

## Assignment 8 and Extra-Credit

### Singer's argument

A small child is drowning in a shallow pond. No one else is around who will help the child. You can easily save this child, but doing so will ruin your new shoes, and probably your cell-phone as well. What ought you do? As we discussed in class, Peter Singer argues that

- (1) You ought to save the child in this 'Shallow Pond' example.

You all agree to this. I do too. But *why* ought we save the child? Peter singer argues that we ought to save the child because

- (2) *Principle of Sacrifice*: If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we are obligated to do it.

This principle is intuitively plausible. Indeed, when I asked last Thursday if y'all believed the Principle of Sacrifice, most of you indicated in the affirmative. However, Singer makes a strong case that this principle obligates each of us to sacrifice a *lot*. Specifically, he argues that

- (3) Given our affluence, if the *Principle of Sacrifice* is true, you ought to help people in need until another increment of aid would sacrifice something of comparable moral importance.

It logically follows from (1) through (3) that

- (4) *The Severe Demand*: You ought to help people in need until another increment of aid would sacrifice something of comparable moral importance.

Here's the puzzle. Most of you think that (1) is true, but (4) is false. Today we looked at Garrett Cullity's argument against (3). It's a good argument. But it also seems to generate the rather counter-intuitive conclusion that you're permitted *not* to save a drowning child right in front of you if you've already saved a child or two in the past. That's a problem. So maybe the best move to make against Singer is to deny (2), and instead appeal to a less demanding principle. That's what I want you to try to do.

### Assignment 8:

Formulate a moral principle that:

- i. obligates you to save the child in the Shallow Pond example,
- ii. does *not* entail the Severe Demand, and
- iii. is no less plausible than the *Principle of Sacrifice*.

### Grading:

Assignment 8 is worth 20 points. You'll receive full credit *just* for formulating a moral principle that satisfies conditions (i) and (ii). However, you'll receive up to 10 points *extra credit* for formulating a moral principle that satisfies conditions (i), (ii), and (iii). You're welcome to argue that some moral principle we've already covered generates the correct answer. You're also welcome to look online for ideas. But you must cite any sources you use, and you won't receive all the extra credit if you merely appeal to someone else's argument. The amount of extra credit you receive is contingent on the amount of original thought you offer. **The assignment is due this Thursday (11/16) by noon in the 'Assignment 8' Dropbox folder on Beachboard.** Good luck.