Debate Cases

1. Mary is a prostitute. Prostitution makes Mary generally unhappy. She does not enjoy her work; she wishes that she could earn a living doing something else. However, her job options are so limited that prostitution is the only way she could earn a living. John approaches Mary to purchase her sexual services. She quotes him a price, and he accepts. John and Mary sleep together. Mary is slightly depressed by the encounter. It lowers Mary's overall level of happiness by 10 utiles (from where it would have been otherwise). John is also disappointed by the encounter. It is not as sexually gratifying as he had hoped it would be. It only raises his overall level of happiness 5 utiles (from where it would have been otherwise).

2. Mary is a prostitute. John approaches Mary to purchase her sexual services. She quotes him a price, and he accepts. John and Mary sleep together. At the end of the encounter, John decides that he doesn’t want to pay, and he leaves out the bathroom window without paying. Mary is slightly depressed by the encounter. The encounter lowers Mary’s overall level of happiness by 10 utiles (from where it would have been, had John paid). John, however, is thrilled. The sex was wonderful, and the excitement of escaping out the window makes him feel young again. It raises his overall level of happiness 15 utiles (from where it would have been, had he paid).

3. There is a disease which is killing hundreds of thousands of people across the world. Sabeen is a scientist who is very close to finding the cure. However, in order to complete the cure, she needs to know something about what happens in the spleen in the first few minutes after infection. Since the disease takes several hours to present symptoms, Sabeen can’t observe any of the infected to see what happens during these initial stages. She decides that she needs to infect somebody with the disease in order to make her observations. If she were to infect herself, then she wouldn’t live long enough to finish her research, and she can’t find any volunteers. So Sabeen kidnaps a homeless person off the street and infects him; he dies an incredibly painful death the next day. Weeks later, she finishes her research, and discovers the cure. Hundreds of thousands of lives are saved.

4. There is a disease which is killing hundreds of people across the world. Sabeen is a scientist who is very close to finding the cure. The virus responsible for the disease has mutated, and there are now 200 different variants of virus. In order to complete the cure, she needs to know something about what happens in the spleen in the first few minutes after infection, for each and every one of the viruses. Since the disease takes several hours to present symptoms, Sabeen can’t observe any of the infected to see what happens during these initial stages. She decides that she needs to infect somebody with each of the viruses in order to make her observations. So Sabeen kidnaps 200 random emergency room visitors and infects them with the virus; they all die incredibly painful deaths in the next few days. Weeks later, she finishes her research, and discovers the cure. About 500 lives are saved.