

Philosophy 235
Direct action and monkeywrenching

environmental direct action / monkeywrenching:

Examples of direct action / monkey-wrenching

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgXeHk6G9ks>

1. Give some other examples of possible direct action / monkey-wrenching which are done to help protect the environment, plants, or non-human animals.

Reasons against direct action

“[S]uppose that Waldman lives in our neighborhood in rural Connecticut, that there are many trees growing on Waldman’s property, and that Waldman is the sort of person who takes great pleasure in swinging an axe. [Each year] Waldman cuts down a carefully selected tree on his lot, saws it to pieces, and spends a weekend splitting firewood [just for fun]... [T]he Caretaker witnesses this attack against the local forest and, while Waldman is not looking, sneaks into his yard, saws the handle of Waldman’s axe in two, and then pours sand into the gas tank of Waldman’s chainsaw.” (Turner (2006) Monkeywrenching, perverse incentives, and ecodefense)

2. Is what Waldman does morally permissible? Why or why not?

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To see if there is a *prima facie* duty to x , ask yourself:

Is it permissible to for a person to **not** do x even when there is no reason for them to **not** x ?

If the answer is “yes,” then there is **no** *prima facie* duty to x .

If the answer is “no,” then there **is** a duty to x .

To see if the duty is *prima facie*, ask if it can sometimes be permissible to not x .

If “yes,” then the duty is *prima facie*.

If “no,” then the duty is absolute.

For example:

Is there a *prima facie* duty to scratch my nose?

So, x = “scratch my nose”

Plug this in the “ask yourself” question:

“Is it permissible for me to not [scratch my nose] even when there is no reason for me to not [scratch my nose]?”

Yes, it is permissible – there’s nothing wrong with not scratching my nose either way.

So, there is no *prima facie* duty to scratch my nose.

Is there a *prima facie* duty to not club baby seals?

So, x = “not club baby seals”

Plug this in the “ask yourself” question:

“Is it permissible for me to not [not club baby seals] even when there is no reason for me to not [not club baby seals]?”

The double negatives cancel out, and we get:

“Is it permissible for me to club baby seals even when there is no reason for me to club baby seals?”

No, it is not permissible.

So, there is a *prima facie* duty to not club baby seals.