

April 17, 2002

CENTRAL PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHY

FOURTH PAPER

On page 765 of Perry and Bratman, Gilbert Harman describes two cases where we must choose between five people alive and one dead, or five people dead and one alive. About the second case, that of the person in Room 306, Harman says, “Surely you must not sacrifice this innocent bystander, even to save the five other patients.” It is clear that Harman is making not just a legal but a moral claim.

Answer the following questions:

- (1) Is Harman right about this, and about the contrast between the two cases?**
- (2) Why or why not? (Be sure to explain the relevant features of the two cases, and the difference between them.)**
- (3) Does the case of the person in Room 306 show that there is something wrong with utilitarianism, or can a utilitarian give a satisfactory account of the right thing to do in this case? (Be sure to include in your answer an explanation of what utilitarianism is.)**

Write a four-page, double-spaced paper on this topic. Make sure you understand the assignment before you start writing, and make sure to answer the specific questions asked. The paper should give your own views and the reasons for them. You should have as few quotations in the paper as possible – and anything quoted or derived from another writer should be fully cited to its original place of publication.

The paper is due in class on Monday, April 29. Please write only your ID number on the paper, to permit blind grading. Late papers should be put in Professor Nagel’s mailbox at the philosophy department, 503 Main, and the time of receipt should if possible be entered by someone on the office staff.