

APPLIED ETHICS

Session 2

Seminar Structure

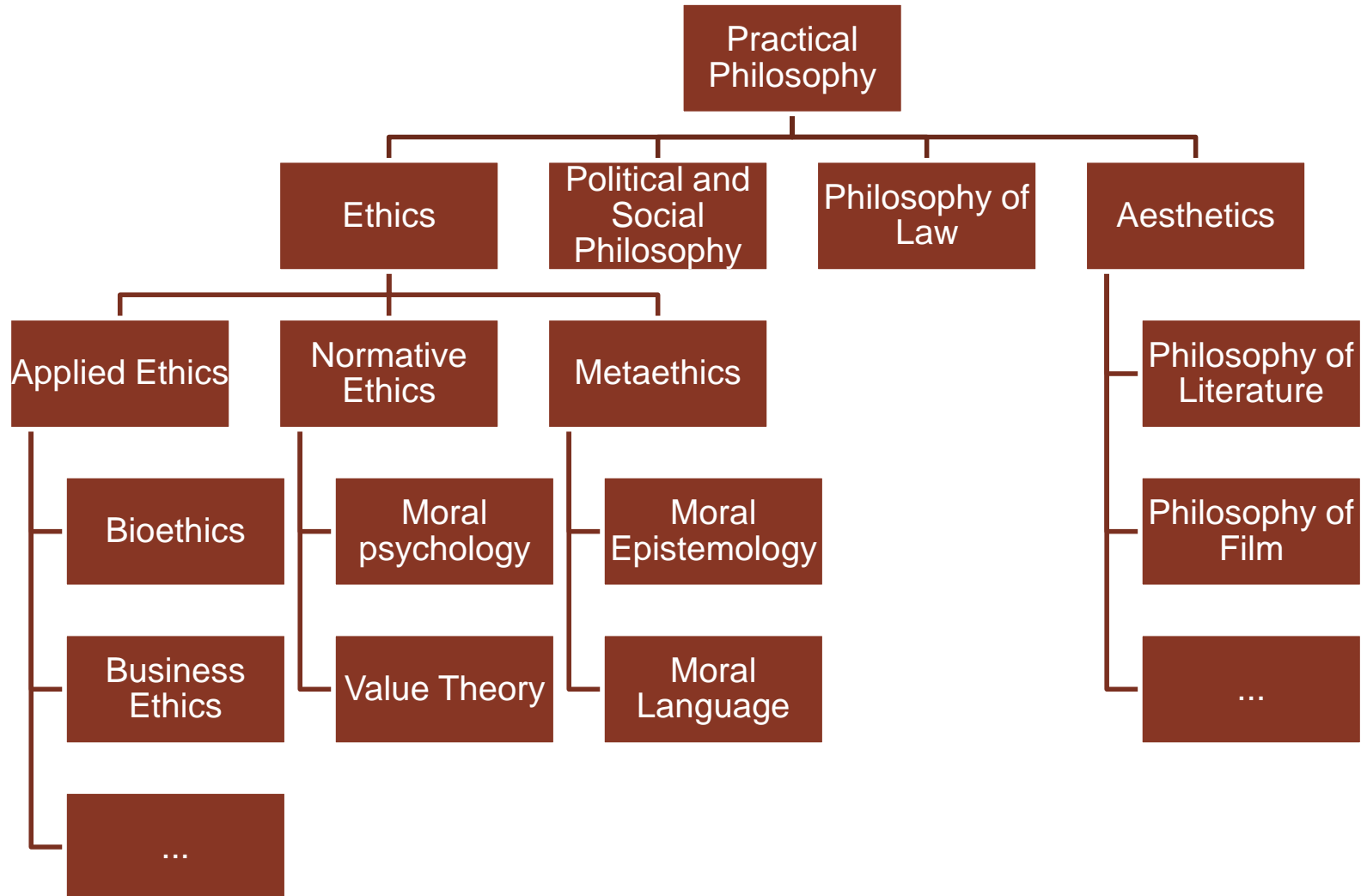
Tuesday 4. 10.	Wednesday 5. 10.	Thursday 6. 10.	Friday 7. 10.
MORNING			
Philosophy Gettier & Logic Exercise	Normative Ethics	Political Philosophy Encountering New Arguments	Philosophy of Economics Criticising a Text (Friedman)
AFTERNOON			
Applied Ethics Text Re- construction (Thomson)	Metaethics Argument Re- construction (Mackie)	Philosophy of Science Argument Re- construction (Laudan)	Anything Else Presenting a New Argument

Contents

- (1) Ethics
- (2) Trolley Problems
- (3) Intuitions

ETHICS

Subfields of Practical Philosophy



Mistreating Cats



(Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stcrX2VAfuk>)

- You see a cat being mistreated. Some intuitive reactions:
 - that's wrong/that's bad!
 - you ought not/must not/should not do that!
 - that's barbaric/you're barbaric!
 - don't you feel ashamed/you should feel ashamed!

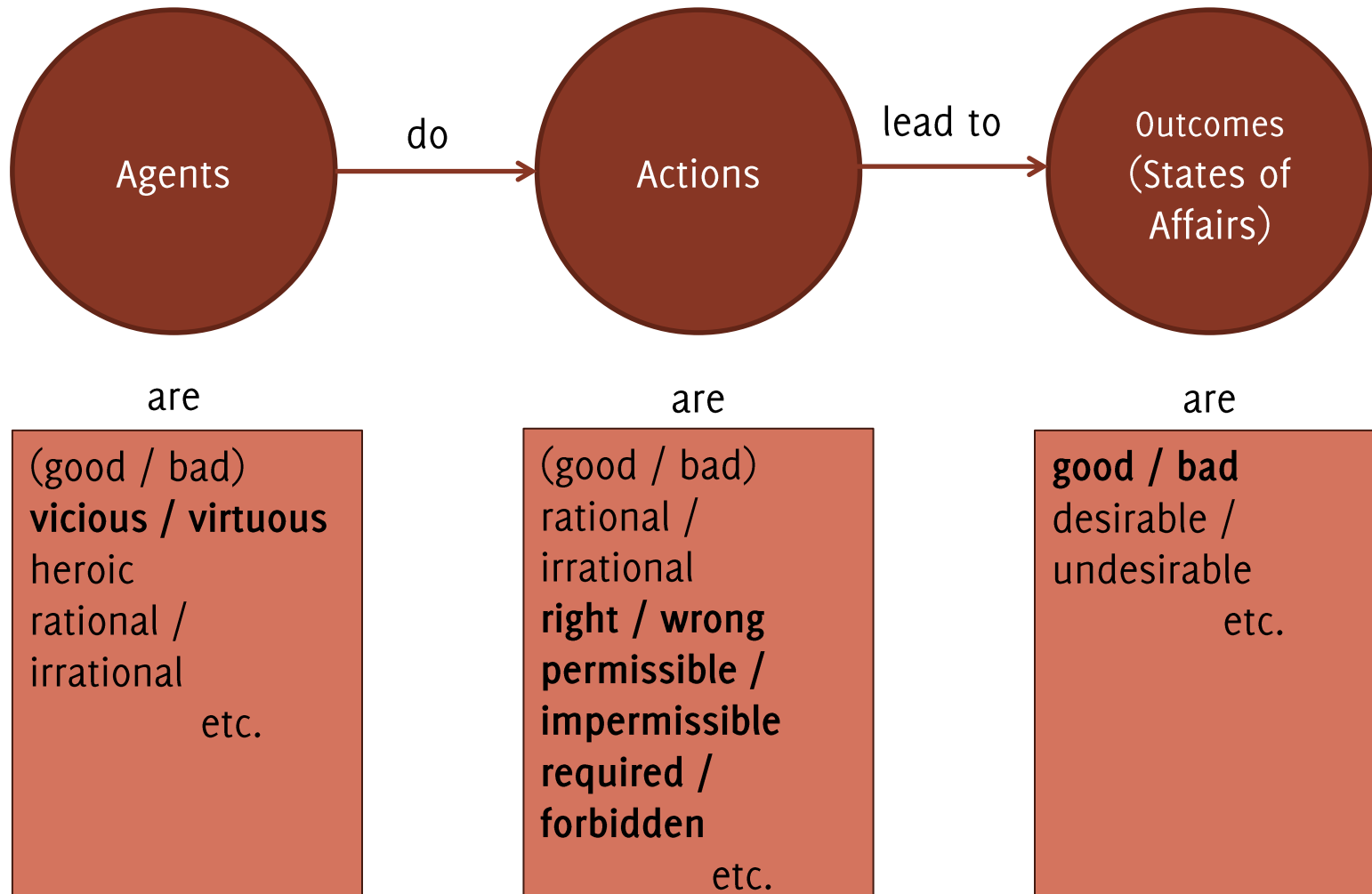
Talking about Morality

- Murder is **wrong**
- Pain is **bad**
- It's **immoral** not to pay your taxes
- People **should be allowed** to drink alcohol in public
- You're so **generous!**
- Everyone **has a right** to say their opinion freely
- It's **good** that untouched nature still exists
- You **ought to** apologise
- You **have a duty** to say the truth
- Edward Snowden is a **hero**
- ISIS is **barbaric**

Objects of Moral Language

- States of Affairs
 - it's good that untouched nature still exists
 - pain (people being in pain) is bad
- Actions
 - murder is wrong
 - drinking in public should be allowed
 - you have a duty to say the truth
- Persons / Agents
 - Edward Snowden acted heroically
 - you're so generous

Objects of Moral Language, cont.



Normative and Evaluative

Normative

- Action-guiding (proscriptive/prescriptive)
- Examples: ought, must, should, have reason to, duty, obligation, permissible, forbidden

Evaluative

- Expressing a judgment, and approval or disapproval
- Examples: good, bad, excellent, awful, heroic, generous, evil

Moral Language and Substantive Links

- Why make all these fine-grained distinctions?
- Simple: because on the surface, we are making different claims
- Obvious connections usually don't work
- Remember: this is what analytic philosophy is all about!

Exercise

Can an action be bad, but not wrong?

Can an action be permissible, but its outcomes bad?

Can the outcome of an action be good, but you ought not to do it?

Can an agent be virtuous, but do wrong things?

Can people have a right to do wrong?

Is it always wrong to wrong someone?

TROLLEY PROBLEMS

(For a good introduction, see
<http://philosophybites.com/2013/09/david-edmonds-on-trolley-problem.html>)

Foot's Original Problem

- *Trolley Driver*: you are the driver of the trolley. If you do not pull a lever, your train will kill five people. If you do, you will kill one person.
 - common intuition: it is permissible to kill
- *Transplant*: you can save the lives of five people by forcibly removing the organs from one person, who will otherwise die.
 - common intuition: it is impermissible to kill

Foot's Original Problem



- These two thought experiments have an important similarity: an agent can kill one person to save five
 - But: we differ in our moral assessment of these cases
- 1. How do we know this?**
 - 2. Is this important?**
 - 3. What do we do now?**

Possible Replies

- Accept that our first-order intuitions were mistaken
 - Perhaps: give a psychological explanation of why we were mistaken
- Question whether the cases are really similar
- Better: give a principle which **explains** why the cases are not similar

Foot's Original Problem

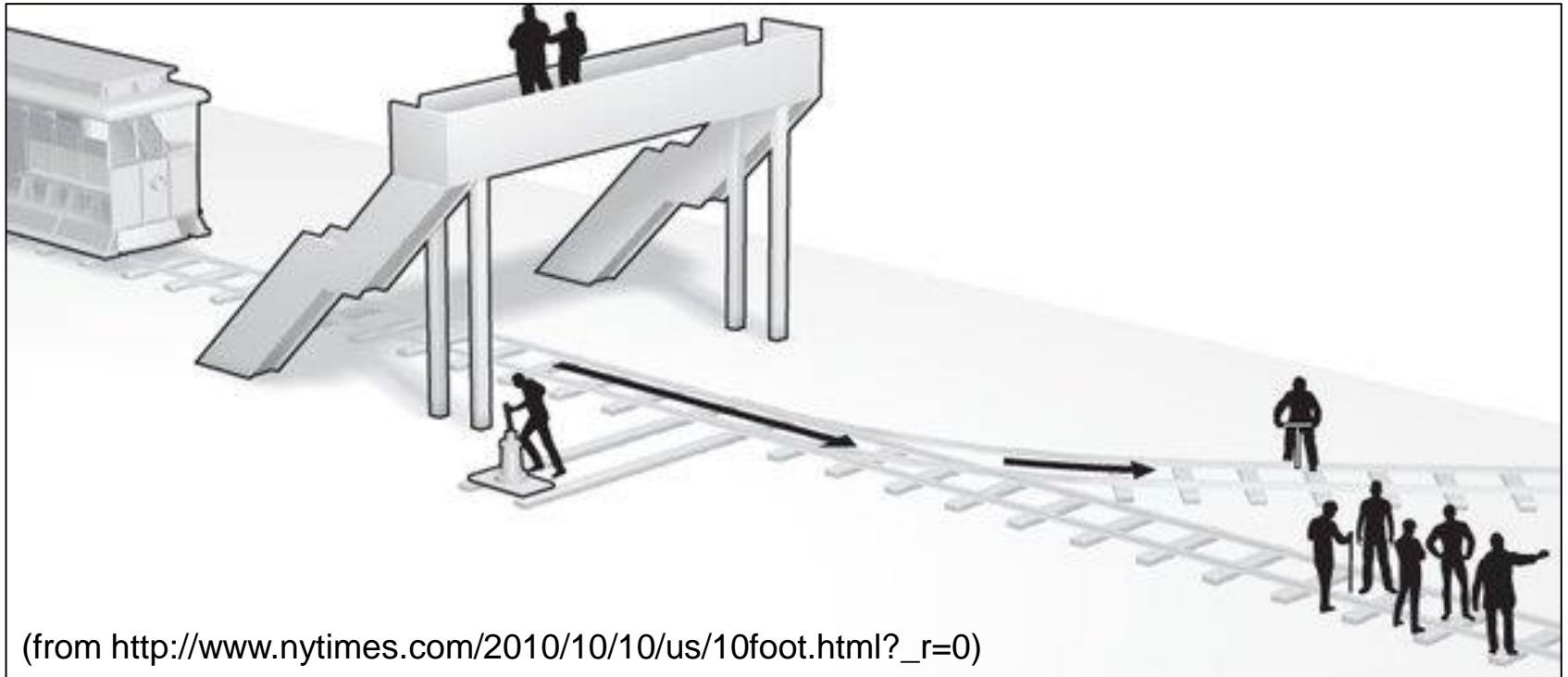


- Foot finds what she thinks is a relevant *dissimilarity*: in *Trolley Driver*, we weigh killing vs killing, but in *Transplant*, we weigh killing vs letting die
- **Proposed Principle:** Killing is worse than letting die

How does Thomson reply to this?

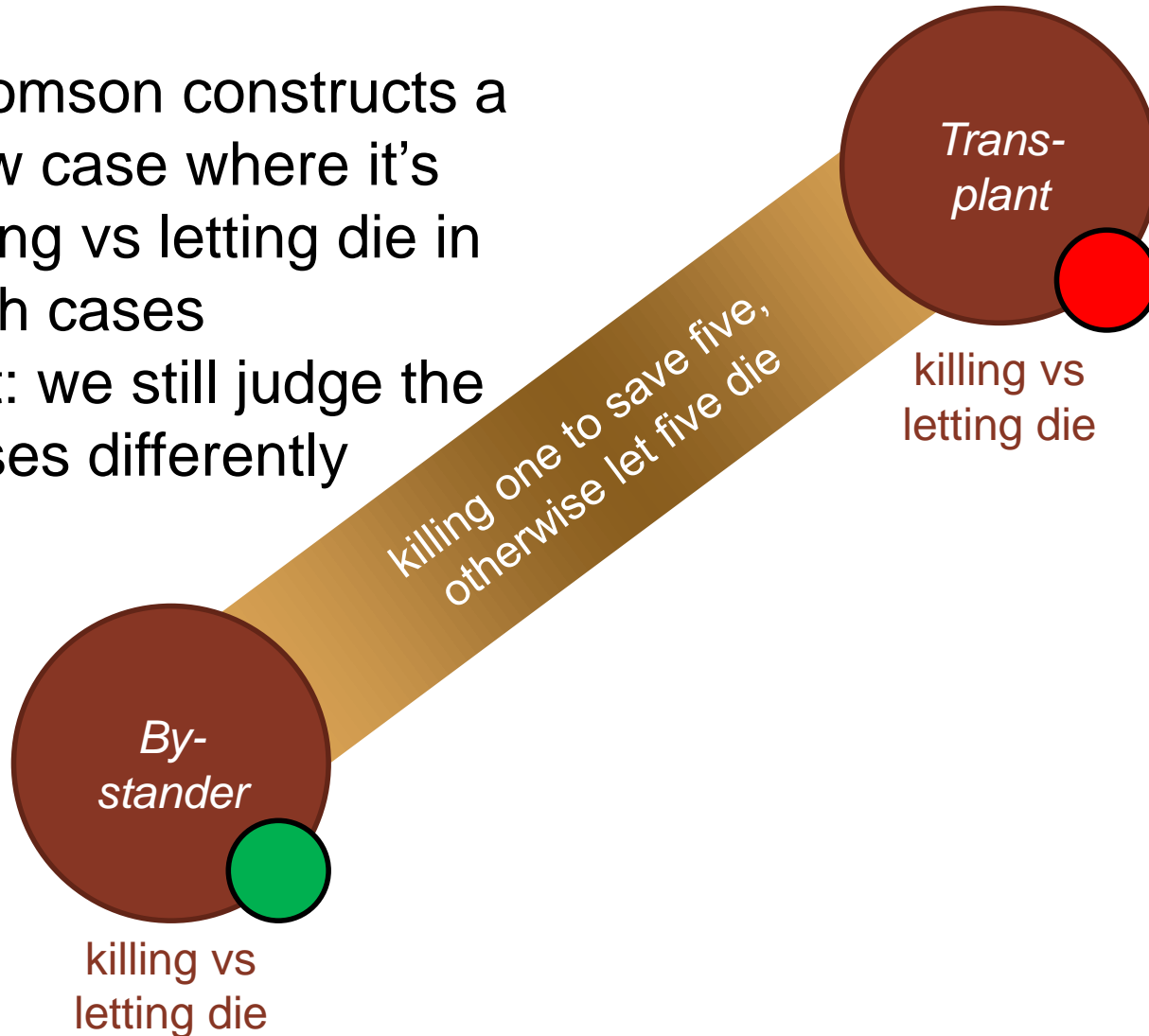
Thomson's new case

- *Bystander*: like *Trolley Driver*, only that you are a bystander who has to decide whether to pull the lever.
 - common intuition: it is permissible to kill



Thomson's Reply

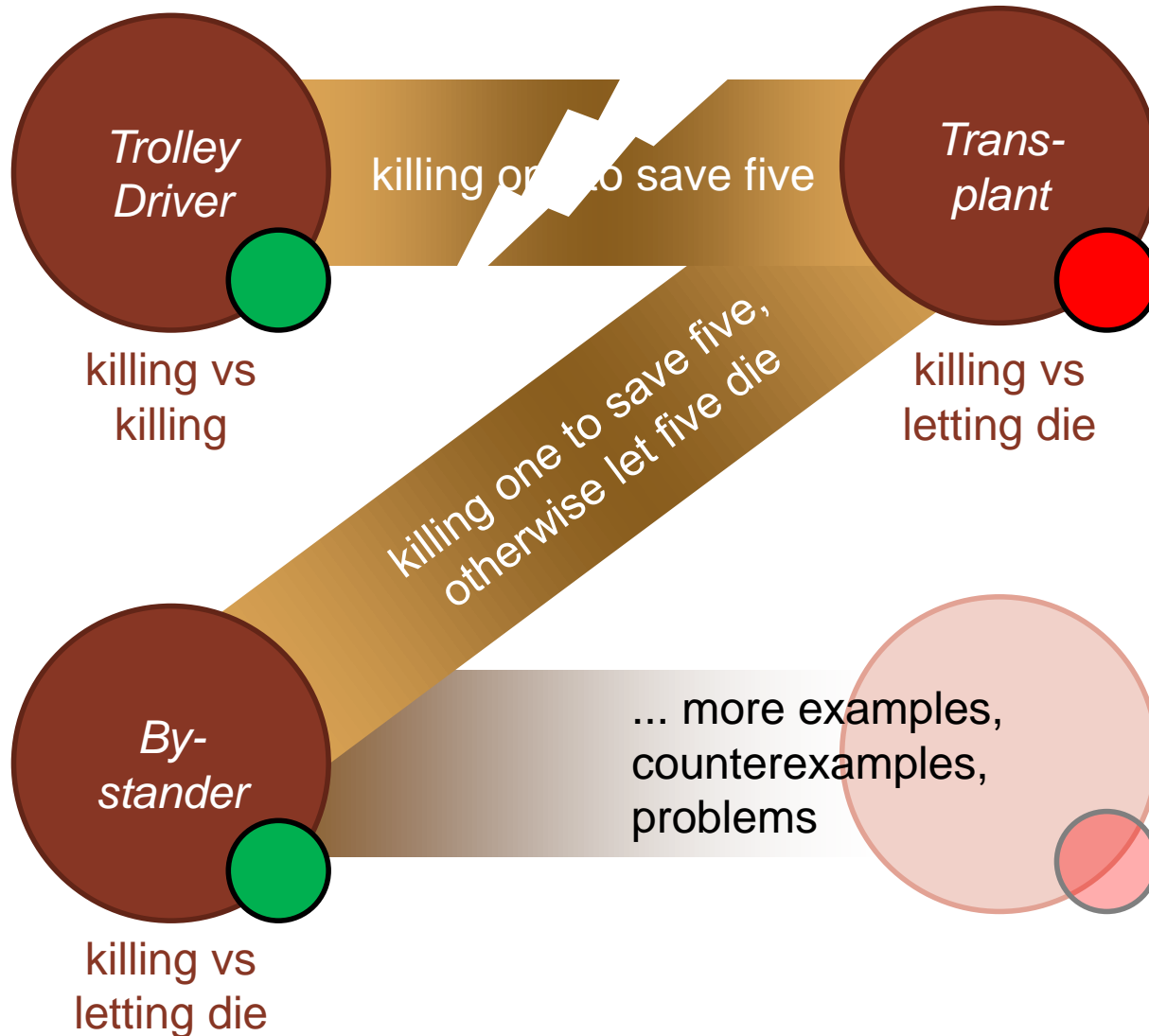
- Thomson constructs a new case where it's killing vs letting die in both cases
- But: we still judge the cases differently



Rachels' Response

- **Case 1:** John slips on the wet bathroom floor, hits his head, and drowns in the bathtub. You watch him die.
- **Case 2:** John nearly slips on the wet bathroom floor. You give him a slight push, he hits his head, and dies in the bathtub.
- Rachels: there is no morally relevant difference between case 1 and 2
- Suspicion: there's not difference between killing and letting die (against Foot's first step!)

Similarity Classes



Why Use Trolley Cases?

- Test moral principles we accept
- Criticise existing principles and positions
 - if you accept this principle, you must judge these two cases in the same way. But that is absurd (reductio)
- Make our moral intuitions coherent
- Find new moral principles which we can apply to new situations
 - Killing vs. Letting Die is not an obvious distinction in our moral thinking

Exercise

Do you think that there is anything (methodologically) wrong with trolley cases?

PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONS

Intro

- Assume that you are presented with *Trolley Driver*, or *Fat Man*, or *Bystander*, and you just have a different intuition. What now?
- More generally, intuitions appear to be strange and mysterious entities

What's an intuition?

- Intuitions are “intellectual seemings” (Huemer), which appear “self-evident” to us (Audi)
- Audi lists some conditions for intuitions (2004, 33-6):
 1. **Non-Inferentiality (Directness) Requirement:** if we know a proposition intuitively, we know it without inference from any other proposition
 2. **Firmness Requirement:** intuitions require a moderately firm belief in them (and need to be somewhat stable)
 3. **Pretheoreticity Requirement:** the ground of an intuition cannot be our belief in a certain theory

(Huemer, Michael. *Ethical Intuitionism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Audi, Robert. *The Good in the Right*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.)

What Intuitions are not

- Intuitions
 - can conflict with each other
 - do not imply certainty
 - do not always override non-intuitive insights
 - do not need to be about particulars

Framing Effects

- Petrinovich and O’Neill describe a Bystander Trolley case with the following wording:
You can (throw the switch/do nothing), (saving/killing) five innocent people, which will result in the death of the one innocent person on the side track.

Information for this slide and the next taken from Sinnott-Armstrong’s paper “Framing Moral Intuitions” on <http://sites.duke.edu/wsa/papers/files/2011/05/wsa-framingmoralintuitions2008.pdf>.

Petrinovich and O'Neill (1996)

Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of participants' levels of agreement with action and inaction as a function of whether the questions incorporating action and inaction were framed in a kill or save wording^a

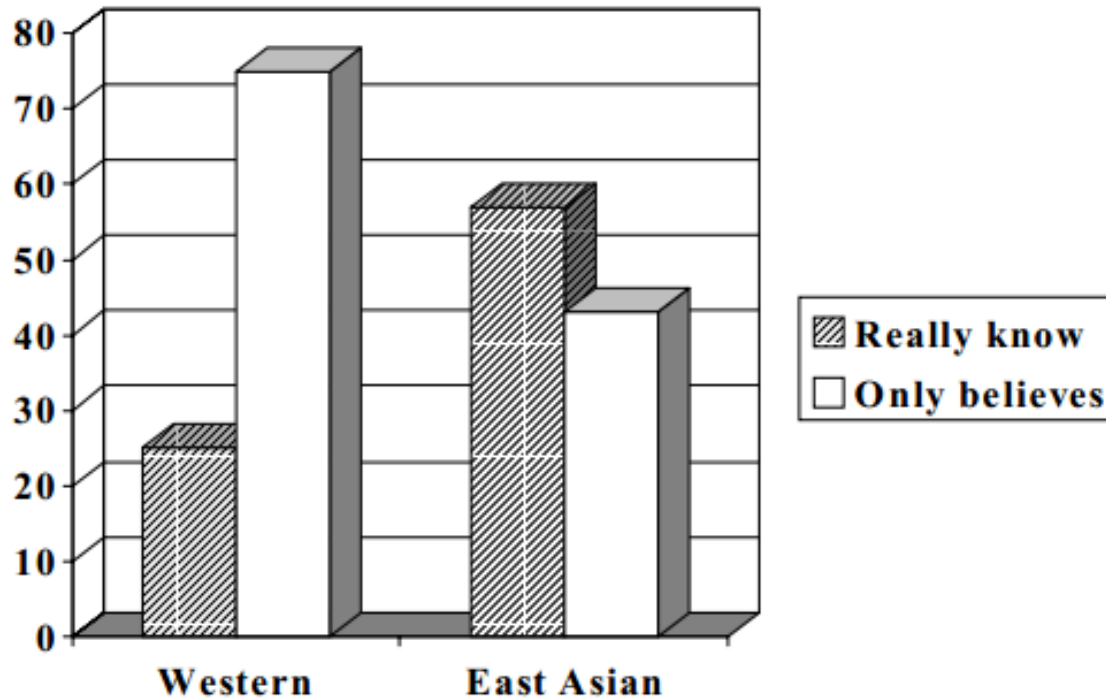
	Saving Wording	Killing Wording
Action	0.65 (0.93)	-0.78 (1.04)
Inaction	0.10 (1.04)	-1.35 (1.15)

^aPositive mean values in the table indicate agreement, and negative values indicate disagreement.

Source: Petrinovich & O'Neill, 1994, p. 152.

(Petrinovich, Lewis, and Philip O'Neil. 1996. "Influence of Wording and Framing Effects on Moral Intuitions." *Ethology and Sociobiology* 67:145-171.)

Disagreement about Intuition: Gettier



Bob has a friend, Jill, who has driven a Buick for many years. Bob therefore thinks that Jill drives an American car. He is not aware, however, that her Buick has recently been stolen, and he is also not aware that Jill has replaced it with a Pontiac, which is a different kind of American car. Does Bob really know that Jill drives an American car, or does he only believe it?