

Infanticide: A critique of Peter Singer's position in Christian perspective and ethics of virtue after Stanley Hauerwas

Referee: Dr. Benedict Kwok
Author: Edward Shum, Caroline Kung

Introduction

Infanticide by definition refers to the act of intentionally causing the death of an infant usually older than one week but less than one year of age. While most people from or under the influence of western civilization would not cast any doubt on the immorality of most cases of infanticide, there has been a change of attitude towards infanticide due to birth defects. With the advancement of medical technology, it is now much easier for the physician to detect potential birth defects well before the birth of the baby. Now, people take it for granted to artificially cease the pregnancy whenever the forthcoming baby is unwanted and many people consider it morally acceptable for letting an infant with severe birth defects to die.

Amongst advocates of infanticide, Peter Singer is well known in dismantling the tradition value of sanctity of life and build up his own theory of personhood. We would like to take this chance to make an ethical study of infanticide with a brief understanding of the issue and a general review of the standpoints of Peter Singer with respect to personhood of infant. Then we will discuss from a Christian perspective by means of related scriptures and theology of human being with a view to substantiating proper personhood of infant against Singer's discontinuity thesis. A reading into Stanley Hauerwas's relevant works in infanticide, family values and abortion would shed lights on the key issues of this subject which being the proper parenthood and virtues needed to be pursued for sustaining the legitimate interest of infants as a person.

I. The Master Argument of Peter Singer for Infanticide

Peter Singer pointed out that most Western societies and many non-Western societies allow abortion even in late pregnancy upon discovery of fetal defects, but infanticide is prohibited if the infant is younger and less developed with more severe defects. He did not see any point to distinguish an individual being delivered with another one remains within the womb. He opined that selective non-treatment to allow certain defective infants to die even for comparatively mild defect, such as Down's Syndrome, has become more common nowadays. If this could be accepted, why not active killing.

A. Singer's view on definition of death and sanctity of life

In his book *Rethinking Life and Death The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*, Singer brought out the difficulties and burden created upon medical care institutions due to the adoption of brain death as the legal definition of death

[\[1\]](#)

. He quoted the dilemma faced by Dr. Frank Shann, director of the intensive care unit of the Royal Children's Hospital. In this case, Dr. Shann was taking care of two babies, one with severe heart disease but otherwise normal baby, and another having some abnormal blood vessels in his brain which burst suddenly causing massive brain bleeding and destruction of the whole of his cerebral cortex but his brain stem was partially functioning. It happened the two babies had the same blood group which opened the possibility of heart transplant but the legal definition of death made it hopeless and both babies died within a short time.

He argued that the Harvard committee's attempted to re-define 'irreversible coma' as a new criterion for death as irreversibly comatose patients were a great burden, not only on themselves, but also on their families, hospitals, and patients waiting for beds. However, the committee's final decision was still adopting the death of the entire brain as the criterion of death. Singer's interpretation of the Harvard committee's report is that the great burden not only applies to those whose entire brain is dead but also to all those who are irreversibly comatose. [2]

Singer repudiated the traditional doctrine of sanctity of life [3] and challenged the view that all human lives have an equal claim to preservation

[4]
. He questioned the justification of the famous statute arising out of Baby Doe's case that based on the principle of equal human rights. He casted doubts on the Baby Doe's case as a practical guidance regarding treatment of infants born with major handicaps and queried the ethical basis of this statute. The joint opposition of this statute by the American Academy of Paediatrics together with the National Association of Children's Hospitals and the Children's Hospital National Medical Centre eventually led to the issue of a new 'Proposed Rule' on 5 July 1983. This rule stated that 'Section 504 does not compel medical personnel to attempt to perform impossible or futile acts or therapies which merely temporarily prolong the process of dying of an infant born terminally ill...Such medical decisions, by medical personnel and parents, concerning whether to treat...are outside the scope of Section 504.'

However, Singer did not agree that it is a medical judgement but in fact an ethical judgment about the desirability of prolonging a life. [5] In case of infants born with anencephaly or intracranial bleeding, he considered such condition makes a person's life not worth living. For cases involving the possibility of obtaining organ transplantation, Singer suggests that changing the definition of death is not required for anencephalic infants and infants whose cortexes had been destroyed. It would be preferable to make it lawful to remove organs from living, precisely defined and indubitably diagnosed, anencephalic infants or infants whose cortexes have been destroyed. [6]

B. Singer's broader perspective

Peter Singer argued that there have been innumerable human societies that did not share the Western belief in the sanctity of all human life. Infanticide had been an accepted practice in non-Western societies like the Netsilik Eskimo, the Kung of the Kalahari, the Tikopia of Polynesia and Japan. The Netsilik Eskimo relied on female infanticide to balance the sex ratio among adults because their society rely heavily on adult males to hunt in order to get the means of survival but hunting caused many men killed. The !Kung women killed new born babies because of the need to keep family size small, to ease the burden of !Kung women while they need to move to another hunting and gathering ground with had to carried all family belongs. Sometime, the !Kung women killed one of the twins born or new born who is too close to the birth of elder one due to insufficient nutrition for the baby. The Tikopia practiced infanticide for potential food supplies and family size whereas the reason of Japanese infanticide is also for limitation of family size and desired distribution of sexes as well as spacing of children for the convenience of the mother. Singer argued that the practice of infanticide in these societies did not pose corrupting effect on public respect for human life. In fact, the murder rate in Japan falls

well below that of the United States. Moreover, the practice of infanticide in these societies does not affect their affectionate to children.

[7]

Given prenatal screening for fetal defects followed by legal abortion upon discovery of defects is permitted even if the defect is minor and in late pregnancy, Singer did not see any difference between killing of fetus and still born baby but the law makes it a difference.

C. Discontinuity thesis and personhood

Singer put forth his argument that the term 'person' is now often used to mean a being with certain characteristics such as rationality and self-awareness. The Council of Nicea in 325 defined the trinity as one substance and three persons while neither God the Father nor the Holy Ghost were human beings. Therefore, he claimed that a person is not by definition a human being. [8] On the other hand, there is evidence of personhood in great apes, whales, dolphins, elephants, monkeys, dogs, pigs and other animals. They may be aware of their own existence over time, capable of reasoning, certainly feel pain and suffer in a variety of ways.

Thus, he queried why should we treat the life of an anencephalic human child as sacrosanct but not non-human. [\[9\]](#) Singer shares with the view of Richard Dawkins in the 'The Great Ape Project' that they do not consider it being appropriate to assume 'humans are humans' and 'gorillas are animals' in such a way that 'the life of a single child is worth more than the lives of all the gorillas in the world.' They call this way of thinking as the discontinuous mind and 'it is we that choose to divide animals up into discontinuous species. On the evolutionary view of life there must have been intermediates...'
[\[10\]](#)

Singer shared the view with Lord Keith of Kinkel in the case of Anthony Bland in Britain that 'an individual with no cognitive capacity whatever, and no prospect of ever recovering any such capacity in this world, it must be a matter of complete indifference whether he lives or dies'
[\[11\]](#)

. We should treat human being in accordance with their ethically relevant characteristics such as consciousness, the capacity for physical, social and mental interaction with other beings, having conscious preferences for continued life, and having enjoyable experiences. What makes a difference to a being is having relationship of the being to others, have relatives who will grieve over your death, or fear for their own lives if you are killed.

[\[12\]](#)
An individual must have a psychological connection to his or her own future in order to be harmed by being killed. As newborn infants do not have a psychological connection to the future,
so Singer considered
they cannot be harmed by being killed.

D. Whose interest matters? The Child or the Parent?

Singer questions whether it is always in the interests of the child to do everything possible to keep it alive which is made on the presupposition that a new-born infant can have an interest in its future existence. On one hand, Singer does not see a new-born infant is a continuing self. Even though it may develop into a person, we cannot say that he has an interest surviving to become a person as it lacks psychological continuity with the person it may become. In other

words, Singer means that the new-born infant is not a person. On the other hand, he argues that if an infant has to go through all painful and suffering treatment and/or surgery, disregarding the pains the parents would go through and the cost of medical care, it would be better for the infant to die shortly after birth rather than having an extended period of 'demonstrably awful' life. Whatever better moments the infant may have in this short extended period would by far be outweighed by what he had suffered.

Instead, Singer emphasizes the interests of the parent, any existing siblings and even that of a non-existing next child. He sees the survival of a handicapped child creates a handicapped family in which case the family would go through tiredness, total exhaustion and depression suffered by the parents. He ignored the significance of work done by Cliff Cunningham who found that between 50 and 70 percent of parents having a baby with Down's Syndrome would discover their experience rewarding and strengthening once overcome the initial shock whereas only 20 percent consider having a Down's Syndrome baby is a burden. He considers the interest of the handicapped child is protected at the expense of the interests of the parents and the interests of existing siblings are also ignored. When taking into account of the result of one study of 160 mothers having disabled child, 101 determined not to have more children out of them 90 would attribute the reason relating to the birth of a retarded child. He draws the assumption that parents by keeping a badly damaged child alive will likely to eliminate the potential existence of a normal one.

E. Impact of Singer's Theory

Singer argued that infants like fetus are not rational and conscious being and do not aware of its own existence over time and hence is not classified as a person. So, active killing of infants painlessly is not wrong if it is the preference and in the interest of the infant's parents whereas it would also ease the burden of the parents, medical care system as well as the society and at the same time of benefit to patients waiting for organ transplantation. There are obviously flaws with Singer's theory of personhood and utilitarian approach to infanticide. Once we accept Singer's theory of personhood, any human infant or adult who is not rational and unconscious of his own existence time is not entitled to the right of survival when he is not welcomed by his family or the society. Interesting enough, Singer's mother had been tragically ailed with

Alzheimer's disease, which is a kind of incurable, degenerative, and terminal disease and is one of the most economically costly disease to the society. According to Singer's argument, his seriously ill mother would fall outside the definition of personhood but Singer admitted that it was more difficult than he thought before because it is different when it's your mother.

[\[13\]](#)

While Singer advocates infanticide based on utilitarian approach, he also advocate protection of animals' right and he had great concern to help the poor. It is difficult for us to accept that the right of animals should prevail over that of human infants. Singer's evaluation of the burden for taking care of a defective infant is very much utilitarianism. Gordon Preece considered it is all about preferences out of personal fulfilment and alleviation of suffering

[\[14\]](#)

without due consideration of the right of survival of the defective infant even the duration of survival is short. Singer's approach would imply an encouragement of the society to abandon human lives when they are not providing any benefit to the society or when their survival would incur costs rather than benefits upon the family or the society. The ultimate goal of Singer is to eliminate burden and suffering but the danger of Singer's theory is that there is no bottom line of burden and suffering. Even if people can eliminate the problem of bringing up a defective infant, there will be plenty of next level suffering to be eliminated. This will be never ending and we will face the risks of going too far towards social Darwinism.

II. Critique of Singer's Theory in Christian Perspective

A. Scriptural consideration on infanticide

When God created man, male and female, in his own image, God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." [\[15\]](#) This is a blessing of God and the blessings is relating to the fruitful multiplication of man and this can only be achieved by reproduction. Because of the faith of Abraham, God made a covenant with him that God gives the

land to the offsprings of Abraham who would multiply exceedingly as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore.

[\[16\]](#)

Even for Ishmael, God also blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply greatly.

[\[17\]](#)

When Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, God open the womb of Leah but Rachel barren

[\[18\]](#)

. When the servant of Leah Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, Leah said, "Happy am I! For women have called me happy."

[\[19\]](#)

Therefore, infants are blessings of God. When God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb that Rachel conceived and bore a son, she said "God has taken away my reproach."

[\[20\]](#)

Hannah before giving birth to Samuel was barren because the Lord had closed her womb, she was grievous, deeply distressed and wept bitterly. Because Ephraim have deeply corrupted themselves, their glory shall fly away like a bird ☐ no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! What Lord would give to them was a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

[\[21\]](#)

These scriptural passages illustrate that that barrenness is a curse! In fact, we can see how Jesus loves and concerns for infants in the Gospel. He healed a demon-possessed boy [\[22\]](#) , He taught the disciples to take care of little child in His name

[\[23\]](#)

, He asked the disciples to let the little children to come to Him and do not hinder them for to such belongs the Kingdom of heaven

[\[24\]](#)

. Amongst the creature of God, only human beings are created in His image

[\[25\]](#)

. It is also on this ground that God prohibited murder

[\[26\]](#)

. For those who kill, God would send punishment upon them to those who kill

[\[27\]](#)

and the Old and New Testament has shown God repetitious commandment of "You shall not murder"

[\[28\]](#)

.

B. Discussion of infant personhood with reference to the Testaments and church history

Singer's concept of personhood is rested on what one can do. It depends on whether one's brain is functioning, thinking and choosing. God recognizes humanity not on rationality, consciousness nor awareness of one's own existence over time. David acknowledged that God took him from the womb and made him trust God at his mother's breasts [29]. David also admitted that God formed his inward parts and knitted him together in his mother's womb

[30]

whereas Solomon similarly stated that "children are a heritage from the Lord; the fruit of the womb a reward.

[31]

"

The psalmist also made similar statement that he leaned upon God before birth

[32]

. If some people argue that these biblical passages from Psalm do not reflect historical facts but only the compassion of the psalmists only, the prophet Jeremiah restated God's word that "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

[33]

Even the New Testament also contains similar teaching that the Lord's angel told Zacharias that "John will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"

[34]

when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb."

[35]

Paul also said it was God who had set him apart before he was born. Evidently, it has been God's words that a person is recognized before birth all three parts of the Hebrew bible: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings as well as the gospels and epistles of the New Testament.

There are scholars arguing that Exodus 21:22 does not require penalty for killing of unborn by someone who caused harm to a pregnant woman. Here, we consider this verse provides guideline as to the type of penalty a wrongdoer has to bear rather than what a victim should get. Otherwise, one can argue that verse 18 and 19 allows us to hit someone as long as the hitting does not result in death which is obviously unbiblical. In fact, if the life of unborn is not valued, there is no need to mention the unborn here. Moreover, this verse does provide leeway for the

husband to ask for reparation from the wrongdoer and the judges to determine. If God value a person before birth, there is no reason to believe that God do not see an infant as a person and therefore, there is no excuse to break God's commandment of "Thou shalt not kill".

We are created as persons and reflect God's nature in our personhood instead of reflecting our personhood in what we do. As pointed out by John Wyatt, the Son is described as the exact representation of God's person by using the word "hypostasis" which the early church fathers used to describe the three persons of the trinity. This means that God's ultimate being was in the form of persons that giving themselves to one another in love. In fact, what sets human apart from all other creatures is the immaterial component of humans, i.e. the soul or spirit and a person is identified with the soul or spirit [36]. As human beings are made in God's image, we too are created as persons. Since only human beings are uniquely created in the image of God, we should treat all human beings with respect and try every means to protect all human beings from abuse, manipulation or any one who would deliberately end their life whatsoever tragically incapacitated. Even deformed baby and those seriously incapacitated are treasured by God as a unique person and so do their family members.

[37]

Irenaeus in *Against Heresies: Book II* alleged that Jesus came to save all through means of Himself. All who through Him are born again to God – infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants. [38] Here Irenaeus reminds us the same human life Jesus our saviour had went through on the earth that human life is a blessings of God instead of a downgraded nature as claimed by Peter Singer. One of the Church Fathers wrote in the

Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus

that

“

Christians display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life...They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring.

”

[39]

In Augustine's Letter to Boniface, he condemned those parents bringing their children, others bringing any little ones, who attempt to place those who have been baptized under obligation to

profane worship of heathen gods, are guilty of spiritual homicide. Augustine reminded his readers “Do not kill your little ones”

[\[40\]](#)

despite infanticide had been a common practice in history. We learn from the Church Fathers how they follow through God’s word in the Testaments in relation to the unique sanctity of human nature and listen to God’s commandments.

III. Discussion of Singer’s Theory in Virtue Ethics Perspective

Virtue ethics in ancient Greek thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle studied ethics as a driving force for promoting virtue. They approached ethics by asking “what traits of characters makes one a good person instead of asking “what is the right thing to do?” The supreme human good is *eudaimonia* which is the happy and fulfilled life for any human being. It characterizes the well-lived life irrespective of the emotional state of the person experiencing it and consists of exercising the characteristic human quality, reason, as the soul's most proper and nourishing activity. Aristotle considered that the pursuit of *eudaimonia* was an activity that could only properly be exercised in the characteristic human community, the polis or city-state. [\[41\]](#)

William Galston, a contemporary proponents of virtue ethics advocates the compatibility of liberalism and virtue theory as well as maintaining that “...liberalism needs an account of goods and virtues that enables it to oppose the extremes of both unfettered individual choice and unchecked state coercion.” Rosalind Hursthouse linked virtue ethics to social organization by advocating the construction of the just society prior to rights.

From the perspective of virtual ethics, it talks about traits of characters of a good person not in a narrow sense but about characteristic quality in a human community. When we talk about human choice and freedom, it is not a matter of the person making the choice alone. Freedom of speech and information does not make any sense if it is to be exercised in a society. But such human choice or freedom would inevitably affect other persons. If the parent or parents of an infant with birth defect exercise the freedom to terminate the life of the infant (by whatever means) in order to ease the social burden of bringing up the infant, what would other people see another parent(s) who determine to take care of their child with similar defects? It is inevitable

that some people may consider those keeping the life of defective infants do not make due consideration to the social cost that a society has to bear for taking care of those with severe disability or sickness. Therefore, what Singer claimed that infanticide of defective infant can release more resources for a society to look after the disabled is a false expectation.

A. Brief understanding of Hauerwas's view on abortion and infanticide

Hauerwas is a prolific and comprehensive theological ethicist. He is a seminal figure in the "recovery of virtue" in theological ethics. Following the teachings in the Old Testament that life is a blessing, he pointed out that Christians think it important to recognize that life is a gift. To live autonomously is a denial of life as a gift. What Christians concern is faith which denotes something beyond the moral. Faith is substantively different from any account of morality that makes autonomy the necessary condition and/or goal of moral behavior. Christians seek neither autonomy nor independence but to be faithful to the way that manifests the conviction that we belong to another

□

God. That is why Christians recognize their lives as a gift rather than an achievement. The difference between autonomy and gift is that the former is relating to freeing oneself from all relations whereas the latter encourages dependence. Hauerwas considered true freedom is perfect service that one has to learn to be appropriately dependent and trust the one who wills to have us as his own and who wills the final good of all.

[\[42\]](#)

Hauerwas considered Christian life requires a more radical transformation and continued growth which requires a story that helps us to accept life as a gift.

[\[43\]](#)

The Scripture offers such a story from which we find the happy news that God has called people together to live faithfully and the Scripture provides the basis for a self appropriate to the unresolved, and often tragic, conflicts of existence.

[\[44\]](#)

Whilst not having made much specific elaboration on the topic of infanticide, Hauerwas's views on abortion did bear great relevance to our present discussion. Hauerwas put aside the issue of

sacred life in addressing the issue of abortion. This is because Christians consider there is much worth of dying than living pagan and that is why they took their children with them to martyrdom,.

[\[45\]](#)

He also did not consider it necessary to ask when does life begin but we hope that human life has started because we consider new life will enrich our community not based on the fact that our hope in the future is in our children. In fact, the world is in such terrible injustice and misery by talking about killing of our children. We are having children because this is an extraordinary testimony and act of faith and hope in God.

[\[46\]](#)

In his address at the annual gathering of the Evangelical Fellowship of the North Carolina Conference in 1990, he challenged the dominant view for discussing abortion in the American society. The American society considers “abortion” from the perspective of “rights”. Hauerwas pointed out that the concept of “rights” was attributed to the American society as to how one can achieve cooperative agreements between individuals who share nothing in common other than fear of death. Hauerwas blamed those advocating that people have inalienable rights opposes what Christians believe.

Hauerwas emphasized the body of Christ. When a Christian is baptized, he or she becomes a member of the body of Christ. So there is no privatization of individual lives which would only destroy rather than building up a church. We as a baptizing people are always ready to welcome new life into their communities. Even when we are in pain or in sickness, we have an obligation to remain with the people of God. What Hauerwas talked about is acceptance of life as a gift from God, even though the life is tragic. We are not autonomous and independent being but belong to God and should be in perfect service to God. Unresolved, and often tragic conflicts of existence is unavoidable but the guidance is God’s word, the Scripture. Therefore, there is no reason for us to abandon life either by abortion or infanticide.

B. Recall of family value – parental competency challenged

Hauerwas quoted the sermon of his former student, Hamilton-Poor that the issue of abortion is now so framed that woman is ultimately responsible both for herself and for any child she might

carry which is unbiblical. Women usually sought to have abortions for two reasons. One is their fear that they cannot handle the financial and physical demands of the child and the other is the fear that having the child will destroy relationships that are important to them even they know abortion is wrong. In this case, Hamilton-Poor considered women choose to have abortion not because of their free choice but because of they have no choice and this leaves women and children become enemies of one another. This indicates that such decision is based on wrong conception that the parental responsibility for caring for the child is solely rested on the woman. [\[47\]](#)

Hauerwas also highlighted another flaw concept that no “unwanted child” ought to be born so that “abortion” has substantial impact upon modern society in respect of the practice of having children. He pointed out that when people are asked about the reason of having a child, we would often get answer like “children are fun”, “children area hedge against loneliness”, “kids are a manifestation of our love”. However, raising children is often a great burden rather than fun, loneliness can be tackled with getting a pet whereas human love is so limited that there is no guarantee that parents would love their children throughout their lives especially when their children is rebellious to the parents. Irrespective of the above, many parents are going to have child even when they have no idea of the reason of having child. Hauerwas also pointed out that some people prepared to have a child when they are financially prepared, i.e. a house ready to receive the new life, the parents are in good relationship and etc. but this would eventually destroy the children because of the failure to appreciate their differences. Parental competency rests with their preparedness of welcoming children into this world, some of whom may be born disabled and even die. [\[48\]](#)

C. Virtues for proper parenthood and the well-being of infant

The virtues for proper parenthood and the well-being of infant rests on the Christian doctrine that we are a people dependent on one another. Because Christian dependent on one another, we need one another in order to be a hospitable people. This hospitable people is the church in which every adult, whether single or married, is called to be a parent as exhibited in the baptismal vow. Parents do not become so biologically but by baptism and the church is a family revealing Christians’ willingness to bring up and receive children, for children lack the three

things the world values most – power, wealth, and influence. What Hauerwas called for is not only a competent parenthood biologically and the preparedness of the parents to receive children, whether they are healthy or born disabled, he also called for Christians' testimony to the world by their readiness to take up the responsibility of receiving those being lack of power, wealth, and influence, notably, children born disabled and helping the needy parents to walk through their darkest moments for bring up these infants. After all, Hauerwas considered every ethic is a social ethic. He saw one's identity rests on his or her relation with others. Christian life is about a life together instead of an individual and it is the church that we learn to recognize Christ's presence outside the church. [\[49\]](#)

Regarding the well-being of infant, Hauerwas considered the most profound question of human existence has been wrongly put on the assumption about the nature and necessity of suffering and our willingness to endure it in our own and other's lives in his discussion about "Should Suffering Be Eliminated? What the Retarded Have to Teach Us?". These false assumptions led us to believe that in the name of humanity we should eliminate those who suffer and that certain children born with severe birth defects should not be kept alive in order to spare them a lifetime of suffering [\[50\]](#). So the elimination of suffering has been wrongly associated with the well-being of infant. It is wrong to assume that certain forms of suffering are dehumanizing that it is better not to exist. If this can be justified, so do suicide in the interest of avoiding or ending suffering. In fact, suffering is neither measurable nor quantifiable. The intensification of sufferings perceived by one person does not mean the same for another and it is a subjective issue. Hauerwas reminded us that not every type of suffering is avoidable, like diseases, accidents, natural disasters & etc. Sometimes, we suffer when we are in the course of achieving a goal, but we are not aware of it. The writers of this essay suffer from sleepless night in order to achieve the assignment requirements but we surely would not identify this as a kind of suffering. Most often than not a disabled suffer because they learn from others that they are decisively disabled and suffer. Undoubtedly, they would suffer from discrimination and may even be ill-treated by other so-called normal people.

Conclusion

The aim of this discussion paper is to allows us to have a rather comprehensive glimpse of

Peter Singer's argument for infanticide. Both of us were alarmed by Singer's arguments for infanticide, especially his preferential utilitarian approach regarding the status of fetus and new born infants. But even for a person who takes such a scornful approach towards life like Singer, he still faced the difficult dilemma of whether to euthanize his mother who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease which Preece Gordon would say "he is not without compassion or emotion, just inconsistent in his application of it, more to animals than to human unborns or newborns. [5
1]

Singer recommended not to focus on the definition of death and sanctity of life but to focus on his definition of personhood so as to make infanticide legally acceptable in the interests of parents and siblings, including those not in actual existence, when a newborn infants do not have a psychological connection to the future. Singer's approach is not just utilitarian but also narrowly based that lacks any consideration to the society as a whole. We reproach Singer's claim that the society could spare more resources on other less disabled by eliminating those in irreversibly comatose being a false expectation as mentioned in paragraph III above. While non-Christian may spot a substantial gap between the Scriptural requirement or Hauerwas' very much Christian and biblical approach, we believe the advocacy of the welfare of the community in the Scripture and the ethics of virtue is much better grounded and reasoned than that of the Singer's. Every person, no matter Christian or not, gains his or her identity from the family and social group he belongs because humanity is about relationship amongst each other. Social good could only be promoted through human cooperation whether in a good and positive situation or during times of tragedies. For us Christians, Hauerwas' concept of a hospitable people sparks off the rethinking of the role of our Church nowadays that we should manifest our hospitality to help those families facing difficulties with baby in defective form instead of indulging ourselves in futile arguments amongst pro-life or pro-choice or acting like the pro-choice who whilst advocating their objection towards infanticide doing nothing to ease those families under distress.

List of Abreviation of References

Hauerwas Hauerwas, Stanley. ed. Berkman, John and Cartwright, Michael. The Hauerwas Reader. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001.

Kuhse & Singer Kuhse, Helga & Singer, Peter. *Should the Baby Live? The Problem of Handicapped Infants.* Aldershot : Gregg Revivals, 1994, c1985.

Preece Preece, Gordon R.. Rethinking Peter Singer: A Christian Critique. InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Singer Singer, Singer, Rethinking Life & Death The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994.

Dawkins Dawkins, Richard, Gaps in the Mind, In PAOLA CAVALIERI & PETER SINGER (eds.), The Great Ape Project New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1993, pp. 81-87 (<http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/dawkins01.htm>)

Erickson Erickson, Millard J. Christian Theology, 2nd Edition, USA: Baker Academic, 1983.

Wyatt Wyatt, John. *What is a Person?(page 10-15)* (<http://www.cmf.org.uk/literature/content.asp?context=article&id=684>)

Irenaeus Irenæus. *Against Heresies Book II*, . (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.iii.xxiii.html>)

Matheles The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iii.ii.v.html>)

Augustin Letters of St. Augustin (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.XCVIII.html>)

Wikipedia Achieving Eudaimonia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue_ethics)

Reference:

1. Kuhse, Helga & Singer, Peter. *Should the Baby Live? The Problem of Handicapped Infants*. Aldershot : Gregg Revivals, 1994, c1985.
2. Clarke, David K. *Readings in Christian Ethics Volume 2 : Issues and Applications*. Michigan: Baker, 1996.
3. Feinberg, John S. and Huxley, Aldous. *Ethics for a Brave New World*. Illinois: Crossway Books, 1993
4. Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics – options and issues*. Michigan: Baker, 1989.
5. Murphy, Nancey and others, eds. *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre* . Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.
6. Preece, Gordon R.. *Rethinking Peter Singer: A Christian Critique*. InterVarsity Press, 2002.
7. Hauerwas, Stanley. ed. Berkman, John and Cartwright, Michael. *The Hauerwas Reader*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001.
8. Sproul R.C.. *Abortion: A rational look at an Emotional Issue*. Colorado: Navpress, 1990.

9. Kaposy, Chris. "The Ethics of Infanticide". Ph.D. diss., Stony Brook University, 2006

10. McMahan, Jeff. "Infanticide". *Utilitas* 19 (2007): 131-159, from .

11. Phelan, John E. Jr. & Madvig, Donald H.. "A Theology of the Child". from .

12. Stanley Hauerwas, "The Moral value of the family". In *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* .
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

13. Smith, Janet. "An Application of an Ethics of Virtue to the Issue of Abortion". from <http://www.aodonline.org/aodonline-sqlimages/shms/faculty/SmithJanet/Publications/Abortion/AbortionandMoralCharacter.pdf>

14. Gunn, Andrew. "Peter Singer_ the most dangerous man on Earth?". *New DOCTOR* 73 (Winter 2000). from .

15. Smith, Janet E.. "Children: the Supreme Gift of Marriage". ed. Russell Smith. Braintree. *Faith and Challenges to the Family*.
MA: The Pope John Center, 1994. from .

16. Smith, Janet E.. "Parenting: A School of Virtues". *Canticle* 5 (Summer 1999). 22-25. from <http://www.aodonline.org/aodonline-sqlimages/shms/faculty/SmithJanet/Publications/FeminismWomenFamily/Parenting.pdf>.

17. Dawkins, Richard, Gaps in the Mind, In PAOLA CAVALIERI & PETER SINGER (eds.), *The Great Ape Project* New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1993, pp. 81-87 (<http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/dawkins01.htm>

)

18. Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*, 2nd Edition, USA: Baker Academic, 1983.

19. Wyatt, John. *What is a Person?(page 10-15)* (<http://www.cmf.org.uk/literature/content.asp?context=article&id=684>)

20. Irenæus. *Against Heresies Book II*, . (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.iii.xxiii.html>)

21. The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.iii.ii.v.html>)

22. Letters of St. Augustin (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf101.vii.1.XCVIII.html>)

23. Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtue_ethics)

[1] Traditionally, death was defined as ‘the permanent cessation of the flow of vital bodily fluids (may be blood, sap or something else)’. In 1968, Black’s Law Dictionary defined death as ‘The cessation of life, the ceasing to exist; defined by physicians as a total stoppage of the circulation of the blood, and a cessation of the animal and vital function consequent thereupon, such as respiration, pulsation etc.’ Starting from 1980, the Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA) 1980 provided the legal definition of death, which was approved by the American Medical Association in the same year, as (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem is dead.

[2] Singer, page 25-27

[3] The traditional sanctity of life doctrine sees the value of life not reducible to anything else like happiness, self-consciousness, rationality, autonomy or consciousness

[4] Singer considered that one of the reason for supporting the view that all human life is of equal worth is based on the concept of human rights which gained weight in the eighteenth century as a barrier against abuse of human rights based on spurious grounds.

[5] Kuhse & Singer, page 27

[6] Singer, page 52

[7] Kuhse & Singer, page 99-109

[8] Ibid, page 180-181

[9] Ibid, page 182-183

[10] Dawkins, pp. 81-87

[11] Singer, page 67

[12] Ibid, page 191

[13] Preece, page 29-30

[14] Ibid, page 92

[15] Genesis 1:27-28

[16] Genesis 15:18, 17:2, 22:17, 26:24, 28:14

[17] Genesis 17:20

[18] Genesis 29:30-31

[19] Genesis 30:13

[20] Genesis 30:22

[21] Hosea 9:11, 14

[22] Matthew 17:18

[23] Matthew 18:5

[24] Matthew 19:14

[\[25\]](#) Genesis 1:26-27

[\[26\]](#) Genesis 9:6

[\[27\]](#) 2 Samuel 16:8, 21:1; Psalm 5:6, 9:12, 26:9, 51:14; Ezekiel 16:38, 18:10-13

[\[28\]](#) Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; 1 Samuel 11:13; Matthew 5:21, 19:18; Mark 10:19;
Luke 18:20; Romans 13:9; James 2:11

[\[29\]](#) Psalm 22:9-10

[\[30\]](#) Psalm 139:13

[\[31\]](#) Psalm 127:3

[\[32\]](#) Psalm 71:6

[\[33\]](#) Jeremiah 1:5

[\[34\]](#) Luke 1:15

[\[35\]](#) Luke 1:41

[36] Erickson, page 540-541

[37] Wyatt, page 10-15

[38] Irenaeus:, Chapter XXII - The thirty Æons are not typified by the fact that Christ was baptized in His thirtieth year: He did not suffer in the twelfth month after His baptism, but was more than fifty years old when He died.

[39] Mathetes, Chapter V.—The manners of the Christians.

[40] Augustin, Letter to Boniface

[41] Wikipedia

[42] Hauerwas, page 223-224

[43] Ibid, page 249

[44] Ibid, page 251

[45] Ibid, page 614

[46] Ibid, page 615

[47] Hauerwas, page 607

[48] Ibid, page 618-619

[49] Ibid, page 372

[50] Ibid, page 558

[51] Preece, page 23