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Ch3: Moral Frameworks

Contents

Ethical Theories Based on Philosophical Scholarship:

- 1) **Utilitarianism** (actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority)
- 2) **Rights Ethics**
- 3) **Duty Ethics**
- 4) **Virtue Ethics**
- 5) **Self-Realization and Self-Interest**

Ethical Theories

- We will discuss five types of **ethical theories** (and traditions) that have been especially influential



Ethical Theories as Moral Frameworks

- **Utilitarianism** says that we ought to (have to) produce the most good for the most people, giving equal consideration to everyone affected.
- **Rights ethics** says we ought to respect human rights.
- **Duty ethics** says we ought to respect individuals' rational autonomy (mentally independent)
- **Virtue ethics** says that good character is central to morality.
- **Self-realization ethics** emphasizes the moral significance of self-fulfillment (satisfaction of hopes and ambitions)

Moral Frameworks

- 1) Utilitarianism(actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority)
 - a) Act-utilitarianism
 - b) Rule-utilitarianism
- 2) Rights Ethics
- 3) Duty Ethics
- 4) Virtue Ethics
- 5) Self-Realization and Self-Interest
 - a) Egoistic (selfish)
 - b) Self-Realization and Personal Commitments

(1) Utilitarianism

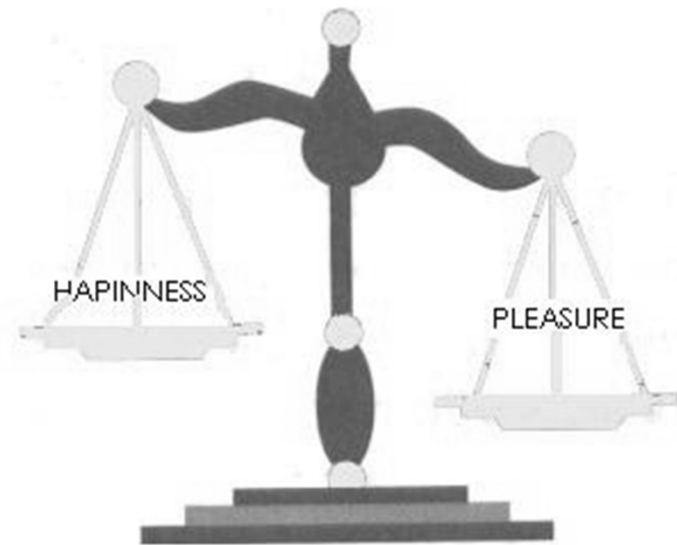
- Act-utilitarianism: maximize the overall good for each action, in each situation.
- Rule-utilitarianism: says live by a set of rules that maximize the overall good.



Theories of Good?

Problem with Utilitarianism Theory

- What is the standards of good is another disagreement between utilitarianism.
- Act-utilitarianism seems that it permit immoral action
- (injustice & require too much).



Stealing a computer
(see next example)

Social good at the
expense of individual
expense

Act-utilitarianism seems to justify wrongdoing

- Suppose that stealing a computer from my employer, an old one scheduled for replacement anyway, benefits me significantly and causes only miniscule(little) harm to the employer and others.
- We know that the theft is unethical, and hence act-utilitarianism seems to justify wrongdoing.
- Rule utilitarianism was developed as way to correct several problems with act-utilitarianism.



(1) Utilitarianism

- Case: Is paying bribe to win a contract for the company which will benefits all the employee acceptable or not?
- Rule-utilitarianism: maximize the **good** through following rules that maximize good consequences, rather than through isolated actions.

Cost –benefit analysis

- Cost-benefit analysis: identifies the good and bad consequences of some action or policy, usually in terms of dollars(money).
- Risk-benefit analysis is the comparison of the risk of a situation to its related benefits.

Case Study: Ford Pinto

- Designed to compete with foreign import models that had better gas mileage. Designing rushed to have it available to the public faster.
- Ford knew that the gas tank would explode if hit at >20 mph from rear.
- Problem could have been avoided if a rubber bladder to cushion impact was installed that cost \$5.08 installed.



- Cost analysis showed that the cost of installing the part to be higher than the damage resulting from fatalities damage.
- Ford eventually did recall the Pinto voluntary to try and save their reputation to reputation

Utilitarianism.. an objection..

- The general idea behind utilitarianism is pretty simple, you should do the thing that results in the greatest overall good.
- The problem and the criticism are simple - how do you know what's going to end up producing the greatest overall good?
- The answer isn't easy - essentially, you need to use your previous experience to guess at what will increase happiness.

(2) RIGHT ETHICS

(3) DUTY ETHICS

- Right Ethics regards human rights as fundamentals.
- Duty Ethics regards duties of respect for autonomy as fundamentals.
- Both theories emphasize respect for individuals' dignity(honor or respect) and worth, in contrast with utilitarian's emphasis of the general good.
- Rights Ethics and Duty Ethics are mirror images of each other: because you have a right to life, I have duty not to kill you; and if I have duty not to deceive(mislead or trick) you then you have a right not to be deceived.

(2) Rights Ethics

- Right Ethics regards human rights as fundamentals.
- All ethical theories leave some room for rights, but the ethical theory called rights ethics is distinctive(distinguished) in that it makes human rights the **ultimate** appeal (max aim) the moral bottom line.

Human Rights

- As such, the notions (concepts) of human rights and legal rights are distinct (obvious).
- Legal rights are simply those the law of given society says, whereas human rights are those we have as humans, whether the law recognizes them or not.

Human Rights

- Rights ethics applies to engineering in many ways. It provides a powerful foundation for the special ethical requirements in engineering and other professions.
- Most engineering codes of ethics enjoin (instruct) holding paramount (more important than anything else) the safety, health, and welfare of the public, a requirement that can be interpreted (translated) as having respect for the public's rights to life, rights not to be injured by dangerous products, rights to privacy, and rights to receive benefits through fair and honest exchanges in a free marketplace. (discuss safety regulations, medical insurance, noon break, salary..)

Two Versions of Right Ethics

- Rights ethics gets more complex as we ask which kinds of rights exist-only liberty (freedom) rights, or also welfare rights?

Two Versions of Right Ethics

- Liberty rights are rights to exercise our liberty, and they place duties on other people **not** to interfere with our freedom. (The “not” explains why they are also called **negative** rights.)
- Welfare rights are rights to benefits needed for a decent (modest) human life, when we cannot earn those benefits, perhaps because we are severely handicapped (chained or disabled), and when the community has them available. (As a contrast to negative rights, they are sometimes called **positive** rights.)

(3) Duty Ethics

- Duty Ethics regards duties of respect for autonomy (self-government) as fundamentals.
- Duty ethics says that right actions are those required by duties to respect the liberty (freedom) or autonomy (self-determination) of individuals.

(3) Duty Ethics

One duty ethicist suggests the following list of important duties:

- (1) Do not kill
- (2) Do not cause pain.
- (3) Do not disable.
- (4) Do not deprive (prevent) of freedom.
- (5) Do not deprive of pleasure.
- (6) Do not deceive (mislead or trick).
- (7) Keep your promises.
- (8) Do not cheat.
- (9) Obey the law.
- (10) Do your duty [referring to work, family, and other special responsibilities.

Prima facie duties (on its first encounter)

- Are duties that have permissible exceptions when they conflict with more pressing (necessary) duties, as distinct from absolute duties that never have justified exceptions. (in similar senses, 'prima facie' is sometimes applied to rights, rules, principles, etc.)

Conclusion

- Duty ethics reverses the order of priority by beginning with duties and deriving rights from them.
- Virtue Ethics (*Next time*)
- Self-Realization & Self-Interest (*Next time*)

Quiz - Utilitarianism

Answer by (True) or (False)

- T** 1) Cost benefits analysis identifies the good and bad consequences of some action or policy in terms of dollars.
- T** 2) Utilitarianism says the sole standard of right action is good consequences.
- T** 3) There is only one general moral requirement for utilitarianism which is producing the most good for the most people, giving equal consideration to everyone affected.
- F** 4) ~~Rule~~-utilitarianism seems to justify wrongdoing.
Act