The Trolley Dilemma

1. You are the engineer of a trolley.

2. The trolley has gotten almost out of control.

3. Your only choice left is to switch at Lincoln Junction between A-track and B-track.

4. You are approaching Lincoln Junction and on the RIGHT track is a school bus filled with 50 innocent young children whose bus got caught in the trolley tracks.

5. The LEFT track is occupied by a homeless person whose poor-fitting shoe has caught in the trolley tracks.

6. As the engineer, you have the choice of moving your lethal train to the right or left. This is your only choice.

Does one have any moral justification for going to the right or to the left? Clearly, most of us would kill one rather than 50. But do we have the moral justification for doing so? Is human life additive? How can we assess such examples? Is it the case that there are no moral reasons for choosing one track over another (as a deontologist might argue), and that if one chooses to save the school bus, you do so for other nonmoral reasons?