

Here are some different ways to understand Thomson's ideas about valuing lives

Default to seeing all lives as equally valuable. Only see/treat a life as more valuable if:

- You have evidence that it is more valuable (e.g. you know something about that life)?
- You have commitments to seeing/treating it as more valuable?
- You have special obligations to see/treat it as more valuable?

Default to seeing/treating your own life as more valuable than others' lives. How much more?
5 times more valuable (aggregation view)

More valuable than the lives of each of 5 strangers (non-aggregation view).

Only see/treat others' lives as more valuable (or your life as less valuable) than that because of:

- Evidence about value?
- Commitments?
- Special obligations?

For any life L, value L as much as those close to you value L.

Why?

- Because this is good evidence about the value of L?
- Because you have special obligations or commitments to trust those close to you?

1. Question: which approach, if adopted, would make things better overall? Does that matter?

2. What kind of evidence is relevant?

Mary sees a car accident late at night. It is dark, and all she can tell is that a bus hit Fred's car, but she can't tell what the bus looked like. Mary testifies about this in court, and there is no other information about who hit Fred's car. 90% of the buses in that part of town are run by Bus Company A, and 10% by Bus Company B. So, given the available information, there is a 90% chance that the bus which hit Fred's car was owned by Bus Company A. Should the judge hold Bus Company A liable for the damage to Fred's car? (based on Judith Thomson, 1986, Liability and individualized evidence)