

Outline of Singer

These are the major parts of Peter Singer's article "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."¹ I find flat outlines like this helpful for following the course of an argument. Even though they aren't very detailed, they keep me oriented. And because they aren't very detailed, they are not hard to make.

1. Introduction to the problem (229-31).
2. Two versions of the principle he wants to defend and the basic argument in its favor (231-32).
3. Objections to Singer's basic argument for his principle: the famine case is unlike the drowning child case (232-35).
4. Radical consequence of the argument: many acts that, according to common-sense ideas of morality, are merely matters of charity are in fact moral duties (235-36)
5. Objections to the principle itself. The objections maintain that an argument that conflicts too much with our commonsense understanding of charity and duty must be mistaken. Singer argues that we should admit that our commonsense understanding of these matters is indefensible (236-39).
6. Objections to the practical steps Singer recommends. These objections accept the idea that we're required to give to those in need but they express doubts about whether privately provided famine relief will meet this goal. The third point isn't really an objection but more of a question: how much should we give? (239-43)

¹ Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229-43.