

# Second Philosophy

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Led by	Oswy Gothly / Keith Parker
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## INTRODUCTION

\*\*\* Dare You Face The Trolley Problem? \*\*\*

Oswy Gothly:

You are standing on a bridge overlooking a railway line. The line stretches out in front of you. In the distance, beyond hailing reach, you see a dozen railway workers carrying out track maintenance. You also see a spur leading off from the main track round a sharp bend on which two further men are working.

Suddenly you look behind you and see a railway trolley running out of control down the track. You realize if left to run it will hit the workers who are intent on their work and almost certainly kill them.

Just below the bridge you see the lever for a set of points that could switch the trolley onto the spur the two men on the spur will never see it in time and will be killed if the trolley is diverted. All of these men are family men. You can just reach the lever and switch the points in time. There are a group of other people with you on the bridge.

This famous scenario, invented by the philosopher Philippa Foot, has come to be known as the `Trolley Problem`. This is my version of it. The problem in question is what you should do in this situation? During the course of this debate you will be asked to make decisions.

The scenarios that provide the context for these decisions will unfold as the debate progresses. Don't worry the least that can happen if you get it wrong is that someone will die!!



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## DISCUSSION:

Oswy Gothly:

If you are all sitting and feeling uncomfortable then I will begin.

It Should Never Have Been Like This.

- 1. Given the situation as outlined so far do you let the trolley run on down the main track or do you switch the points?**

Schopenhauer Brim: I would switch the points.

Simulat Almendros: yep - switch

Oswy Gothly: And on what basis do you switch?

Oswy Gothly: Well do you stand there paralyzed?

Simulat Almendros: that's an option too - nobody would blame you :-)

Schopenhauer Brim: Nietzsche once wrote something to the effect that injustice cannot be avoided, so one should go for the lesser injustice.

Simulat Almendros: It's foreseen that the two would die but that's not the intention

Oswy Gothly: Are you looking at consequences? Lesser consequences if you switch?

Schopenhauer Brim: Yes Oswy, lesser consequences. Only two men die as opposed to a dozen.

Oswy Gothly: Who gives you the right to kill those two rather than the others?

Marya Blaisdale: Well, in this specific context and scenario, people are going to die - 2 'random' people or 12 'random' people - so yes, you switch to lessen the consequences

Schopenhauer Brim: No one gives me the right to kill the two as opposed to the others. I make the decision.

Marya Blaisdale: it's not about having any sort of rights at all - it's about making a difficult choice

Marya Blaisdale: right, Schop

Oswy Gothly: You seem to be playing God here?

Simulat Almendros: two dying is better than 12 dying - but it's not your intention to kill anyone

Oswy Gothly: Fate seem to decree the trolley should just run on?

Chazz Heliosense: I can think of two answers, switch or make some futile attempt to head off the collision by trying to warn the men or flag down the train. I think this second is what almost anybody would do because of the difficulty in quickly enough evaluating every part of the situation and being sure of your decision. As far as Nietzsche recommending minimizing the damage, who could disagree? Scarcely seems we need a famous philosopher for that idea. All due to N, and thanks Schop for the quote.

Oswy Gothly: you cant warn them; you could let fate take its course and not get involved in trying to play God?

Schopenhauer Brim: But if the trolley is a runaway trolley, any physical attempt is sure to be futile. Screaming to the men as warning may ne be enough because we also have to take the speed of the train into consideration.

Plus, we are going of the assumption that this must be a split second choice.

Marya Blaisdale: I don't see it as playing god at all - it is a matter of seeing a situation and doing what you think is 'best' in that situation

Schopenhauer Brim: But Oswy, perhaps it is fate for me to intervene and detour the trolley.

Oswy Gothly: OK you seem to be happy with a consequentialist solution two die and 12 are saved. I am going to move on. Watch

Oswy Gothly:

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A New Dimension to the Problem:

Standing on the bridge is a stranger. He is leaning over the parapet and unaware of the situation. If you tip him over the parapet he will fall just in front of the trolley and the impact will stop it. He will be almost unaware of what is happening.

## 2. Do you throw the man over the parapet or switch the points or let the trolley run on down the main track?

Oswy Gothly: OK you now have another option want to take it?

Schopenhauer Brim: Yes, this one is more difficult because it is more personal whereas the lever is impersonal.

Marya Blaisdale: Is it an option to throw yourself over the parapet instead, Oswy?

Oswy Gothly: Well it's tempting for consequentialists like you lot? Only one dead

Simulat Almendros: Kant said "don't use another as a means to your end" so doesn't that prevent you from killing the guy on the bridge?

Schopenhauer Brim: Marya, if you were really in that situation, would you throw yourself in front of the trolley?

Marya Blaisdale: I honestly don't know, Schop. I think it would depend on a great many variables so it is difficult to say

Oswy Gothly: Schop I am a coward so that is not an option. Yet

Schopenhauer Brim: Exactly, we are going on the assumption that we have a lust for life and don't want to end it.

Oswy Gothly: Come on folks do we get rid of this stranger and save the day. He wouldn't know what was happening?

Simulat Almendros: I answered :-)

Oswy Gothly: Sim, so you are still going for the switch but that means two dead?

Schopenhauer Brim: Oswy, didn't you say there are other people on the platform with the stranger and me?

Oswy Gothly: Aren't you using them to be a means to save 12?

Marya Blaisdale: I think the context is important, Oswy - it is one thing to flip a switch and another to push someone over a parapet

Chazz Heliosense: You only have seconds to determine that, you cannot be sure either of the facts or of the decision. I guess I'm derailing here by bringing real life factors into a gedankenexperiment, but seriously, in real life very few people would choose to pull the lever, or consider pulling and choose to simply watch.

Simulat Almendros: yes Oswy - and the reason is following Kant's second maxim

Oswy Gothly: Schop, never mind them yet.

Marya Blaisdale: The context has changed - that needs to be taken into consideration, Oswy

Oswy Gothly: Marya It's easy to push someone when you try?

Marya Blaisdale: The problem I'm finding with a lot of thought experiments, is that one rule does not fit all - as soon as situations change, the context of those situations change, and different rules apply

Oswy Gothly: Heave and he's gone.

Schopenhauer Brim: In thinking about this Oswy, I would have to let the train run its course. As Kant said no to use others as a means to an end.

Oswy Gothly: Schop is going for 12 dead?

Simulat Almendros: reminds self not to stand on bridges with dragons :-)

Marya Blaisdale: In fact, I think that is the core of such philosophical issues and general paradoxes - is that the context changes and people are still trying to apply the same rules, Oswy

Schopenhauer Brim: Yes, but then again, I am still using others as a means to an end in the other scenario.

Oswy Gothly: Marya I agree this thought experiment is going to test rules to destruction. But that is not my problem. He ha

Marya Blaisdale: lol

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Oswy Gothly: OK well let's move on I notice by the way that some people are being slow and have not made a decision yet? I move on

The Problem Becomes More Complex

You notice out of the corner of your eye an old lady in a wheel chair. She is clearly disabled and looks very ill. You realise that if you run over and give her wheel chair a push down the bank, which the bridge was built to span, then it will collide with the trolley and stop it. The old lady is unaware of your thoughts.

### **3. Do you push the wheelchair down the bank or tip the stranger over the parapet or switch the points or let the trolley run on down the main track?**

Oswy Gothly: Ok the old Lady is now in play?

Schopenhauer Brim: Couldn't I push the old lady out of the wheel chair and throw the chair onto the tracks?

Oswy Gothly: Schop, No you don't have time, it's her or nothing or one of the alternatives?

Marya Blaisdale: I think the same would apply as per the previous one - I expect I would still push the lever

Simulat Almendros: I'd still just flip the switch

Chazz Heliosense: Some old lady. No. At most maybe you throw the switch. Not in real life, but in an academic discussion.

Oswy Gothly: Look folks, be realistic It's a sick old lady she hasn't got long anyway?

Schopenhauer Brim: Sickly old lady, or healthy stranger. Hmmmm.....

Oswy Gothly: Will you really let 12 die for her? What would people say?

Chazz Heliosense: I think the reason the old lady makes it interesting is than it opens up an argument against the seemingly easy decision to throw the switch.

Oswy Gothly: Deo you are being very silent here?

Deoridhe Quandry: Yes, I am.

Oswy Gothly: The old lady does not have the status of the others?

Marya Blaisdale: I think most people, as I think Chazz mentioned, would probably just flip the switch

Oswy Gothly: She is at the end of her life? The alternative is the stranger. One for 12 or two?

Marya Blaisdale: Another reason why these things are so hard to 'judge' is because we're lacking so much context - we're essentially just speculating in the dark

Seaplane Jonson: btw physics is wrong ... human body would likely not stop a trolley

Schopenhauer Brim: Plus, they presuppose too much.

Oswy Gothly: Marya, so you would kill two family men for an old lady?

Oswy Gothly: Seaplane I assure you it would work.

Marya Blaisdale: Probably yes, Oswy - I cannot say for sure until actually being in that situation. I lack too much context to make a clear decision

Oswy Gothly: Oh something else is happening. Stand by

Schopenhauer Brim: Plus, now that we are dealing with two people, couldn't one of them tell the fuzz what I did thereby getting jailed as a murderer?

Chazz Heliosense: The argument would be 'if you are fine with deciding to kill one group of people to save another, when we are confronted with actually killing someone, which pushing the old lady in front of the train definitely feels like, while throwing the switch seems less so, we suddenly get squeamish. Or at least I would. Apparently not the rest of the hard-boiled eggs around here.

Marya Blaisdale: No, that sounds right to me, Chazz

Simulat Almendros: Oswy - it seems that with the innocent bystanders you are intending to harm them by using them as a means to your end - where as with the two guys on the track you just foresee their death but don't intend it

Oswy Gothly: Someone Reads Your Thoughts.

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You look at the old lady and she looks deep into your eyes. She also has seen the trolley. She knows what you are thinking. She slowly raises her hand and points down the bank and nods her head slowly. Is she giving her assent?

#### **4. Do you take her gesture as assent and push her down the bank or do you tip the stranger over the parapet, or switch the points or let the trolley run on down the main track?**

Oswy Gothly: OK Sim Problem over, she gives assent, clever old lady?

Chazz Heliosense: so let her roll herself out there. Leave me out of it.

Simulat Almendros: yeah chazz

Marya Blaisdale: lol Chazz

Marya Blaisdale: that's a fair point though

Oswy Gothly: Surely you have to agree its just euthanasia by another name? Isn't it?

Oswy Gothly: Chazz, be the gentleman give her a hand.

Chazz Heliosense: In fact, I believe I could put on a pretty good display of fake concern

Oswy Gothly: She wants to be a hero let her. It solves the problem?

Chazz Heliosense: Oh, I'd be sure and wait until too late to stop her

Oswy Gothly: Think of what people will say about you if you don't give her her last wish?

Simulat Almendros: and as you ponder all that the 12 die :-)

Chazz Heliosense ponders split second life and death decisions coolly, and flicks a speck of lint off his immaculate sleeve

Marya Blaisdale: I think in that situation you're less likely to be thinking about what people will say - you don't have time for that - you just have to 'do'

Oswy Gothly: 12 Dead and the old lady who wanted to save them alive all because you were squeamish?

Marya Blaisdale: we would still have the option of flipping the switch, so it would be 2 dead and not 12

Schopenhauer Brim: True Marya, but one dead is less than two.

Oswy Gothly: Marya you would still look ridiculous. Think of what The Sun (newspaper) would say??

Simulat Almendros: well - they did set themselves up in a dangerous environment without a proper watch for oncoming trains - don't they have a responsibility for their own fate?

Marya Blaisdale: Yes - but it's not all about numbers - the context changes - it is one thing to flip a switch and another to push someone onto the tracks - which is what several people have been saying

Schopenhauer Brim: Yes.

Marya Blaisdale: Yes indeed, Sim!

Chazz Heliosense: management did that

Marya Blaisdale: lol

Oswy Gothly: Marya the only difference is will!!

Schopenhauer Brim: Then let's throw the managers onto the tracks.

Oswy Gothly: Schop and Sim, Is anyone really going to care about that?

Simulat Almendros: I bet the old lady is really Oswy's mother in law :-) He seems determined to get us to kill her

Schopenhauer Brim: Perhaps. Ha ha ha.

Oswy Gothly: you could save them all with the death of one old knackered lady who wants to die.

Schopenhauer Brim: The difference between in-laws and outlaws is that outlaws are wanted.

Simulat Almendros: hehe Schop :-)

Schopenhauer Brim: Well, if she wants to die, then I'll toss her.

Oswy Gothly: She is no relation honestly!

Marya Blaisdale: But we don't know any of this for sure, do we - it's all split second speculation. I don't think most people, if any, would actually push the old lady - despite it being 'maybe' the 'right' thing to do in that situation

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Oswy Gothly: Marya, that's what we are here for. You have to decide. There is only one right answer?

Schopenhauer Brim: This is definitely a problem for which there is no answer.

Deoridhe Quandry: I think it is definitely possible we could think we know all this, though, based on preconceived notions.

Seaplane Jonson: why is there only one right answer?

Marya Blaisdale: No, Oswy, there are many potentially right answers :)

Chazz Heliosense: Is it maybe the right thing or almost certainly the right thing?

Oswy Gothly: Marya this is your chance for glory and glory for the old lady or the stranger?

Marya Blaisdale: unknown, Chazz - too many variables that we don't know

Seaplane Jonson: or perhaps there are no right answers

Marya Blaisdale: LOL Oswy

Marya Blaisdale: Right, Seaplane

Simulat Almendros: are you trying to tell us that moral decisions are a matter of cold logic Oswy?

Schopenhauer Brim: If we stick to what Kant said about not using others as a means to an end, then we cannot do anything in any of the scenarios because, whether pulling a lever or pushing someone, we are using people as a means to an end.

Oswy Gothly: All Look you only have time to do one thing and it's got to be right or wrong?

Seaplane Jonson: or one could just change the nature of the problem ... like Alexander the great cutting the Gordian knot

Deoridhe Quandry: False dichotomy. All responses could be wrong, or all could be right.

Oswy Gothly: Deo Try telling that to the relatives of the dead?

Marya Blaisdale: Yes, we lack the context to really 'know' or make any valid moral 'judgement'

Schopenhauer Brim: I agree Marya.

Deoridhe Quandry: I have, Oswy. There are circumstances in which every response is wrong. This would be one of them, if you value human life.

Chazz Heliosense: are we going to add another layer after deciding to kill Oz's mother in law and learn that she was the world's leading medical researcher and carried in her head the final cure to all disease, while 100% of the workers were actual chain gangs of condemned paedophile/murderers?

Oswy Gothly: Chazz be patient. Oh I have realized something else Stand by.

Deoridhe Quandry: But thanks for the attempt at an appeal to emotions.

Oswy Gothly: Could It Get Any Worse?

You suddenly realise there are not two workmen on the spur. One of the distant figures you can now see more clearly. It is the world famous bioengineer Dame Margaret Feelgood. She has been taking a walk from her home down by the railway line. Just last week you read an article about her and her pioneering work in almost reaching cures for AIDS and cancer; work that if she continues it will save hundreds of thousands of lives. Her death would be a catastrophe for medical research.

## **5. Do you push the old lady down the slope, or tip the stranger over the parapet, or switch the points or let the trolley run on down the track.**

Oswy Gothly: Still going to switch those points?

Chazz Heliosense: I watched Saving Private Ryan mainly because the publicity promised an explanation for why they would willingly send a dozen people to near certain death on a probably futile mission to save one. If that answer was actually given in the film, I missed it.

Oswy Gothly: Don't you have any sense of responsibility ?

Schopenhauer Brim: Well Oswy, if that is the case, even though I have never heard of the lady, I would have to let the trolley run its course.

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Simulat Almendros: paralysis happens when you can't decide Oswy - and you are slowly and inexorably making the issue undecidable so I guess the 12 are toast

Marya Blaisdale: No, I don't think I would switch them - I think I would let the 12 die by not doing anything

Oswy Gothly: You have to save Feelgood. The stranger the 12 or the Old lady have to go?

Schopenhauer Brim: But now we have the issue of a "celebrity" involved. How many people would throw the switch if one of their favorite writers, actors, musicians would be killed?

Marya Blaisdale: This is a tough one

Simulat Almendros: but its not my fault - its Oswy's for setting up the situation :-)

Oswy Gothly: Why do the 12 have to die; there are alternatives. Better alternatives? They are family men? Where is your compassion?

Seaplane Jonson: I would throw Oswy onto the tracks :)

Marya Blaisdale: Again, do we not have the choice of throwing ourselves in front of it?

Marya Blaisdale: Well, I would think the 12 men should be aware of the dangers of their jobs, they would have good insurance, their families would be taken care of

Schopenhauer Brim: Well, I highly doubt anyone would throw themselves onto the track, unless they hate their life.

Oswy Gothly: Sea, I'm a coward I would resist with fiery breath.

Simulat Almendros: Schop - it's actually fairly common that people throw away their own lives to save others

Seaplane Jonson: you could probably throw me on the tracks then :)

Deoridhe Quandry: I probably would if I knew for sure that would upset the trolley, but the entire point of fictional examples is that they do not translate well to reality.

Oswy Gothly: All I cant believe you would kill 12 family men for an abstract principle . What sort of people are you?

Marya Blaisdale: Well, if there was no option to self sacrifice (assuming one would do that), then it's a matter of doing nothing, or actively ending the old lady's life

Simulat Almendros: but it's unheard of for people to throw away innocent bystanders to save others

Schopenhauer Brim: True Simulat. But I am pretty sure if they had other options at their disposal, they would utilize one of them.

Oswy Gothly: Deo, take it from me the Physics is sound.

Simulat Almendros: you'd get charged with murder

Deoridhe Quandry: Oswy, again with the emotional appeals. People die no matter what.

Deoridhe Quandry: Also, no, I won't take it from you - either the attempts at guiltning us, nor that your physics is foolproof.

Oswy Gothly: Sim If you killed 12 you might.

Marya Blaisdale: Again Oswy, too many variables - we are only assuming they're 'good decent family men' and again I think this cannot be resolved in any 'right' way since we lack too much context (as it is with all such thought experiments - which is why they don't usually have any answers!)

Simulat Almendros: not me that killed 12 - that's due to the negligence of the people in charge of the trolley

Oswy Gothly: Oh my God something else has cropped up> Stand by ... It's a Nightmare.

Schopenhauer Brim: I think this is more of a guilt trip than philosophy. What's next? Is a young child involved?

Oswy Gothly: Next to the old lady is her niece who is pushing a pram. It is a heavy old fashioned type with just enough mass plus the baby to derail the trolley. The niece has not seen the trolley it would be easy to grab the pram and push it down the bank. The baby would be unaware but would not survive.

Deoridhe Quandry: Good call, Schopenhauer.

Oswy Gothly:

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### 6. Do you grab the pram and push it or push the old lady instead or push the stranger over the parapet or switch the points or let the trolley run on down the track?

Chazz Heliosense: finally an easy one

Marya Blaisdale: I'm sticking with either self sacrifice or doing nothing and letting the 12 die

Oswy Gothly: Ok A baby too young to know anything. Why not her?

Simulat Almendros: take the baby out of the pram and push the pram down the hill :-)

Deoridhe Quandry: Yeah, self-sacrifice. The most moral and ethical of every wrong choice.

Schopenhauer Brim: Screw it. In all cases I will let the train run its course. At least I cannot blame the out of control train on myself. Physics is indifferent to us.

Oswy Gothly: Sim You are a scientist I just told you not enough mass?

Deoridhe Quandry: Ooo! I bet my purse is as heavy as a baby. Sim, you can have my purse.

Marya Blaisdale: lol

Seaplane Jonson: put the pram in the wheelchair ... without baby or old lady ... and push that onto the tracks

Oswy Gothly: All A guilt trip . When was moral decision making anything else?

Marya Blaisdale: Nice one, Seaplane :)

Seaplane Jonson: should be enough mass to work

Simulat Almendros: sure - but the pram would slow the train down and would make a racket so that the 12 would be warned and could get out of the way

Marya Blaisdale: Logic saves the day :D

Oswy Gothly: All You are trying to find ways out of facing your moral dilemma?

Schopenhauer Brim: And trust me, I think there would be enough time to throw the old lady out of the wheelchair and push it onto the tracks, If she is ill, she probably weighs no more than a Rice Krispie.

Deoridhe Quandry: Frequently, Oswy. Often, in the ethical choices I have to make, there are multiple correct answers. No guilt trip. In this one, all of the answers are wrong. Thus, guilt trip.

Oswy Gothly: Sim, it's very windy they would not hear?

Simulat Almendros: awww - c'mon Oswy - you are making this all up :-)

Marya Blaisdale: lol

Deoridhe Quandry: Funny how things only become more explicit and realistic when plausible answers NOT resulting in death appear.

Oswy Gothly: OK Deo Give me a range of ethical answers

Seaplane Jonson: part of what makes humans unique is their creativity ... they need not always accept a problem as given

Schopenhauer Brim: This is definitely a loaded question. No matter what I do, there are consequences. However, at least if I let the train run its course; it's not my fault that the laws of physics are what they are.

Oswy Gothly: We now have the stranger, the old lady the baby Dr Feelgood or the 12 in play. Who goes first?

Deoridhe Quandry: Secrets Policy. When giving therapy to a group of adults, you can either chose to have a policy whereby you will hold secrets told to you in confidence, or you won't. Both choices are ethical. Not making a choice is not ethical. Simply.

Oswy Gothly: Still looking for options?

Marya Blaisdale: Nope - decision already made for me :)

Schopenhauer Brim: Train runs loose, I watch.

Simulat Almendros: several of the options involve killing people intentionally

Oswy Gothly: Is Feelgood worth more than the 12? Is the lady worth less than either?

Oswy Gothly: Marya, what was your last option I missed it sorry?

Marya Blaisdale: Well, that judgement, if we can call it that, is going to be up to the person facing the dilemma

Oswy Gothly: OK That is you!!

Simulat Almendros: and the dilemma with Feelgood is that she is said to be worth more than 12 worthy family men

Oswy Gothly: Sim She could save millions.

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Simulat Almendros: if we accept that then squish go the qw

Marya Blaisdale: Either self sacrifice, doing nothing and letting the 12 die, or doing what Seaplane said, and coming up with some sort of clever contraption to throw on the rails instead :)

Simulat Almendros: 12 - that is - assuming that I'm not heroic

Oswy Gothly: Seaplanes option not available all options in play.

Schopenhauer Brim: Owsy, this is my final answer: I let the train run its course and kill the 12.

Marya Blaisdale: Okay - then it's self sacrifice or do nothing and let the 12 die - the answer would depend on many things that are happening at that time - and since I'm not in that situation right now, I cannot say which I would choose

Simulat Almendros: and as I said Oswy - people are often heroic

Oswy Gothly: Ah the aftermath? Stand by

Whatever you decided to do an inquest was held. You were pilloried in the press for your stupid and spineless behaviour. The police are looking into the possibility of bringing charges against you?

## 7. Are you being treated fairly??

Simulat Almendros: it's a setup :-)

Schopenhauer Brim: Okay so no matter what I do, I'll be charged?

Oswy Gothly: Marya How do you feel about manslaughter by neglect?

Seaplane Jonson: does Good Samaritan law apply here?

Oswy Gothly: Seaplane what did you decide to do?

Deoridhe Quandry: Good Samaritans protect people doing first aid and CPR.

Marya Blaisdale: I'm okay with that Oswy - I would be in some awful situation no matter what I do

Seaplane Jonson: I do not accept the problem as stated

Oswy Gothly: Tough, you are under arrest!

Marya Blaisdale: lol

Schopenhauer Brim: There is no way out of this because no matter what I do, I'll be charged. However, if I let the train run its course, I'll only get manslaughter. If I pull a lever, or push someone, I'll get murder.

Marya Blaisdale: My answer then is this: So be it :)

Seaplane Jonson: just like being drafted in military, I guess

Deoridhe Quandry: They can't convict you of manslaughter unless you started the train on its course.

Oswy Gothly: Deo You neglected to do anything I think So twelve died whereas only one needed to

Marya Blaisdale: No, if you do nothing Schop, there is no way to prove you 'could' have done anything so there couldn't be charges brought against you ... realistically

Oswy Gothly: The very least is that you will be crucified in the press for being a do nothing philosopher.

Deoridhe Quandry: Bad reading, Oswy. I self-sacrificed. They can throw my corpse in jail, but I doubt I'll mind much.

Simulat Almendros: but you'd be charged with murder if you killed someone Oswy - and just letting the train run its course isn't killing anyone

Schopenhauer Brim: True Marya, but I am speaking in the context of the scenario. I know charges would not be brought against me.

Oswy Gothly: Sim Justified homicide. If you killed the stranger or the old lady you are a hero and will make a fortune selling your story.

Deoridhe Quandry shrugs. "I got tired of guilt trips and decided to return in like coin, taboos.

Oswy Gothly: Deo Self Sacrifice how abstract is that?

Simulat Almendros: Oswy - if you sacrificed yourself you would be a hero

Simulat Almendros: otherwise you are either killing people intentionally or are paralysed

Oswy Gothly: Sim But you didn't you took control of the situation and threw a single person to their deaths to heroically save the others.

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Deoridhe Quandry: I don't know, Oswy. Set up the situation and lets see. Of course, since you set it up, you'd be guilty of manslaughter at the least, and homicide at the most. Give me a date and I'll see if I can get there.

Oswy Gothly: You demonstrated Courage a virtue?

Oswy Gothly: Deo I didn't set the trolley rolling; that was fate?

Deoridhe Quandry: Yes, because courage is letting someone ELSE take the cost of your choice.

Simulat Almendros: I notice how you exclude the only heroic action from consideration and also say that throwing someone to their deaths is some how different from killing them

Deoridhe Quandry: I'm glad you made that a question, Oswy. The answer is "No."

Oswy Gothly: Sim Deo, how could it be heroic to kill yourself. You had a responsibility to take control after all you are philosophers and know about these things don't you?

Seaplane Jonson: ha

Marya Blaisdale: lol

Deoridhe Quandry: I'm not a philosopher, Oswy. I'm a Case Manager. Currently, my job is making sure people have places to live and food to eat, and maybe someone to give a shit about them. Of course, now since I'm dead I'm sure you will be HAPPY to step into my place.

Oswy Gothly: Deo, the answer is no to what?

Simulat Almendros: Oswy - it would be heroic the same way that drowning in the rescue of others is heroic

Simulat Almendros: they'd probably make a statue in your honour

Deoridhe Quandry: [13:01] *Oswy Gothly: Deo I didn't set the trolley rolling that was fate?*

Deoridhe Quandry: You made it a question. The answer is no.

Oswy Gothly: Sim Deo What is the use of a useless sacrifice?

Deoridhe Quandry: Heh. Drowning trying to save someone else from drowning is STUPID. That's why most people who do water rescue use objects to rescue.

Oswy Gothly: But you cant say the people responsible for starting the trolley rolling are responsible for you doing nothing?

Simulat Almendros: not useless Oswy - it serves the function of saving the 12, and it has the advantage of using myself as a means to my own end

Deoridhe Quandry: Useless, Oswy? You really are setting up a double standard. Murdering someone else is noble. Murdering yourself for the same purpose is useless. In other words, you've decided to try to justify murder, in your mind. Double standard, appeals to emotion, moving goalpost. You've hit the trifecta of poor logic.

Seaplane Jonson: the structure of this problem does not allow authentic moral decisions

Oswy Gothly: Deo Sim OK I am a spineless coward I told you that at the start anyway I am too light to have stopped the trolley. Only one of the alternatives was a real option.

Oswy Gothly: OK, we are getting close to the hour I will try and sum up.

They purpose of these thought experiments is to test rules about morality. Bernard Williams had his own called Jim and the Indians. His conclusion was that that none of the rules could guarantee an answer. This being so we had to trust people to make a reasonable decision in the situation they found themselves. In that sense you could not be wrong? However this has some alarming implications.

If someone decides to do something in good faith and based on the information they had is it correct to say that we must accept this? Is it not the case that some decisions are better than others? Tonight we heard Sim repeatedly quote Kant and the principle of not using others as means. Does that have some special status here? Does it rank better than consequences? Does it rank better than following a virtue?

Simulat Almendros: It works for me in this situation Oswy

Oswy Gothly: Does it rank batter than suicide?

Simulat Almendros: yes

# Second Philosophy

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Oswy Gothly: Does it rank better than washing your hands of the situation and saying its nothing to do with me?  
I leave that to you

Simulat Almendros: but I don't take the 2nd maxim as an absolute as Kant does

Oswy Gothly: I am very interested in the issue of morality and its possible rules as opposed to saying do anything or do what seems successful because say evolution says so.

Seaplane Jonson: the actual moral dilemmas we face are usually complex, often without certain answers

Marya Blaisdale: I always find these sorts of thought experiments to be so very lacking in context, that as Deo said, there just aren't any right answers - we lack sufficient information to be able to make any 'good or right' choices

Seaplane Jonson: have you ever served on a jury?

Simulat Almendros: I encountered this same problem in a book about the evolution of morality

Oswy Gothly: All Often we don't have all the information at the point of decision.

Seaplane Jonson: if so, you may also have found that juries have to make decisions that aren't just literal readings of the law

Simulat Almendros: and there it was used to probe how people actually would respond to the problem and what the implication of those responses has for morality

Oswy Gothly: Seaplane I think that is a useful analogy.

Simulat Almendros: the point being that we don't generally make moral decisions by following a moral calculus

Oswy Gothly: Sim Pity Ref was not here. He is always telling me morality = functionality and I am never happy with that.

Simulat Almendros: instead most moral decisions are quick and automatic - they are interpretations of a situation in terms of right and wrong

Marya nods

Oswy Gothly: Sim It may be why we are so frail in terms of morality

Simulat Almendros: what's with this "we" :-)

Oswy Gothly: Look at the recent rumpus about the policing of the G20 emo in London?

Simulat Almendros: the case where the police killed an innocent bystander and then lied about what had happened until video evidence was brought forth?

Simulat Almendros: we have an enquiry going on about a similar case here

Oswy Gothly: Sim Well there is a lot to be proved here ie did they kill him was there a cover up. They certainly behaved in a fairly brutal way?

Seaplane Jonson: stuff like that happens frequently during war ... alas, we sometimes just ignore it

Simulat Almendros: yeah - and against someone who wasn't even protesting

Oswy Gothly: But other issues come in were the police provoked?

Oswy Gothly: Did the politicians tell the police to be robust? Were they trained properly and led properly?

Simulat Almendros: why didn't the politicians just meet on a cruise ship? Why the provocation of meeting in the middle of a huge city?

Oswy Gothly: A point to prove I suppose and political capital to gain?

Simulat Almendros: yeah - they are telling people who is boss

Oswy Gothly: A refusal to be intimidated by protesters etc etc?

Simulat Almendros: plain reckless; they should conduct their affairs in a way that isn't so dangerous

Oswy Gothly: Did the protesters have a right to block the streets of the capital. Who elected them?

Oswy Gothly: coming back to the point to what extent is the individual policeman culpable for whatever action he took?

Simulat Almendros: sure - protestors have always had that right - and its not a right that is given them - its a right they seize

Seaplane Jonson: nonviolent resistance carries with it a large element of risk, even if undertaken for a good cause

Oswy Gothly: You could say he did what he thought was right and what he was ordered to do? But somehow it does not seem quite right

# Second Philosophy

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Simulat Almendros: Oswy - there is limited culpability for making a mistake, but a lot of culpability for lying about it

Oswy Gothly: But then by what moral rule do you judge someone?

Simulat Almendros: it's just too dangerous for a democracy for the police to lie

Oswy Gothly: I don't think lying has been established only a mistaken first post mortem.

Simulat Almendros: the cop - I read - even denied knocking the victim over

Oswy Gothly: I am not saying the police never lie by the way

Seaplane Jonson: judging police is only partly moral matter ... also legalities ... and other factors

Oswy Gothly: True, Sea, yet our law incorporates morals and hold people responsible. I find the whole issue of the 'ought' of morals fascinating.

Seaplane Jonson: hmmm....laws and ethics are not exactly same thing, though; there are immoral laws, sometimes

Marya Blaisdale: very true

Seaplane Jonson: and sometimes what is moral may be illegal

Oswy Gothly: That's true and then the issue becomes how do we establish the ought of their being changed

Simulat Almendros: yes - I was reading about the distinction between morality and ethics just this week

Oswy Gothly: What allows us to judge them immoral?

Seaplane Jonson: as in civil rights movement that ended segregation

Simulat Almendros: are you familiar with Hauser's ideas about how morality involves an interpreter somewhat like a language interpreter Oswy?

Oswy Gothly: Sea But they interact Yes

Seaplane Jonson: right....they do interact

Oswy Gothly: Sim No not familiar.

Simulat Almendros: With language we have the ability to interpret language built into our brains by our genes - that interpreter gets informed by culture and upbringing to give a particular person their language

Oswy Gothly: I should say I am very much a Kantian in these matters. I believe in moral facts and all that stuff

Simulat Almendros: very similarly we have moral interpreters built in that get informed by culture and upbringing

Oswy Gothly: I will have a look at this. I am sure morality is a complex interaction of genes and evolution and culture and the rest. But as I was saying to ref only recently on Facebook. Oughts do not derive from Is at least not entirely>

Simulat Almendros: oughts don't derive from is, but surely are informed by is; but check out Moral Minds by Marc Hauser

Oswy Gothly: Sim Agreed but its getting the mix established that is so infernally difficult.

