

Yankee Steve's Almanac
for the Week of March 31, 2009

Mr. Charlie Rose, 731 Lexington Avenue, New York City, NY 10022

Dear Mr. Rose:

If someone remarked that the interviews you conduct with distinguished guests are the most edifying and evocative on television, I would agree. Thank you.

That is why I was surprised to see that you spent valuable time interviewing Dr. Peter Singer of Princeton University. Joseph Heller sums up my assessment of Dr. Singer. **“Some men are born to mediocrity, some men achieve mediocrity, and some men have mediocrity thrust on them.”**

Singer displays mediocrity in all these ways. I am certain that if Singer lived at another time and place, say during the time Diogenes Laertius listed the more important philosophers, he would have never even made it into the footnotes.

So why present him to the PBS audience? Circuitous answers not tinged with any real emotion, unlike those exhibited by two powerful guests you had on before him, gave me the impression that Singer is nothing more than a bloodless, detached academician. He discusses the subject of poverty and suffering as if he were dealing with binary fission.

Dr. Singer has lost his way. His written works show that he allows for and even recommends infanticide. And if that is the case why should he be consulted about matters dealing with ethics? Philosophers of his stripe do more harm than good. Students forget valuable lessons from their chemistry or literature classes, but they remember just enough from teachers like Singer to screw up the rest of their lives.

I am of the opinion that a dark cloud hangs over Nassau Street where Princeton is located chiefly because Dr. Singer has been allowed to ply his trade there, much like a mountebank selling an elixir. Or should I say that he corrupts the youth there with no fear of having to drink the hemlock. American universities pride themselves in hiring avant-garde quacks. Every college must have one or two on their faculty. However, the voice of experience thinks differently. **“I will turn from a philosopher as I would from a mad dog.” [Lucian]**

Maybe Lucian had met up with someone like Singer.

Name the philosopher, Sartre or Camus or Russell, what good have they done us? Thankfully there is an alternative to philosophy. Athanasius said,

“These philosophers could not influence their own neighborhood, but this one man Jesus filled the world with men that loved righteousness and no longer feared death.”

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