

Ethics of Peter Singer

Peter Singer is called one of the most influential living philosophers. His books have been translated into many languages and his “Practical ethics” has become basic literature for courses in ethics in the entire world. However, his views are controversial and sometimes counter-intuitive, therefore, they might be worth understanding and challenging. The 2-hours’ lecture will be a brief presentation of his basic philosophical assumptions and the most famous and sound philosophical arguments: principle of equal consideration of the interests, the argument for a duty to help the poor, the argument for not harming the animals, the argument for abortion, the argument for euthanasia.

Effective Altruism

Effective altruism is a philosophical idea and social movement aiming at optimizing the world. The movement already has a great impact on attitudes, consumer choices and charity actions of many people. It proposes a new approach to charity. Intuitions and emotional reactions to those in need are replaced by applying careful evidence-based reasoning to charitable actions. Effective altruists focus on areas where actions can be the most cost-effective: eliminating world poverty, reducing animal suffering and preventing extinction of human species.

Our duties to the poor

Helping the poor has always been a subject of concern for people and a major problem in ethics. Changes in the last 50 years forced philosophers to rethink traditional views on poverty and charitable actions. The awareness of world’s poverty has risen due to development of communication technology. Other technological achievements led the so-called “first world” to an unprecedented level of affluence, yet according to the UN, in 2010 every 3rd second, a person died due to poverty-related reasons. In the 2-hours’ lecture, basic arguments for (P. Unger) and against (G. Hardin) helping the poor will be presented and an argument for considering helping the poor as a moral duty and not charity (Singer).