

San José State University
Philosophy 133
"Ethics in Science"

Sample Case Study Work-up

*This is a model of the information we are trying to generate (and the level of thoroughness we are aiming for) in our **discussions** of case studies.*

*Note that I **don't** expect your initial responses to cases to take this format, or to be this thorough!*

I haven't also written a sample case to go with it, but if you know your fairy tales, the details are probably familiar to you ...

Interested Parties:

- Jack - in getting along with Jill, getting the water he needs, in his own health and well-being
- Jill - in getting along with Jack, not being blamed for Jack's mistakes, in her own health and well-being
- Jack's mother, brothers, cow - they need the water Jack is trying to get, but also care for Jack
- Troll guarding the well - in defending the water against theft
- Wizard who owns the well - in deciding who gets to use his water and under what conditions
- People of the village - in being able to get water when they need it

Potential Consequences (if Jack decides to go up the hill for a pail of water, or if he does something else instead):

- Jack and his family and livestock will get the water they need to survive (or they won't)
- Jack will earn a reputation as brave and resourceful (or as a coward)
- Jack might be caught/punished by the troll and/or by the wizard
- The troll might lose his well-guarding job (or be rewarded for doing it well)
- The wizard might get mad that his water has been stolen (or that he wasn't asked)
- Jill might get blamed (or praised) just as much as Jack
- Jill might be unhappy that Jack hasn't included her in his deliberations about what to do
- The people of the village might follow Jack's example and take what they need from the wizard
- If Jack fails, drought might drive the people of the village to seek water from other sources (including from the giant at the top of the beanstalk)
- Jack might sustain a head-injury on his way down the hill (and so might Jill)

Jack's obligations: *[note that we focus on the obligations of the protagonist because that's who's trying to make a good ethical decision about what to do in the case!]*

- To help his family
- To provide humane conditions for his livestock
- To be a good friend to Jill
- To respect property rights
- To establish his reputation as a hero
- To protect his own health and integrity
- To consider the welfare of his village (and whether his individual efforts to help his family will help or hurt the village as a whole)

Big conflicts between Jack's obligations:

- Getting water for his family and livestock pulls against respecting the wizard's property rights
- Being a hero seems to pull against protecting his health and integrity
- Being a hero seems also to pull against his duties to Jill (she could be hurt, and maybe she'll lose her fair share of the hero credit)
- Depending on how things go, helping his family may pull against helping his village as a whole

What Jack should do here:

[I'm going to leave that to you!]