

A MODEST PROPOSAL

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Peter Singer does not think that eating meat is wrong in and of itself. The case he makes in *Practical Ethics* against the use of non-human animals for food consists of two connected arguments.¹ It will be convenient to call them the Suffering Argument and the Killing Argument. The Suffering Argument is primarily an argument against *factory farming*—the mass production of meat and animal products as it occurs in developed nations at least—and is well expressed by paraphrasing an explicit argument Singer gives (230–231) concerning absolute poverty:

- S1. If we can prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, we ought to do it.
- S2. Animal suffering is bad.
- S3. We can prevent most of the animal suffering produced by factory farming without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance.
- C. We ought to prevent most of the animal suffering produced by factory farming.

If the conclusion of the Suffering Argument is granted outright,² then there is still some work to do to mount an argument for vegetarianism. Assume that the market for animal products other than meat—leather, for instance—could not sustain factory farming by itself. Global vegetarianism would then be an effective means of preventing *all* the animal suffering involved in factory farming, since presumably factory farming would cease to exist without a market for its products. But it might reasonably be objected that other global strategies short of vegetarianism would do at least as well. One option would be to leave factory farming practices more or less intact, but change the nature of the animals processed under it—say by genetically engineering them to be non-sentient or nearly so. Another (less science-fiction-sounding) option is to adopt a consumer strategy of selective meat use, consuming only animals raised by “traditional” farming methods, which arguably might not inflict *unnecessary* suffering on them. Singer’s chief argument against traditional farming, and the focus of the rest of this essay, is the Killing Argument.

Singer's views have received intense criticism, within and without the philosophical community. This essay will argue that one critical possibility has gone unnoticed. Singer's employment of the Killing Argument, when combined with the rest of his ethical views, does not after all recommend vegetarianism, even granting Singer's controversial views about adult non-human animals. By Singer's own lights, we seem permitted to turn our gastronomic attention to the very young, a result that crosses species boundaries.

I. THE ETHICS OF KILLING

Singer readily admits that traditional farming methods do not always raise the concerns about suffering that factory farming does. But Singer is no mere hedonist. His ethics is driven by what he calls the *principle of equal consideration of interests*, and the interests that morally considerable individuals like us have are not limited to the experience of pleasure and the avoidance of suffering. In virtue of being sentient, an individual has interests, but the range and depth of those interests are a function of the range and depth of the individual's psychological capacities. One capacity in particular—*self-consciousness*—provides another morally important threshold, over and above the threshold of sentience. The possession of a self-concept enables an individual to have future-oriented preferences about how its life will go, and its interests include the satisfaction of such preferences. Singer calls self-conscious individuals, *persons*.

Singer thereby has an answer to a central question in applied ethics: what is so (distinctively) bad about killing a typical adult human being, like you or me? An appeal to the suffering caused to the victim seems only to recommend that if someone is going to kill an individual like you or me, they should take care to do it painlessly if possible. Singer can say something much more plausible: even painless killing of typical adult human beings does them a very great harm, because, in virtue of having future-oriented preferences (including the strong preference to continue to live), they have a very great interest in continuing to live. Call the interests that only persons have, *person-specific* interests.

Singer's approach to applied ethics, then, sorts individuals into three basic metaphysical categories: *non-sentients*, which cannot be the victims of (moral) harm; *sentient non-persons*, which can be harmed by causing them suffering and benefited by causing them enjoyment; and *persons*, who (typically) are especially harmed when they are killed, even if it is done painlessly. Call this sorting the *Singerian division*.

Of course, the ethics of killing depends upon more than whether or not killing an individual makes it the victim of harm. For instance, kill-

ing individual X may cause *indirect* harm, such as suffering in others, if they are aware of the killing. And even on a hedonist view (according to which it arguably does X no harm to kill X painlessly), there may be circumstances where no harm is done to other existing individuals either, but the mere loss of pleasure that otherwise would have existed is sufficient to render the killing wrong.³ Yet even if X's continued life would have been on balance pleasant, the killing of X need not be wrong. For killing X may "make way" for the existence of another individual Y, which otherwise would not have existed or persisted, and which has a life that is on balance at least as pleasant as the continued life of X would have been. When this condition is fulfilled, we say that X is *replaceable*. (And if X is killed in such circumstances, say that X is *replaced*, and Y is a *replacer*.)

Non-hedonists can appeal to the same sorts of "indirect" considerations. Singer holds that it is in an individual's interest to experience pleasure and avoid pain, and hence that there is moral value in pleasure and disvalue in pain. So he can appeal to replaceability considerations where the ethics of killing is concerned. Singer is a utilitarian, of course, and replaceability considerations have often been invoked to cast doubt on utilitarianism. Singer's response to this charge is subtle, and depends upon the Singerian division. Persons typically are not replaceable, since killing a person typically harms *that person*. But sentient non-persons *are* replaceable.

Singer's ethics of killing can be summarized as follows: there are direct and indirect reasons why a killing may be wrong. The direct reasons involve harms to the victim, and might be experienced harms, such as suffering, or non-experienced harms, such as the frustration of future-oriented preferences. The indirect reasons involve experienced harms to other individuals, or non-harms such as the loss of unreplaced individuals.⁴

II. THE KILLING ARGUMENT

Of course, Singer's personhood condition has no necessary connection with species membership, and Singer has argued on reasonable grounds that there are non-human persons amongst species such as gorillas and chimpanzees. This enables him to object to, for instance, some medical experimentation on adult chimpanzees, which culminates in the animals being killed. Even were such an experiment painless, the killing of the chimpanzees, if they are indeed persons, still causes them considerable harm, and will be permissible only if it is morally necessary.

Suppose that someone proposes to kill an adult chimpanzee in order to eat it. Singer would object if the harm to the chimpanzee were unnecessary—if it were done only to satisfy a craving for chimpanzee meat, say.⁵ Surely many of us share Singer's judgment about this case. Perhaps our

reluctance to eat dogs, cats, horses, and dolphins reflects at least an uncertainty about whether or not we would be eating persons. Indeed, in one respect Singer seems on very firm ground: each of us seems to draw the line at killing and eating *some* non-human individuals, a line that is *moral* and not merely aesthetic. So we already think that there are some non-humans it is wrong to kill for food, at least given that it is unnecessary to do so. Singer is merely attempting to make our thinking consistent. Take the case of pigs. Animal psychology strongly suggests that adult pigs are at least as psychologically sophisticated as adult dogs. So if we give dogs the benefit of the doubt, it seems we ought to give it to pigs as well.⁶

Singer applies this thought to the ethics of killing as follows:

It is notoriously difficult to establish when another being is self-conscious. But if it is wrong to kill a person when we can avoid doing so, and if there is real doubt about whether a being we are thinking of killing is a person, we should give that being the benefit of the doubt. (119)

Generalize this into what can be called the *principle of the benefit of the doubt*:

(PBD) For any individual X, if there is sufficient doubt that X is not a person, then you ought to treat X (modulo necessity) as if X were a person.⁷

The corollary of the PBD is that known non-persons are not to be treated as if they are persons. But how far down the psychological hierarchy of animals do we go in our application of the PBD and its corollary? Certainly Singer thinks that higher mammals receive the benefit of the doubt. But his more cautious opinion on the treatment of poultry is that we ought to simply avoid any wrongdoing by avoiding farming them for meat.

Singer's discussion of poultry farming (133–134) can be put as follows. The *best* case to be made for the permissibility of raising animals for food will focus on traditional farming methods where, arguably, no unnecessary animal suffering occurs (suppose they run, play, are well fed on a normal diet, and are killed quickly and painlessly). If the animals' lives are on balance pleasurable, then if they would not have otherwise existed, it seems that traditional farming only benefits them (though nothing rests on this—it is sufficient for our purposes that they are not harmed by it). If in addition the killing (given the economics of farming, perhaps) materially implies *replacement*, then a *prima facie* case can be made for its permissibility. But this “replaceability argument” makes room only for the possibility of permissible animal farming, and Singer thinks its application is at best very limited, and will nonetheless call for massive revision in our practices. For instance, it may not apply at all to poultry and other edible birds: Singer calls the assumption

that chickens are not self-conscious “questionable” and the assumption that ducks are not self-conscious “shaky” (133).

Singer writes that, of the things we regularly kill for food, fishes are “the clearest case of animals who [*sic*] are conscious but not persons.” (119) But his attitude to all the other species we farm seems to be that we ought not, to be on the safe side, even traditionally farm them, since killing them might for all we know be the killing of persons. It will be useful to have a name for the epistemic category that chickens apparently fall into: an individual is an *epiperson* iff it is not known to be a person, and it is not known not to be a person.⁸ The three epistemic categories that will concern us are: known non-persons, epipersons, and known persons.

We can now state the Killing Argument:

- K1. It is wrong, in circumstances where it is not necessary, to kill persons or epipersons.
- K2. All the animals we regularly kill and eat (excepting fishes) are either persons or epipersons.
- C1. It is wrong, in circumstances where it is not necessary, to kill the animals we regularly kill and eat (excepting fishes).
- K3. The circumstances in which it is necessary to kill any of the animals we regularly kill and eat, do not include factory or traditional farming of meat.
- C2. Factory and traditional farming of meat (excepting fishes) is wrong.⁹

Singer’s exhortation to a comprehensive extension of the boundaries of our ethical concern to include animals is commonly seen as either inappropriately raising the status of animals, or else as inappropriately lowering the position of humans. This author makes neither judgment. Instead, this essay simply explores some broad consequences of Singer’s overall position. Suppose that Singer is more or less correct in his judgments about which individuals fall into which epistemic category. What follows from this, together with the rest of his views?¹⁰

III. EUTHANASIA, ABORTION, INFANTICIDE, AND ANIMALS

Singer notes that our speciesist attitudes are not always to the benefit of humans: in failing to permit active euthanasia we often treat suffering humans in a way that we would not dream of treating a suffering animal. This is especially so in the case of suffering infants passively euthanized. Here, then, is a narrow possibility for farming meat. Animals that are properly euthanized, even when they are persons, are not harmed by being killed. So it would appear permissible to eat them. (Of course, depending upon why they were suffering in the first place, it might not be *prudent* to eat them.) It would be perverse, though, to farm

livestock on the off chance that they would need euthanizing, and presumably would be wrong to farm them in ways that *bring about* the necessity of euthanasia. But there might be other legitimate reasons to farm—such as, perhaps, free-range egg or milk production—which leave the potential for meat from euthanized animals. Then again, all such farm animals will die sooner or later—that is assured. So even those animals legitimately farmed for other purposes, and which die of “natural causes,” as we say, can be used for meat. Indeed, it would be consistent with Singer’s view that we raise livestock, for the purpose of producing food, by traditional farming methods, and simply wait for them to die by “natural causes.” (Again, it will not always be prudent to eat them, and old meat is no doubt less desirable than much of what we’re used to, but there seems no principled *moral* objection here.)

Perhaps Singer’s most notorious use of the PBD and its corollary is in the realm of abortion and infanticide. There is little or no doubt that very early human infants lack a self-concept, so for the Singerian, very early infants are neither known persons nor epipersons, and cannot receive a benefit of doubt under the PBD. In our culture at least, painless infanticide is often wrong, anyway, since it is contrary to the wishes of those closely involved. But this is entirely a matter of side-effects, of “indirect” reasons, since no harm is done to the infant.

Human development is of course gradual, and between the known non-persons that are early infants, and the known persons that include you and me, there are epipersons. Singer regards normal human infants older than (roughly) one month as epipersons. But animal development is gradual, too. In the case of a chicken, a fertilized egg is a known non-person, and according to Singer, an adult chicken is an epiperson. Hence, given the PBD and its corollary, the ethics of killing chickens will depend upon the boundary between epipersons and known non-persons. If the force of the Suffering Argument is removed by traditional farming methods, and if the animals killed are replaced, then it is permissible (*ceteris paribus*) to farm and kill them if they are known non-persons. So if new-born chicks are known non-persons, then they are candidates for morally permissible traditional farming.

Quite generally, Singer’s position lends itself to the conclusion that the *older* a healthy animal is, the more likely it will be that it is wrong to kill it, independent of side-effects. As for the young, it will depend upon the empirical data. We cannot simply transfer Singer’s judgment about human infants to the animal cases, and say that anything up to one month of age is “fair game.” It seems likely that non-human mammals are born further along in their development than human infants. But of course, this must be balanced against the obvious difference in overall development—adult humans are far more sophisticated mentally

than adult cows. Indeed, it seems that these two dimensions stand in an inverse relation: the more overall mental sophistication there is in a species, the more relatively undeveloped will a newborn member of that species be. So it seems very likely that the line between known non-persons and epipersons will be later than birth for all the species other than fishes that we routinely use as food animals. Even were this incorrect, there may be other animals, mammals even, for which it is true—perhaps squirrels and mice. And there are still other possibilities. Marsupials give birth to live young which are very undeveloped, and grow to relative maturity outside the womb, in the mother's pouch. There are post-birth, known non-persons amongst such mammalian species.¹¹ It seems, then, that in the absence of indirect reasons to refrain from doing so, we may eat replaced, *baby* animals.

IV. AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PBD?

It may be objected that the argument just given is based on a misunderstanding of Singer's position, and that the *prohibition* he proposes on the meat-farming of mammals and poultry does not rest (or not directly, anyway) on the Killing Argument. It might be pointed out in this regard that Singer concludes his discussion of traditional farming as follows:

In any case, at the level of practical moral principles, it would be better to reject altogether the killing of animals for food, unless one must do so to survive. Killing animals for food makes us think of them as objects that we can use as we please. Their lives then count for little when weighed against our mere wants. As long as we continue to use animals in this way, to change our attitudes to animals in the way that they should be changed will be an impossible task. How can we encourage people to respect animals, and have equal concern for their interests, if they continue to eat them for mere enjoyment? To foster the right attitudes of consideration for animals, including non-self-conscious ones, it may be best to make it a simple principle to avoid killing them for food. (134)

Perhaps (the objection goes) the best interpretation of Singer's position is that there may in fact not be anything directly wrong with killing chickens, but we should refrain from doing so anyway, for pragmatic reasons. Call this the Pragmatic Argument.

The response to this objection is in three parts. First, Singer does not fully commit himself to the extra argument just given, so we should be cautious in attributing conviction here. Second, it is just as well that Singer does not commit himself to it. The Pragmatic Argument seems a clanger of the sort Kant dropped when he argued that we have no direct duty *to* animals to avoid cruelty to them; but rather we should avoid it

anyway, on the ground that it brutalizes us to engage in it. *If* there is a world of difference between humans and other animals, such that the former are morally considerable and the latter not, then it is a mystery why Kant thought treating animals a certain way would imply or lead to similar treatment of humans. Only someone who is confused or ignorant would be prone to such error, and the solution would appear to be moral education—in Kantian ethics and how to apply it—not the prohibition of “cruelty” to animals.

The parallel criticism of the Pragmatic Argument requires a little setting up. In the passage just quoted, Singer explicitly employs Hare’s distinction between the *intuitive* (“practical”) and *critical* levels in ethical thinking. For fairly standard utilitarian reasons, it can be argued that we are better off following relatively broad and simple ethical principles for practical purposes, rather than be constantly on the lookout for the overall best outcome. But for Hare’s distinction to support the Pragmatic Argument, there must be an “intuitive” principle that implies a general prohibition on meat-eating.

Here are some candidate principles Singer might have in mind:

- (A) It is better to treat sentient non-persons as if they were persons, than to treat them as if they were sentient non-persons.
- (B) It is better to treat sentient non-persons as if they were persons, than to treat them as if they were non-sentient.

At the critical level, (A) is simply not supported by Singer’s ethics. What *might* be supported is the following qualified version:

- (A*) It is better to treat sentient non-persons as if they were persons, than to treat them as if they were sentient non-persons, if there is sufficient doubt about whether they are persons, and if their interests are not in conflict with equal interests of known persons.

But (A*) is a very close cognate of the PBD. So it’s clear that in Singer’s view, (A) is not to be preferred at the intuitive level to (A*). (The “in any case” in the quote above strongly suggests that the Pragmatic Argument does not rest upon doubts about the personhood of poultry and game birds.) Let’s then suppose that (B) is correct at the critical level, and at the intuitive level, too. Then the Pragmatic Argument might go through if a certain empirical claim is true, namely that:

- (C) If we don’t treat sentient non-persons as if they were persons, then we will treat them as if they were non-sentient.

But whether or not this claim is true, or should be believed, has nothing to do with the distinction between the critical and intuitive levels of ethical reasoning. Consider Ralph, who believes that chickens are definitely

sentient, and definitely non-persons. Moreover, Ralph adopts the Singerian division. Ralph, if he is moderately rational otherwise, will not conform to (C) when it comes to his treatment of chickens. Indeed, no *Singerian* will conform to (C), unless they are confused or ignorant, and the solution would appear to be moral education—in Singerian ethics and how to apply it—not a prohibition of the killing of (even known) non-persons.

The third response to the objection is an *ad hominem*: Singer himself apparently cannot employ the Pragmatic argument without compromising his views elsewhere. Suppose we were to paraphrase the above argument as follows:

In any case, at the level of practical moral principles, it would be better to reject altogether the killing of infants, unless one must do so to survive. Killing infants for convenience makes us think of them as objects that we can use as we please. Their lives then count for little when weighed against our mere wants. . . . To foster the right attitudes of consideration for humans, including non-self-conscious ones, it may be best to make it a simple principle to avoid killing them. (134)

This sort of argument Singer surely rejects, given his views on infanticide and euthanasia. Singer does not, and should not, embrace the Pragmatic argument, and it is henceforth set aside.¹²

V. THE MODEST PROPOSAL

Here, then, is the proposal in behalf of the Singerian: in the absence of indirect reasons to refrain from doing so, let us eat replaced, *baby* animals. This is a two-edged sword, of course. Exactly the same considerations will apply to the possibility of using replaced *human* babies, and perhaps human fetuses, as a food source. A pleasing side-effect will be that some of the best leather and other animal products will continue to be available; not to mention new resources such as the skin of human infants (which artificially dressed will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen, or so Swift proclaims).

Note that we must keep firmly in front of us the assumption that farming the young not fall foul of the Suffering Argument. It is not being proposed that veal production is after all permissible on Singerian grounds. But killing replaceable, well-treated, young-enough calves, lambs, or piglets, is another matter. We should also consider using unwanted kittens and puppies.

Doubtless there are those among us who have an aesthetic objection to eating young animals, perhaps especially human ones.¹³ Or, it might be that it's not a good idea for health reasons to consume too much of one's own species.¹⁴ These sorts of indirect difficulties can be obviated

by the appropriate distribution of resources: for instance, human babies could be fed to less discerning animals, such as carnivorous pets, freeing up more non-human baby meat for the rest of us.

VI. REPLACEABILITY

A well-known and important indirect consideration against meat-farming animals that are known non-persons is the ecological cost of meat, relative to more efficient food resources. Suppose this consideration in fact prohibits any but very moderate use of meat from non-human sources. Yet human individuals who grow to maturity are *much* more ecologically expensive than individuals of the species we usually eat. Abortion or infanticide is therefore a considerable overall economic saving, if the human individual is not *replaced*. Unwanted pregnancies are bound to occur. So let us eat, or feed our pets with, unwanted, unreplaced, human babies and fetuses.¹⁵

On economic grounds, Swift proposed the *selling* of human meat, but we probably must draw the line somewhere. A commercial market for human meat products may be undesirable for the same sorts of reasons as have been offered (by Singer, amongst others) against commercializing the markets in blood and organs.¹⁶ Perhaps it would be bad or wrong for women deliberately to get pregnant to make money selling their offspring to the highest bidder. All things considered, it might be better to think of “baby-food” as a gift, if not an obligation to refrain from wasting valuable resources that can save lives.

Does Singer’s ethics otherwise vindicate Swift? No. Swift, in *his* seminal work, got it wrong in supposing that older children could be butchered no matter what their preferences. He also got it importantly wrong—backwards, in fact—in proposing that the rich eat the babies of the poor. Swift’s argument was not explicitly based on replaceability, and in all likelihood (the Irish being, as he put it, “constant breeders”) the overall rate of Irish baby-making would have been unaffected by the injection of extra resources gained by sacrificing babies.

Singer describes, in hedonist terms, two basic versions of utilitarianism (103). On the “total” view:

we aim to increase the total amount of pleasure (and reduce the total amount of pain) and are indifferent whether this is done by increasing the pleasure of existing beings, or increasing the number of beings that exist.

The second approach is to count only beings who already exist, prior to the decision we are taking, or at least will exist independently of that decision. We can call this the “prior existence” view.

Consider that there are two ways for a sentient, known non-person X to be replaceable. *Symmetric replaceability* obtains when it would make no difference to the overall amount of moral value whether or not X is replaced. Hence, symmetric replacement is permissible, but refraining from symmetrical replacement is also permissible. *Asymmetric replaceability* obtains when eliminating X would *increase* overall value. Asymmetric replacement of known non-persons seems obligatory, at least from a “total” utilitarian perspective.

Moreover, there are two distinct ways for replacement to occur. *Creative replacement* obtains when killing X *brings about* the existence of replacers that would not have otherwise existed. *Noncreative replacement* obtains when killing X merely permits the continued existence of replacers which otherwise would not have survived. *Noncreative asymmetric replacement* of known non-persons seems obligatory, even from a “prior existence” utilitarian perspective.

Since the person-centered interest in survival outweighs the interests of a known non-person, let the at-risk poor kill and eat their unwanted fetuses and babies. Consider also that we who grow to maturity in the developed world are *far* more ecologically expensive than the often enough undernourished denizens of the developing world. Given the principle of diminishing marginal utility, and the extravagance of our lifestyle, there is an obvious ecological argument that our unwanted babies and fetuses are asymmetrically replaceable. So wherever practicable let *them*—the poor—eat *our* unwanted babies and fetuses.¹⁷

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NOTES

Thanks to David Braybrooke for helpful comments.

1. The following discussion of Singer is restricted to *Practical Ethics*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), arguably the most complete development of his overall views. One note of caution: the present author has a preference for writing in terms of ethical truth and falsity. Singer is not himself a cognitivist, and nothing in this essay should be taken to attribute cognitivism to him.

2. The case for the conclusion of the Suffering Argument can seem strong, even if one does not accept all its premises.

3. For instance, if the continued life would have been on balance pleasurable, and the continuation of that life would not have rendered other lives on balance less pleasurable than they otherwise would have been, or otherwise reduced the number of on-balance-pleasurable lives, then there would have been a net loss of overall pleasure from killing that individual. A hedonist utilitarian would presumably judge such an act to be wrong.

4. In principle, Singer could include non-experienced harms to other individuals in the indirect reasons. A person's preferences can be frustrated without them knowing, so even a secret killing frustrates the ("external") preferences of those who would rather that such things not obtain.

5. In a case where it *was* necessary—say in order to survive—Singer's view clearly has the resources to grant a judgment of permissibility.

6. This is not to say that there is necessarily an inconsistency if one eats pigs and not dogs—there can be non-moral reasons for such a preference.

7. The "modulo necessity" qualification allows *inter alia* that person-specific interests of a *known* person can override the interests of a *doubtful* person, when they are in conflict.

8. Two qualifications are necessary. First, nothing here rests upon any particular account of knowledge—indeed, the term "knowledge" is used here mainly for ease of exposition, and a definition in terms of reasonable or justified belief might do just as well. Second, the definition of an epiperson assumes a judgment under conditions of *epistemic responsibility*. For instance, one does not get to count another individual as a mere epiperson through willfully ignoring their reasonable claim to personhood.

9. The strength of belief in the conclusion of the Killing Argument will for a Singerian partly depend upon the strength of belief in K2, since there can presumably be doubt about whether or not we know an individual is an epiperson.

10. Although the matter is not explored here, views other than Singer's that sharply distinguish individuals on the basis of psychological capacities, in the manner of the Singerian division, may likewise support the "modest proposal."

11. What if the line for all edible species was in fact prior to birth? In principle, it will still be permissible to farm such animals, but it would depend upon an unintrusive method of terminating pregnancy to obtain the fetus at a "safe" stage.

12. Nothing in this essay forecloses on the possibility that it be sensible to place a *moratorium* on traditional farming of animal non-persons, while proper moral education is administered. But this is a much weaker version of the Pragmatic Argument than that intended in the objection.

13. Note that there can be Singerian moral reasons for refraining from eating adults who are dead anyway—they likely had a strong preference not to be eaten, for instance.

14. Interestingly, it might in the case of eating other species be *better*, healthwise, to eat the young.

15. The usage in this essay of the notion of replaceability is the usual *narrow* one. On a broader conception, one might claim that if the death of a human X makes way for several other non-human individuals who otherwise would not have existed or persisted, and if their interests when combined are at least as important as those of X, then X is after all replaced.

16. Peter Singer, "Altruism and Commerce: A Defense of Titmuss Against Arrow," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 2, pp. 312–320.

17. Whether or not the asymmetric replacement here is creative might depend upon one's metaphysics. It might be argued that some beneficiaries of the replacement of known, human non-persons are human *persons* that do not exist prior to or independent of the replacement killing (e.g., some fetuses might exist prior, and fail to be persons). Hence, it might be argued that the "prior existence" utilitarian who endorses the Singerian division can in some measure resist the conclusions of the last paragraph.