

agency to take the law into their own hands, or making it more difficult for captains to recruit cabin boys.

Second, even if, all things considered, the benefits do outweigh the costs, don't we have a nagging sense that killing and eating a defenseless cabin boy is wrong for reasons that go beyond the calculation of social costs and benefits? Isn't it wrong to use a human being in this way—exploiting his vulnerability, taking his life without his consent—even if doing so benefits others?

To anyone appalled by the actions of Dudley and Stephens, the first objection will seem a tepid complaint. It accepts the utilitarian assumption that morality consists in weighing costs and benefits, and simply wants a fuller reckoning of the social consequences.

If the killing of the cabin boy is worthy of moral outrage, the second objection is more to the point. It rejects the idea that the right thing to do is simply a matter of calculating consequences—costs and benefits. It suggests that morality means something more—something to do with the proper way for human beings to treat one another.

These two ways of thinking about the lifeboat case illustrate two rival approaches to justice. The first approach says the morality of an action depends solely on the consequences it brings about; the right thing to do is whatever will produce the best state of affairs; all things considered. The second approach says that consequences are not all we should care about, morally speaking; certain duties and rights should command our respect, for reasons independent of the social consequences. In order to resolve the lifeboat case, as well as many less extreme dilemmas we commonly encounter, we need to explore some big questions of moral and political philosophy: Is morality a matter of counting lives and weighing costs and benefits, or are certain moral duties and human rights so fundamental that they rise above such calculations? And if certain rights are fundamental in this way—be they natural, or sacred, or inalienable, or categorical—how can we identify them? And what makes them fundamental?

live. But Brooks refused, and no lots

no ship was in sight. Dudley told oned to Stephens that Parker had to told the boy his time had come, and stabbing him in the jugular vein. tious objection to share in the gruesome men fed on the body and blood

describes their rescue in his diary, e 24th day, as we were having our ne three survivors were picked up. e were arrested and tried. Brooks Stephens went to trial. They freely ten Parker. They claimed they had

ow would you rule? To simplify and assume that you were asked to was morally permissible. efense is that, given the dire cir- ne person in order to save three. all four would likely have died. udley and Stephens, he had no e of support and left no grieving

two objections: First, it can be the cabin boy, taken as a whole, nting the number of lives saved their families, allowing such a society as a whole—weakening e, or increasing people's ten-