PHIL 102 Short Assignment 2019

Critical Thinking Task (400 words)   Due Monday 25th March 2019 at 23:59

SUBMIT THROUGH TURNITIN ONLY, NO PAPER COPY OR COVER SHEET NEEDED

**The task: Defending an argument for a position on obligations to strangers.**

**Background to the task:**

**The task relates to these two thought experiments discussed in lectures:**

* POND: You are walking by a pond. A child is drowning. You can save the child, but your new suit will get wet. What should you do?
* EMAIL: You receive an email, asking for donations. By denoting $10, you can save the sight of a child in Africa. What should you do?

**The ethical question we want to address is**: Should you donate in EMAIL?

**Singer’s Position**: You should donate in EMAIL.

**Singer’s Argument for his Position**:

1. FIRST PREMISE: The only morally relevant facts in POND are that you can prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of any moral significance.
2. SECOND PREMISE: The only morally relevant facts in EMAIL are that you can prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of any moral significance.
3. FIRST INFERENCE: Therefore, POND and EMAIL are morally equivalent.
4. DEFINITION: If POND and EMAIL are morally equivalent, then we must give the same moral answer in both cases. [Definition of ‘morally equivalent’.]
5. SECOND INFERENCE: Therefore, if you should save the child in POND, then you should donate in EMAIL.
6. THIRD PREMISE: In POND you should save the child.
7. CONCLUSION: Therefore, in EMAIL you should donate $10.

**YOUR task:**

1. Describe ONE objection to this argument. (NOTE: This is not an objection to the conclusion, but an objection to the argument given for it.)

CLUE: An objection to the argument must deny one of the premises in the argument or one of the inferences in the argument. In this argument, it is easier to deny one of the premises (Steps 1, 2, or 6).

1. Explain why your objection is a good one. (WHICH premise in Singer’s argument does your objection reject? Why is that a plausible rejection? How does this allow you to deny the conclusion of the argument?)
2. Offer ONE possible reply that Singer could make to your objection, providing supporting reasons that you have thought of yourself.

No reading is required for this task. If you do refer to a reading, do reference it, but no references are required for this task. You do not need to reference lecture notes either, for this task.

**Skills required and developed in this task**:

* Using the “position, argument, objection and reply” format
* Being precise in formulating a position
* Exploring views that are not your own
* Expressing yourself concisely

**Purpose of the task**

* To reinforce a useful format for presenting arguments in philosophy
* To give you practice in being very clear about what you are arguing for
* To prepare you to mount your own arguments more ably (in later essays)– by understanding more fully the views you oppose, being charitable to the ideas you are opposing and giving yourself a greater range of opposing ideas to interact with
* To give practice in writing clearly, directly and briefly.