

Worksheet on Objections to “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”

The argument:

1. *If there are (a) very bad things happening, (b) there is something that we can do that will prevent some of these bad things from happening and (c) we can do these things without sacrificing something of comparable moral significance, then we are morally obligated to do so.*
2. (a) There *are* very bad things happening (e.g., children starving, dying from malaria, etc.)
3. (b) We *can* do something to prevent some of these bad things from happening (e.g., by donating).
4. (c) In doing this, we wouldn't sacrifice something of *comparable moral significance*.
5. Therefore, we are morally obligated to donate (and it's wrong not to).

Some objections to work through:

Directions: State these objections as valid arguments. Add the missing premise(s) needed to make them valid. Explain whether the arguments are sound (i.e., valid with true premises) or not and so whether these objections show that Singer's argument is not sound.

If an argument below is sound, then that implies that a premise in Singer's argument above is false. If any argument below is sound, which premise above is false? Explain.

Objection 1: “Hypocrisy! “Singer doesn't *perfectly* practice what he preaches, so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 2: “Others aren't helping! Very few people give anything, much less a lot, to help starving people. Therefore, I (or we) am not obligated to help.

Objection 3: “Saving people is the job of governments so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 4: “The child is a stranger so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 5: “The child is a far away so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 6: “I/we did not *cause* their problem so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection (observation?) 7: “People will not accept this argument, i.e., they won’t do what Singer argues they should, so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 8: We *can’t* help any of these people so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 9: If *everyone* helped out, I wouldn’t have to give very much, so I don’t have to give very much (certainly much less than Singer says). Although we might be obligated to donate something, we are not morally obligated to donate a lot.”

Objection 10: “People have a moral right to spend their money however they’d like so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 11: “Singer is *forcing* people to help the starving, so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Objection 12: “If we would give to help starving children, we *would* be sacrificing something of comparable moral significance (e.g., _____) so we are not morally obligated to donate.”

Other objections: