

## **Judges' Commentary on "Why Then Should We Give?"**

by

**Marie Pappas**

**"Why Then Should We Give?" won second prize in the University of Pittsburgh's  
2007/08 Composition Program Writing Contest**

Assigned to compose an analytical argument using an outside source to respond to Peter Singer's position on charitable giving in "The Singer Solution to World Poverty," Marie Pappas adeptly resists reducing the task to dutiful comparison-contrast. Her essay "Why Then Should We Give?" demonstrates the art of intellectually engaged counterargument through well-chosen, well-read source. Even though the decision to counter Singer might at the outset seem daunting—who could possibly argue against charity?—her essay quickly locates a compelling focus: her concern is precisely *for* charity, and for its moral underpinning based not in guilt but in love, as argued by Christian writer C. S. Lewis. It is this "heartfelt" foundation for humanitarian action that "Why Then Should We Give?" seeks to reclaim from Singer's self-proclaimed "utilitarian" approach, and which Pappas' writing with its love of reason and sense of human drama lucidly portrays.

Paying close critical attention to language, she illuminates the limitations of Singer's terms, noting that it seems he "wants to condemn his readers to a lifetime of guilt." She elucidates the negativity of his argument to draw a contrast with Lewis' more substantive reasoning: "[Lewis] is certainly demanding more than Singer, who merely wants the contents of our wallets; the charity that Lewis urges us towards requires not just monetary investment, but emotional and personal investment as well." Yet Pappas also skillfully qualifies her initial opposition between the two authors by acknowledging that both use logical and emotional appeals, even as she offers the moral lens of Lewis's essay to critique Singer's ethics and reasoning. In her thoughtful, measured account, these writers' discussions of the motivation for charity take on relevance for a broad audience. Their arguments "make us stop to think in part because love and guilt are equally powerful motivators, and appeal to our inherent tendency to want to at least appear benevolent." "Why Then Should We Give?" encourages readers to examine the

basis for their own aspiration to do good by treading lightly yet perceptively on this most delicate of territories.

**To read the full text of Marie Pappas' essay, [click here](#)**