

Constructing an ethical theory: three cases for discussion

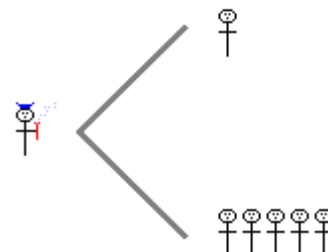
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<http://philosophy.tamu.edu/~gary/blogscases.pdf>

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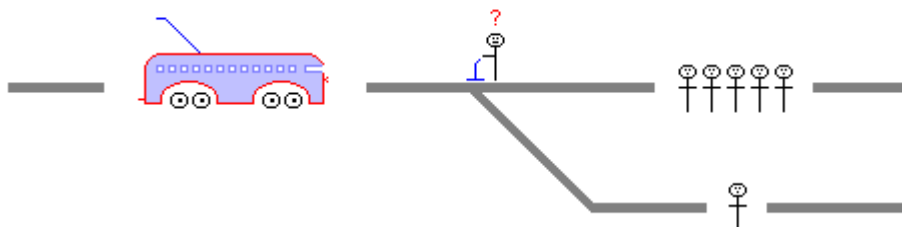
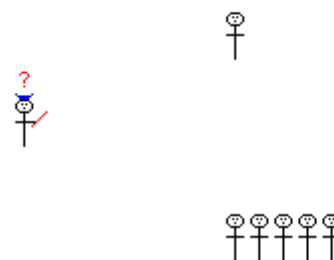
1. The scarce drug case

You are an emergency room physician, and you only have five doses of a certain drug left. Alas, you have six patients who need it. Bloggs has a very severe version of the condition for which the drug is a treatment, and it will take all five doses of the drug to cure him. Your other five patients have mild versions of the condition, and each of them will be cured by a single dose. Any one of the six who doesn't get the full dosage they need will die.



2. The transplant case

Suppose that you are a famous transplant surgeon, and that your transplants always work. You have five patients, each of whom needs a transplant. One needs a heart, one a brain, two need one lung apiece, and one needs a liver. One of your patients, Bloggs, has come in today to find out the results from some lab work. You know from the results of the lab work that Bloggs would be a perfect donor for each of your five other patients, and you know that there are no other available donors. So you ask Bloggs if he would be willing to be cut up and have his organs distributed. He declines your kind offer, but you realize that you could easily overpower Bloggs and cut him up without his consent.



3. The trolley case

The driver of a trolley has passed out at the wheel, and his trolley is hurtling out of control down the track. Straight ahead on the track are five men who will be killed if the trolley reaches them. You are a passerby, who happens to be standing by the track next to a switch. If you throw the switch, you will turn the trolley onto a spur of track on the right, thereby saving the five. But Bloggs is on that spur of track on the right; and he will be killed if you turn the trolley.

Exercise: In small groups, decide in which cases you judge it permissible to save the five. Then state *why* it is permissible in those cases and not in the others. Make sure that your explanation for one case does not imply the opposite of the answer you give in either of the other two cases.