

Judith Thomson

November 9th

Philippa Foot

Trolley driver case: you are the driver, breaks broke; there are 5 workers on the track ahead, and 1 worker on the side track

↳ is it morally permissible for you to turn the trolley (kill one instead of 5)

→ Foot says yes to turn + kill one → Thomson Agrees

Judith Thomson

Thomson's trolley problem: you are a bystander and notice there's no driver; you can let trolley kill the 5 workers on the path or pull a switch to turn the trolley and kill one worker

→ Thomson says yes it is permissible; and rejects "killing one is worse than letting 5 die" (Foot's explanation of the transplant case)

Remorseful Surgeon: you accidentally poison 5 patients, but by killing one healthy one could save the 5

↳ is it morally permissible to kill the one to 'reverse' your poisoning?

→ Thomson says no; it is worse to kill more than kill less and it is worse to kill than to let die

Bentham's conception of utility: "greatest happiness for the greatest number" → might disagree w/ Thomson

Kant's formula of humanity: "act so that you treat humanity... never merely as a means" → surgeon uses healthy person as a means (impermissible), bystander does not use anybody to save the 5 (permissible)

Bystander loop:  if you don't pull the switch, the train will kill 5, but 1 is spared; if you pull the switch 1 dies and 5 are spared (size of body mass would stop the trolley)

↳ is it morally permissible to pull the switch → Thomson says yes to kill one + save 5

* Kant would say no b/c you would be using the fat man as a means to save the 5

Thomson's solution

1) Distributive exemption

* A permissible action involves a correct distribution of existing threats → when there is an existing threat that will cause harm no matter what. It is ~~permissible~~ to distribute the harm from more people to fewer

→ Explains bystander (permissible) and transplant (impermissible) cases

Bystander Bridge:  you're on the bridge behind the fat man and know that if you push him he would stop the train and save the 5 workers

↳ Is it morally permissible to push + kill fat man to save 5 others?

→ Thomson says no even though it satisfies the distribution exemption

- she grants that the patient, worker, and fat man have a ~~right to life~~ → considering rights are necessary, but not sufficient to settle permissibility

↳ the trolley problem can only be solved by appeal to the concept of a right, but not only by appeal

2) Non-infringement of stringent rights

- a permissible action does not infringe upon any stringent rights → pushing the man was a direct violation of rights; pulling the switch was not

Thomson's solution

- it is permissible, when something will do harm no matter what, to better distribute the harm, only if you can w/out directly infringing on stringent rights

