

Alternative principles

1 The argument that giving famine aid is a duty

1. Suffering and death are bad. [Moral Assumption]
2. If (a) it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, (b) without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, (c) we ought, morally to do it. [Moral Principle]
3. We could prevent suffering and death by giving aid without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. [Empirical Assumption]
4. Therefore, we ought, morally, to give aid. [Conclusion]

2 The argument for the moral principle

5. I ought, morally, to save the drowning child. [Moral Assumption]
6. The moral principle (2) is the best explanation of why I ought, morally, to save the drowning child.
7. Therefore, the moral principle (2) is true.

3 Two versions of the moral principle (2)

The strong version

If (a) it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, (b) without thereby sacrificing *anything of comparable moral importance*, (c) we ought, morally to do it.

The moderate version

If (a) it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, (b) without thereby sacrificing *anything morally significant*, (c) we ought, morally, to do it. (p. 231, 241)

