lives. Rather, the reason will have something to do with the kind of life the agent chooses to lead, his choice of a profession in which he can save lives, but only one-fifth as many as in some other professions, and so on. Finally I agree with Professor Anscombe that there can be bad reasons for choosing *A* over *B* (or *B* over *A*) such as that the favored group is richer or that the disfavored belong to a hated racial minority.[3] All in all the issues are complex and Taurek's argument has the virtue of showing that the ethics is indeed, at least in part, innumerate.

From Derek Parfit
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I am puzzled. Consider

> *Case One*: I could save either one stranger or five others. Both acts would involve a heroic personal sacrifice. I choose, for no reason, to save the one rather than the five.

Fried argues:

(1) Since both acts would involve a heroic sacrifice, I could not be criticized if I chose to do neither.
(2) If I could not be criticized for choosing to do neither, I cannot be criticized for choosing to do one rather than the other.

Therefore

(3) When I choose to save the one rather than the five, my choice cannot be criticized.

Fried rejects (3). Though my act is heroic, he concedes that my choice is "perverse" and "morally deficient." Since he rejects his conclusion, he must abandon one of his premises. He does not suggest which. I suggest (2). There are countless pairs of acts such that I

3. "Who Is Wronged," *The Oxford Review* 5 (1967):16-17.

could not be criticized for choosing neither, while I could be criticized for choosing one rather than the other. Suppose that I could save either Fried's life or his umbrella. If both acts would involve a heroic sacrifice, I could not be criticized for choosing neither. But I could be criticized if I chose to save the umbrella.

Fried suggests another argument. "It is implausible to say that one is morally deficient for being heroic, but not as heroic as he might be all things considered." Certainly. But this does not support (3). In Case One it is not *more* heroic to save the five.

Though he rejects (3), Fried believes this concession to be unimportant. This is puzzling. His chief concern is

> *Case Two*: The same as Case One, except that I have some reason for my choice.

He aims to show that, in Case Two, I do not have to "account for" my reason as "sufficiently weighty" to defend my choice from criticism. How could this be shown? Only by showing that it is not my having of this reason which defends my choice from criticism. Only by showing that even in Case One, where I do not have this reason, my choice cannot be criticized. But Fried has just conceded that, in Case One, my choice can be criticized. It is "perverse" and "morally deficient."

Here is another puzzle. Fried aligns himself with John Taurek. But Taurek *does* believe that, in a case like One, my choice cannot be criticized. According to him, I would have "absolutely no reason" to save the large number (p. 306). He rejects the common view that it would be worse if more people die.

My paper criticized Taurek's arguments. Fried writes: "it seems to me that the plausibility of [Parfit's critique] depends precisely on a crucial utilitarian premise: that there is no distinction to be made between obligation and supererogation." This is another puzzle. My critique depends precisely on the claim that there *can* be such a distinction, and that this distinction is more plausible than Taurek's arguments. I claim, for instance, that we can appeal to

(4) I would be morally permitted not to save the five if the act of

so doing would impose on me too great a sacrifice. (See my pp. 285-292).

Curiously, Fried himself lacks confidence in (4). Return to Case Two, where I have some reason for my choice. Suppose my reason is that I want to pursue some particular profession. (Fried explains that, in this profession, "one can save lives, but only 1/5 as many as in some other professions.") If *this* is the reason for my choice, we would expect Fried to appeal to (4). Not pursuing my chosen profession would be a sacrifice. But Fried does not appeal to (4). He appeals to (1) and (2). He argues that, *whatever* my reason, my choice cannot be criticized. Why does he appeal to that argument? He himself gives this explanation. If the reason for my choice is that I want to pursue some particular profession, this is not a reason which I would want "to have to account for as a moral reason sufficiently weighty to justify the loss of four lives." This explanation must assume that I cannot appeal to (4). If I could, I would not need Fried's argument.[1]

Fried ends by supposing that I choose to save the one because I hate the racial group to whom the five belong. If his argument was sound, my choice could not be criticized. Here again he rejects his own conclusion.

1. Note that, even if that argument was sound, I might have to appeal to (4). I cannot appeal to Fried's argument unless my chosen profession *itself* involves a personal sacrifice.