

Ethical Pluralism

1. Objectives
2. Administrivia
3. Ethical Pluralism

Objectives:

By the end of this lecture you should be able to:

1. Differentiate between ethical pluralism and ethical monism;
2. Evaluate problems of ethical absolutism

July 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	29	30	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28			31	

My
Feedback...

Capstone
Paper Due

Last Lecture

Anything Else? Anyone?

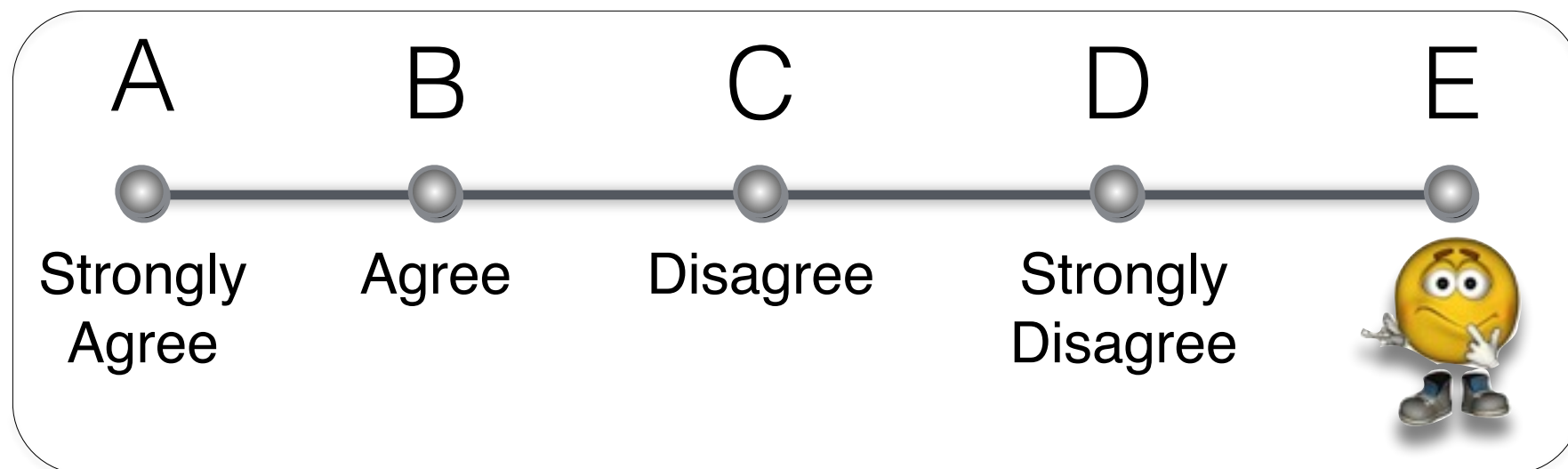




Poll

Claim

Moral principles are absolute

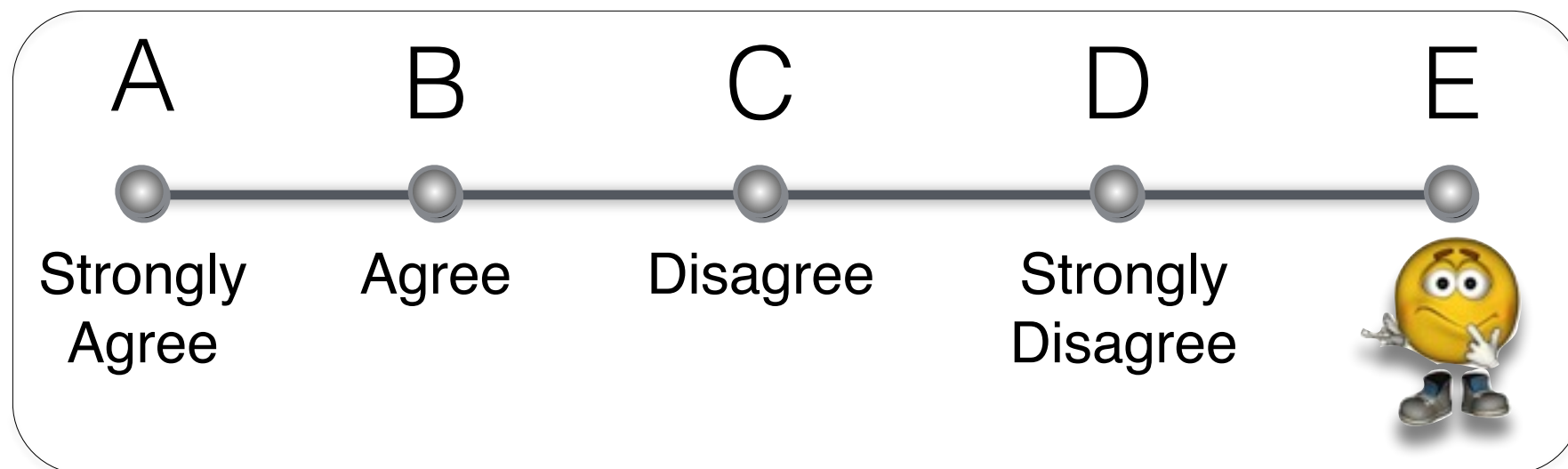




Poll

Claim

There is just one fundamental moral principle



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism		
Pluralism		

Ethical monism is the view that there is just one ethical rule that serves as the basis for morality

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

A supreme moral rule has two defining features. First, it is **absolute**. That means that we are *never* permitted to break it. If you violate an absolute rule, you have...acted immorally.

- Text, p. 219

”



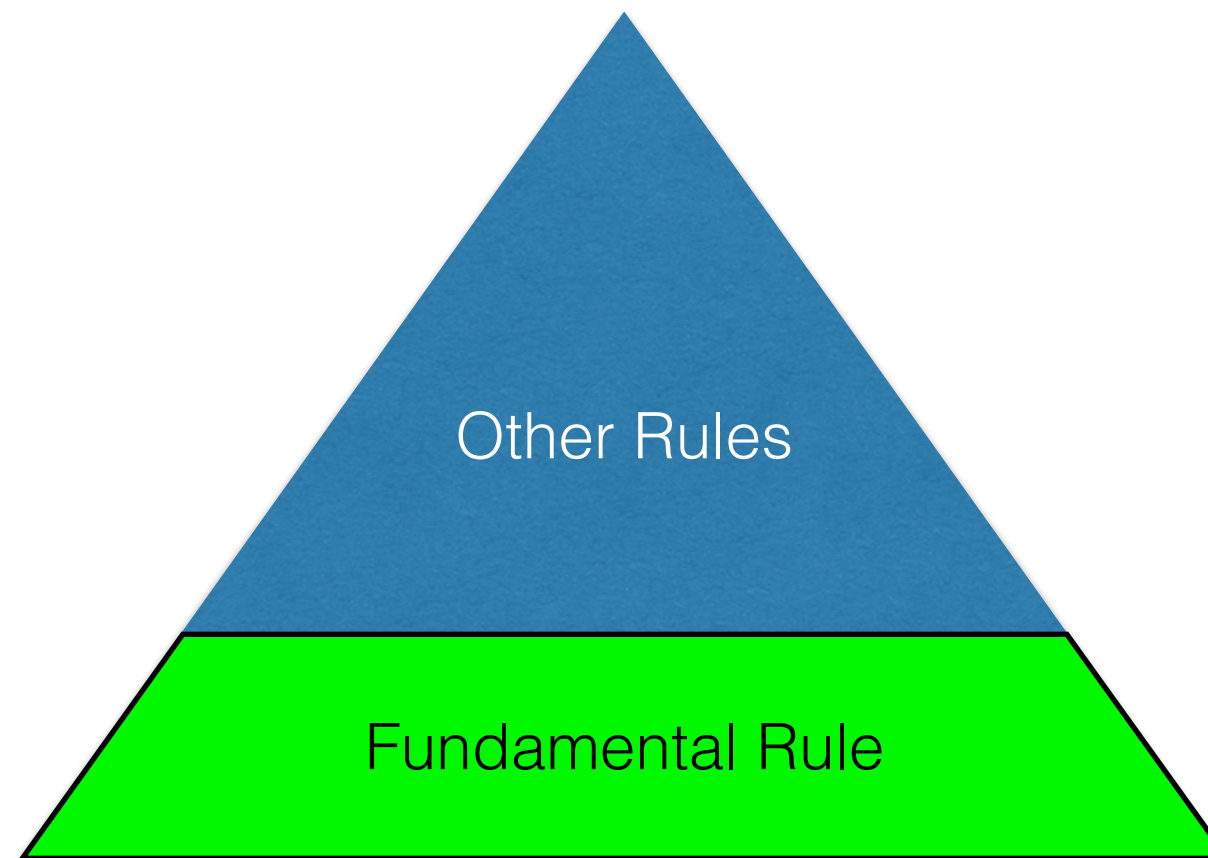
Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Second, this moral rule is **fundamental**. There are no deeper, more basic moral rules that justify the supreme rule.

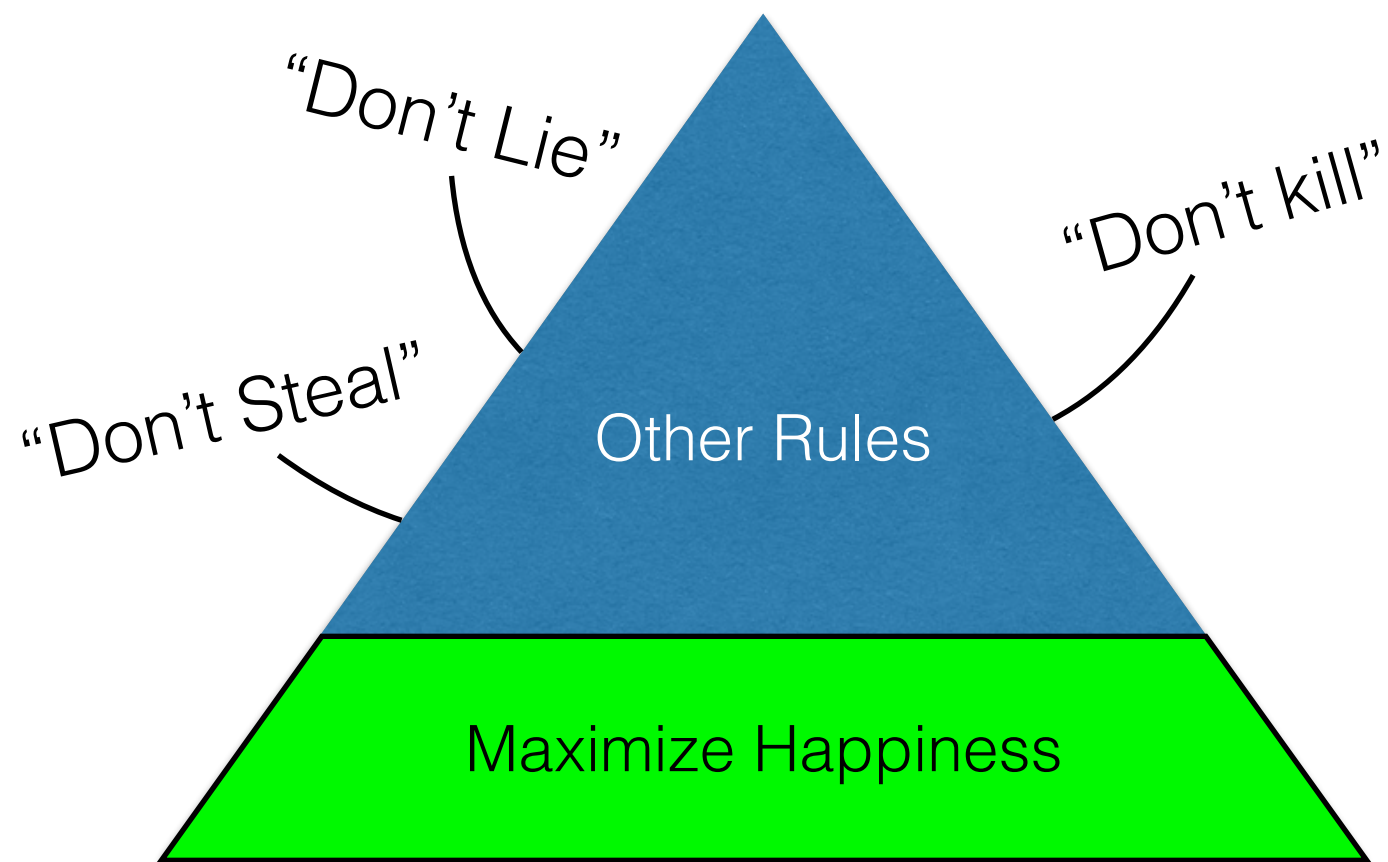
- Text, p. 219

”



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

Utilitarianism



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4


Utilitarianism: → Maximize Happiness

Virtue ethics: → Act in accordance with virtue

Moral rights: → Respect the interests of others

Deontology: → Never treat a person as a means

Ethical egoism: → Maximize self-interest

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism		Absolute & Fundamental
Pluralism	3	4



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

The attractions of a monistic theory are clear. We naturally seek unification in our thinking, and monistic theory provide this. They can impose order on morality, and organize all moral principles by reference to a supreme moral rule.


- Text, p. 220


”

But no ethical theory is without its problems

So what do we do?



- 1) Stay the course and defend our theory of choice
- 2) Come up with a new monistic theory
- 3) Become a pluralist

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	1 	2
Pluralism	3	4



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

Ethical pluralism is the view that there is a plurality of fundamental moral rules

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism		2
Pluralism	3	 4

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

THE question: is moral absolutism plausible?

Three Criticisms:

- 1) Avoiding catastrophes
- 2) A tale of 3 cases
- 3) Moral conflict

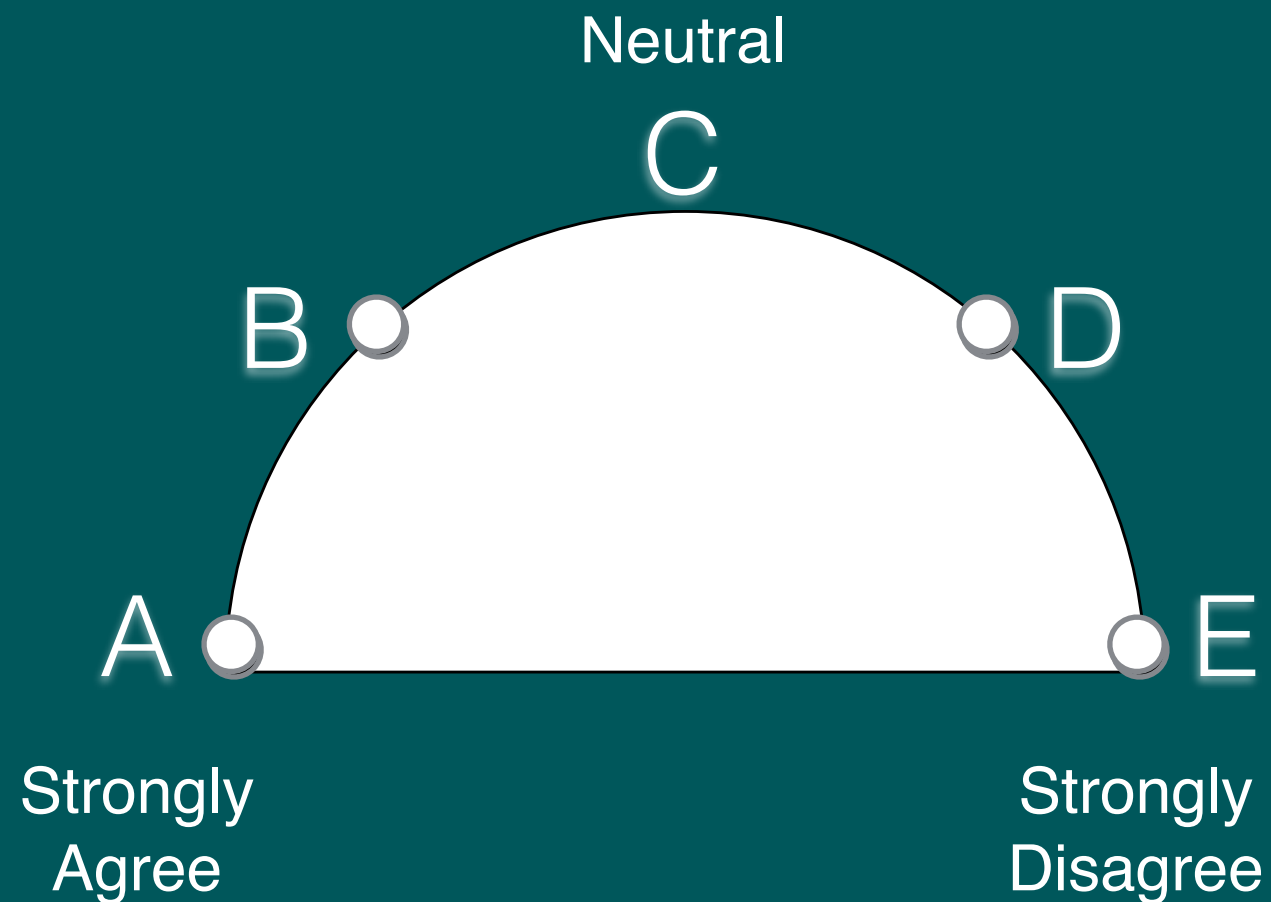
	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4



Poll

Question

Is it okay to violate a moral principle if doing so avoids a catastrophe?



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

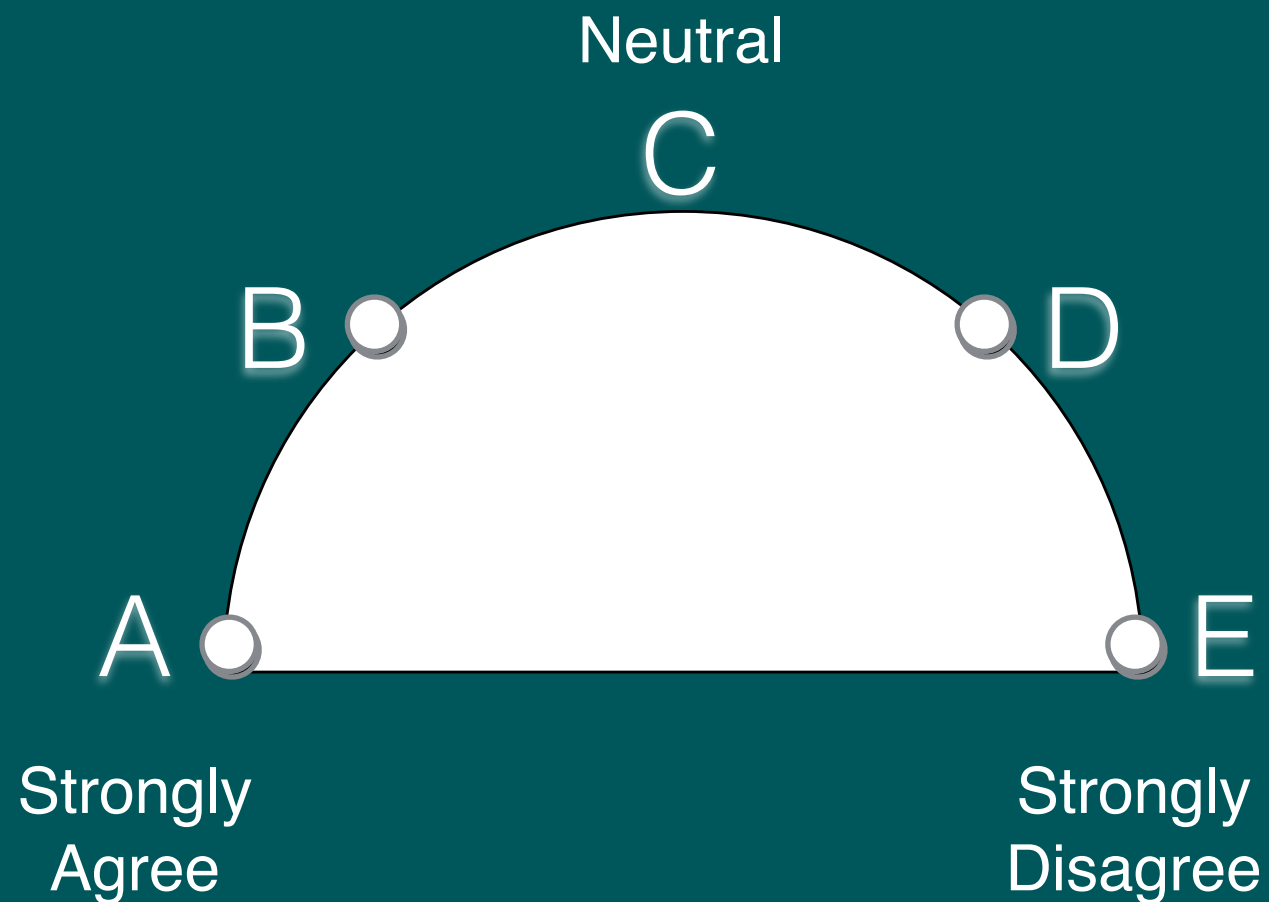
- P1 If there are any absolute moral rules, then we are never permitted to break them
- P2 Every moral rule may be permissibly broken, since doing so may be necessary to prevent a catastrophe
- C Therefore there are no absolute moral rules



Poll

Question

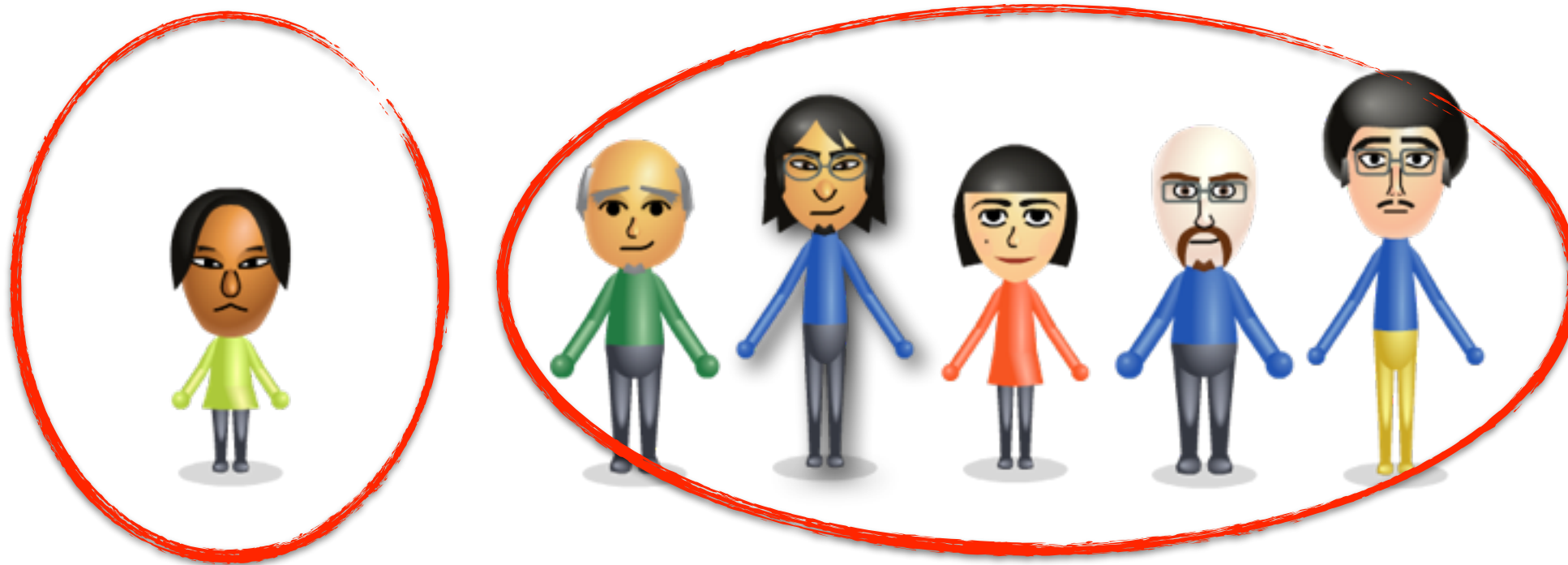
Does 'Minimize Harm' seem like a good fundamental moral rule?



A Tale of 3 Cases: Case 1

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

- All six have been poisoned
- You only have 1 antidote

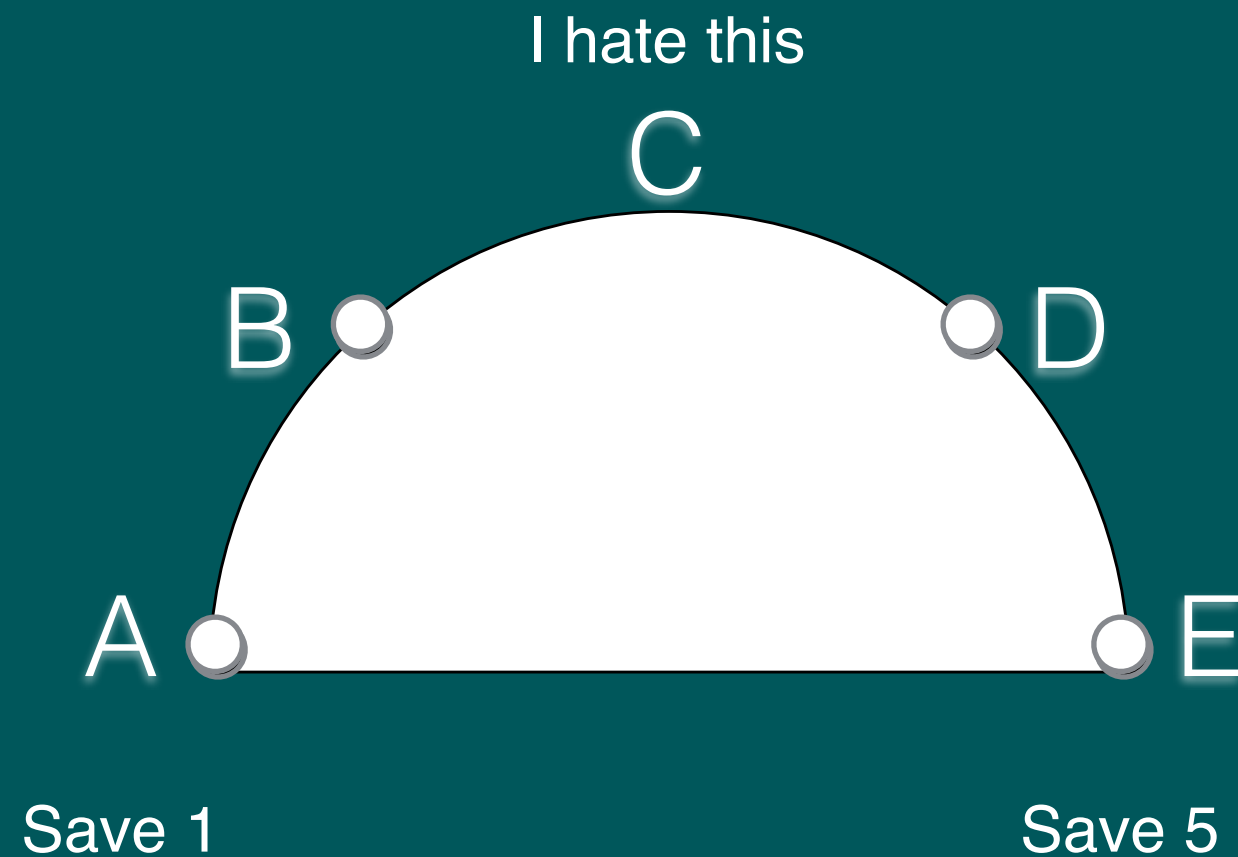





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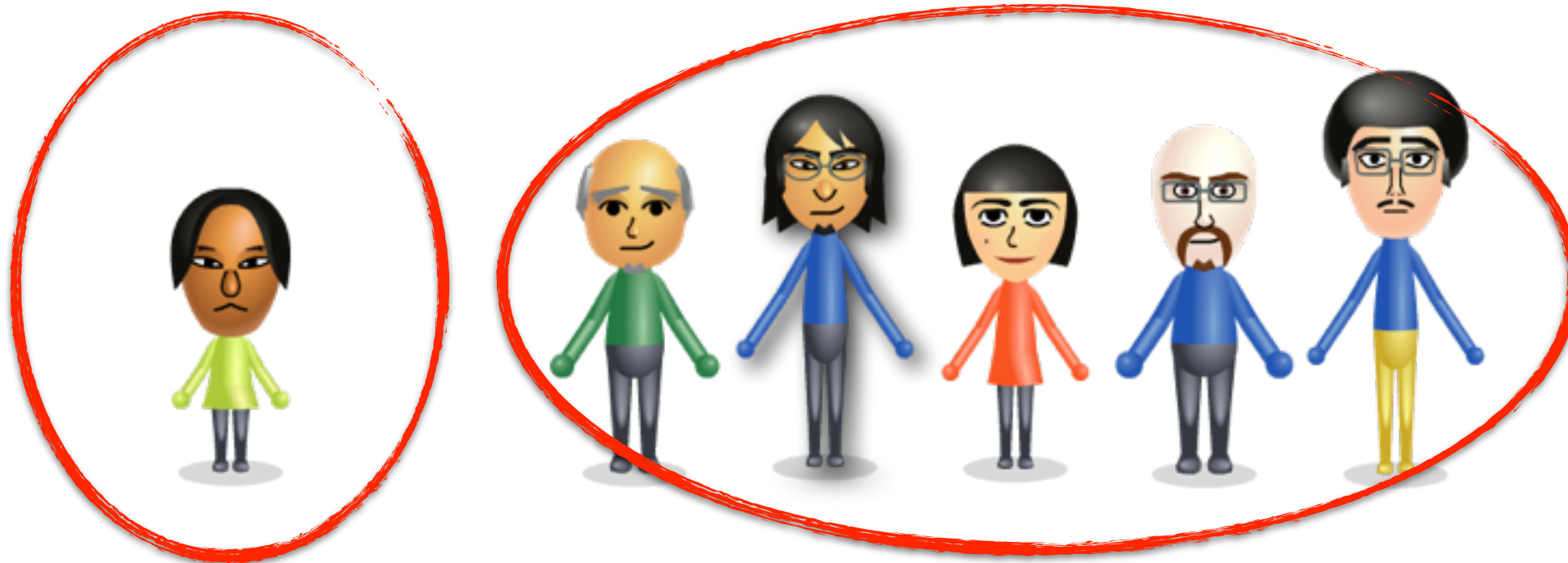
Question

Would you save the 1 or save the 5



- An important military operation needs to be conducted
- 1 soldier is just as likely to accomplish the task

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism		2
Pluralism	3	4

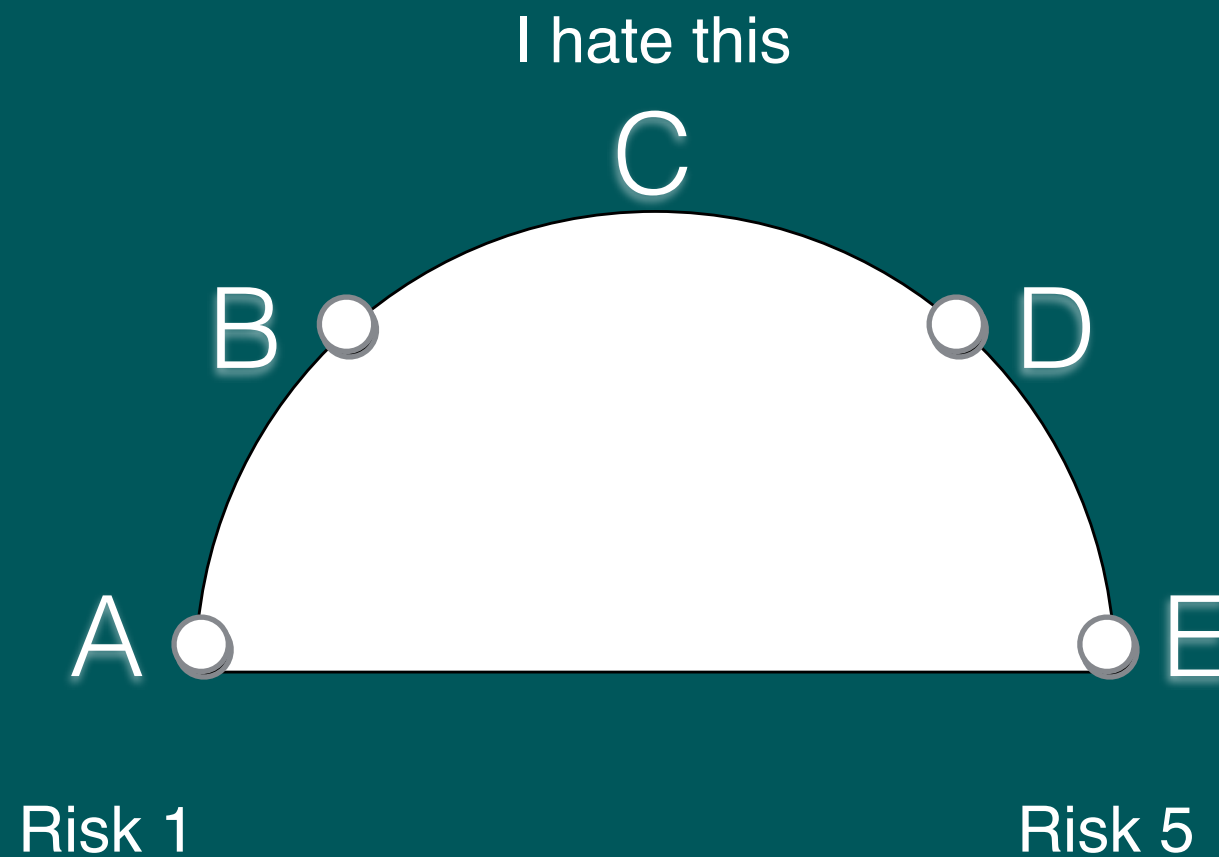




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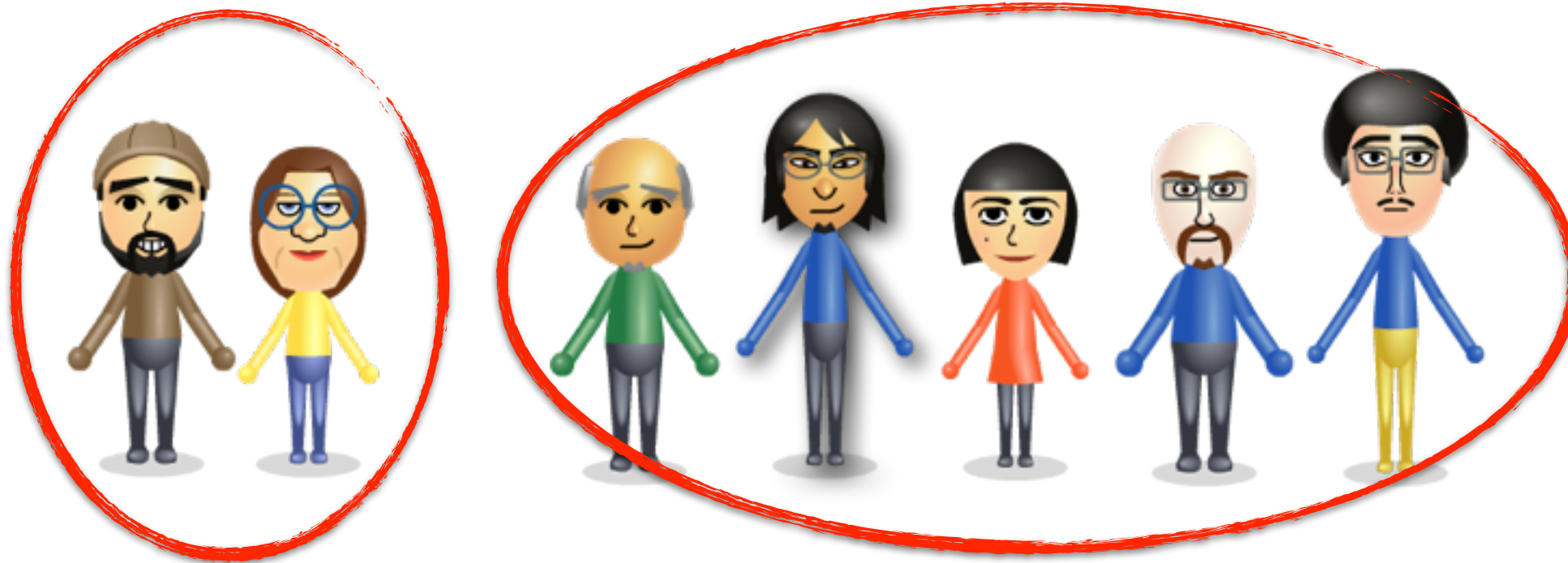
Question

Would you risk just the 1 life or risk 5 lives?



- 5 people need an organ transplant
- There are 2 really sad people

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

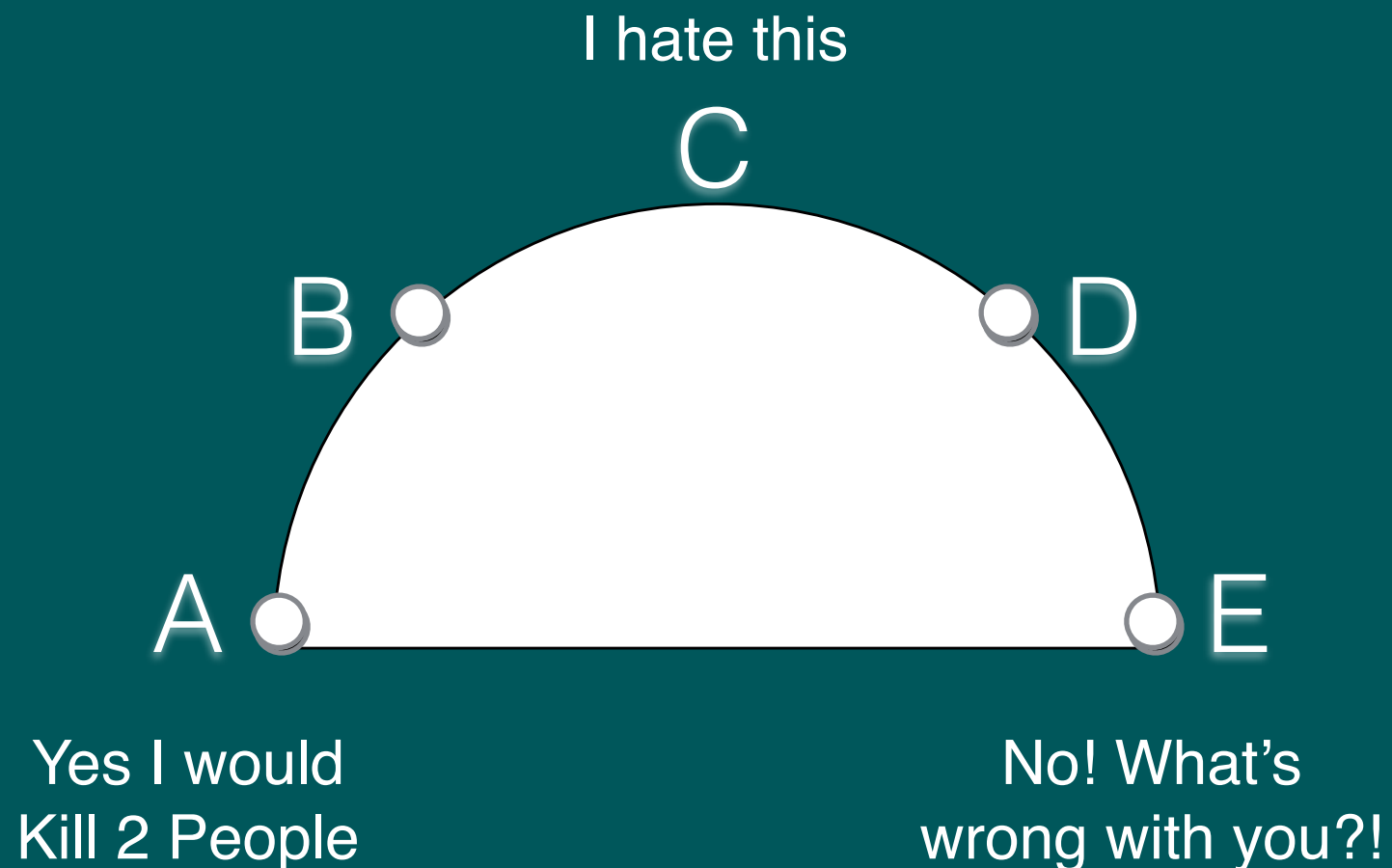




Poll

Question

Would you kill two sad people in order to save 5 people?





Russ Shafer-Landau

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The absolutist must be able to distinguish the antidote...and military stories, on the one hand, from the murderous case just described

- Text, p. 224

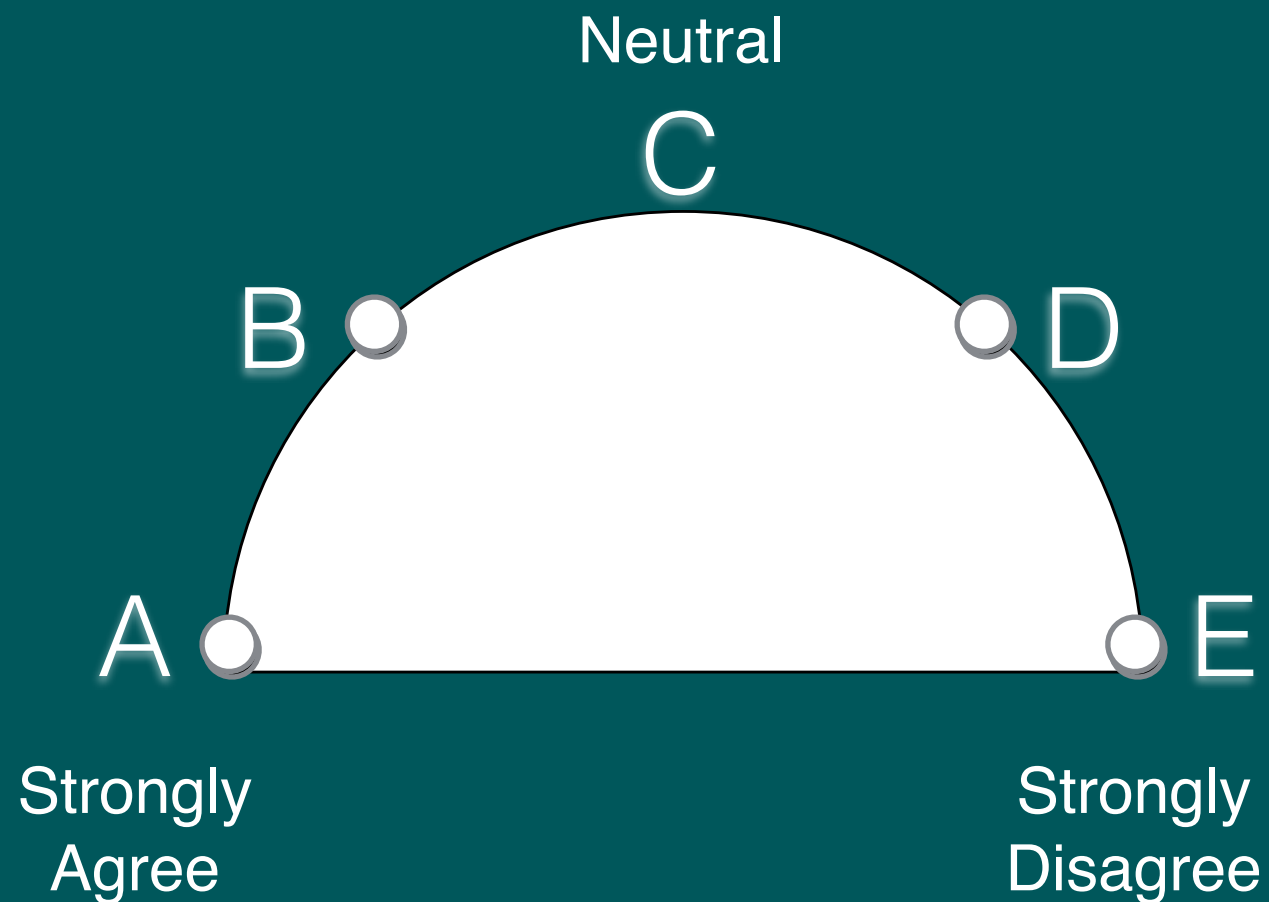
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Poll

Question

Let's say an action will lead to two outcomes: one good, and one bad. Is it morally permissible to do said action?

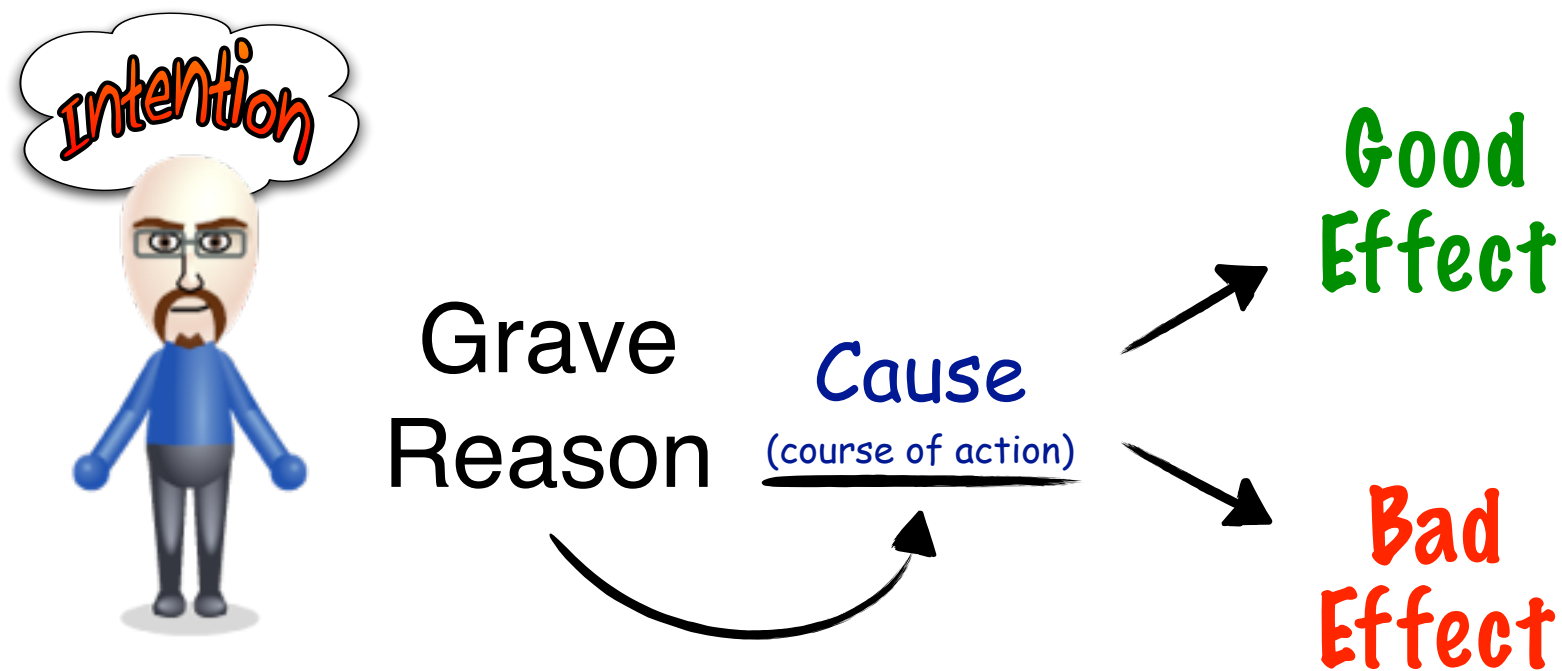


Provided that your goal is worthwhile, you are sometimes permitted to act in ways that foreseeably cause certain types of harm, though you must never intend to cause such harms.

Doctrine of Double Effect

Let's say a course of action will lead to two outcomes: one good, and one bad. You can do that action, but only if:

- ① The agent's end must be morally acceptable
- ② The cause must be good (or indifferent)
- ③ The good effect must be immediate
- ④ There must be a grave reason for positing action



Doctrine of Double Effect

① The agent's end must be morally acceptable

- Condition ① excludes acts done for an immoral purpose
- One's intentions determine the morality of the act



Doctrine of Double Effect

② The cause must be good (or indifferent)

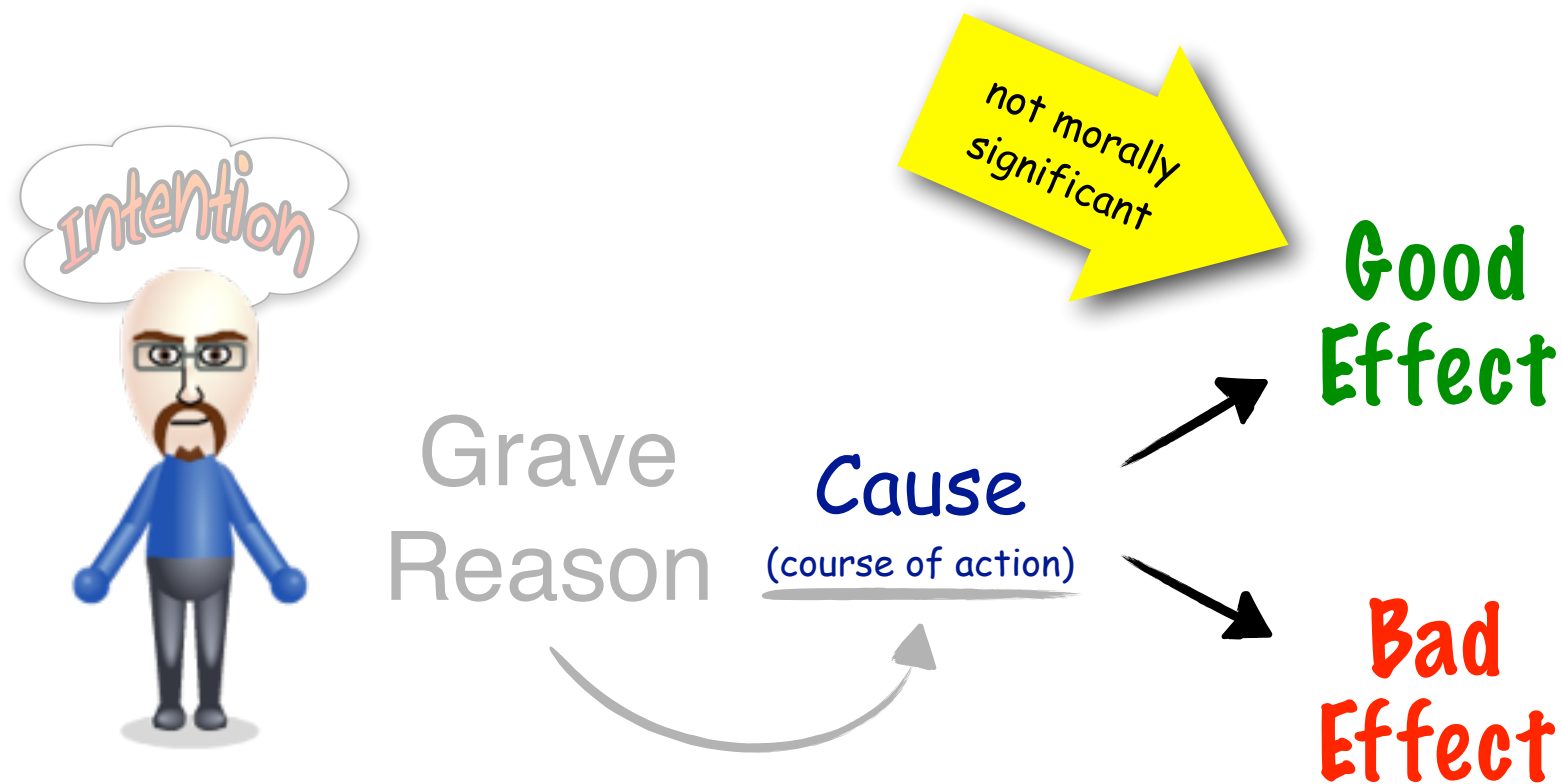
- the cause is evaluated independently of either of the effects



Doctrine of Double Effect

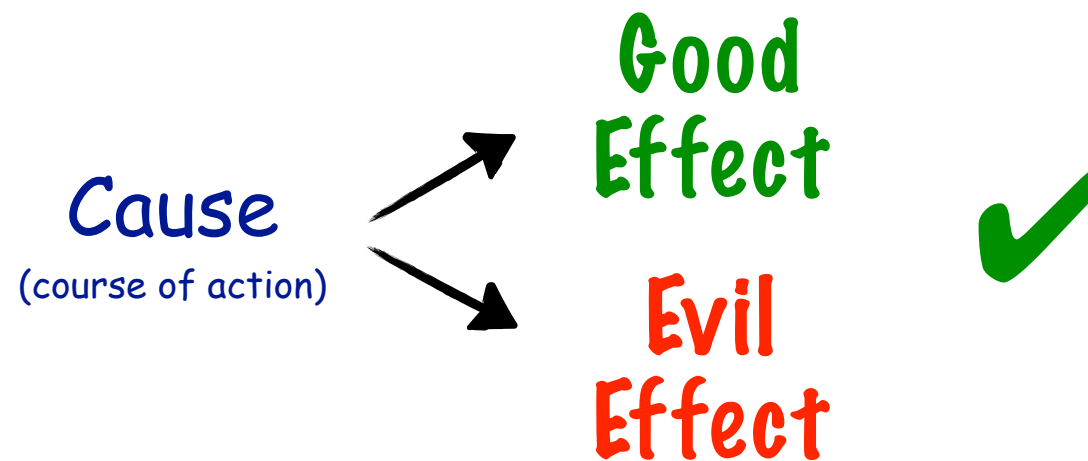
③ The good effect must be immediate

- An evil means cannot lead to a good ends
- It is wrong to seek moral ends through evil means



Doctrine of Double Effect

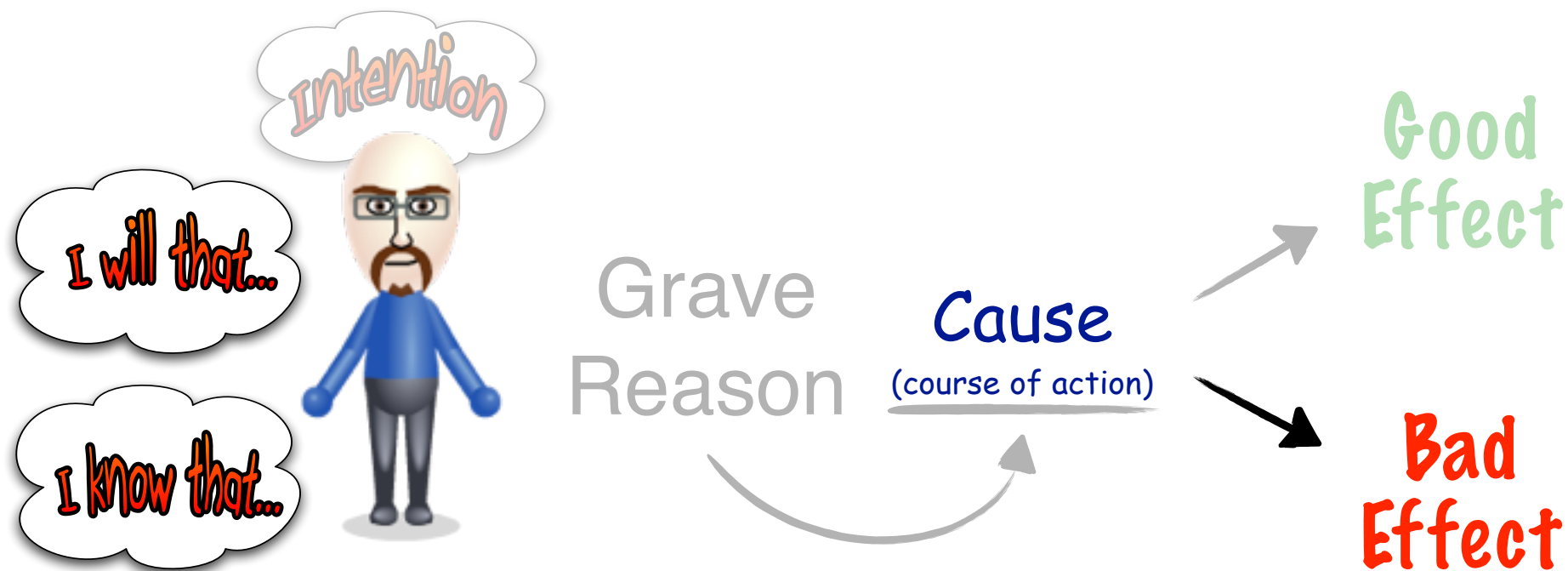
③ The good effect must be immediate



Doctrine of Double Effect

The Doctrine of Double Effect provides justification

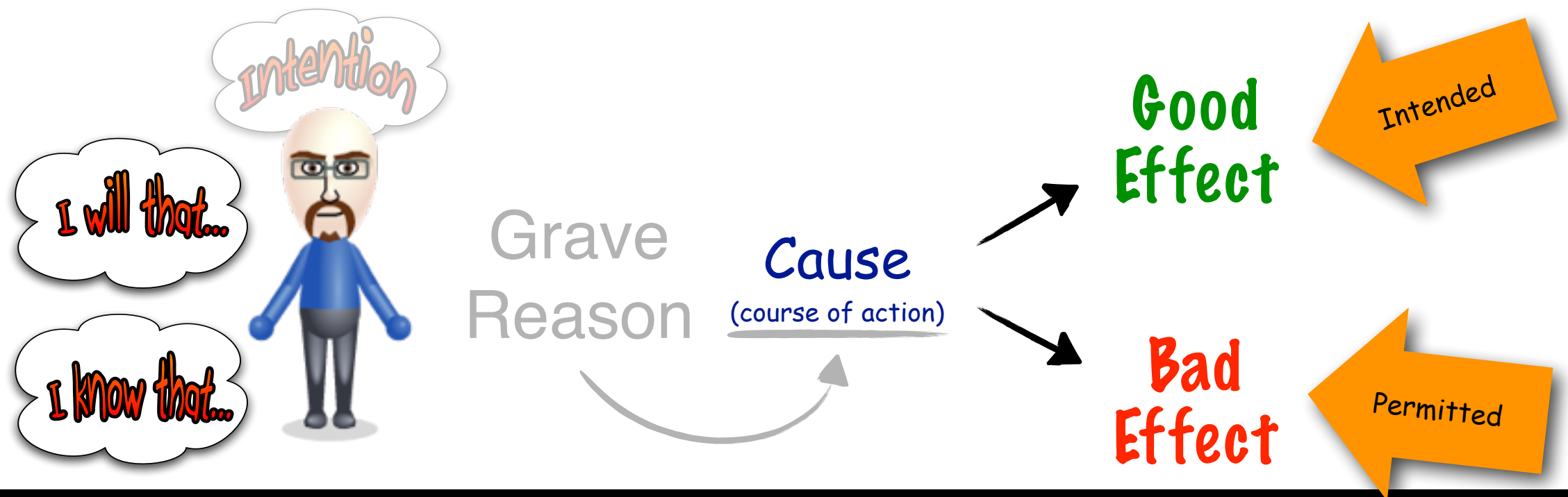
1. The agent knowingly and willingly brings about the evil effect.



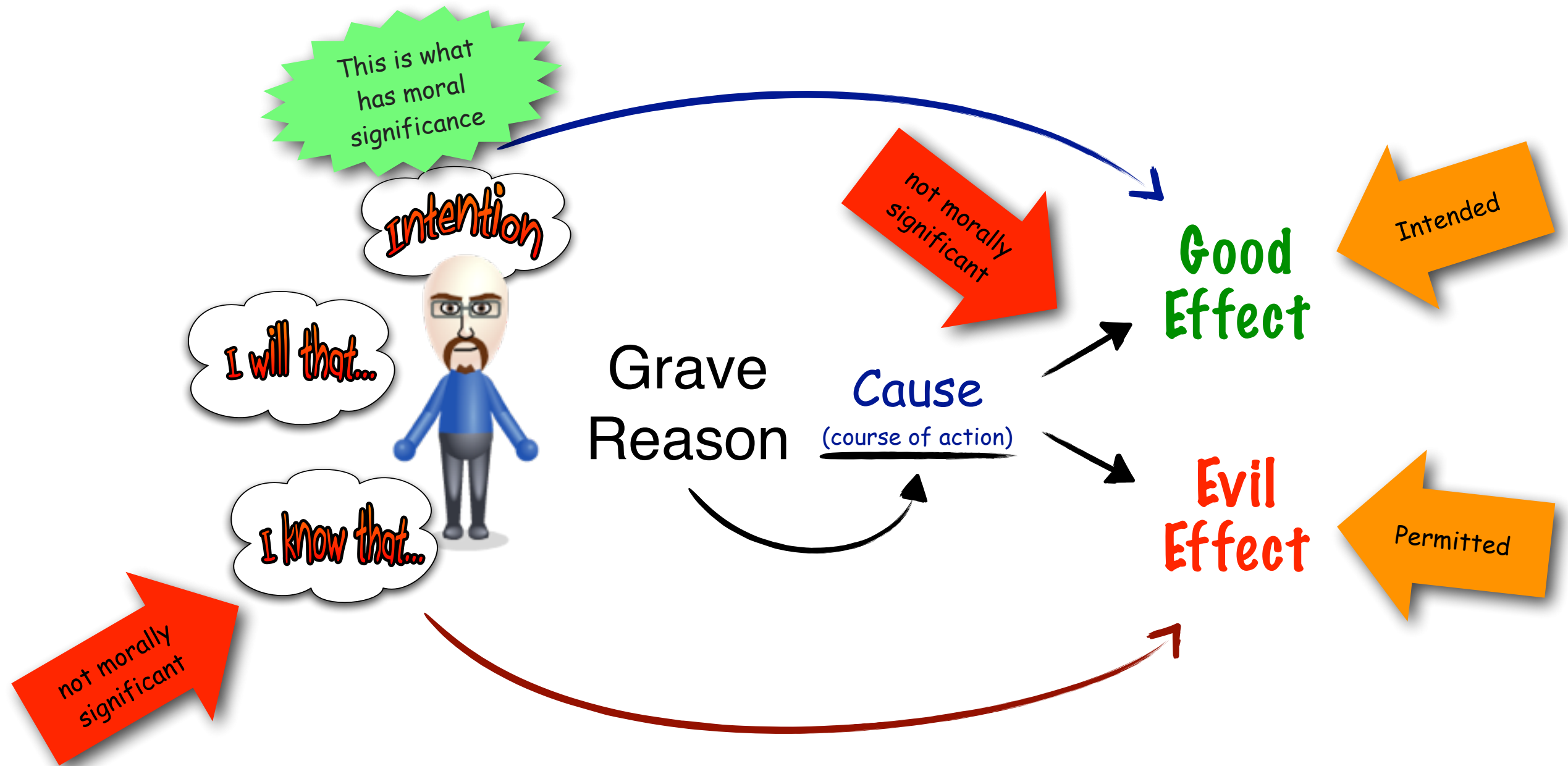
Doctrine of Double Effect

The Doctrine of Double Effect provides justification

1. The agent knowingly and willingly brings about the evil effect.
2. All action is undertaken to bring about a certain state of affairs.



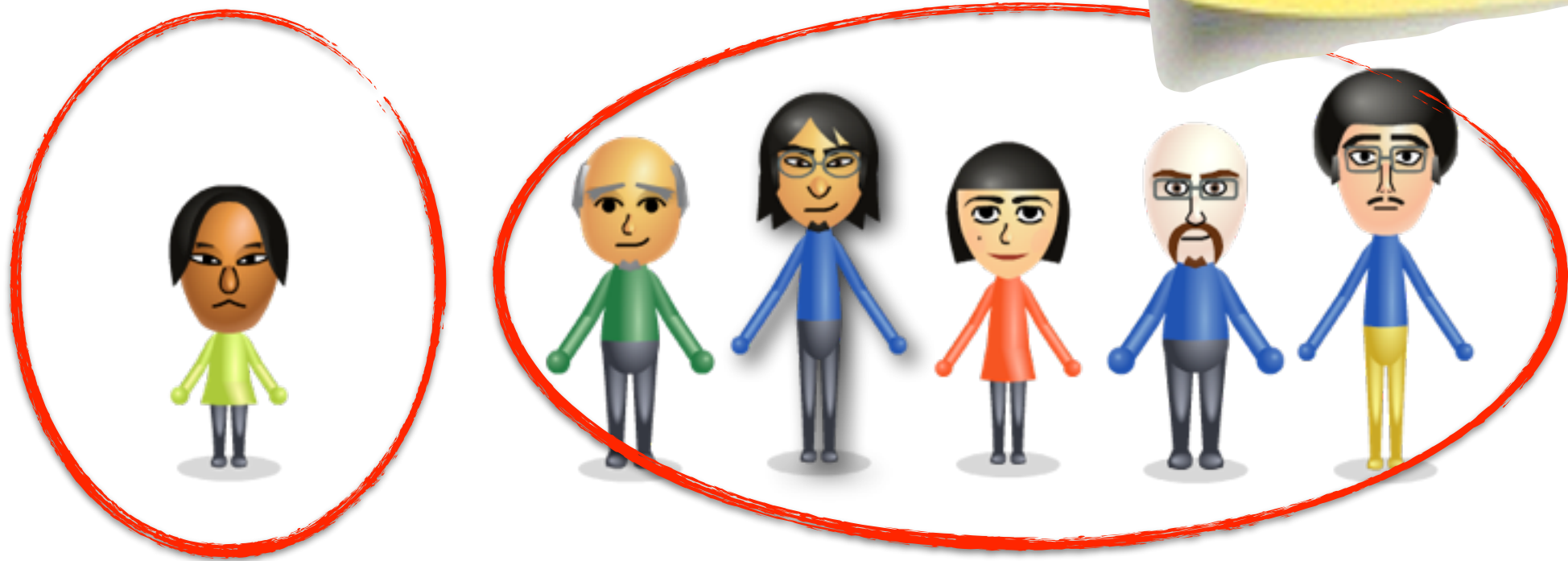
Doctrine of Double Effect



A Tale of 3 Cases: Case 1

- All six have been poisoned
- You only have 1 antidote

- 1) Is the agent's goal acceptable?
- 2) What is the good effect?
- 3) What is the evil effect?
- 4) Is there a grave reason to act?
5. Does DDE justify allowing the person to die?

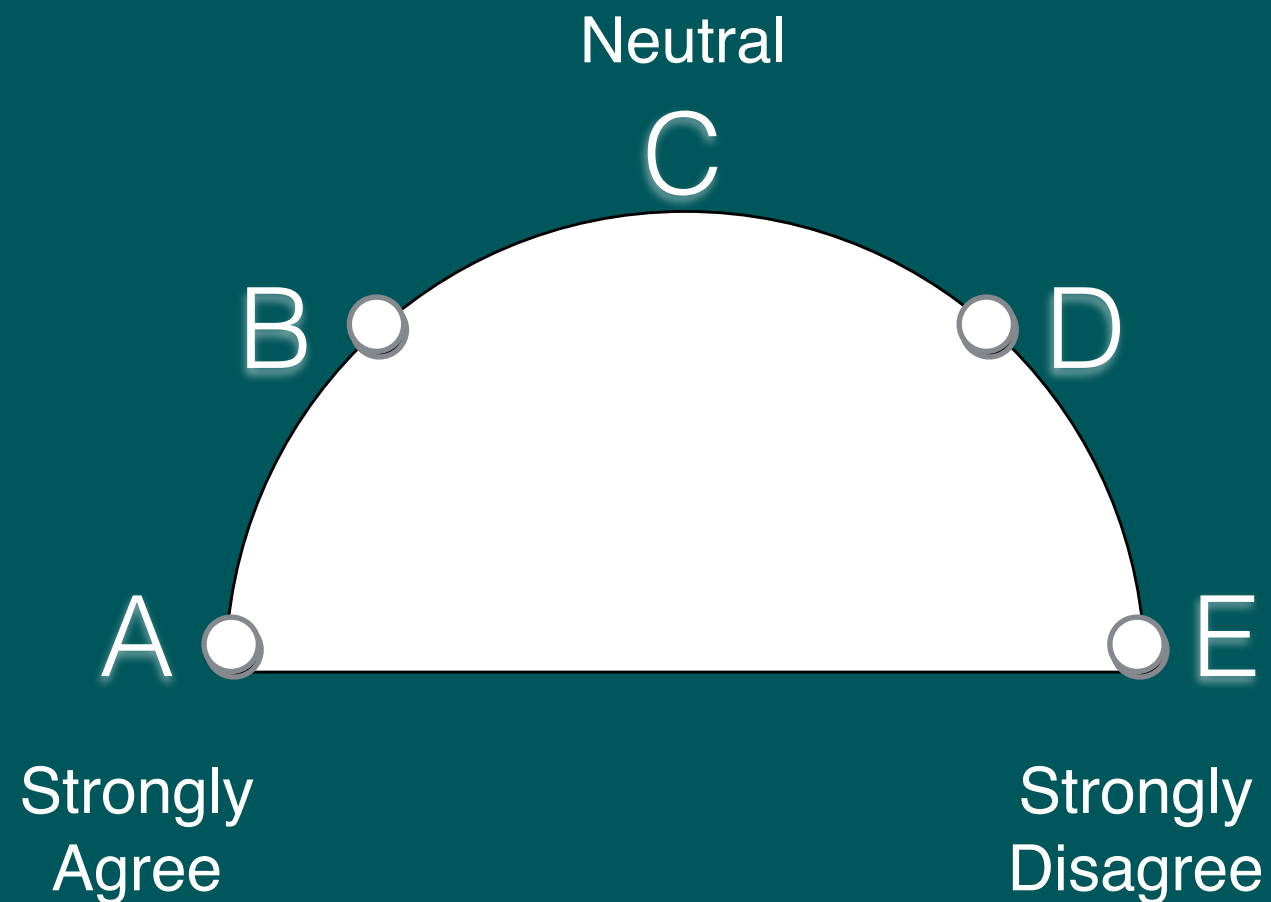




Poll

Question

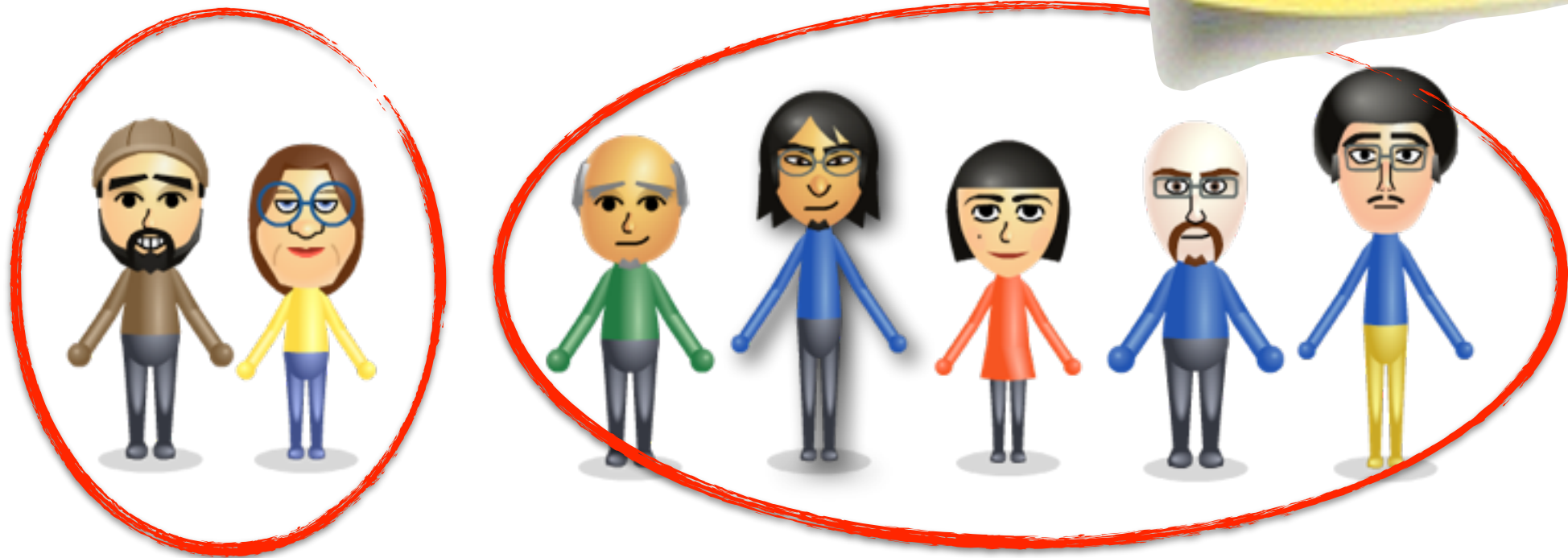
Does DDE justify allowing the person to die?



A Tale of 3 Cases: Case 3

- 5 people need an organ transplant
- There are 2 really sad people

- 1) Is the agent's goal acceptable?
- 2) What is the good effect?
- 3) What is the evil effect?
- 4) Is there a grave reason to act?
5. Does DDE justify killing two innocent people?

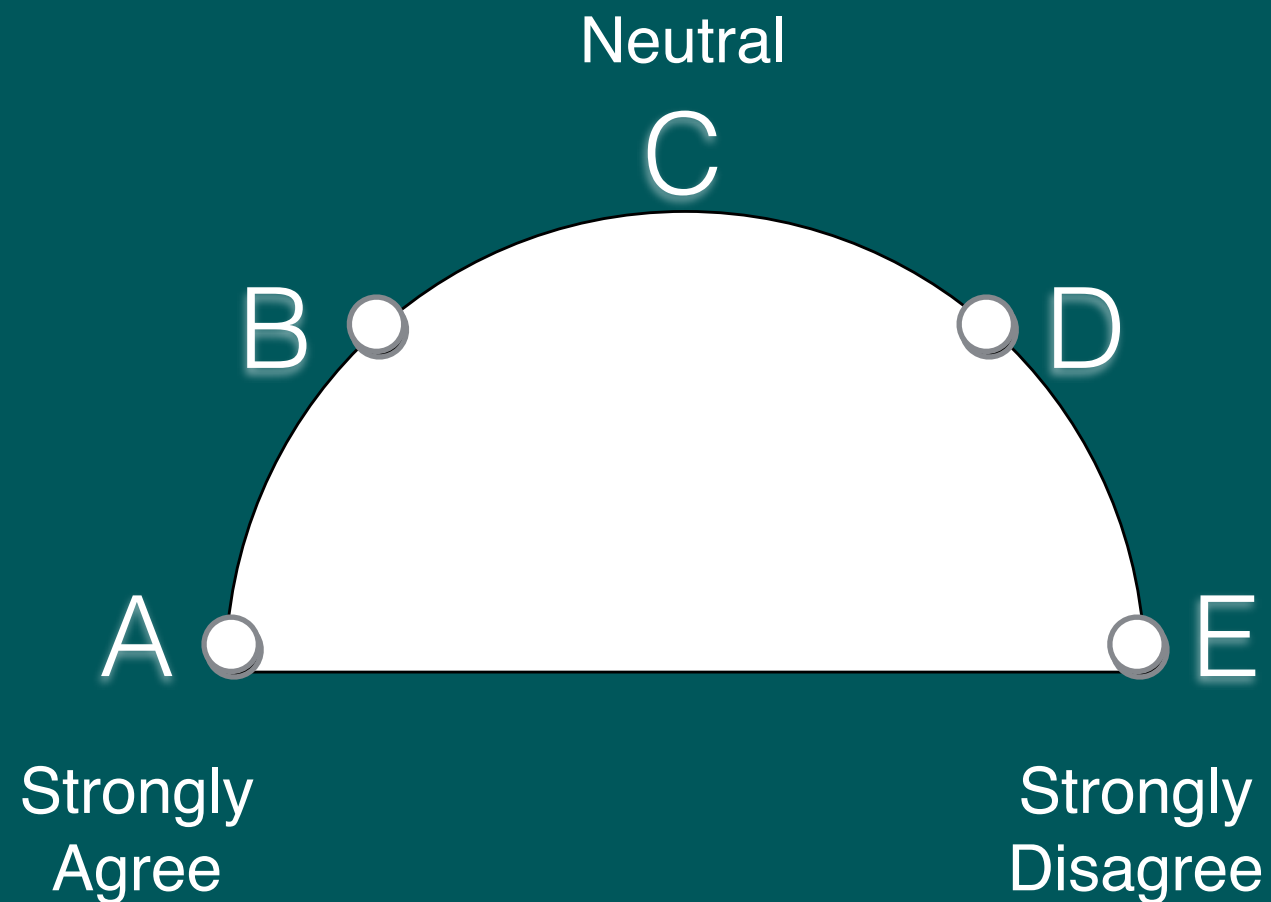




Poll

Question

Does DDE justify killing two innocent people?





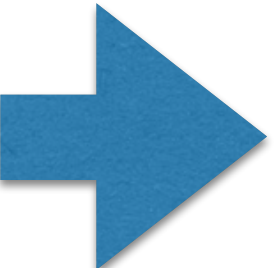
Russ Shafer-Landau

“

The difficulty is that we lack a clear basis for distinguishing between intention and foresight. Without clarity on this point, the DDE will either fail to provide guidance about the morality of actions or will give us results that seem deeply mistaken.

- Text, p. 226

”



	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	It is never okay to violate a fundamental rule

Moral Principle: Minimize Harm

Poisoned
Mushrooms
Case



Military
Operation
Case

Organ
Harvesting
Case





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Those who secretly abduct and carve up innocent people to distribute their organs could say that they intend only to save many innocent lives. They would be delighted if their innocent victims were...to remain alive after the operation.

- Text, p. 226

”

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

Therefore they *don't* intend to kill their victims. They merely force their death. Thus the DDE does not condemn their actions.

- Text, p. 226

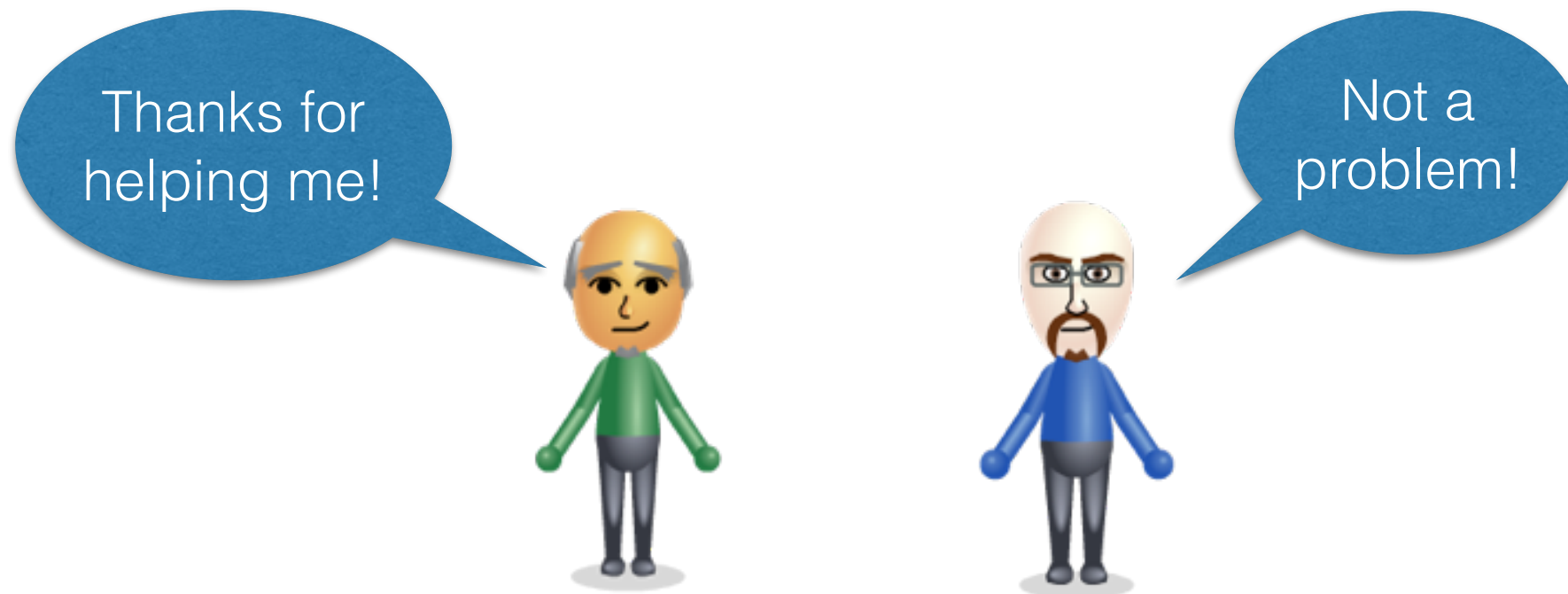
”

Foresee something
evil

Intend to do
evil

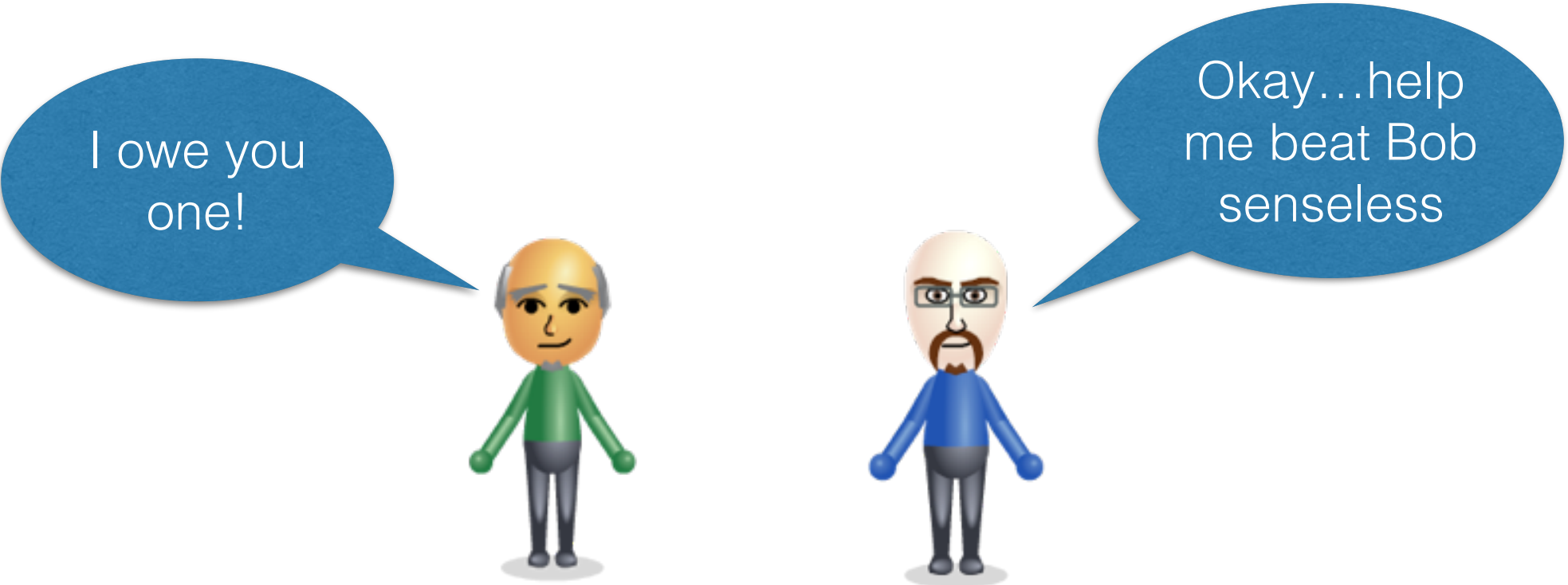
Two moral principles:

- 1) Keep your promises
- 2) Don't harm innocent people



Two moral principles:

- 1) Keep your promises
- 2) Don't harm innocent people



I owe you one!

Okay...help me beat Bob senseless

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

In this case, you are morally required to keep your promise. But in doing that, you'd also be acting immorally, since you would be violating the rule against harming innocents.

- Text, p. 228

”

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

If you instead avoid hurting the innocent rival, you will be doing what is required of you. But this would also be forbidden, since it would involve breaking your promise.

- Text, p. 228

”

“



Russ Shafer-Landau

Either way you go, your action is both morally required and forbidden. That is a contradiction.


- Text, p. 228

”

Three Criticisms:

- 1) Avoiding catastrophes
- 2) A tale of 3 cases
- 3) Moral conflict

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism	X	2
Pluralism	3	4

	Non-absolute	Absolute
Monism		Absolute & Fundamental
Pluralism	It is sometimes okay to violate a fundamental rule	It is never okay to violate a fundamental rule