

Trolley Problems

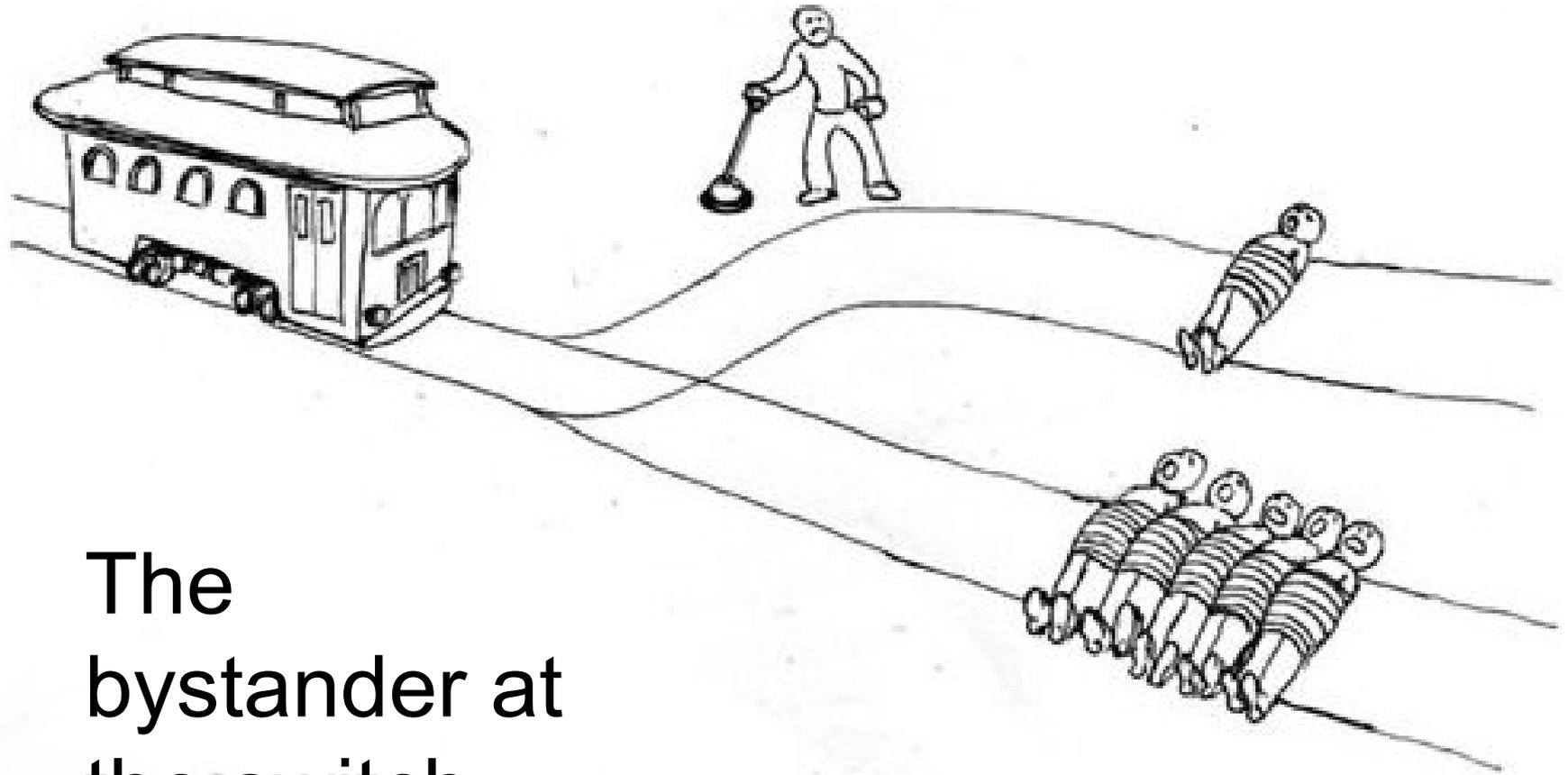
Bob Stone

CAUTION

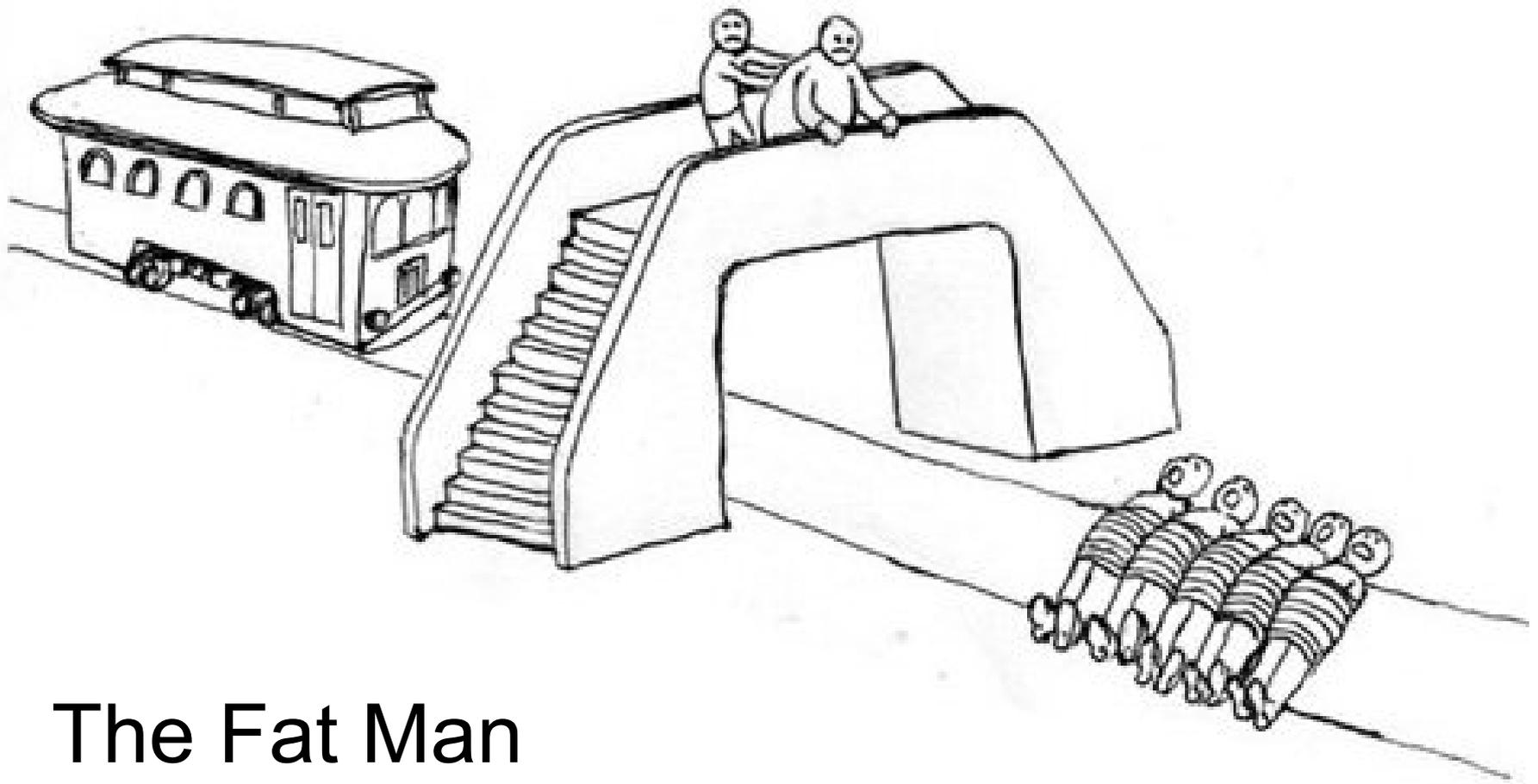


***This trolley will stop suddenly
if you try to leave the facility***

Supplied by Trolley Maintenance Services



The
bystander at
the switch



The Fat Man

Theory (a)

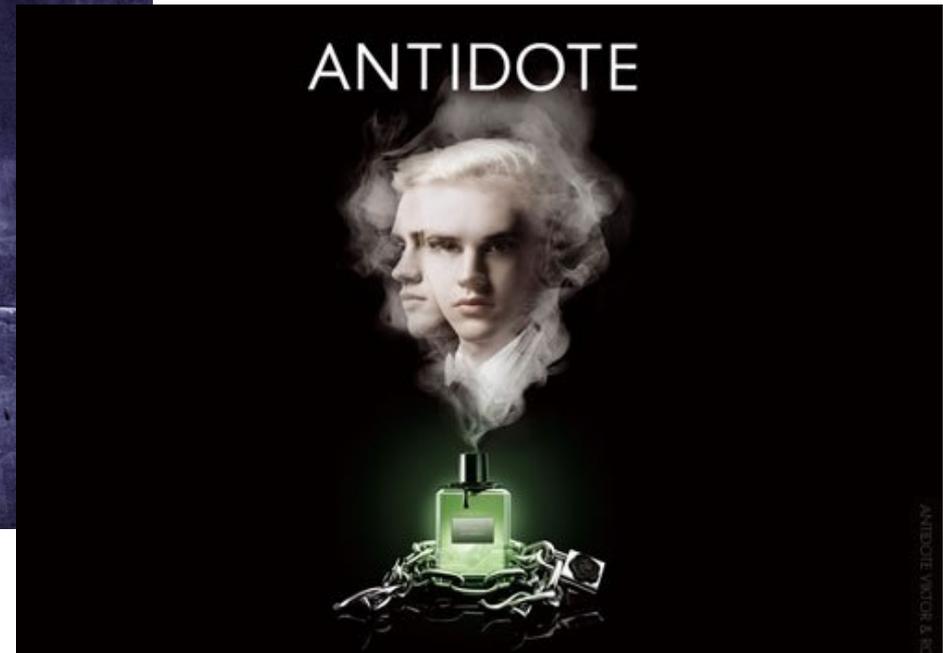
Killing is always worse
than letting die

versus

The Equivalence Thesis



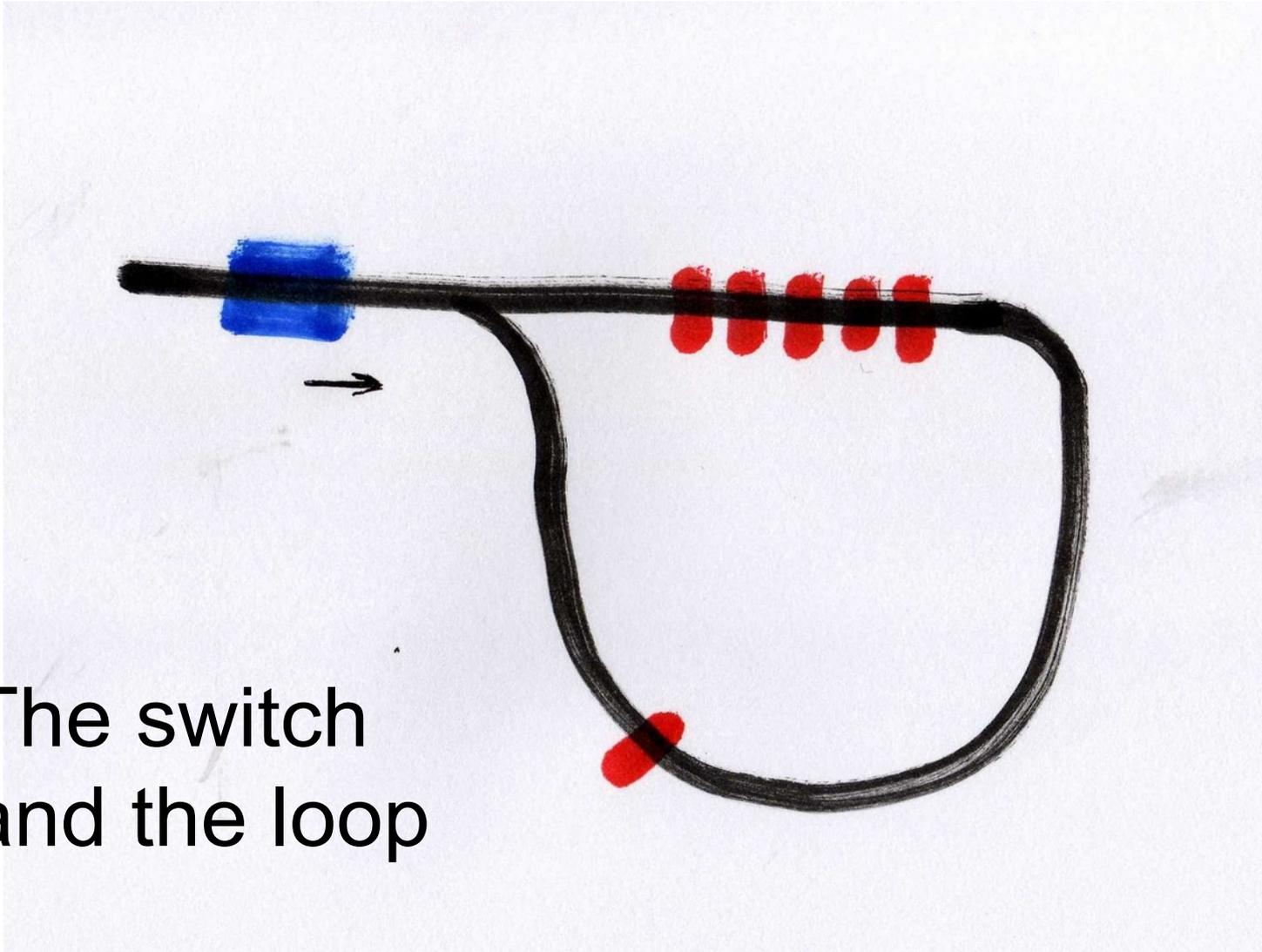
The uncle-
poisoners



Theory (b)

Categorical Imperative:

“So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”
(Kant: GMM 4:429)



The switch
and the loop

Theory (c)

Rights trump utilities

Theory (d)

Intended effects are worse than those merely foreseen

Theory (e)

Diverting a threat from many to one is good, creating a new threat to the one is bad

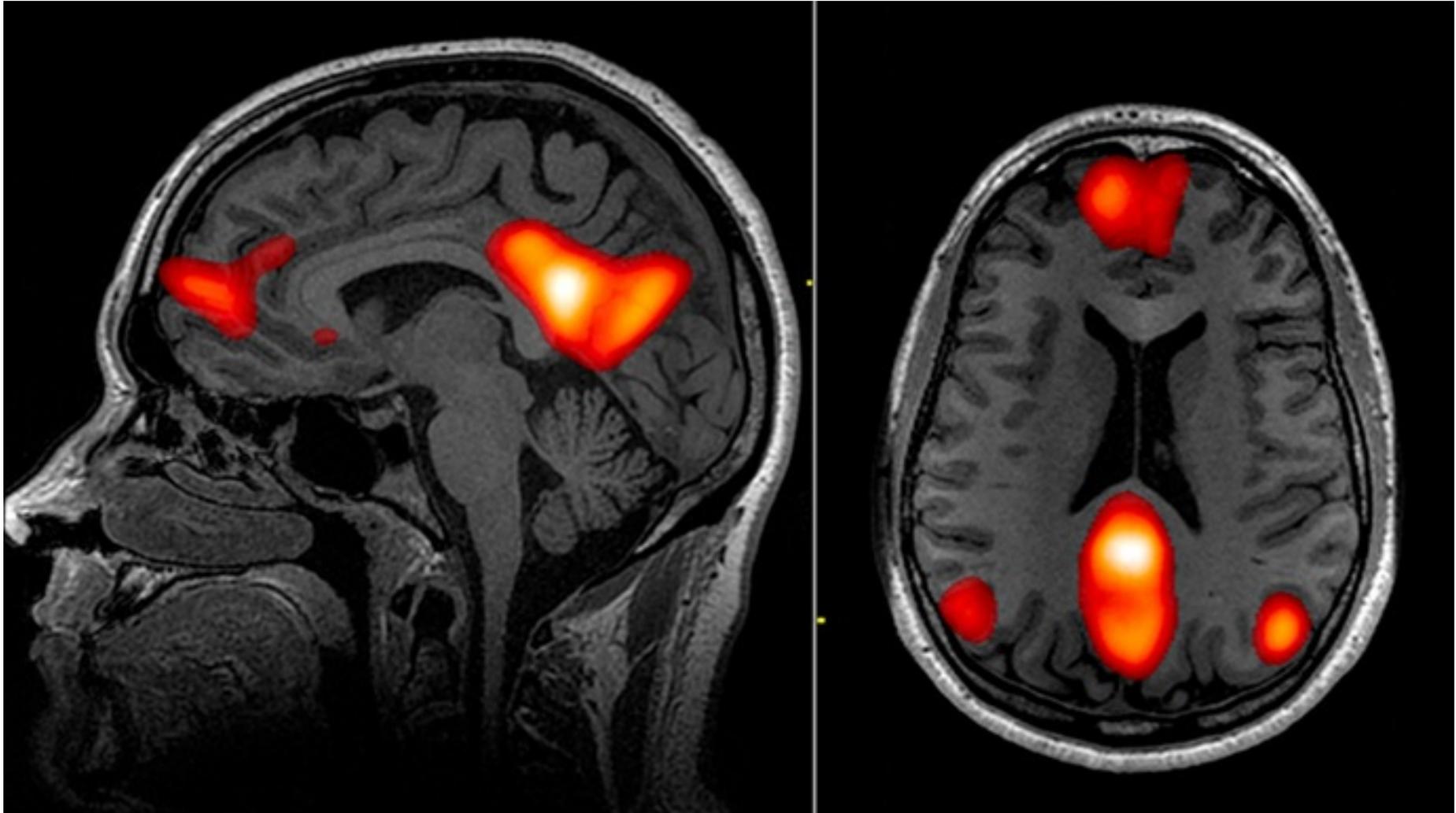


The surgeon at
the hospital

Dual-process theory:

Utilitarian v Deontological
Calculating v Intuitive

functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)



Idea of **upfront personal** harm

→ high activity in emotion parts of brain

Idea of **indirect** harm

→ less activity in emotion parts of brain

Deontological answer: quicker, less
use of cognitive areas of brain

Utilitarian answer:

slower, more use of cognitive areas
of brain



- Rawls: we should seek a 'reflective equilibrium' between our best moral theory and our intuitive moral judgments
- Singer: moral intuitions are not data for a moral theory, only for a theory of how we do in fact think



Reciprocity

Parental influence



1) Moral intuitions have no normative value

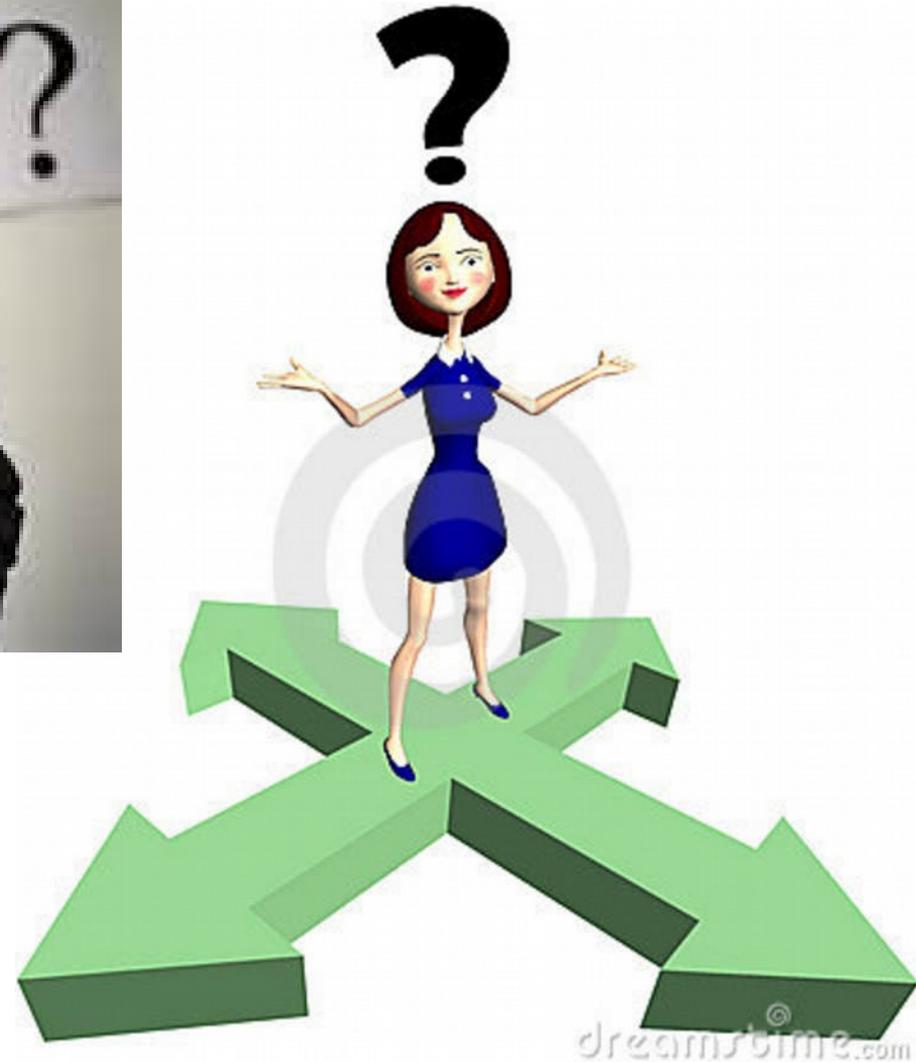
2) Reasoning about the consequences is the only way



Barking up
the wrong
tree?



Reason alone trying
to make a decision



dreamstime.com

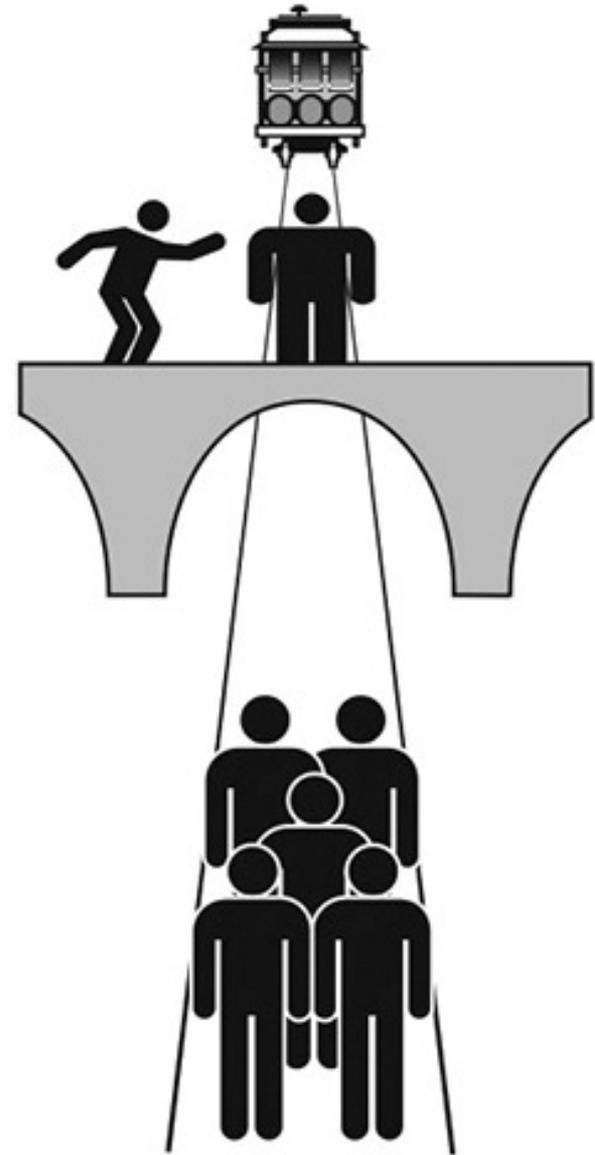
- Utilitarianism – a rational intuition?
- Sentiment of generalised benevolence
- General happiness principle

Consequences type 1:

- Immediate
- Easily foreseeable
- Most likely to arouse emotional response

Consequences type 2:

- Knock-on effects
- Delayed
- Need to be calculated



Aaarrghhh!



Consequences type 3:

- Long-term effect of that sort of action being regularly done
- Can be judged from long experience

Intelligent Utilitarianism:

- takes the long view
- judges the consequences of practices and rules, not merely of actions
- often coincides (luckily) with our moral intuitions
- BUT not always . . .

