The Act

"What a kind of act is, morally, is taught; the verdict is said of an act, never of a person. What a person knew and willed is claimed, never computed."

The kind of answer: judged · The Act on the map

In a child's words. We can say whether an act is right or wrong, but we cannot see into a heart. What someone knew and wanted is what they tell us, not something we work out.

The Institute habit

Persons judged and acts excused. Mr. Curtain did not mind cheating so long as he knew the circumstances, because then he could control them, and a Messenger who was blamed was promoted. In the first book the children were told to become what they were not; Constance kept apart using a deception and being a deceiver.

The book

The Prisoner's Dilemma: the opening game, with kitchen duty instead of prison, and the children's refusal of both options.

Week 1 · the kind of answer

Play the prisoner's dilemma with tokens, then fill in its table: what each pair of choices costs each player. Then do what the children did and look for an option the table leaves out.

Week 2 · the essay

Of Divers Weights, in the register of Adam Smith, one numbered section a day. A dozen eggs at five prices in one shop; the test is a market you could send a child to. End on its note on what is claimed, which keeps apart what was found, what is still open, and the speaker's verdict. For children of 12 or 13, The Meekest Man That Ever Ate in Hall, once a parent has read it.

Week 3 · the case

The trolley. Pulling the lever, so that one man dies as a side effect of saving five, may be done, by double effect, on what the one who pulls it says he intended. The surgeon who kills one patient to give five others his organs must not, whatever he intended, because the kind of act is the killing of an innocent. Pushing a man in front of the trolley turns on two things no one can work out from outside: what the one who pushes says about choosing the man's death as the means, and a question the teaching leaves open, whether an act is "direct" by what is chosen or by the order of causes. Read by the order of causes, the push must not be done whatever is claimed; read by what is chosen, the verdict follows the claim. We judge the act; we do not read the heart.

The workshop · suggested

For a child taking the workshop strand, Project 5, the computer. It begins: the fetch-execute cycle and the processor. At each tick the CPU decodes one instruction and acts on it, settled by that instruction alone.

The end first

Ask "what for?" of any choice until the answers stop. Thomas says they must stop: with no last end the chain would never begin (I-II q. 1 a. 4). Put money at the end of the chain and it stands in God's place. A claim can be refused for the place it puts something, without judging anyone's heart.

Fridays

The honesty question: tell about a time you were blamed for something, and whether the blame was for the act or for you.

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