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Intro to Philosophy

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### Peter Singer: A Man Against Humanity

What is a sentient being? What defines the sanctity of life? According to Aristotle, humans hold all three of his aspects of the soul; vegetative, sensitive, but the last one, the rational soul, does not fully develop in our brains until the age of around twenty. What does that make of the humans that are younger, with underdeveloped frontal lobes? Peter Singer is the man who, if given more power, could bring us into a brave new world. Singer argues that animals are equals to humans in the sense that if we experiment on animals, we should be able to experiment on humans. Though he is not referring to equality; it is that humans are just under the impression, due to a higher ability of thought, language, and so forth, that they are higher beings than living things that cannot do the same. Rationally we hunt animals for sustenance and population control, but if the human population is growing at an exponential rate, when is the cut off? Singer uses research on children from divorced couples as an example to highlight the silver lining in his infanticidal ideal future, frequently implying the highly probable decline in depression-related disorders throughout the population, namely parents left with a burden or the burden itself. Singer's idea of population control is correct and similar to a modern-day version of Darwinism, in that, we weed out the weak and keep the strong happy.

Referring back to Aristotle's rational soul, described in his translated text *De Anima*, as part of the soul which has a long-term planning aspect and reasoned thought. However, birds and squirrels do long-term plan seasonally, not as a taught schema but rather as part of nature's life pattern. It could be argued that the way humans long-term plan for their future, as a means towards success and survival, as a part of their nature as a species. Everything does follow nature's path and human's "awareness," ability to build buildings or go to the moon, could just be a part of it. This does not make humans better than other beings such as birds and squirrels, Peter Singer opts for equality among species, while also advocating abortion and euthanasia. Though Aristotle continuously uses the word animal as both humans and all relative mammals, he insists humans are the only ones with a rational soul. Whereas humans without fully developed frontal lobes, children lack rational souls, could argue to be as "socially useless" as a dog is, or at least that is the way Singer sees it, along with the disabled and elderly under the corresponding circumstances.

Singer is infamously known for his metaphysical dispute over man and all other living organisms, and in addition, he believes that infants are not people, "as you and I are people." In Ellen Fielding's article "Marilyn Hogben Meets Peter Singer," Hogben is deciding whether or not to throw away her frozen fertilized eggs then asks Singer's help on the subject. Singer tells Hogben that ethical decisions should be made with rationality and not with emotion, though his exact answer is not given. Using logical thought and critical thinking allows us to see answers more clearly, even relating to maternal topics. Singer states abortions and post-partum abortions are just; if the new sprout of life distresses one's way of living, the parents have a right to terminate said sprout, "since neither the unborn nor the newly born have the capacity for

self-knowledge, self-awareness of their lives as past, present, and future” (Feilding). In comparing frozen embryos to a baby in a womb, we can go back to Aristotle’s other two aspects of the soul; a nutritive soul being something that is alive, like a plant, that would be our frozen embryo. A sensitive soul, which appeals to senses such as touch or smell, like animals, that is the baby in a womb, hairless dogs that can speak. One should be able to kill a plant without having to justify one’s actions, killing an animal can be a controversial issue but it happens every day.

Singer sheds light on a highly disputed topic, bringing the sanctity of life to the minds of modern philosophers everywhere. Contemporary Christians and the majority of Republicans are more conservative in their conviction on the topic, basing their logic on the rights of a being starting at conception, as explained in Bernanke's article in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. Popular debates in religion and politics relate the sanctity of life to the quality of life, Singer wishes to change the opinion of the State, the Vatican, and the people, by supporting abortion, euthanasia, and other peculiar ethic issues; facing questions that may make some feel uncomfortable, “What point is there in intubating a 90-year-old and severely demented woman with an irreversible lung disease” (Singer 31:38)? An example taken from the documentary, “Singer: A Dangerous Mind,” or his comparison of a luxury sports car to a young child in a complex runaway train scenario, stating buying such things is money that could be put towards poverty-stricken countries or families.

Ethics and ethical decisions is a favored topic in both modern and pre-modern philosophy and an excellent place to find hard-hitting questions to ponder. In *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Immanuel Kant states ethics could be simplified to a question of if the nature of subject carries more weight towards evil rather than good, then it is unethical. Does

population control contradict our will of procreation and survival of the species? Does it resemble a sort of selfishness or is there an exception when the population has grown so high?

In questioning the life of a small being, parents find themselves asking why it is their decision to make on whether or not it should live, and thusly says it is not their decision, it is a higher power's decision. Bringing religion into the argument of a life's worth, due to humans not being able to see the future; if the little sprout will be a hindrance or a benefit to the parent, which that is all humans want, a benefit to themselves. This question's answer Singer defines as morally defensible, in that the good outweighs the evil due to a world population of 7.4 billion, increasing by roughly 2 humans every second, according to the United States Census Bureau to date. Welcome Darwinism to the twenty-first century and ease the stress of reproduction by saving it for the ones who have the means to do so; if mandating laws on the issue sets a method to the madness at least there will be no longer be an oops moment or happy accidents for that matter.

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