

Example of essay on trolley problem

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



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Discussion 1

I agree with the majority of people regarding these cases. It's more acceptable to sacrifice someone in the Switch Dilemma because both the group of five people and the single person who were tied to the tracks were already in the same predicament, that is, they were all tied to the tracks. As such, if given a choice on who to save, then the principle of Utilitarian ethics can be applied in that the choice should be based on the consequences. In particular, the choice should be the one that leads to the most people benefitting from the choice. In this case, saving the five people will naturally lead to more people being saved and more people becoming happy.

However, the same is not acceptable in the Footbridge Dilemma because the big fat man was just an innocent bystander. He wasn't involved in what was happening and pushing him over would mean killing him, which is morally wrong.

When applying the Kantian principle to the Switch dilemma, I can create a rule like “ When given a choice to save two groups of people who are in the

same predicament, the larger group should be chosen.” This is a rule that can be applied universally. On the other hand, if I use the Kantian principle on the Footbridge Dilemma, my rule will be something like, “ It’s okay to intentionally kill an innocent man for the good of more people,” which cannot be applied universally. Kant also contended that it’s unethical to use people as a means to an end and so the fat man should not be used as a means to preventing the tragedy on the tracks.

Discussion 2

1. I think that although both cases required sacrificing one life, it seemed more appropriate for the Switch Dilemma because the person pulling the switch wasn’t directly causing the death of the one person tied to the track. As such, the person who pulls the switch wasn’t as directly responsible for causing the person’s death. He could reason that it was an inevitable occurrence anyway and that he merely diverted the trolley in order to save more lives. He would then feel less guilty. On the other hand, in the Footbridge case, sacrificing the big fat man would not seem appropriate because the person pushing him will feel directly responsible for the man’s death. Emotion is involved as he would feel guilty for the act. Moreover, he is more likely to be emotionally attached to fat man as he is standing beside him, compared to the students on the track who are distant from him.

2. The Trolley problem would be related to the debates on utilitarianism in that according more importance to the good of the majority can lead to the disregard of the rights of the minority. For example, although 5 people will be saved for the loss of one, it doesn’t mean that the one person did not

have as much right to live as the 5. Moreover, utilitarianism disrupts personal relationships in that we cannot treat everyone in the same way. For example, the person in the Footbridge case cannot be faulted if he felt more partial to the fat man standing beside him than to the students on the track.

Discussion 3

I believe that Truman violated an absolute moral rule. However, I also think that he was faced with a conflict between two absolute moral rules – sacrificing the lives of the Japanese people with the dropping of the atomic bombs or sacrificing the lives of people around the world if the war continued. As such, I think that he was justified in choosing the lesser of the two evils.

I think that Anscombe would disapprove of the US war on terrorism, as this involves violence and killing, which are against absolute moral rules. However, based on Kant's principle, I think that going to war can be morally justified by using Kant's theory of punishment. According to Kant, people should be punished for the simple reason that they have committed crimes and that the punishment should be proportionate to the seriousness of the crime, that is, small punishments would be sufficient for small crimes, but big punishments should be imposed on big crimes. As such, it can be said that the war on terrorism is the U. S. A.'s punishment for terrorists and that since the crime committed by terrorists involved violence and death then a proportionate punishment for them also has to involve violence and death.

Discussion 4

1. A good Kantian would not speed in their automobile even if they were running late because the rule that “ it’s okay to speed in the automobile if you’re running late” cannot be applied universally. If everyone who was running late could use that reason to justify the need to drive fast then there would be chaos on the roads.

2. A good Kantian would continue to sell the products even if they were hazardous for the health because a rule such as “ It’s okay to sell something that’s hazardous to the health as long as it’s legal” can be applied universally. For example, smoking is hazardous to the health but cigarettes are sold everywhere. Even marijuana is hazardous to the health but considered legal in some places and as such are being sold in those places. This is also in conformance to Kant’s idea of treating people as ends in themselves. This means that people should be treated as rational beings who are responsible for their behaviors, that is, they should be given the freedom to decide what to do based on their own concept of what is best. Moreover, as responsible beings, people should be held accountable for what they do. That said, as long as the products are legal, a good Kantian would still sell hazardous products because in respect for the consumers, they should be given the freedom to decide whether the product is good for them or not. After all, they will also be the ones to be held accountable for the decisions they make.