

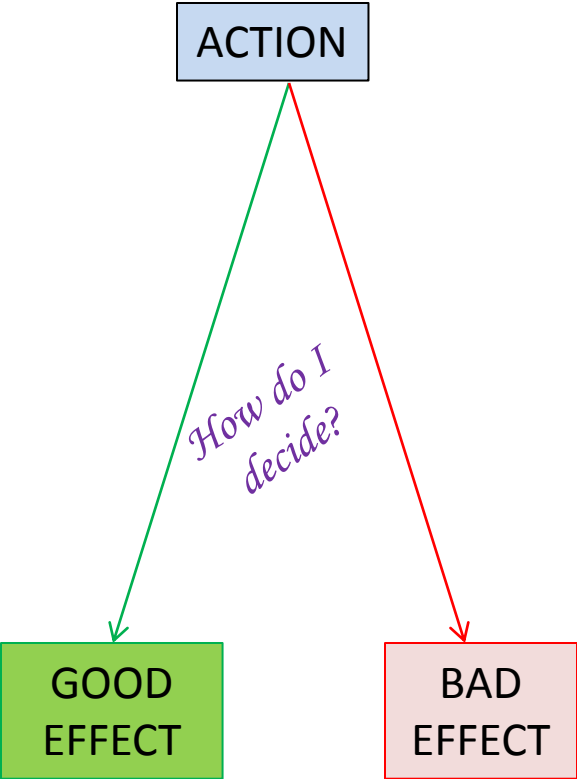
Principle of Double Effect:

“a rule of conduct frequently used in moral theology to determine when a person may lawfully perform an action from which two effects will follow, one bad and the other good.”

St. Thomas Aquinas

from article by F.J. Connell in the New Catholic Encyclopedia Volume 4 p. 880

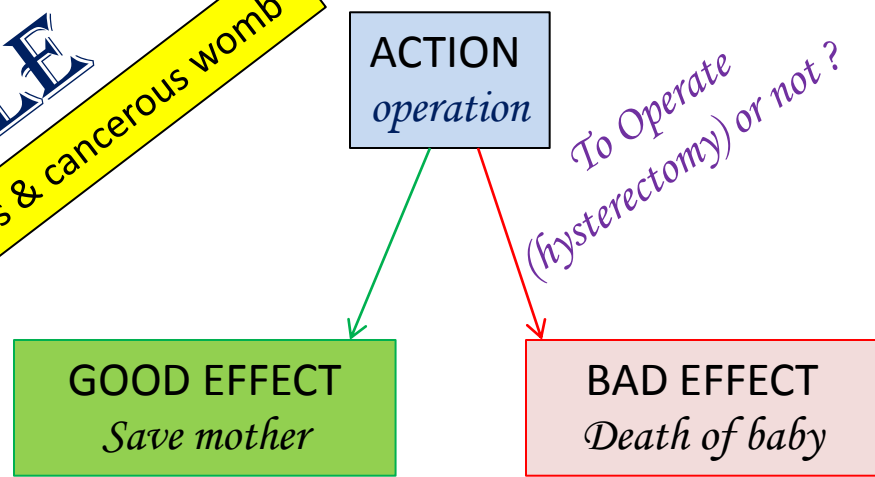
<http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/stmp11>



CONDITIONS:

- 1 Action must be **MORALLY GOOD** (or neutral)
- 2 **The desired OBJECT** is for the **GOOD effect** & **NOT the bad effect**
- 3 **GOOD effect** flows DIRECTLY from the Action (**NOT from the BAD effect...otherwise you fall into the ERROR of 'the ends justifying the means'**)
- 4 **GOOD effect** must *outweigh* the **BAD effect**

EXAMPLE
Pregnant with nonviable fetus & cancerous womb



- 1 Action must be MORALLY GOOD (or neutral); **operation/hysterectomy is morally lawful in certain conditions**
- 2 The desired OBJECT is for the GOOD effect & NOT the bad effect; **intention is to SAVE woman's life, NOT to 'kill' the baby; results in the death of the baby as a foreseeable but undesired second effect**
- 3 GOOD effect flows DIRECTLY from the Action (**NOT** from the BAD effect...otherwise you fall into the **ERROR** of 'the ends justifying the means') **saving the mother & death of baby BOTH follow directly from operation**
- 4 GOOD effect must outweigh the BAD effect **the chance of saving the mother is sufficiently desirable to compensate for the death of the baby which would probably not survive if operation not performed**

Conclusion: Hysterectomy is morally licit in this situation