

## CS/PHIL 201 Discussion Prompt Response

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Response to Prompt for Module # 1 on topic Large Stranger Trolley Problem

**Make an argument about the ethical permissibility of pushing the large man in the trolley case. Begin with your conclusion and then give several reasons to justify your conclusion.**

I do not believe that it is ethically permissible to push the large stranger off the bridge to save the five innocent people. In this scenario, five people are 'guaranteed' to die because the trolley is heading their direction. However, the large stranger is simply a bystander on the bridge next to me and has no other connection to the trolley car and five strangers. It is not ethical for me to push the stranger off the bridge because I would be murdering the stranger. Although five human lives are more valuable than one, it is not ethical to murder one innocent life in order to save the five. A similar more horrific scenario is whether to murder an innocent human being in order to harvest their organs to save many more people. It is clear to most in this scenario that it is unethical to kill the innocent being.

This scenario is certainly more difficult to argue than the original trolley problem; in the first scenario of the trolley problem either one person or five people are guaranteed to die in a moment. Therefore, a decision needs to be made on which group will survive. However, in this scenario only the group of five people are 'guaranteed' to die. In this decision, either the group dies as guaranteed or I would be required to murder an innocent bystander to save five other lives. The first scenario, either group of people will die because they are trapped, therefore by flipping the switch you are simply making a difficult decision. In the second scenario only the group of five is tied down, thus pushing an innocent bystander is pushing them to their unnecessary death.

**Play devil's advocate. What reasons speak against your conclusion? These may be reasons your group members presented, or if your group is in agreement, they may be reasons you have to work together as a group to discover.**

One can view pushing the large stranger off the bridge in order to save the other five from a utilitarian ethical standpoint. A utilitarian would most likely view this situation from a standpoint that one person's happiness is lesser than five persons. Therefore, they may argue to push the large stranger off the bridge, in front of the trolley, to save the other five. This would result in an overall 'higher' amount of happiness.

Another argument could be the overall life expectancy in the future. From the given scenario, with some speculation, it sounds like the bystander on the bridge is larger, possibly obese, while the five on the track are average. With this thought process, if the bystander is larger, they most likely have several health concerns, while the others are likely to be healthy individuals. Therefore, the larger individual is likely to have a lower life enjoyment and expectancy when compared to the five on the tracks. These are some reasons that would support pushing the large man into the trolley case to save the five which are trapped.