

Scientific Ethics Assignment  
10/18/2007

- 1) You are walking home past a canal. Suddenly, you see that a human stranger and your dog (or cat or pet demon, as applicable) are both drowning. You have the swimming ability to save both, if you take two trips. However, you only have time to make one trip before the one you leave behind drowns. Which do you save? Why?
- 2) Dr. Joseph Mengele performed horrific experiments on prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. To date, the notes from his experiments have not been found. Now that you have become a world famous doctor, an unmarked package appears in your mailbox. Inside are the notes from Mengele's experiments. You realize that these notes contain a possible cure for cancer. Do you use them? Why or why not? If you said "yes", does your answer change if perfecting the cure requires killing 1,000 otherwise healthy people, as part of the clinical trials?
- 3) In most cases, there is a long waiting list for organ transplants in the United States. It has been argued that shortages could be resolved using a free-market approach. Donors (or their families, where applicable) would be paid for donated organs. Insurance companies might be expected to pay in this scheme, as even the most expensive organ transplants are usually less expensive than long term care for a person with one or more failing organs. Would this be a good approach? What might happen if companies were allowed to recruit donors from other countries? How do these consequences affect your decision?
- 4) Alternatively, it has been proposed that the United States move from an "opt-in" program of organ donation (you or your family must actively agree to donate your organs) to an "opt-out" system (unless you or your family object, we'll presume that you're willing to help out). Proponents of this system suggest that waiting time on some transplant list could be reduced from years to as little as 48 hours. Opponents of this new system, suggest that doctors, either consciously or unconsciously, might stop attempting to save your life earlier than they would otherwise, as a protracted battle with some diseases will render organs unfit for transplant. Which way would you vote?