

(This video references Video 4)

In this video (Video 4), I presented what I take to be a counterexample to this principle:

(K) It's always wrong to kill an innocent person.

Some people objected to my counterexample by pointing out the distinction between killing and letting die—for instance, between throwing someone in the ocean to drown versus merely failing to jump in to save a drowning person. They claimed my example was an instance of letting die, as opposed to killing.

This is a fair objection, since if it's not an instance of killing, then it's not a counterexample to the principle—even if you agree with the moral judgment that it's not wrong to unplug.

Now, in the video, I did stipulate that unplugging kills them, not merely lets them die, but to be fair, I didn't provide any details. So, let me fill those in here.

Suppose the only way to unplug involves ripping out the other person's IV violently, causing blood loss and death. In this case, I think it's pretty clear that it's killing, not merely letting die. And yet I still think it's not wrong—again, if it's the only way to extricate yourself from the situation, and thereby exercise your bodily autonomy.

Now, you might complain that this is unrealistic, since ripping out the IV typically isn't that dangerous. But that's not how thought experiments work. In thought experiments, you can stipulate whatever you like, and as long as it's possible, it can serve as a counterexample to a general principle.