

# What is the doctrine of double effect

[Philosophy](#)



The paper "What Is the Doctrine of Double Effect?" is a wonderful version of a term paper on philosophy. The doctrine of double effect was a theological concept or a principle that invokes the permissibility of a certain action while causing serious harm in the process of attaining ultimate good at the end of the intention. The principle of double effect may also mean a number of variations which also would likely include an ultimate good in the end but will also render a bad effect as a twin result of the final good. The key people who have explored this principle include the Italian St. Thomas of Aquinas, who is a known theologian in the 13th century and a pioneer to the Catholic faith. He has included the Doctrine of Double Effect principle in his *Summa Theologica* and has presented a case wherein self-defense is an example of the principle. The explanation is that when a person defends himself from an assailant, he then plans to escape or save himself by scheming in hurting the assailant. This is permissible, according to Aquinas, provided that he does not overdo his repulsion of force and to do it in moderation. Another case is the killing of an assailant as not as prohibited, although earlier writings of another theologian and pioneers of the Catholic faith, St. Augustine, repels the idea of killing for self-defense which he believes would only be possible in the presence of extreme self-love. Other key people who also wrote about this included Joseph Mangan, an American philanthropist, and metaphysic, who had another set of conditions in rendering such action that aims well but has harmful double effects. His conditions as stated in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* are as follows:

A person may licitly perform an action that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and

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the same time:

1. that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent;
  2. that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended;
  3. that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
  4. that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect”
- (Mangan, 1949, p. 43).

As a personal opinion, the Doctrine of Double Effect is a topic that cannot be denied. To the vast majority, the principle of double effect is an ongoing process that can be found in everyday interactions with people even in the what-looks-to-be-normal society. A person who does a little decision may affect another one negatively. This may not be as severe as how theologians in the earlier part of this descriptive paper may explain the Principle of Double Effect but even if a person does not kill another, if harm is also produced by a beneficial action, then it also becomes a variation of the Double Effect Principle.

I would defend the Doctrine of Double effect because there are certain situations that need to have sacrificed for the ultimate goal which is good. A solid example could be the gospel of Jesus Christ where Christianity narrates it as the ultimate sacrifice for the human race. At that point in time, for example, Jesus’ contemporaries did not understand why He still had to suffer. But his death on the cross, which is a very famous historical event, is an example of the Double effect principle.

Another existing example could be during wars when generals need to

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strategize and win for battle. Note that the positive outcome that is intended is for them to win the war to protect their country folk but in the process, they even sacrifice their own soldiers in strategizing for the war. There are different war classifications, but for this example, we can aim at a war that aims for peace of a certain society.

There would be numerous examples for this Double Effect Doctrine could be analyzed. There are also going to be a numerous number of cases that could be studied for this principle, but all in all, there will always be negative outcomes—if perceived in a very subjective perspective to certain events in life.