

Doing, Allowing, Intending, and Foreseeing Harm

Fall 2023

MWF 9am

James Blair 142

Syllabus

Instructor

Chad Vance
cvance@wm.edu

Office Hours

James Blair 124
Wed, Fri noon-1pm
(and by appointment)

What Is This Class About?

The rejection of consequentialism entails that, at least sometimes, *it is wrong to do what is best*. But, if that is true, then – in addition to the consequences mattering, morally – the way in which we bring about consequences must also matter, morally. In short, some deontological distinction must be true.

There are two plausible candidates on the market: First, the claim that *doing* harm is much worse, morally, than merely *allowing* harm; and, second, that *intentionally* causing harm (as a means or end) is much worse, morally, than merely *foreseeing* that harm will result as an unintended side-effect of achieving one's end. Make no mistake: We *must* defend one or both of these claims (or some replacement), if we are to avoid being committed to consequentialism.

We will take an in-depth look at the nature of harm, as well as the two moral distinctions just described. Along the way, we will also consider some potential applications (e.g., to euthanasia, famine relief, vaccination, & climate change).

Assigned Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Assigned readings will be provided as pdf files, accessible under “Assigned Readings” on our course website, here:

<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil403/phil403.html>

Course Requirements

1. Essays (45%). You will write two papers. The first (15%) will be a short diagnostic paper, 900-1200 words (roughly 3 - 4 pages), and the second (30%) will be a longer paper, 2400-3600 words in length (roughly 8 - 12 pages). *More info: TBA.*
2. Presentations (20%). You will deliver two 15-minute presentations: You will present one paper written by a professional philosopher (8%), and another written by yourself (8%), also providing feedback to each of your classmates on their own papers (4%).
3. Quizzes (15%). You will take 11 short reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped; i.e., your 10 best scores will constitute your quiz grade (1.5% each).
4. Reading Responses (10%). Ten times, and **no more than once per week**, you will write an informal 250-350 word essay responding to assigned readings. (1% each)
5. Participation (10%). This grade will depend on your ability to come to class (on time and prepared), participate in class discussion, abide by COVID policies, and refrain from being disruptive or disengaged, or falling asleep, texting, using the internet, etc.

Course Policies

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found here: <https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/faq.pdf>

Two notes: (1) You are responsible for reading the FAQ by the end of the first week of class. (2) Please consult this syllabus and the FAQ first, whenever you have a question about the course.

COVID Policy

University policy: All students are expected to follow W&M COVID policies and guidelines, found here:

https://www.wm.edu/about/administration/emergency/current_issues/coronavirus/students/index.php

Classroom policy:

- (1) If you have tested positive: Do not come to class. You must isolate for 5 days, or until you have tested negative.
- (2) If you have symptoms consistent with COVID: Take a test. If it is positive, refer to (1), above. If negative, then you may attend class only if you wear an N95 or KN95 mask. Test & mask daily until you no longer have symptoms.
- (3) If you have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive: Take a test. If the test is positive, refer to (1), above. If negative, then you may attend class only if you wear an N95 or KN95 mask. Test and mask daily for at least 5 days after your last contact with the individual(s) who were positive with COVID.

NOTE: *These policies will be enforced, with zero tolerance for violators. Students found to be in violation will be sent home, and a portion of their participation grade will be deducted.*

Academic Integrity

All students of the William & Mary are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity honor code policy of this institution. Violations of this policy include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, and stealing. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Council. More honor code info at:

wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor_system/index.php

NOTE: *The honor code will be enforced, with zero tolerance for violators. Any student found to be in violation of this code will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member (i.e., the student will automatically receive an F for the course) as well as non-academic sanctions (which include academic probation, suspension, or expulsion).*

Student Conduct

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to the code of conduct may be subject to discipline. More information at:

wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/student_code_of_conduct/index.php

Student Accessibility Services

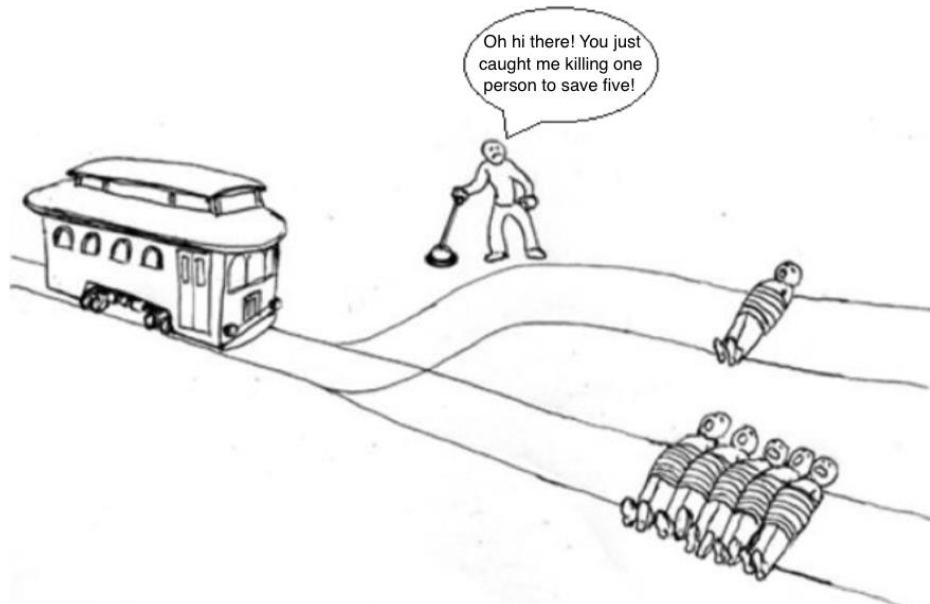
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability or any issue affecting accessibility, please submit to me a letter from Accessibility Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. More info can be found in the Campus Center (room 109), 757-221-2510, or at: wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentaccessibilityservices/

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know by the end of the drop/add period about any such conflicts, so that we can resolve them. More information at: wm.edu/about/administration/provost/forfacstaff/holidays/religiousguidelines/index.php

Discrimination and Harassment

The College of William & Mary policies on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes that they have been the subject of sexual harassment and/or discrimination based upon race, sex, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religious belief, political belief, disability, veteran status, age, or any other category protected by the Commonwealth or by federal law should contact the Office of Compliance and Equity on the first floor of James Blair Hall. More information about discrimination and harassment can be found at: wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/student_discim_policies/index.php



Course Schedule

Below is a schedule of the topics that we will cover, along with list of the reading(s) which you should complete before each class meeting. Please note the dates for **paper due dates**, and *presentation days*.

UNIT ONE		Goodness, Badness, Life, Death, and Harm
Week 1	The Good Life	
Wed 8/30	Hedonism	• Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
Fri 9/1	The Good Life	• Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"
Week 2	Life, Death, Identity, & Harm	
Wed 9/6	The Harm of Death	• Nagel, "Death" • Purves, "The Badness of Death"
Fri 9/8	The Harm of Existence	• Benatar, "Why It Is Better Never to Come into Existence"
Week 3	Harm & the Non-Identity Problem	
Mon 9/11	The Non-Identity Problem	• Parfit, "The Non-Identity Problem"
Wed 9/13	Proposed Solutions	• Boonin, "How to Solve the Non-Identity Problem"
Fri 9/15	On Making Worse Off	• Norcross, "Harming in Context"
Week 4	Further Issues	
Mon 9/18	Analyzing 'Harm'	• Bradley, "Doing Away With Harm"
Wed 9/20	<i>Presentations 1-3</i>	No readings
Fri 9/22	<i>Presentations 4-6</i>	No readings
UNIT TWO		The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing
Week 5	Nonconsequentialism	
Mon 9/25	Non-Consequentialism	• "Non-Consequentialism" (various selections from Kamm, Kant, Ross, Williams, and Woollard)
Wed 9/27	Euthanasia	• Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" • Tooley, "An Irrelevant Consideration: Killing Versus Letting Die" (and a brief reply by Trammell)
Fri 9/29	Killing and Letting Die	• "Killing and Letting Die" (various selections from Kagan, Thomson, and Foot)
Week 6	Doing and Allowing Harm	
Mon 10/2	Actively Allowing Harm DUE: PAPER #1	• Bennett, "Negation and Abstention: Two Theories of Allowing" (§§I-V)
Wed 10/4	Doing and Allowing Harm	• Quinn, "The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing"
Fri 10/6	Withdrawing Aid	• McMahan, "Killing, Letting Die, and Withdrawing Aid"
Week 7	Presentations	
Mon 10/9	<i>Presentations 7-9</i>	No readings
Wed 10/11	<i>Presentations 10-12</i>	No readings
Week 8	Applications	
Mon 10/16	Vaccination & the DDA	• Flanigan, "A Defense of Compulsory Vaccination" • Woollard, "COVID-19, Lockdowns and the Doing/Allowing Distinction" (here)
Wed 10/18	Famine Relief	• Singer, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty"
Fri 10/20	Famine Relief	• Vance, "Causal Relevance, Permissible Omissions, and Famine Relief"

UNIT THREE		The Doctrine of Double-Effect	
Week 9	DDE & the Problem of Closeness		
Mon 10/23	The Doctrine of Double-Effect		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Introduction to the DDE" (various selections from Aquinas, Kant, Foot, and Fitzpatrick)
Wed 10/25	The Problem of Closeness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bennett, "Intended as a Means" • Nelkin & Rickless, "So Close, Yet So Far" §§ 1-3
Fri 10/27	A Solution to the Problem		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitzpatrick, "The Intend/Foresee Distinction and the Problem of Closeness" §§ 1-4 • Nelkin & Rickless, "So Close, Yet So Far" § 6
Week 10	The DDE & the Trolley Problem		
Mon 10/30	Revising the DDE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quinn, "The Doctrine of Double Effect" (excerpt) • Fitzpatrick, "The Intend/Foresee Distinction and the Problem of Closeness" § 6
Wed 11/1	The Trolley Problem		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"
Fri 11/3	The Doctrine of Triple-Effect		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kamm, "The Doctrine of Triple Effect" (w/ Otsuka's 6-Behind-1 case & a reply from Thomson)
Week 11	Further Issues for the DDE		
Mon 11/6	Thomson's Turnaround		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomson, "Turning the Trolley"
Wed 11/8	Self-Sacrifice, Self-Defense, & Human Shields		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kagan, "Intending Harm" (& Nozick's Falling Man)
Fri 11/10	<i>Presentations 13-15</i>		No readings
Week 12	Puzzles & Complications		
Mon 11/13	Retroactively Doing Harm		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanna, "Doing, Allowing, and the Moral Relevance of the Past"
Wed 11/15	Paradox for Deontology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huemer, "A Paradox for Weak Deontology"
Fri 11/17	The All or Nothing Problem		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kamm, "The Intransitivity Paradox" • Horton, "The All or Nothing Problem" ¹ • Pummer, "All or Nothing, But If Not All, Next Best or Nothing" ²
Week 13	Collective Action Problems		
Mon 11/20	Group Harms <i>(remote instruction)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parfit, "Five Mistakes in Moral Mathematics"
Week 14	Student Presentations		
Mon 11/27	Climate Change		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vance, "Justifying Subsistence Emissions: An Appeal to Causal Impotence" (you may skip §3)
Wed 11/29	<i>Presentations 1-3</i>		No readings
Fri 12/1	<i>Presentations 4-6</i>		No readings
Week 15	Student Presentations		
Mon 12/4	<i>Presentations 7-9</i>		No readings
Wed 12/6	<i>Presentations 10-12</i>		No readings
Fri 12/8	Concluding Remarks		No readings
Exam Week			
Tue 12/12	DUE: PAPER #2 (noon)		No readings

¹ Read to the end of section I (i.e., read the first 3 pages). The rest is optional.

² Read to the end of pg. 285 (i.e., read the first 8 pages). The rest is optional.

Paper Presentations

Below are abstracts for the 15 papers that will be delivered as student presentations. The first week of class, you will sign up for one of the following articles. Then, on the assigned date, you will present that article to the class for 15 minutes (an 8-10 minute presentation, followed by audience Q&A).

Presentations 1-3 (Wednesday, 9/20)

1. Neil Feit, "Harming By Failing to Benefit" (*Ethical Theory & Moral Practice*, 2019)

[Argues that, contrary to intuition, not giving someone a gift counts as harming them.]

Abstract In this paper, I consider the problem of omission for the counterfactual comparative account of harm. A given event harms a person, on this account, when it makes her worse off than she would have been if it had not occurred. The problem arises because cases in which one person merely fails to benefit another intuitively seem harmless. The account, however, seems to imply that when one person fails to benefit another, the first thereby harms the second, since the second person would have been better off if the first had benefited her. I argue that the cases of failing to benefit at issue are in fact cases of harming. They are cases of preventive harm. I also argue that we can explain away the intuition that no harm occurs in these cases, and that the relevant implication of the counterfactual comparative account is consistent with a variety of plausible views about the moral significance of harm.

2. Duncan Purves, "Harming as Making Worse Off" (*Philosophical Studies*, 2019)

[Appeals to possible worlds and the doing-allowing distinction to defend an intuitive account of what harm is.]

Abstract A powerful argument against the counterfactual comparative account of harm is that it cannot distinguish harming from failing to benefit. In reply to this problem, I suggest a new account of harm. The account is a counterfactual comparative one, but it counts as harms only those events that make a person (rather than merely allow him to) occupy his level of well-being at the world at which the event occurs. This account distinguishes harming from failing to benefit in a way that accommodates our intuitions about the standard problem cases. In laying the groundwork for this account, I also demonstrate that rival accounts of harm are able to distinguish harming from failing to benefit only if, and because, they also appeal to the distinction between making upshots happen and allowing upshots to happen. One important implication of my discussion is that preserving the moral asymmetry between harming and failing to benefit requires a commitment to the existence of a metaphysical and moral distinction between making and allowing.

3. Molly Gardner, "Beneficence and Procreation" (*Philosophical Studies*, 2016)

[Appeals to the metaphysical view that future times exist, to argue that we have moral reasons to procreate.]

Abstract Consider a duty of beneficence towards a particular individual, S, and call a reason that is grounded in that duty a "beneficence reason towards S." Call a person who will be brought into existence by an act of procreation the "resultant person." Is there ever a beneficence reason towards the resultant person for an agent to procreate? In this paper, I argue for such a reason by appealing to two main premises. First, we owe a pro tanto duty of beneficence to future persons; and second, some of us can benefit some of those persons by procreating. In support of the first premise I reject the presentist account of time in favor of the view that future persons are just as real as presently existing persons. I then argue that future persons are like us in all the morally relevant ways, and since we owe duties of beneficence to each other, we also owe duties of beneficence to future persons. In support of the second premise I offer an account of benefiting according to which an individual can be benefited by an action even if it makes her no better off than she would have been, had the action not been performed. This account of benefiting solves what I call the "non-identity benefit problem." Finally, I argue that having a life worth living is a benefit, and some of us can cause some persons that benefit by causing them to exist.

Presentations 4-6 (Friday, 9/22)

4. Molly Gardner, “A Harm-Based Solution to the Non-Identity Problem” (*Ergo*, 2015)

[*Offers a new account of what harm is, and then uses this to solve the non-identity problem.*]

Abstract Many of us agree that we ought not to wrong future people, but there remains disagreement about which of our actions can wrong them. Can we wrong individuals whose lives are worth living by taking actions that result in their very existence? The problem of justifying an answer to this question has come to be known as the *non-identity problem*. While the literature contains an array of strategies for solving the problem, in this paper I will take what I call the *harm-based approach*, and I will defend an account of harming—which I call the *existence account of harming*—that can vindicate this approach. Roughly put, the harm-based approach holds that, by acting in ways that result in the existence of individuals whose lives are worth living, we can harm and thereby wrong those individuals. An initially plausible way to try to justify this approach is to endorse the *non-comparative account of harming*, which holds that an event harms an individual just in case it causes her to be in a bad state, such that the state’s badness does not derive from a comparison between that state and some alternative state that the individual would or could have been in. However, many philosophers argue that the non-comparative account of harming is inadequate, and one might be tempted to infer from this that *any* harm-based approach to the non-identity problem will fail. My proposal, which I call the *existence account of harming*, will show that this inference is faulty: we can vindicate the harm-based approach without relying on the non-comparative account of harming.

5. Hallie Liberto, “The Exploitation Solution to the Non-Identity Problem” (*Philosophical Studies*, 2014)

[*Appeals to lessons from the ethics of exploitation and sweatshop labor to solve the non-identity problem.*]

Abstract When discussing exploitation, we often say things like this, “sweatshop laborers have terrible working conditions and are paid almost nothing, but they are better off with that labor than with no labor.” Similarly, in describing the Non-Identity Problem, Derek Parfit points out: we cannot say that the individuals born in future generations are worse off because of our destructive environmental policies because the particular people living in those future generations wouldn’t even exist if it were not for these destructive policies. How can we explain these cases, exploitation and environmental destruction, as ones of wrongdoing when the victims in both cases are no worse off than they would have otherwise been? This paper investigates the link between these two moral puzzles and ultimately uses one to solve the other: an exploitation solution to the Non-Identity Problem.

6. Scott Hill, “Why God Allows Undeserved Horrendous Evil” (*Religious Studies*, 2022)

[*Uses the non-identity problem to explain how a morally perfect God could allow so much suffering.*]

Abstract I defend a new version of the non-identity theodicy. After presenting the theodicy, I reply to a series of objections. I then argue that my approach improves upon similar approaches in the literature.

Presentations 7-9 (Monday, 10/9)

7. Christopher Boorse & Roy Sorensen, “Ducking Harm” (*The Journal of Philosophy*, 1988)

[*A gun fires. You can: Duck (person behind you dies) or Shield (pull them in front of you). Why is Shield worse?*]

Abstract Often a person *A* can transfer a threatened harm to another person *B*. Often too there are two ways *A* can achieve this result, one more acceptable than the other. One way is for *A* merely to exit the threatening situation, leaving *B* behind to suffer the injury. The other way is for *A* directly to place *B* in harm’s way as *A*’s shield. This distinction between *ducking* harm to *B* and *using B as a shield*—or, as we shall often call it, “sacrificing” *B*—is neglected in law and moral philosophy. It is an analogue to the act/omission distinction, arousing similar intuitions, but wholly within the realm of acts. If accepted, it is a new nonconsequentialist constraint on distributing harm, and its explanation may be an adequacy condition on solutions to the act/omission problem.

8. Timothy Hall, “Doing Harm, Allowing Harm, and Denying Resources” (*Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 2008)

[*Explores the difference between killing, letting die, and withdrawing life-saving aid (e.g., life support).*]

Abstract Of great importance to many non-consequentialists is a claimed moral difference between doing and allowing harm. I argue that non-consequentialism is best understood, however, as consisting in three morally distinct categories where commentators typically identify two: standard doings of harm, standard allowings of harm, and denials of resources. Furthermore, the moral distinctness of denials of resources is independent of whether denials are doings or allowings of harm, I argue. I argue by way of matched examples, as well as by way of two widely accepted features of non-consequentialism: stringent rights of persons, and the susceptibility of resources to distribution within political society.

9. Kaila Draper, “Rights and the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing” (*Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 2005)

[*Re-interprets the wrongness of killing, letting die, and withdrawing aid as rights violations.*]

Abstract *No Heroics*: A stray arrow (tipped with a deadly poison) is headed right at Jones. You know that the arrow will strike and kill him unless you sacrifice your own life by moving in front of him. You choose to preserve your own life. *Shield*: A stray arrow is headed right at you. You know that the arrow will strike and kill you unless you sacrifice the life of Jones by pulling him in front of you. You choose to preserve your own life. In both of these cases, you preserve your own life at the expense of the life of another. Yet common sense tells us that your behavior is morally innocent in *No Heroics*, but terribly wrong in *Shield*. The doctrine of doing and allowing (hereafter DDA) is often invoked to distinguish cases such as these. But attempts to define the relevant notions of “doing” and “allowing” have produced only versions of the doctrine that are at odds with moral common sense. This has led some to consider the possibility that DDA only approximates the truth and that the moral difference between cases like *No Heroics* and *Shield* must be explained in terms of some moral principle or principles distinct from that doctrine. One suggestion along these lines is that certain truths about moral rights provide a better analysis of the relevant cases than DDA. I will attempt to develop and defend this suggestion.

Presentations 10-12 (Wednesday, 10/11)

10. Scott Hill, “Murdering an Accident Victim: A New Objection to the Bare-Difference Argument” (*Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 2017)

[*A refutation of James Rachels’ claim that drowning a child & letting them drown are morally equivalent.*]

Abstract Many philosophers, psychologists, and medical practitioners believe that killing is no worse than letting die on the basis of James Rachels’s Bare-Difference Argument. I show that his argument is unsound. In particular, a premise of the argument is that his examples are as similar as is consistent with one being a case of killing and the other being a case of letting die. However, the subject who lets die has both the ability to kill and the ability to let die while the subject who kills lacks the ability to let die. Modifying the latter example so that the killer has both abilities yields a pair of cases with morally different acts. The hypothesis that killing is worse than letting die is the best explanation of this difference.

11. Fiona Woollard, “‘Utilitarianism for Animals, Deontology for People’ and the Doing/Allowing Distinction” (*Philosophical Studies*, 2023)

[*Argues that (a weaker version of) the killing-letting die distinction applies to our treatment of animals.*]

Abstract It is tempting to think that zebras, goats, lions, and similar animals matter morally, but not in quite the same way people do. This might lead us to adopt a hybrid view of animal ethics such as ‘Utilitarianism for Animals; Deontology for People’. One of the core commitments of deontology is the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing (DDA): the view that doing harm is harder to justify than allowing harm. I explore how this core tenant of deontology applies to non-person, non-human animals and whether hybrid views of animal ethics can accept it. In doing so, I aim to do three things. First, to show that my defence of the DDA can solve a problem surrounding our duties to wild animals, while making only minimal claims about animal moral status. Second, to offer an argument that for many non-person, non-human animals, we should recognise deontological constraints on their treatment, but also see those constraints as importantly different from the constraints against doing harm to persons. Third, to get clearer on how we should understand Utilitarianism for Animals and Nozickian hybrid approaches to animal ethics.

12. Adam Hosein, “Doing, Allowing, and the State” (*Law and Philosophy*, 2014)

[*Argues that it is morally worse when governments do harm (e.g., torture) than when they merely allow harm.*]

Abstract The doing/allowing distinction plays an important role in our thinking about a number of legal issues, such as the need for criminal process protections, prohibitions on torture, the permissibility of the death penalty and so on. These are areas where, at least initially, there seem to be distinctions between harms that the state inflicts and harms that it merely allows. In this paper I will argue for the importance of the doing/allowing distinction as applied to state action. Sunstein, Holmes, Vermeule and others have presented influential arguments for the claim that where the state is concerned the doing/allowing distinction has no moral significance, even if it does elsewhere. I show that these arguments can be resisted. In doing so, I defend some important distinctions and principles that help us understand the state’s role in protecting people from harm.

Presentations 13-15 (Friday, 11/10)

13. Alison Hills, “Intentions, Foreseen Consequences, and the Doctrine of Double Effect” (*Phil. Studies*, 2007)

[*Explores the concept of intention to save the intend-foresee distinction from its primary criticism.*]

Abstract The difficulty of distinguishing between the intended and the merely foreseen consequences of actions seems to many to be the most serious problem for the doctrine of double effect. It has led some to reject the doctrine altogether, and has left some of its defenders recasting it in entirely different terms. I argue that these responses are unnecessary. Using Bratman’s conception of intention, I distinguish the intended consequences of an action from the merely foreseen in a way that can be used to support the doctrine of double effect.

14. Amir Saemi & Philip Atkins, “Targeting Human Shields” (*The Philosophical Quarterly*, 2018)

[*Explores the ethics of killing human shields (e.g., when enemy combatants hide behind innocent civilians).*]

Abstract In this paper, we are concerned with the morality of killing human shields. Many moral philosophers seem to believe that knowingly killing human shields necessarily involves intentionally targeting human shields. If we assume that the distinction between intention and foresight is morally significant, then this view would entail that it is generally harder to justify a military operation in which human shields are knowingly killed than a military operation in which the same number of casualties result as a merely foreseen side effect. We argue, however, that only some cases of knowingly killing human shields should be regarded as intentionally targeting human shields, and thus only those cases face higher bars of justification. We shall formulate different principles that help us to distinguish between cases where a military operation involves the deliberate harming of human shields and cases where it does not. As we shall see, these principles are relevant in scenarios that are all too realistic and common, such as the bombing of legitimate military targets located amid civilian populations.

15. Alida Liberman, “‘But I Voted for Him for Other Reasons!’: Moral Permissibility and a Doctrine of Double Endorsement” (*Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, 2019)

[*Adapts the intend-foresee distinction to explore the ethics of endorsement (e.g., in voting, or appreciating art).*]

Abstract Many people presume that you can permissibly support the good features of a symbol, person, activity, or work of art while simultaneously denouncing its bad features. This chapter refines and assesses this commonsense (but undertheorized) moral justification for supporting problematic people, projects, and political symbols, and proposes an analogue of the Doctrine of Double Effect called the Doctrine of Double Endorsement (DDN). DDN proposes that when certain conditions are met, it is morally permissible to directly endorse some object in virtue of its positive properties while standing against its negative properties, even though it would be morally impermissible to directly endorse those negative properties themselves. These conditions include separability (the good and bad features must not be inextricably linked), proportionality (the positive value of the good features must be significantly greater than the negative value of the bad features), and constrained choice (there must not be other things that the agent could endorse instead that share the same positive features but are not saddled with the negative ones). The chapter applies these constraints to a number of practical issues, including (among others) voting for morally troubling candidates, supporting Confederate monuments, and consuming sexist art.