

Increasing Harm and Offsetting

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1 What's Wrong with Merely Increasing Harm?

SINGLE PLAYER, SINGLE VICTIM ZAPPING GAME:

- Three buttons:
 - o Up (+1, +\$20)
 - o Down (-1, -\$20)
 - o Exit
- Score: 7
- The higher the score, the more painful the zap
- Maximum 10 U and D presses

Question: Why is (UE) wrong?

Easy answer: doing harm (except in special cases) is wrong, and the U in (UE) does harm to the victim. (UE) violates the constraint against doing harm. (E) and (DE), on the other hand, do not involve any harming, only failures to prevent harm.

Why this answer isn't good enough: many of the permissible options have U's in them.

Impermissible	Permissible	Supererogatory
(UE) (UUE) (UUUE), (DUUE), (UUDE), ... (UUUE), (DUUE), ...	(E) (UDE), (DUE) (DUUDE), (UUDDE), ...	(DE) (DDE) (DDDE), (DUDE), (UDDE), ... (DDDDDE), (UDDDE), ...

My suggestion: the old constraint against doing harm doesn't work for these cases, we should instead appeal to a constraint against unoffset harm increases.

But maybe these are 'special cases'?

2 Offsetting Skepticism

Alternative explanations:

- (1) Moral balancing
(No. The harms aren't required for the benefits)
- (2) Compensation
(No. Harms can follow the benefits; ratio can be 1:1; multiple victim case)
- (3) Hypothetical Consent
(No. Doesn't help on its own; doesn't work when there's explicit non-consent)
- (4) Withdrawing Aid
(No. Irrelevant whether your decrease interacts with *your* increase, even if it's possible to identify such things)
- (5) Preventing of Would-be Harm
(No. Same reason)

On (4) and (5): Token version of the zapping game (or maybe better: U-stones and D-balloons).

Other options: deny permissibility of fully offset harm increases; become a consequentialist or something.

But if you don't want to do that, you should consider accepting...

