

When moral intuitions are immune to the law:

a case study of euthanasia and the act-omission distinction in the Netherlands

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Abstract. Legal scholars and philosophers have long debated the moral standing of the act-omission distinction, with some favoring the view that actions ought to be considered as morally different from omissions, while others disagree. Several empirical studies suggest that people judge actions that cause harm as worse than omissions that cause the same harm with the implication that our folk psychology commonly perceives this distinction as morally significant. Here we explore the robustness of people's moral intuitions, and in particular, whether the omission bias can be eliminated in the face of explicit and familiar laws that take away the moral standing of the distinction between actions and omissions. We show that although Dutch law allows both active and passive euthanasia, and although our Dutch participants were well aware of this law and supported it, they nonetheless showed a robust omission bias across a wide range of moral dilemmas. We conclude by discussing the relationship between our folk moral intuitions and explicit moral rules that are handed down by law and religion.

Introduction

Euthanasia raises tough ethical decisions (Biggar, 2004; Young, 2007). On the one hand is the view that life is special — sacred — and that no one should be able to end their own life or another's; life ends, when it ends, naturally. On the other hand, there may be situations in which life is no longer worth living because there is too much suffering, not enough joy, and no medical prospects for a cure. This kind of conflict is at the core of philosophical, biomedical, and legal discussions of euthanasia. A further cut, however, entails

the distinction between active and passive euthanasia (McMahan, 2002; Rachels, 1975), and specifically, the question of whether there are moral and thus, potentially legal differences between ending someone's life by lethal injection as opposed to terminating life support [an omission]. In most countries, active euthanasia is legally forbidden whereas passive euthanasia is permissible. The psychological basis of this difference may well be the strong intuition, held by many, that [all else equal] actions are morally worse than omissions (Baron, 1994; Baron & Ritov, 2004; Hauser, 2006). And one account of why this intuition is operative is that we can more readily assign

causal and intentional responsibility to actors than omitters (Alicke, 2000; Baron & Ritov, 2004; Bennett, 1995; Cushman, 2008; Cushman, Young, & Hauser, in prep; Hart & Honore, 1959). More specifically, active euthanasia entails direct causation whereas omission entails indirect causation (Royzman & Baron, 2002; Spranca, Minsk, & Baron, 1991).

Here we take advantage of a fairly recent change in a country's legal attitude toward euthanasia to explore a question that is central to current concerns in moral psychology: to what extent are the processes that underpin our intuitive judgments of right and wrong susceptible to, or influenced by culturally explicit norms or rules (Dwyer, 1999, 2004; Haidt, 2001; Hauser, 2006; Mikhail, 2007; Mikhail, in press)? Specifically, on April 10, 2001, the Upper House of Parliament in the Netherlands passed legislation [104 pro versus 40 against] stating that the termination of life on request, and by assisted suicide, will not be treated as a criminal offence if carried out by a physician under strict criteria; for a history of this change, see (Onwuteaka-Philipsen et al., 2003). As noted by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport [translation from the Dutch]:

The greatest care has been taken to regulate care for patients who are suffering unbearably with no prospect of improvement. Euthanasia may only be carried out at the explicit request of the patient. It allows a person to end their life in dignity after having

received every available type of palliative care. In the Netherlands, euthanasia is understood to mean termination of life by a medical practitioner at the request of a patient. This definition also covers assisted suicide.

All reports in the press have suggested that this change — legalizing active euthanasia by means of assisted suicide — has been successful. For example, from 2001 when the law was passed, to 2005, there was a 26% increase in the frequency of assisted suicide cases. Given this success, the government's focus over the past few years has been to increase the knowledge that physicians have about the law, while also increasing the public's education on issues of palliative care.

Given this shift in the Netherlands, our aim in this paper was twofold: first, to explore whether the Dutch are aware of this change in the law and endorse it, and second, to test whether knowledge of the law impacts upon moral judgments of non-explicitly legal cases [i.e., unfamiliar moral scenarios]. To explore these problems, we presented Dutch subjects with a series of moral dilemmas targeting the act-omission distinction. All of these cases were artificial, and thus unfamiliar. We also presented subjects with a pair of real euthanasia cases, one active and one passive. Lastly, we asked subjects about their knowledge of Dutch law concerning euthanasia and also, whether they would endorse the Government's decision to make assisted suicide legal. We predicted that if subjects were aware of the legal decision concerning euthanasia, and endorsed it, then they might show a reduction or no omission bias — that is,

perceive actions and omissions as morally comparable. In contrast, if explicit rules fail to penetrate our intuitive system, serving only to guide explicit cases, then even if the Dutch know about the legal case concerning euthanasia, they will nonetheless show an omission bias. On this view, the omission remains operative for unfamiliar cases because causal responsibility is most readily assigned to actions as opposed to omissions.

Methods

Participants

From June 2008 until January 2009, 404 individuals filled out a Dutch version of the web-based Moral Sense Test [<http://www.serve.com/~harvardpcnl/MST/Dutch/>]. Of all Dutch participants, 58% were female, 75% Dutch, and the rest from Belgium and the Netherlands Antilles; subjects ranged in age from 14-79 [M=35; SD = 14]. A majority [84%] had not taken any moral courses and only 50% had read a book on moral reasoning.

To examine possible cross-cultural differences, we contrasted the patterns of judgment obtained for our Dutch sample with a North American sample that had been previously collected, and tested on the same act-omission cases (Cushman, Young, & Hauser, 2006). In total 202 individuals filled out the original English version of the web-based Moral Sense Test. Of these participants, 47% were female, 53% male, and all were North American. A majority had not taken any moral courses [74%], and only 33% had read a book on moral reasoning. The only difference in testing procedures [see below] between these two samples, therefore, was that we didn't ask the American sample about their knowledge of euthanasia, and nor did we present cases of active and passive euthanasia. We selected a strictly North American sample because the United States makes a legal distinction between active and passive euthanasia, with only the latter permitted.

Stimuli and Judgment Data

Since our goal was to explore how knowledge of legal distinctions impacts moral judgment, and in particular, how knowledge of Dutch law concerning euthanasia bears on judgments of actions and omissions, we asked each Dutch subject to evaluate the permissibility of an explicit case of active and passive euthanasia, to say whether they were aware [Yes or No response] of the legal distinction on active and passive euthanasia in the Netherlands, and whether they would endorse this distinction [Yes or No response]. Specifically, each subject read [in Dutch] and responded to the following:

Explicit scenario: Your sister has a life threatening tumor in her brain. Several treatments have been tested, but nothing can save her from dying. She is in unbearable pain and wants to end her life.

Question 1: Do you think it is permissible to give her a drug that will end her life in this situation? Yes/ No

Question 2: Do you think it is permissible to send her into a deep sleep stage in this situation? Yes/ No

Question 3: Is giving a drug morally worse, similar to, or better than send her into a deep sleep stage? Worse/Similar/Better

Question 4: Do you know that in The Netherlands, it is legally permissible to give either a drug or send the patient into a deep sleep stage? Yes/No

Question 5: If you had to vote today, would you vote in favour of this policy? Yes/No

Since explicitly asking subjects for their awareness of the legal decision concerning active versus passive euthanasia might affect their moral judgments, half of the subjects [n=192] were presented with the explicit euthanasia case and questions before the actual dilemmas, while the other half were presented with the dilemmas first [n=212].

We presented subjects, counterbalanced for order, with 31 dilemmas designed to explore not only the act-omit distinction, but also, the distinction between means and side effects, as well as harm

caused by physical as opposed to non-physical contact (Cushman et al., 2006); here we only present the data on 5 pairs of act-omit cases [see Appendix for the English and Dutch versions of these cases]. Each pair of cases was carefully controlled, using the same wording, and only changing whether the consequences emerge due to action as opposed to omission. The following represents a single pair:

Action. Ed is driving five sick people to the hospital. They are in critical condition and will die if Ed makes any stops along the way. In his hurry to pack them in the car Ed slams the door on a few feet of thick cord that is now dangling beside the car. Ed takes the fastest route to the hospital, which is a narrow, unpaved mountain pass. On his way, Ed sees a rock climber hanging onto the side of the mountain beside the road. The rock climber is safe and in control, but if Ed drives by the thick cord dragging along the side of his car will dislodge the rock climber, causing him to fall to his death. If Ed slows to a stop and waits, the rock climber will be able to reach a stable landing where the cord will not dislodge him, but it will be too late to save the five people. If Ed continues to drive, the one person will fall to his death and the five will be saved. Ed decides to continue to drive.

Question: Continuing to drive is:

Omission. Jack is driving five sick people to the hospital. They are in critical condition and will die if Jack makes any stops along the way. In his hurry to pack them in the car Jack slams the door on a few feet of thick cord that is now dangling beside the car. Jack takes the fastest route to the hospital, which is a narrow, unpaved mountain pass. On his way, Jack sees a rock climber hanging onto the side of the mountain beside the road. The rock climber is losing control and is about to fall to his death, but he could be saved if he had a cord to pull himself up. If Jack slows to a stop the rock climber will be able to use the cord dangling from the side of the car to pull himself up to safety, but it will be too late to save the five people. If Jack continues to drive, the one person will fall to

his death and the five will be saved. Jack decides to continue to drive.

Question: Continuing to drive is:

Prior to presentation, FT translated the English versions of the dilemmas into Dutch, then a second bilingual speaker back translated these into English, and then MH checked the back-translation for accuracy. For each dilemma, subjects rated the action on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 labeled as forbidden, 4 as permissible and 7 as obligatory.

Results

1. Dutch data

Only a minority of Dutch subjects [n=55, 14%] were unaware of the distinction between active and passive euthanasia, and almost all participants [n=390, 97%] said they would support the legalization of euthanasia. Further, and of interest to the omission bias, 93% [n=376] of Dutch subjects said that active euthanasia was permissible, and 84% [n=341] said that passive euthanasia was permissible. However, 21.5% [n=87] said that active euthanasia was worse than passive euthanasia, 36.8% [n=149] said that these two forms of euthanasia were similar, and 41.7% [n=169] said that passive was worse than active. Thus, in contrast to those who perceived active euthanasia as worse than passive, more subjects perceived no moral difference [$z = 2.27, p < .002$] or perceived passive euthanasia as worse than active [$z = 3.06, p < .001$]; there was no difference in the proportion of subjects who perceived no difference and those who perceived passive as worse than active [$z = 0.8, p > 0.05$].

If explicit moral knowledge affects moral intuitions and the judgments that flow from these, then subjects who were aware of the legal decision concerning active versus passive euthanasia [*aware group*] should judge act-omission cases differently from those that were unaware [*unaware group*] of this legal issue. For subjects who were and

were not aware of the legal decision on euthanasia, the judgment data were normally distributed, with no significant differences regarding age, sex, ethnicity, education or occupation. Since there were no outliers, all participants were included for further analyses, and subjects' awareness entered as a grouping factor.

To test whether the groups differed on the action versus omission cases, or explicitly asking about the Dutch legal distinction on euthanasia results in different judgments, a 2 [group aware vs. unaware] x 2 [order euthanasia case first vs. dilemmas first] x 2 [action vs. omission] ANOVA with repeated measures was performed on all 5 dilemmas targeting the act-omission distinction. Results revealed a significant effect of dilemma type [e.g., action vs. omission cases; $F[1,400] = 66.28, p < .00$], but no significant group differences [$F[1,400] = 0.01, p = 0.94$], order effects [$F[1,400] = 0.10, p = 0.75$], or interactions [$F[1,400] = 0.55, p = 0.46$]. The main effect of dilemma type indicates that both groups perceived a difference between actions and omissions, with action dilemmas consistently judged more harshly than omissions. Bonferroni corrected post-hoc tests revealed no statistically significant group effect for the type of moral dilemma. As can be seen from Table 1, however, all five dilemmas showed an omission bias, with moderate to large effect sizes.

— Insert Table 1 here —

Given that subjects provided different judgments about the explicit euthanasia case, we examined the relationship between their explicit judgments and those provided on the five other act-omit pairs. We divided subjects into whether they perceived active euthanasia as worse than, equal to, or better than passive euthanasia, and carried out a 3 [group] x 4 [dilemma] ANOVA. There was no significant group effect [$F[2,404] = .93, p = .40$].

2. Contrast between Dutch and US judgments

To test for cross-cultural differences in judgment between American and Dutch

individuals on the action versus omission cases, a 2 [group USA vs. Dutch] x 2 [action vs. omission] x 4 [dilemma] ANOVA with repeated measures was carried out targeting possible cross-cultural differences in the perception of morally significant differences between actions and omissions. Although the Dutch sample perceived the act-omission distinction as morally relevant, it is nonetheless possible that the magnitude of this distinction could be diminished as a result of their explicit knowledge of the government's decision about euthanasia. Results indicated a significant interaction effect of group [USA vs. Dutch], dilemma type [action vs. omission cases] and dilemma [$F[4,604] = 10.32, p < .001$]. This significant interaction is, however, entirely driven by the judgment data from the *pond* dilemma (see Appendix). Within the *pond* dilemma, there is a significant interaction pattern for dilemma type and group [$F[1,604] = 8.56, p < .01$]. Specifically, although both groups judged action more harshly than omission for this dilemma, the magnitude of this difference was greater in the American subjects. If we remove the *Pond* dilemma, and rerun the analyses, we find a consistent and statistically significant effect for dilemma type [action vs. omission; $F[1,604] = 205.41, p < .0001$], but no significant effect for group [USA vs. Dutch; $F[1,604] = .85, p = .36$] and no significant interaction [$F[1,604] = 1.89, p = .17$].

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine whether knowing about legally sanctionable and permissible actions (or any other institutionally imposed and explicit norm) affects one's intuitive moral judgments. On one view, knowing about a particular legal distinction could, in principle, have a ripple effect across our moral intuitions more generally. On this view, our moral psychology is plastic, open to reason and experience, and thus, open to substantial reorganization as a function of culturally imposed changes. An example of such shifts might be the kind discussed by Peter Singer (1981) in his book *The Expanding Circle*.

Though we, like other animals, have evolved a capacity to distinguish in-group members from out-group members, we are also readily influenced by our experiences, and often by reason, to shift individuals and groups in and out of these classes. Thus, animals were once out of the moral circle, but are now in, at least for most societies. In the United States, African Americans were once out in terms of voting rights, but are now in.

On the alternative view, some aspects of our moral psychology are more rigid, perhaps immune to reason and experience. From this perspective, knowing about the law certainly impacts one's actions in those cases where the law holds, but such knowledge does not cause any change in our moral intuitions. Here, more specifically, we took advantage of the relatively recent (2001) change in the Dutch government's decision to eliminate the legal distinction between active and passive euthanasia to assess whether the Dutch are aware of this change, endorse it, and as a result, fail to perceive a moral difference between harms resulting from actions as opposed to omissions. Based on a sample of several hundred, native Dutch subjects, results showed that most were aware of the government's decisions, stated that they would support it if a second vote was requested, and judged the active case as either comparable in moral permissibility to the passive case, or *more* permissible. However, although subjects were aware of the government's decision, and some were reminded of this immediately before responding to the artificial and unfamiliar dilemmas, they nonetheless showed a strong omission bias. Moreover, there was no difference between our Dutch and North American samples, with the exception of one dilemma in which the North Americans judged the action more harshly than the Dutch. Thus knowing that active and passive euthanasia are legally permissible, and supporting this law, fails to impact on the intuitive system that underwrites our capacity to judge unfamiliar cases. This conclusion, and the specific case on which it rests, raises additional questions about what it means for individuals to understand or

know about a particular legal or moral case such as euthanasia, and what it means for our understanding of reasoned and intuitive processes.

Although it was clear from our sample that most Dutch subjects were aware of the government's decision about euthanasia, and would endorse it again, it is unclear what this awareness entails in terms of individual knowledge of the case. That is, the law explicitly states that both active and passive euthanasia are allowed, but do subjects take this to mean that only outcomes matter, that only outcomes matter when the intentions are the same, or that the cases are morally equivalent because there are no differences in the agent's causal responsibility? Any one or more of these factors, and others, might be correct. We simply don't know. The only conclusion that we can offer, with any confidence, is that whatever subjects extract from the government's decision, it is insufficient to overturn the omission bias that appears to characterize the psychology of other cultures where active euthanasia is legally forbidden, but passive euthanasia permitted.

Several studies have recently explored the robustness of the omission bias, and in particular, the factors that might support or eliminate our intuition that actions are worse than omissions (Baron, 2009; Baron & Ritov, 2004; Connolly & Reb, 2003; Haidt & Baron, 1996; Mandel & Vartanian, 2007; Patt & Zeckhauser, 2000; Ritov & Baron, 1990; Rozman & Baron, 2002; Spranca et al., 1991; Tanner & Medin, 2004; Waldmann & Dieterich, 2007). Some of these studies point to the importance of presentation, that is, the difference between reading and judging cases sequentially as opposed to in parallel. Thus, and as noted by Baron and colleagues (Baron, 2009; Baron & Ritov, 2004) in several reviews and empirical papers, reading two paired cases side by side can function to reduce the difference, especially in terms of the distinction between direct and indirect causes of harm. This is precisely the effect that Rachels (1975) plays into his case of the greedy uncle, where in the action scenario, the uncle drowns his

nephew in the bathtub in order to gain the family's inheritance, and in the second, omission scenario, allows the nephew to drown. Here, we don't perceive a moral difference between doing and allowing because the causality is transparent in both. Consequently, we hold the uncle responsible for both taking the nephew's life and for failing to save him at no personal cost. This toy example, and the empirical results that support it, suggest that when information about causality and intentionality are unambiguous, that we may convert omissions into actions — that is, omitting to save the drowning nephew or allowing the patient to die, are both cases of action, at least from the perspective of the adjudicating psychology.

Other studies find a reduction in the omission bias, or its elimination, when there is either an expectation that someone should act (and thus, omissions are perceived more harshly), or, because of a particular social role (e.g., friend, family member), should take responsibility to prevent harms, either by action or by omission (Haidt & Baron, 1996; Ritov & Baron, 1994). Along these lines, it is interesting to note that most of our Dutch participants either judged active euthanasia to be as morally permissible as passive euthanasia, or judged passive euthanasia to be worse. One interpretation of this trend toward an action bias is that given the legal stance on euthanasia in The Netherlands, allowing someone to die represents a failure to take on the responsibility of what is permissible, which is to terminate pain and suffering as fast as possible by means of active euthanasia.

Although the empirical research on actions and omissions clearly shows that there are ways to eliminate or reduce the omission bias, it is also clear that in a wide variety of studies, using different methods, scenarios (both apocryphal and real), and populations, that the omission bias is observed. More importantly, the present study shows that even when subjects are explicitly aware of a situation in which the distinction between action and omission has been morally neutralized, this knowledge

fails to spread, generalizing to unfamiliar cases. Consequently, and irrespective of whether one considers distinctions such as that between actions and omissions to be biases (Baron & Ritov, 2004), heuristics (Sunstein, 2005), or rules in a moral grammar (Hauser, 2006; Mikhail, 2007), the mechanisms mediating our moral judgments are, in some cases, automatically operative, and to some extent, immune to our explicitly held beliefs and systems of reasoning.

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Tables

Scenario pair	Action		Omission		Difference		t	Effect size [d]
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Boxcar	3.72	0.18	4.27	1.38	-0.55	1.53	-7.12*	0.71
Pond	2.63	1.63	3.91	1.63	-1.29	1.80	-14.43*	1.45
Car	3.79	1.54	4.78	1.39	-0.75	1.71	-10.43*	1.05
Boat	3.87	1.58	4.63	1.37	-0.29	1.52	-8.74*	0.88
Switch	4.10	1.46	4.38	1.30	-0.55	1.53	-2.62*	0.26

Table 1. Dutch judgment data (7pt Likert scale, where 1 = forbidden, 4= permissible, and 7 = obligatory) for five action-omission pairs.

Appendix. English and Dutch versions of dilemmas.

1. Explicit euthanasia

English

Your sister has a life threatening tumor in her brain. Several treatments have been tested, but nothing can save her from dying. She is in unbearable pain and wants to end her life.

1. Do you think it is permissible to give her a drug that will end her life in this situation? Yes/ No
2. Do you think it is permissible to send her into a deep sleep stage in this situation? Yes/ No
3. Is giving a drug morally worse, similar to, or better than send her into a deep sleep stage?

- worse-

-similar-

-better-

4. Do you know that in The Netherlands, it is legally permissible to give either a drug or send the patient into a deep sleep stage? Yes/No

5. If you had to vote today, would you vote in favour of this policy? Yes/No

Active Euthanasia = [ending a life on request] euthanasia, is a termination of life by a physician by administering a deadly fluid. The patient's request to die must be voluntary and well-considered, furthermore his condition needs to be hopeless and his pain [physical and mental] unbearable.

Passive Euthanasia= [Palliative care] means 'deliberately reducing the patients consciousness in the last phase of life'. It means that patients whom have at maximum two weeks to life, are send into a deep sleep stage and receive no fluid anymore.

Dutch

Je zus heeft een grote, levensbedreigende tumor in haar hoofd. Er zijn verschillende behandelingen geprobeerd, maar niets kan haar meer redden. Ze heeft ondragelijke pijn en wil het leven beëindigen.

Vind je het toegestaan om haar een dodelijk middel te geven in deze situatie? Ja /Nee

Vind je het toegestaan om haar in een diepe slaap te brengen in deze situatie? Ja /Nee

Het geven van een dodelijk middel is moreel slechter, hetzelfde, of beter dan het in slaap brengen?

- slechter-

-hetzelfde-

-beter-

Weet je dat het in Nederland [onder strikte richtlijnen] is toegestaan om een dodelijk middel te geven of in diepe slaap te brengen? Ja /Nee

Stel, je zou er vandaag over moeten stemmen, zou je dan voor deze mogelijkheden zijn? Ja /Nee

Actieve Euthanasie = [levensbeëindiging op verzoek] van euthanasie is sprake als een arts de dodelijke middelen toedient aan de patiënt. De arts kan dit alleen doen op vrijwillig, weloverwogen verzoek van de patiënt. Er moet dan sprake zijn van uitzichtloos en ondragelijk [lichamelijk of geestelijk] lijden.

Passieve Euthanasie= [Palliatieve sedatie] is het 'opzettelijk verlagen van het bewustzijn van de patiënt in de laatste levensfase'. Dat houdt in dat patiënten die nog hooguit twee weken te leven hebben, in diepe slaap gebracht worden en geen vocht krijgen.

2. Six action-omission dilemma pairs

1a. Boxcar-action

English

Standing by the railroad tracks, Evan sees an empty, out-of-control boxcar about to hit five people. Next to Evan is a lever that can be pulled, lowering the railing on a footbridge that spans the main track, and causing one person to fall off the footbridge and onto the main track, where

he will be hit by the boxcar. The boxcar will slow down because of the one person, therefore preventing the five from being hit. If Evan pulls the lever the one person will fall and be hit by the boxcar, and therefore the boxcar will slow down and not hit the five people. If Evan does not pull the lever the boxcar will continue down the tracks and hit the five people, and the one person will remain safe above the main track. Evan decides to pull the lever.

Pulling the lever is:

Dutch

Staande naast een treinspoor ziet Yvar een leeg, onbeheerst karretje op het punt staan om vijf mensen te raken. Naast Yvar is een hefboom die de railing van een loopbrug over het hoofdspoor verlaagt, als er aan getrokken wordt. Hierdoor valt één persoon van de loopbrug op het hoofdspoor, waar hij geraakt zal worden door het karretje. Het karretje zal in vaart minderen vanwege de ene persoon en daarmee voorkomen dat vijf mensen geraakt worden. Als Yvar aan de hefboom trekt, zal het karretje het spoor vervolgen en de vijf mensen raken, de ene persoon boven het hoofdspoor zal veilig zijn. Yvar besluit de hefboom te trekken.

Aan de hefboom is:

1b. Boxcar-omission

English

Standing by the railroad tracks, Jeff sees an empty, out-of-control boxcar speeding toward five people. There is one person on a footbridge spanning the main tracks who is slipping and about to fall onto the main track, where he will be hit by the boxcar. The boxcar will slow down because of the one person, therefore preventing the five from being hit. Next to Jeff is a lever that can be pulled, raising the railing on the footbridge and preventing the one person from falling. If Jeff does not pull the lever the one person will fall and be hit by the boxcar, and therefore the boxcar will slow down and not hit the five people. If Jeff pulls the lever the boxcar will continue down the tracks and hit five people, and the one person will remain safe above the main track. Jeff decides not to pull the lever.

Not pulling the lever is:

Dutch

Staande naast een treinspoor ziet Jeff een leeg, onbeheerst karretje richting vijf mensen razen. Er is één persoon die uitglijdt op een loopbrug over het hoofdspoor, en op het punt staat op het hoofdspoor te vallen, waar hij geraakt zal worden door het karretje. Het karretje zal in vaart minderen vanwege de ene persoon en daarmee voorkomen dat vijf mensen geraakt worden. Naast Jeff is een hefboom die de railing van een loopbrug over het hoofdspoor verhoogt, als er aan getrokken wordt. Het verhogen van de railing voorkomt dat de ene man valt. Als Jeff niet aan de hefboom duwt, zal de ene persoon vallen en geraakt worden door het karretje, waardoor het karretje in vaart zal minderen en de vijf mensen niet zal raken. Als Jeff de hefboom duwt, zal het karretje het spoor vervolgen en de vijf mensen raken, de ene persoon zal veilig boven het hoofdspoor blijven. Jeff besluit de hefboom niet te duwen.

Niet aan de hefboom trekken is:

2a. Pond-action

English

James is hiking through a foreign land when he comes across a remote village. James learns that one of the villagers fell into a cursed pond but, contrary to local superstition, did not die. If the one villager does not die by sunrise, five other innocent and unwilling villagers will be sacrificed to the gods to thank them for sparing the one. James, who has some medical training, realizes that

he can prevent the sacrifice of the five villagers if he secretly poisons the one villager. If James poisons the one, the one will be dead by sunrise, and the five will not be sacrificed. If James does not poison the one, the one will not be dead by sunrise, and the five will be sacrificed as planned. James decides to poison the one. James decides to poison the one.

Poisoning the one is:

Dutch

James lift door een vreemd land, als hij langs een afgelegen dorpje rijdt komt James er achter dat een dorpsbewoner in een vervloekt meer is gevallen en tegen de locale bijgeloven in, niet is gestorven. Als de ene dorpsbewoner niet sterft voor zonsopgang, zullen vijf onschuldige dorpsbewoners aan de goden geofferd worden, om ze te danken voor het sparen van de ene persoon. James, die enige medische training heeft gehad realiseert zich dat hij het offeren van de vijf dorpsbewoners kan verhinderen, als hij de ene dorpsbewoner stiekem vergiftigt. Als James hem vergiftigt, zal hij dood zijn tegen zonsopgang en de vijf dorpsbewoners hoeven niet geofferd te worden. Als James hem niet vergiftigt, zal hij niet dood zijn tegen zonsopgang en zullen de vijf dorpsbewoners, zoals gepland, geofferd worden. James besluit om de ene dorpsbewoner te vergiftigen.

De ene dorpsbewoner vergiftigen is;

2b. Pond-omission

English

Robert is hiking through a foreign land when he comes across a remote village. Robert learns that one of the villagers fell into a cursed pond but, contrary to local superstition, did not die. If the one villager does not die by sunrise, five other innocent and unwilling villagers will be sacrificed to the gods to thank them for sparing the one. Robert, who has some medical training, notices that the one has accidentally consumed a poisonous substance. Robert can administer the antidote to the one villager.

If Robert withholds the antidote from the one, the one will die by sunrise, and the five will not be sacrificed. If Robert does provide the antidote to the one, the one will not be dead by sunrise, and the five will be sacrificed as planned. Robert decides not to provide the antidote to the one.

Not providing the antidote to the one is:

Dutch

Robert lift door een vreemd land, als hij langs een afgelegen dorpje rijdt komt Robert er achter dat een dorpsbewoner in een vervloekt meer is gevallen en tegen de locale bijgeloven in, niet is gestorven. Als de ene dorpsbewoner niet sterft voor zonsopgang, zullen vijf onschuldige dorpsbewoners aan de goden geofferd worden, om ze te danken voor het sparen van de ene persoon. James, die enige medische training heeft gehad ziet dat de ene dorpsbewoner onbedoeld een vergiftigde vloeistof drinkt. Robert zou de ene dorpsbewoner een antigif kunnen geven. Als Robbert de persoon weerhoudt van het nemen van een antigif, zal hij dood zijn tegen zonsopgang. De vijf dorpsbewoners hoeven dan niet geofferd te worden. Als Robert de ene dorpsbewoner de antistof geeft, zal hij niet dood zijn tegen zonsopgang en zullen de vijf dorpsbewoners, zoals gepland, geofferd worden. Robert besluit om de ene dorpsbewoner de antigif niet aan te bieden.

De antistof niet geven aan ene dorpsbewoner is;

3a. Car-action

English

Ed is driving five sick people to the hospital. They are in critical condition and will die if Ed makes any stops along the way. In his hurry to pack them in the car Ed slams the door on a few feet of thick cord that is now dangling beside the car. Ed takes the fastest route to the hospital, which is a narrow, unpaved mountain pass. On his way, Ed sees a rock climber hanging onto the side of the mountain beside the road. The rock climber is safe and in control, but if Ed drives by the thick cord dragging along the side of his car will dislodge the rock climber, causing him to fall to his death. If Ed slows to a stop and waits, the rock climber will be able to reach a stable landing where the cord will not dislodge him, but it will be too late to save the five people. If Ed continues to drive, the one person will fall to his death and the five will be saved. Ed decides to continue to drive.

Continuing to drive is:

Dutch

Ed rijdt vijf zieke mensen naar het ziekenhuis. Ze bevinden zich in kritieke toestand en zullen sterven als Ed onderweg stopt. In zijn haast om de mensen in de auto te krijgen, heeft Ed de deur dichtgeslagen, met daartussen een dik koord van een paar meter dat nu achter de auto aan bungelt. Ed neemt de snelste route, een smalle, onverharde bergpas naar het ziekenhuis. Onderweg ziet Ed een bergbeklimmer hangen aan de rand van de berg naast de weg. De bergbeklimmer is beheerst en veilig, maar als Ed voorbij rijdt, zal het dikke koord aan de wagen de bergbeklimmer los van de berg slaan. Als gevolg hiervan zal de bergbeklimmer sterven. Als Ed tot stilstand komt en wacht, is het voor de bergbeklimmer mogelijk om een veilige en stabiele lading te maken, waardoor het koord hem niet los kan slaan, maar het zal te laat zijn om de vijf mensen te redden. Als Ed doorrijdt zal de ene persoon doodvallen en de vijf anderen worden gered. Ed besluit om door te rijden.

Doorrijden is;

3b. Car-omission

English

Jack is driving five sick people to the hospital. They are in critical condition and will die if Jack makes any stops along the way. In his hurry to pack them in the car Jack slams the door on a few feet of thick cord that is now dangling beside the car. Jack takes the fastest route to the hospital, which is a narrow, unpaved mountain pass. On his way, Jack sees a rock climber hanging onto the side of the mountain beside the road. The rock climber is losing control and is about to fall to his death, but he could be saved if he had a cord to pull himself up. If Jack slows to a stop the rock climber will be able to use the cord dangling from the side of the car to pull himself up to safety, but it will be too late to save the five people. If Jack continues to drive, the one person will fall to his death and the five will be saved. Jack decides to continue to drive.

Continuing to drive is:

Dutch

Jack rijdt vijf zieke mensen naar het ziekenhuis. Ze bevinden zich in kritieke toestand en zullen sterven als Ed onderweg stopt. In zijn haast om de mensen in de auto te krijgen, heeft Ed de deur dichtgeslagen, met daartussen een dik koord van een paar meter dat nu achter de auto aan bungelt. Ed neemt de snelste route, een smalle, onverharde bergpas naar het ziekenhuis. Onderweg ziet Ed een bergbeklimmer hangen aan de rand van de berg naast de weg. De bergbeklimmer verliest zijn controle en staat op het punt om dood te vallen, maar kan gered worden als hij een koord had om zich aan op te trekken. Als Jack stopt, is het voor de bergbeklimmer mogelijk om het koord dat aan de wagen hangt te gebruiken om zich veilig aan op te trekken, maar het zal te laat zijn om de vijf mensen te redden. Als Jack doorrijdt zal de ene persoon doodvallen en de vijf anderen worden gered. Jack besluit om door te rijden.

Doorrijden is;

4a. Boat-action

English

Justin is driving his motorboat in the bay when he notices some swimmers in trouble. There are five swimmers drowning at the end of a narrow channel in front of Justin. In between Justin and the drowning swimmers is another swimmer who is safe and not in trouble. If Justin takes the narrow channel to the five drowning swimmers and saves them, the wake from Justin's boat will wash over the safe swimmer, drowning him. If Justin does nothing, the five swimmers will drown and the one swimmer will remain safe. Justin decides to take the narrow channel.

Taking the narrow channel is:

Dutch

Justin is aan het varen met zijn motorboot in de baai, als hij enkele zwemmers in nood bemerkt. Voor Justin, aan het eind van een smal kanaal verdrinken er vijf zwemmers. Tussen Justin en de zwemmers die verdrinken is er een andere zwemmer die veilig en niet in nood is. Als Justin het smalle kanaal naar de vijf verdrinkende zwemmers in gaat en ze redt, zal de golf van Justin's boot over de veilige zwemmer slaan en hem doen verdrinken. Als Justin niets doet, zullen de vijf zwemmers verdrinken en de ene zwemmer nog steeds veilig zijn. Justin besluit het smalle kanaal in te gaan.

Het smalle kanaal in gaan is:

4b. Boat-omission

English

Don is driving his motorboat in the bay when he notices some swimmers in trouble. There are five swimmers drowning at the end of a channel in front of Don. To the side of the channel there is another swimmer drowning. If Don stops to save the one swimmer on the side of the channel, he will not be able to get to the five swimmers in time to save them. If Don continues to speed towards the five swimmers past the one swimmer, the one swimmer will drown, but he will reach the five swimmers in time to save them. Don decides to continue to speed towards the five swimmers.

Continuing to speed towards the five swimmers is:

Dutch

Ron is aan het varen met zijn motorboot in de baai, wanneer hij enkele zwemmers in nood bemerkt. Voor Ron, aan het eind van een kanaal verdrinken er vijf zwemmers. Aan de rand van het kanaal verdrinkt een andere zwemmer. Als Ron stopt om de ene zwemmer te redden aan de rand van het kanaal, zal hij de andere vijf zwemmers niet op tijd bereiken om ze te redden. Als Ron doorvaart voorbij de ene zwemmer, naar de vijf zwemmers, zal de ene zwemmer verdrinken. Maar hij zal de andere vijf zwemmers tijdig bereiken om ze te redden. Ron besluit door te varen naar de vijf zwemmers.

Doorvaren naar de vijf zwemmers is:

5a. Switch-action

English

Luke is operating the switch at a railroad station when he sees an empty, out of control boxcar coming down the tracks. It is moving so fast that anyone it hits will die immediately. The boxcar is headed towards five repairmen on the track. If Luke does nothing, the boxcar will hit the five

repairmen on the track. Luke can pull a lever redirecting the boxcar to an empty sidetrack. However, pulling the lever will cause the switch to crush one other repairman working on the switch, who will die immediately. Luke decides to pull the lever.

Pulling the lever is:

Dutch

Luuk verstelt de schakel bij een treinstation als hij een leeg, onbeheerst karretje ziet naderen op het spoor. Het karretje beweegt zo snel, dat het iedereen die het raakt onmiddellijk zal doden. Het karretje rijdt richting vijf reparateurs op het spoor. Als Luuk niets doet, zal het karretje de vijf reparateurs op het spoor raken. Luuk kan een hefboom optillen, waardoor het karretje naar een leeg zijspoor wordt gestuurd. Maar het optillen van de hefboom, zorgt ervoor dat er een ander reparateur die aan de schakel werkt, wordt verpletterd. De ene reparateur zal onmiddellijk sterven. Luuk besluit aan de hefboom te trekken.

Aan de hefboom trekken is:

5b. Switch-omission

English

Alan is operating the switch at a railroad station when he sees an empty, out of control boxcar coming down the tracks. It is moving so fast that anyone it hits will die immediately. The boxcar is headed towards a repairman whose leg is caught in the switch. Further down the main track are five more repairmen. If Alan does nothing, the boxcar will hit the one repairman and therefore slow to a stop and not hit the other five repairmen. Alan can pull a lever and release the repairman's leg, allowing him to jump safely out of the way.

However, releasing the repairman will allow the boxcar to continue down the main track where it will hit the five other repairmen working on the tracks. Alan decides not to pull the lever.

Not pulling the lever is:

Dutch

Alex verstelt de schakel bij een treinstation als hij een leeg, onbeheerst karretje ziet naderen op het spoor. Het karretje beweegt zo snel, dat het iedereen die het raakt onmiddellijk zal doden. Het karretje rijdt richting een reparateur die met zijn been vast zit in de schakel. Verderop werken er nog vijf reparateurs aan het hoofdspoor. Als Alex niets doet, zal het karretje de ene reparateur raken en hierdoor tot stilstand komen en de andere vijf reparateurs niet raken. Alex kan een hefboom optillen, en het been van de reparateur bevrijden. Hierdoor kan de reparateur veilig aan de kant springen.

Maar het bevrijden van de reparateur, zorgt er voor dat het karretje het hoofdspoor volgt en de vijf andere werkmannen die aan het spoort werken raakt. Alex besluit niet aan de hefboom te trekken.

Niet aan de hefboom trekken is: