can assist by doing something that I can do without any important costs to me. But it does not imply that there has to be any particular individual that is going to be saved. The argument from beneficence does not restrict itself to any specific person, and it is not necessary that there is a known specific individual who is going to be saved.<sup>70</sup>

These are the criticisms directed at Singer's analogy. Although I argue that these objections cannot refute Singer's principle, they do strike at the core of the analogy. However, Cullity's position does not base itself on any analogy. Cullity shows that his theory is immune to these irrelevant criticisms. They are not successful to refute our basic responsibility toward the poor people. Our obligation on this is still valid. Cullity also answers some other criticisms. Some of them were addressed by me in the last section. I would not go into details on this.

Although Cullity can escape from the objections based on the differences of

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<sup>70</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.26-P.27

directness and immediacy, there is another criticism he has to face which effectively shows Singer's principle could lead to a disastrous effect. It is the excessive demandingness of his principle. Cullity has to confront the same problem at this stage because he borrows the argument from Singer. His argument is the same that would lead one to face the recurring appearance of a question that whether she should give more or not. And according to the argument examined here, she ought to give if the cost is so trivial to her. This may lead to the same consequence that she has to reduce herself to the edge of poverty. Therefore, Cullity calls the requirement of his argument at this stage "*The Extreme Demand*".<sup>71</sup> The Extreme Demand is something like Singer's principle. It requires us to give away my time and money to the aid agencies working for poverty relief. Its requirement would not end, unless the entire world poverty is wiped out, as long as we are not going to sacrifice something more important than saving the next life. Cullity also sees its problem and tries to reject this Extreme Demand in the second part of his book. Moreover, he also gives another moderate demand.

The Extreme Demand as well as Singer's principle is so demanding. They evade many of the criticisms. Although Singer's principle was rejected, it was only rejected by its foreseeable and very possible consequences, but not by any failure in Singer's logical reasoning. They are so obviously pointing out our wrongness if we fail to

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<sup>71</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.70-P.73

fulfill the duties required. The Extreme Demand is derived from the argument from beneficence. It calls for too much from us, but how to refute it?

Cullity thinks that it is hard for anyone to accept a proposal like the Extreme Demand. But it is not yet a reason to reject the Extreme Demand simply indicating that one has to sacrifice himself until the edge of poverty.<sup>72</sup> Other than some basic necessities, there is always something else that is significant and that we pursue and cherish. These things make our lives worth living. Cullity calls this kind of goodness the personal life-enhancing good. If one follows the Extreme Demand, his life-enhancing goods may possibly be weakened, lessened, or impaired. The life-enhancing goods include friendship, and personal projects, which are the major goods mentioned by Cullity in his book.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the constitution by personal partiality, it is impartially acceptable to have certain degree of partiality. That means it is agreed by everyone that there is something worth cherishing personally. These things are not only worth pursuing. Cullity think that they also give us reason to help the other to pursue these goods. It is because they are "*intrinsically life-enhancing good*".<sup>74</sup> Previously, when talking about saving lives in poverty, the reason to help is the interests from other people in their own lives with a little cost to me while delivering my help. It is the requirement

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<sup>72</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.134

<sup>73</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.129-130

<sup>74</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.129

of beneficence to have practical concerns of other people's interests. It means their values in lives give us the reason to help.

Cullity then asks a further question about why people would have interest in lives. The answers to this question can be varied. Some would say that it is for its own sake that life is good, but not for any other reason. However for many people it is not the answer for them. *"What is more important, for most of us, is that our lives are vehicles for the fulfillments that a well-lived life can contain."*<sup>75</sup> This is the answer for most people. Following strictly the Extreme Demand or Singer's principle would lead to *"altruistically-focused lives"*. It is a kind of lives that only focused on helping the other. But we do want a *"non-altruistically-focused lives"*. This allows us to have our own pursuits of personal goods.<sup>76</sup> It is clearly not only the interests constituting the life of me, but it is also other's interests that to live non-altruistically-focused lives that allowing them to have their personal pursuits. This provides us the compelling reason to have them to pursue a well-lived life.

At the same time, it is also a reason to deny the Extreme Demand. It is because the Extreme Demand, like Singer's principle, denies the pursuit of non-altruistically-focused lives and denies the reason that life-enhancing goods give for assisting other people having the same pursuits. Therefore it is acceptable to

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<sup>75</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.135

<sup>76</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.134-P.138



reject the Extreme Demand which is not compatible with the intrinsically worth pursuing elements that constituting well-lived lives of people.<sup>77</sup>

But after rejecting the Extreme Demand, what would be the limit for giving? When should we stop to help the others for pursuing their non-altruistically-focused lives? And what kind of goods is permissible to pursue?

Cullity thinks that it is permissible for one to pursue certain kinds of goods that are intrinsically life-enhancing, and these goods also ground the requirement on others. It means it is requirement grounding goods on others. It requires our help when people pursuing this kind of goods. But it is not required for us to help those “*purely episodic*” goods, which do not lead to a better life in a long-run. It is not a good reason for us to pursue this kind of goods rather than saving others’ lives.<sup>78</sup> For intrinsically life-enhancing goods, Cullity lists out seven categories in his book including the close personal relationships, achievements on pursuing worthwhile personal projects etc. He thinks seven categories is enough here.<sup>79</sup> The conclusion of the requirement and permissibility of beneficence is that one can spend if its permissibility is entailed by this kind of life-enhancing goods, or until there is requirement-grounding loss if there is further restriction on his spending.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, one can justly refuse to stop his spending on his own good only if there is

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<sup>77</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.137-P.143

<sup>78</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.160-P.162

<sup>79</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.162-P.165

<sup>80</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.171-P.172

deprivation on his non-altruistically-focused life, or it makes larger his requirement-grounding loss, or it deprives him from a good better than the requirement-grounding amount, or there is deprivation of his commitment good. Other than these situations, he is bound by the argument from beneficence. He ought to give away his money and time for other people's interests and for their lives to be saved. And it is a moral requirement which is hard or nearly impossible to refute.

### **Evaluation**

Cullity gives a very careful and detailed argument, and with a very technical reasoning process. He borrows the well known idea from Singer and develops his own argument in the light of Singer's weakness. He then makes the argument from beneficence. He says we should help people satisfy their interests. He gives persuasive objections to possible criticisms (some are evaluated in Chapter 3 and some will be stated in Chapter 5). However, it still has to face its over-demandingness like Singer's one does.

Therefore, he makes an argument about the things that make our lives worth living. Interests in these intrinsically life-enhancing goods gives us reason to help others, also gives us reason to develop our own personal projects. I am required to help the other unless my personal interests in these goods are harmed. The pursuit of

these life-enhancing goods is not allowed on Singer's principle and the Extreme Demand. But here, this is a more moderate and reasonable argument than the Extreme Demand and Singer's principle. It avoids the problem of over-demandingness of our moral requirement. We are still required to help the poor people. But at the same time, it allows us to pursue, and spend on, something that is important and worthy to us. Moreover, it avoids facing the criticisms directed at the dis-analogy of Singer's argument. Therefore, I would say that Cullity's argument from beneficence is fruitful and we are required to help those poor people. Otherwise, we fail in beneficence.

## **Chapter 5**

### **General Criticisms against Aid**

The argument now is well formed. We can reason that we do have some obligation to the global poor based on Singer's argument. At the same time, by introducing Cullity's argument of beneficence, we can avoid the difficulties arising from the failure of the analogy between saving drowning child and the obligation to donate money for global poverty.

There are some further and general objections to aid. These objections are not pointing to any particular argument of philosophers, but are pointing to the issue of poverty relief generally.

#### **5.1.1 Efficiency of Aid Agencies**

The efficiency of the aid agencies is widely questioned. One may defend one's reluctance to give aid because one does not know whether one's contribution would really help those poor people. It is quite uncertain where the money goes. It is also not clear that the amount reaching the destitute people is equal to the sum one originally gave. One may suspect the money will probably be lost in the process of delivery to the needy, or will never reach the poor. Therefore many relatively wealthy

people in the developed countries do dispute giving their surplus to the poor.

Moreover, there are significant data that show the inadequacy of the international aid agencies in their alleviation of global hunger, poverty and related problems. Some of those aid agencies waste money and resources. Some of them do not have knowledge and techniques required for using aid resources. It is not that simple as Singer and other philosophers imagine.

There is also strong evidence that there is corruption within those organizations, or among the governments and the bureaucracies in poor countries. The agents work along with the temptation of misusing a vast amount of money. On the other hand, the governments in those developing countries could enjoy free and huge inflow of money and commodities because of the amount of aid. Development aid often is depleted before reaching the hands of the impoverished.

Apart from corruption and waste of resources, it is still not that easy to help sometimes. Just as with the seclusion of certain countries such as North Korea, the despotic state allows none or very few aid agencies to enter their country and monitor aid disbursements. Even though they permit some international agencies to enter North Korea, the activities of the agents are severely restricted. The international agencies, like the Red Cross, can do only very little in a self-secluded country like this. Another example is the case of the destructive Cyclone Nargis on

May 2008. Here the Burmese government refused the help from the foreign governments and international NGOs several days after the disaster. They announced that they only welcomed money. It is horrible that the Burma government isolated themselves from the international relief effort on its own behalf. They rebuffed the entry of international aid agencies and their planes which carried medicines, food, clean water and many different kinds of necessities for fighting against the unprecedented disaster in Burma. There were nearly 200,000 dead or missing.<sup>81</sup> But it is believed that many deaths could have been avoided if the Burmese government would have responded immediately and have permitted the international relief efforts. The governments in affected countries often hinder the efficiency of aid delivery, and sometimes make the situation worse.

Sometimes it is not a political reason, but the geographical inaccessibility that hinders the efficiency of aid. There may be certain rural places in the developing countries that are unreachable. There is no viable infrastructure, such as passable roads. There are places that cannot be approached by any transportation, or only by some unusual transportation devices, such as boats or camels. There are some undeveloped areas that could only be reached on foot. It is hard to carry large quantities of aid materials to these remote locations. These circumstances would

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<sup>81</sup> Cyclone Nargis. In *Wikipedia* [Web]. Retrieved June 2009, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone\\_Nargis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone_Nargis)

make aid activities ineffective. Therefore, one may refuse to help for these reasons.

### **5.1.2 Evaluation on the Efficiency of Aid Agencies**

The ignorance of the efficiency of aid, the waste of resources, the corruption and resistance of governments, the inaccessibility of certain rural places, these are all factual objections to giving aid. But I think these factors cannot undermine the claim that we are morally required to help severely impoverished people.

Firstly, I would agree that there is a lot of research showing the inadequacy of the aid agencies which are working on poverty relief. But, on the other hand, there are also many data showing the efficiency of the relief efforts. They come from various sources. It is hard to compare these statistical reports. They are based on different contexts, assumptions, subjects etc. I am not going to discuss these data in detail here. It is the job of social scientists to debate about the correctness of data.

For those who say that they simply do not know if the money could really help those poor people on the other side of the world, the argument is not certain. It is still a question whether the relief work is useful or not. And they could even say they do not know what other ways are effective to help the poor, therefore they should not be blamed for not helping those worse-off. For these factual arguments for the rejection of giving aid, Cullity gives some analysis. "Ignorance does not produce immunity

from blame.”<sup>82</sup> Cullity thinks that those people who appeal to the ignorance on whether aid agencies are doing something efficacious or not are not successful in their attempt to deny their moral obligation.

Moreover, for those people who firmly believe that aid is badly coordinated and not efficient on delivering poverty relief, Cullity again argues that they cannot refute their obligation with this reason.<sup>83</sup> He argues that even if affluent people believe the humanitarian aid is ineffectual, they fail to show that “the most helpful thing we can do is nothing.”<sup>84</sup> However, this cannot refute the argument that there is a moral duty to help others. We are required to respond to others’ interests according to Cullity’s argument presented in the last section. Believing that one of the ways to help is not productive cannot wholly refute the moral requirement. Even if it turns out that aid is not productive in various ways, the argument that we should be concerned about others’ interests still holds true. Therefore, the argument on the efficiency of the aid agencies cannot overthrow the obligation to help those least well-off people in the world.

### **5.2.1 Fundamental Institutional Change is More Effective**

Singer urges us to give all we’ve got other than necessities to aid agencies for

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<sup>82</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.49

<sup>83</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.46-53

<sup>84</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.47



the ubiquitous recurring-emergencies all over the world. However, it all entails one's excessive contribution if we follow Singer's advocacy. We can hardly live our own lives and follow our own interests. We would likely reduce our life to the edge of poverty. Besides, if Singer's argument is valid, since we are always required to save those in dire poverty as well as the drowning child, the constant effort would simply exhaust us. Some of us may also fall back to absolute poverty in the process of rescuing others. Therefore, Badhwar thinks it is better to change the system that allows people falling behind. Institutional change is the best way to end poverty, not giving aid.

Badhwar says, *"Our attitude may shift from a mixture of compassion, pity, guilt, and despair to indifference and then to irritation at "those people" who can't keep their children from drowning,"*<sup>85</sup> She goes on, *"more reflectively, we might feel anger at the system that allows children to drown every day and attempt to fix it."*<sup>86</sup>

I think that she is right. We would not believe that we have to spend all our surplus wealth on endless 'emergencies'. We would not think that we have to spend all our energy and money and save the least well-off from impoverishment during our entire lives.

The most effective way to help, as Badhwar stated, is a fundamental change of

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<sup>85</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 82

<sup>86</sup> (Badhwar, Winter 2006). P. 82

the institutions in these poor countries. Institutional change is the best or may be the only way for countries to escape from poverty, just like what happened in the Four Asia Tigers, i.e. Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. Their successes were not achieved by aid, but by their fundamental changes within their borders. They have seen immense changes in their territories, like industrialization, adoption of political democracy, legal changes, encouragement on international trades etc. They are now among the most modernized places in Asia.

On the other hand, aid can never lead to economic attainment. Aid is not good for an infant economy. Actually aid is not good for any economy. Aid does not have any productive power in economists' view. We may feel good by simply giving money, but it is not helping these worse-off. They do not learn to live. They get money and may get away from poverty. But after that, after they have consumed those resources and money, and they fall back into the poverty trap again. It will never end if we give them aid.

The only way to achieve a high-flying economy is to have the fundamental changes. Countries in South Asia and Africa have long been lagging countries. They are regressive on many aspects. They have to make fundamental changes in order to flee from dire poverty. Reforms in politics, economics, legal, technological, social and institutional aspects are needed. After improving outdated systems, there likely

would not be any famine and impoverishment. People can benefit from the reforms. They can get the job opportunities, make their own living, keep their assets safe, live better, and enjoy their leisure times. In conclusion, we are better advised to help them to run the reforms on their local institutions than to pour money into their countries.

### **5.2.2 Evaluation on the Fundamental Institutional Change**

I would agree that fundamental institutional change is a very effective way to relieve dreadful poverty. I agree it is efficacious, in the long run. But I think it cannot be shown that emergency aid is not important or useless merely by revealing that the most effective way for pulling people out from poverty trap is a fundamental change in their local institutions. Poor people are living without enough food, safe drinking water, medical care. These are essential requisites for maintaining their daily lives. They can easily die. And actually there are many dying day by day. Their needs are desperate and urgent. They cannot wait until there is a success of the local reforms.

Cullity has a similar view here. He thinks that we should ask two questions. One is “what can we do to stop this (poverty) from happening again?”<sup>87</sup> and “What we can do to help these people now?”<sup>88</sup> He believes pointing out that emergency aid cannot solve the former does not lessen the significance aid can achieve for the latter

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<sup>87</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.43

<sup>88</sup> (Cullity, 2004). P.43

question. It means we should distinguish an emergency help and the assistance in a long run.

Even the fact that emergency aid is not sufficient for eradicating ongoing poverty does not imply that there is nothing that aid can do. I agree that we should have another kind of relief plan working in a long run. We do not want to see that child drowns. And we do not wish to see those people that we rescued falling back into the poverty trap. Therefore, long-term institutional reforms and changes in these underdeveloped countries are necessary. However, the exigent aid is also essential for life-saving purpose. These two kinds of assistance activities should be executed simultaneously. Neither one can kick poverty away forever.

### **5.3.1 Encourage Dependency on Aids**

Some people may think that aid is not a good way for relieving global poverty, because it invites the victims in dire poverty to rely on aid only. We simply pour money and materials into these developing countries. It makes the poor become dependent upon those necessities provided by organizations on aid.

It can be presented in a kind of game theorist's argument. If we save one drowning child, people who observe it may throw again the child into the pond, and see our response to it. And according to Singer, we are obliged to help continuously.

After a long term experiments, they find that we are always here to help. It is the same in world poverty. People that are suffering in severe poverty find we are always here to help them. They may find that they do not need to make their own living and we prepare everything for them. What they need to do is just say “welcome” to us. It encourages their dependency on us. It is not healthy for either them or us.

Furthermore, they do not learn to make their own living. They just wait until we help. They learn nothing from waiting and receiving aid money and resources. If they do not earn their own living, and just simply await the aid agencies, even if it helps them once, they are very likely to fall behind and fall back into absolute poverty. Should we help them repeatedly? Yes, according to Singer. But it is an unwelcome outcome. However, aid encourages them to do it this way. Aid encourages them to wait for everything needed to maintain their lives. Aid encourages them not to work, not to earn for what they need. They can sustain lives without doing anything. It is never a good consequence for the people in rich countries, as well as the destitute people. Therefore, we should not give anymore in order to avoid their dependency and laziness.

### **5.3.2 Evaluation on the Dependency on Aids**

I will say that it is not the whole story. The presupposition here is not correct. It

is not the true that the poverty relief works are merely supplying money and resources for them. And even if it is true that aid is generally leading to dependence, it cannot refute our requirement for fulfilling other people's interests.

On the position is that aid would result in economic dependency. Some argue that aid could only encourage people's dependencies on those in affluent countries. They say that the recurrent inflow of money into poor countries misleads people in those countries into thinking that basic things are always available and free. The poor can just wait without doing anything. They do not have to have their own jobs. This would only keep poverty going on and on.

But the presupposition is incorrect here. There are many kinds of aid activities. It is not true that aid is only in form of inflow of money and materials. Actually, many aid agencies are doing relief works without the pouring in of large amounts of money. Some forms of aid are aiming at teaching the poor about self-sufficiency. It aims at bringing about their ability to make their own living. Of course, for helping dying people the only way it provide them with food and water, or remedies that they need. It is an emergency help. But it is not the end for the relief work that is being done today. Many organizations teach poor people, who are mostly agriculturists, to farm with new form of technology, special skills, better growing seeds, pesticides, herbicide and fertilizers, or teach them to make use of cattle and machinery. These

kinds of organizations also teach women to read. It is because women always have great influence in a family and they are responsible for nurturing their children. A literate woman can teach their kids to read, prevent basic sickness, and participate in certain economic activities. Some women and youngsters are taught to make various handcrafts. So they can sell the products in the local markets, and make some money, food or anything in return. Besides, through aid efforts, the poor are introduced to knowledge of contraception. This is for the purpose of birth control. It is not going to harm the rights of having babies. But they simply have too many that they cannot bring up. And the problem of overpopulation in these underdeveloped places is very serious. They have sex if they want it, without any means of contraception. They give birth to many unwanted babies. But they do not have money or abilities to bring the babies up. Many kids are abandoned. Some of them die easily because of a lack of milk, food and water. Through aid efforts they can gain the knowledge to avoid pregnancy, and then they can choose if they want a baby or not. Contraception does help in another way as well. In these areas, wide-spreading HIV is a one of the dominant fatal diseases. They enjoy sex without knowing the dangers of HIV. They do nothing to prevent this killing disease. It could affect the following generations. Therefore, having knowledge of contraception can save their lives and those of next generations.

These are all for the purpose of sustaining the lives of the poor people on their own in a long run and for encouraging them to be independent of aid. It is because emergency aid is not always here for any particular human being. They cannot just wait for the uncertain assistance. And we also do not to see people like them would only sit and wait for aid passively. They can do it by making their own harvests and profits. They can escape the poverty trap in a long run. And it is the way the relief efforts are most effective.

#### **5.4.1 Aid Leads to Poverty by Dambisa Moyo**

Economist Dambisa Moyo worked for Goldman Sachs for the last eight years and possesses a PhD from Oxford University. She comes from a very poor African country – Zambia. So, she does have the qualification to deal with this problem. But she, as a Zambian, does not urge for more aid from the affluent countries. On the contrary, in her very latest book *Dead Aid*, she argues that aid leads to poverty.

In her book *Dead Aid*, she gives a lot of concrete data in support of the claim that aid has not actually helped poor countries during the past decades. She even goes further by arguing that aid is actually harming the development of African countries. There were a trillion US dollars flooded into Africa in the past 60 years. However the per-capita income is even lower than it was in the 1970s. 50% of the total population,



more than 350 million people, in Africa is living less than \$1/day. This situation tends to become progressively worse.

And the corruption in Africa is nothing secret. The bureaucracies overtly steal huge amount of money from their countries. But the West turns a blind eye to it and continues to pour aid into Africa. Large amounts of free resources and money inflow encourage military struggles among African countries. If they seize power, they can enjoy a lot of benefits. This leads to the political and social instability.

Aid industries also destroy the local economy. She gives an example as explanation.

*Even what may appear as a benign intervention on the surface can have damning consequences. Say there is a mosquito-net maker in small-town Africa. Say he employs 10 people who together manufacture 500 nets a week. Typically, these 10 employees support upward of 15 relatives each. A Western government-inspired program generously supplies the affected region with 100,000 free mosquito nets. This promptly puts the mosquito net manufacturer out of business, and now his 10 employees can no longer support their 150 dependents. In a couple of years, most of the donated nets will be torn and useless, but now there is no mosquito net maker to go to. They'll have to get more aid. And African governments once again get to abdicate their responsibilities.<sup>89</sup>*

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<sup>89</sup> Moyo, Dambisa (2009, March 21). Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa . *Wall Street Journal*, Retrieved 2009, March 29, from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123758895999200083.html>

The case would be similar to other kind of aid, e.g. food aid. Millions dollars are used to buy American-grown food, and then be shipped form the US to the other side of the world. The flooding of American food makes the local farmers lose their jobs. Aid discourages production, and destroys the local economy. People there may want to make their own living, but they fail to compete with the flooding of foreign market with free goods and products.

She blames the aid advocates who spend very little time to address the usefulness of aid. Why would a country seek aid rather than other better forms of financing? It is mysterious for the aid supporters.

She states that there has not been even one country that could achieve economic success by simply relying on aid to the degree that many African countries do. Economies that depend on aid almost universally fail, but those that do not rely on aid succeed. She takes the examples of India and China. They achieved economic success by the changes within their own boundaries, rather than by receiving aid from outside.

She gives lots of data and evidence to support her argument. This claim seems very radical. She does not simply say that aid does not help in poverty relief. She even goes further by claiming that aid leads to poverty, and makes the poor people poorer.

## **5.4.2 Evaluation on the Poverty-leading Argument**

I think Dambisa Moyo is right to a certain extent in her claim that aid leads to poverty. But I would say it is to a limited extent that she is right. Her view is partial. Actually, in her latest book published only two months ago (at the time when I was writing this paragraph) she restricts the term “aid” to “*the sum of total of both concessional loans and grants.*”<sup>90</sup> It is limited to the transnational government-to-government level assistance money flows. It is a narrow sense of aid. She uses a few sentences to describe the concept of humanitarian altruism.

*But this book is not concerned with emergency and charity-based aid. The significant sums of this type of aid that flow to Africa simply disguise the fundamental (yet erroneous) mindset that pervades the West – that aid, whatever its form, is a good thing. Besides, charity and emergency aids are small beer when compared with the billions transferred each year directly to poor countries’ governments.*<sup>91</sup>

It seems that aid for Moyo is evil, no matter what its form. She thinks that aid is leading to poverty. Aid makes the situation worse. Aid discourages development. Because the large amount of billion dollars flooding into Africa tempts the politicians and destroys the potential local economies. At the same time, the humanitarian aid

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<sup>90</sup> Moyo, Dambisa (2009). *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa*. London: Penguin Books. P.9

<sup>91</sup> (Moyo, 2009). *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is Another Way for Africa*. P.7-P.8

has no contribution. It is the hypocritical actions from the West. They pretend to be kind. But in reality it is harming the least well-off in the underdeveloped and developing countries. It is a very radical view.

I think that Moyo overestimates the negative effects of aid. So that she reaches the conclusion that aid is leading to poverty. She thinks that the policies on international government-to-government grants and loans are not clear. It makes the recipient countries confused about whether they have to return the money or not. It tempts different camps in these countries to strive to power in order to get the free money from the West. It produces wars and political instability. Even if these countries have to return the money, the interest rate is too high to bear. They suffer from the unrealistic interest rates proposed by the West. Therefore, aid actually makes them get worse and worse. It is not the way to success. Moreover, she offers the African countries various ways to be prosperous. She thinks they can achieve economic success through trading and attracting more foreign direct investments. The way forward on this view is to build a healthy and independent economy. Her view seems to be on the side of free markets against aid activities. But they are not actually contrary to each other. There are many other things constitute an economy, e.g. the geographical causes, political causes, populations, literacy, technological development etc. Her view seems to me is a partial one, with lots of bias.

I agree with her that the international borrowing system and policies should be executed and clarified in a better way. But I do not agree that it is the whole story of aid, let alone the contradictory and controversial views she offered in her book. Just as she thinks the foreign inflow of money discourages the government to raise tax, yet low tax rate is actually the way to attract foreign investments that she calls for. On the other hand, she believes that providing educations to the women in these countries are useless. Say says, “*never mind that they won't be able to find a job in their own countries once they have graduated.*”<sup>92</sup> It is because they cannot work after receiving knowledge. But it is not true that the only purpose for education is to have a job. They can make their lives better with knowledge. They do not have to write an essay nor publish a book, but they do learn through education.

As I see, there are many kinds of aid, but most of them are not going to make a country prosperous. And many of them are not simply pouring money and free resources into these desperate places. There are forms of aids concerned with humanitarian assistance. They are helping people in emergencies. It is a life-saving work. Some aid is focusing on building infrastructure for the better lives of the badly-off people in a long run. Some set schools up for educating the youths, some bring in new form of farming and use of technology and machinery, some offer free or cheap medical care, and some introduce contraception in order to fight against

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<sup>92</sup> (Moyo, 2009). “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa”.

overpopulation and spreading of HIV. These things are not as useless and harming as Moyo interpreted.

All the problems Moyo presented are the problems of execution. Aid is not wrong in its nature. These problems are actually avoidable if everything is planned and organized well, with more closely surveillance from the watchdog agencies. However, her radical interpretation of aid cannot refute the usefulness of aid, especially the humanitarian aid. And her aim of economic success is for a long term development. However, some kinds of aid are for life-saving in the emergencies, which high-flying economy could not help immediately. Moreover, if Moyo is correct in her view that one way of aid could not achieve the goal of relieving poverty, this does not imply that we can do nothing more. There are ways to help and some of them are effective. Furthermore, if aid is really harmful to the poor people, it is morally acceptable not to give help using this kind of aid, as both Singer and Cullity's would agree. But we should seek other effective ways to help them rather than stop doing anything.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

The core question in my thesis is to see whether we have a moral obligation to help the poor people or not: whether we, the affluent people, are morally required to help the worse-off or not. There are some other questions that can be asked on the issue of poverty, such as the reason for poverty and its solution. But these are not the main problems to be addressed in this thesis. However, they are not irrelevant or not worth answering. They are undoubtedly important and are interrelated with the main issue. And actually there are traces of these questions in some sections of this thesis.

The current situation of poverty is massive. The poverty relief does not work according to our expectations. It can be done better. And many people in the affluent countries know little and give very little for helping these masses in desperate need on the other side of the globe. Singer, therefore, argues that we are obliged to give if saving their lives only costs us a little. He then asks whether we are wrong not to save a drowning child in front of us or not. If we agree that we are doing wrong in this case, it is also the same in the enduring world poverty. It is a kind of ongoing emergencies, very much bigger than any kind of a massive disaster. In the case of global impoverishment, we could also easily save their lives by giving out our

surplus money not spent on basic necessities.

Then I address the criticisms raised against Singer. Some of them fail to show their moral relevance in the attempt to reject the obligation to give. But two of them are forceful, one is the failure of analogy, the other is the over-demandingness. For the failure of analogy, I argue that this does not undermine the core part of Singer's argument. It is because I think that Singer's argument does not necessarily depend on the analogy. Without the analogy, Singer's argument still works. We are required to contribute help to the poor people. However, I argue that the over-demandingness of principle is its fatal criticism. If we follow Singer's advice, this could lead to a disastrous effect. It could make the global economy collapse.

Therefore, I seek argument from other philosophers, such as Unger, O'Neill, Murphy and Pogge. But neither of them provides a satisfactory support for our obligation to give without any controversies. Some of them are over-demanding, and some are counter-intuitive, some are questionable at their foundation. However, I find that Cullity gives a very careful and reasonable argument on this. His argument from beneficence is borrowed from Singer at the beginning, without using the analogy. It is other people's interests in their lives that make requirements on us to save them. However, it would face the same fatal problem as Singer's principle is confronted with, which is the problem of over-demandingness. Therefore, Cullity has



to deal with this problem. Cullity argues the requirement of beneficence can be extended to the interests on intrinsically life-enhancing goods as I elaborate in Chapter 4.4. We have to help other people to pursue the life-enhancing goods which are good for them in a long run, like friendship. This extension does not make burden to our moral conduct. On the other hand, it helps to justify our own spending on this kind of goods. At the same time, it avoids the miserable effect of the excessive demandingness. It is because we are allowed to spend on something we find worth cherishing and pursuing, beyond our basic needs. These kinds of goods are not allowed by Singer's principle and the Extreme Demand, as they urge us to give away our entire surplus after spending on the basic necessities. This is a compelling argument in that it requires us to help the poor on one hand, and allow our development of personal integrity on the other. The broader line may be a little bit vague without a clear cut boundary. There may be something controversial about whether they are life-enhancing or not. But its vagueness makes it more reasonable to be accepted. For both Cullity and Singer, they think that if you find something that is not clear whether it is life-enhancing, we should do it first. However I would say the vagueness does not mean that we have no idea about the life-enhancing goods. There are many cases that are clearly far away from being included in the life-enhancing goods. In these cases, we should give away the money spent on these

things. We can stop or refuse to give to the poor people if by continuing the contributions, our own pursuits of the intrinsically life-enhancing goods are impaired.

After that in Chapter 5, I presented some further criticisms on aids. However, these are mainly factual criticisms, which I argue, are morally irrelevant and some are unilaterally argued. I believe that most of them can be avoided if we could have better organized and well-planned strategies for poverty relief. These further criticisms cannot refute the argument from beneficence presented in Chapter 4.4.

Therefore, in my conclusion, I will say that we are morally required to help the poor people. If we do not take serious consideration and do something about the issue, we are acting wrongly. We have to give away our money to a certain extent in order to help relieve the worldwide poverty, as Cullity's argument urges us to do. We can stop giving at the point when our own pursuits of the life-enhancing goods are harmed if we continue to give.

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