

Right and Wrong

Nobody asked but ...

Right and wrong are not sides of a coin. Right is according to principle. That which is not according to principle is wrong. Ethicists like to do thought experiments that only muddy the water.

Take, for instance, the trolley problem. The problem is defined at the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy as follows:

... a trolley driver must choose between turning a trolley so that it runs over an innocent man attached to a track and allowing the trolley to run over and kill five innocent people.

But we make a mistake by trying to find a principle that will fit either leg of this dilemma. There is no principle, and certainly not a lame one such as the lesser of two evils, a pseudoprinciple. There is no right choice. There are only wrong choices.

Relax. The trolley problem is unlikely, but one may nevertheless encounter gray-area problems. These usually involve two or more wrong choices, however, they may hide a good choice. There are unnumerable actions that may have forestalled the trolley problem.

It is always a right action to follow the NAP — the non-aggression principle — do not initiate aggression.

— Kilgore Forelle