**Worksheet 1**

**Core Computing Concepts for Cyber Security**

**Major Ethical Theories**

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# Utilitarianism

Definition

In the realm of ethics, utilitarianism reigns supreme as a school of thought that judges right from wrong based on the outcome of actions. It's a subset of consequentialism, a branch of philosophy that emphasizes consequences over intention, in other terms, the end justifies the means. This moral framework proposes that the optimal choice is the one that benefits the greatest number of people, regardless of how you feel about the actions themselves. Utilitarianism is one of the most powerful and persuasive approaches to normative ethics and was first systematically accounted and developed by Jeremy Bentham although had earlier forms and was well in use before his accreditation of the concept.

Greatest Happiness Principle

The greatest happiness principle is in simple terms, the greater good that makes more people happy no matter the means is the right route. An example of this could be if a small town, that doesn’t have much opportunities for the people has got funding and the go-ahead to implement and build a nuclear powerplant. This would provide the local people with jobs, livelihoods and better living standards overall due to the influx in investment. Furthermore, this also comes at the cost of pollution in the area, maybe even destroying a minority of the population’s health overtime, In greatest happiness principles, the power plant would be built as it would produce overall greater happiness.

Evaluation / Strengths/Weaknesses

Some of the strengths of implementing utilitarianism include the pragmatism and flexibility of its nature. If implemented correctly, utilitarianism will take into any factors and circumstances. This approach is seen as the perfect mixture for ethical pragmatic approach to decision making by (Kifaru, 2023) that gives affirmation to this. Oneof the weaknesses of utilitarianism comes from not being so theoretically clean as told to us by(Driver, 2009)*“the sense that it isn't clear what essential work God does, at least in terms of normative ethics. God as the source of normativity is compatible with utilitarianism, but utilitarianism doesn't require this.”* Although the case of pushing utilitarianism ethical concepts might first seem ideal, it is vital to understand the fundamental issues and weaknesses to be able to apply and understand the concepts

# Deontology

Definition

Deontology is an ethical theory that uses rules to distinguish right from wrong. Deontology is often associated with philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant believed that ethical actions follow universal moral laws, such as “Don’t lie.  Don’t steal.  Don’t cheat.” Deontology is an ethical theory that bursts with the idea that moral rules, principles, and duties should be the guiding stars of our ethical decisions. This philosophy, famously championed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, insists that certain actions are intrinsically right or wrong, regardless of their outcomes.

Duty and Moral Rules

Within the realm of deontological ethics, duty and moral rules take centre stage, bursting forth with unwavering significance and unyielding principles. Duty, a cornerstone of this ethical philosophy, entails an unequivocal sense of moral obligation, setting the stage for resolute, uncompromising moral guidance. It fervently dictates that individuals must adhere to certain principles and responsibilities, remaining impervious to the alluring whispers of consequences that may beckon them astray. In essence, deontology boldly proclaims the existence of actions that we are irrevocably duty-bound to perform or avoid, solely because they are deemed morally imperative, standing as unassailable pillars of ethical conduct.

For instance, the indomitable Immanuel Kant, a torchbearer of deontological thought, championed the notion that telling the truth is an unwavering moral duty, with the brilliance of deontology blazing forth in his assertions. Deontology insists, with an intensity that defies question that one should always speak the truth, with no compromise entertained, regardless of whether the siren song of falsehood promises more favourable outcomes in a given circumstance. Another emblematic duty within this ethical realm is the promise-keeping duty, an unwavering call to honour one's commitments, even when stormy waters threaten to capsize the ship of convenience.

Evaluation

Deontology possesses several notable strengths and weaknesses, which, when evaluated, provide insight into its merits and limitations. On the positive side, deontology offers a set of clear and unequivocal moral guidelines. These rules and duties serve as a dependable compass for individuals when navigating complex ethical dilemmas, ensuring that the right course of action is not shrouded in ambiguity.

Furthermore, deontology places significant importance on the intent and motive behind one's actions. It recognizes the moral worth of individuals who act with virtuous intentions, irrespective of the outcomes. This emphasis on character and motive is regarded as a notable strength by those who value the intrinsic value of ethical actions.

Deontology is also applauded for its commitment to the principles of individual rights and respect for autonomy. It advocates the inviolability of certain rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, offering a principled and foundational approach to ethical considerations.

Moreover, deontology champions consistency and universality in moral reasoning. The concept of universalizability and the categorical imperative promote ethical decision-making that is consistent and impartial.

However, deontology is not without its weaknesses. Chief among these is its rigidity, often leaving no room for exceptions, even in exceptional or unconventional circumstances. This inflexibility can lead to ethically questionable outcomes, raising concerns about its applicability in certain real-world situations.

Additionally, conflicts between moral duties can arise, presenting complex ethical dilemmas. Determining which duty takes precedence in such situations can be a challenging and subjective task.

In practical terms, some critics argue that deontology's emphasis on duty and moral rules may not always offer practical guidance in complex, real-world scenarios.

Competing moral principles in intricate situations can make applying deontological principles challenging.

Finally, deontology's limitation in not directly considering the consequences of actions is another point of contention. Some argue that this lack of consequential consideration can result in ethical decisions that may not be perceived as the most beneficial or ethical in certain contexts.

In evaluating deontology, one must recognize its valuable role in providing a strong moral framework, emphasizing moral principles, duties, and individual rights.

Nevertheless, its rigidity and potential for moral conflicts must also be acknowledged, particularly when faced with situations that demand flexibility and a consideration of consequences. In practice, many ethical systems blend elements of both deontology and consequentialist reasoning to address the complexities of real-world ethical dilemmas. Ultimately, the strengths and weaknesses of deontology should be considered in the context of specific ethical scenarios and individual moral perspectives.

# Virtue Ethics

Definition

Virtue ethics, a moral philosophy, underscores the significance of nurturing a virtuous character as the cornerstone of leading a morally upright and satisfying life. Unlike certain other ethical frameworks that centre on rules, obligations, or outcomes, virtue ethics places great importance on the development of virtuous qualities within individuals. The value of virtuous character lies in the belief that possessing these virtuous traits, like honesty, courage, compassion, and wisdom, paves the way for ethical behaviour and sound moral choices

In virtue ethics, it's not merely about what one does but fundamentally about who one is. A virtuous character is deemed to be the bedrock for ethical actions and decisions. A virtuous person embodies these virtues as a natural part of their being, responding to situations with an inherent sense of what is morally excellent.

The significance of virtuous character is evident in its capacity to provide guidance in a wide array of circumstances. It doesn't rely on rigid regulations, but rather on the internalisation of virtues that serve as a moral compass. Moreover, virtue ethics attaches importance to moral education and personal growth as avenues to cultivate virtuous character, allowing individuals to mature morally over time. This approach underscores the idea that being a good person is as, if not more, important than simply performing good deeds, making it an appealing perspective for those keen on refining their moral character and ethical decision-making.

Virtues

*Three virtues often emphasized in virtue ethics are:*

* Courage: Courage is the virtue that enables individuals to face fear, danger, or difficult situations with strength and determination. In virtue ethics, courage guides ethical decision-making by helping individuals overcome obstacles and challenges in order to do what is morally right. It empowers them to stand up for their principles, even when it is uncomfortable or risky.
* Compassion: Compassion is the virtue of showing empathy and kindness towards others, particularly in times of suffering or distress. This virtue guides ethical decision-making by encouraging individuals to consider the well-being and feelings of others. It prompts them to act with kindness, help those in need, and avoid causing unnecessary harm.
* Honesty: Honesty is the virtue of truthfulness and integrity. It involves being sincere and transparent in one's actions and communication. In virtue ethics, honesty guides ethical decision-making by promoting transparency, trustworthiness, and a commitment to telling the truth. It discourages deceit, manipulation, and dishonesty in interactions with others.

Evaluation

Virtue ethics boasts strengths in its strong emphasis on personal development, where individuals are encouraged to nurture virtuous character traits continually. This focus on character-driven ethical decisions is a notable advantage, as it promotes moral growth and principled conduct.

However, virtue ethics is not without criticisms. One of its weaknesses is the lack of clear and universally applicable moral guidelines, leaving room for uncertainty in ethical dilemmas. Additionally, it may overlook the importance of considering consequences directly, as it prioritises character virtues over the outcomes of actions. These criticisms raise questions about its applicability in situations that require more specific guidance or an assessment of the moral implications of actions. Ultimately, the value of virtue ethics depends on the significance one places on character development in ethical decision-making.

These virtues serve as ethical principles that help individuals assess and navigate complex moral dilemmas. They provide a moral framework for making decisions that prioritise integrity, empathy, and moral courage, leading to actions that are in line with virtuous character and considered morally commendable. Virtue ethics suggests that individuals who cultivate these virtues in themselves are more likely to make ethically sound decisions, as their character is imbued with these qualities and they instinctively act in ways that reflect them.

# Social Contract Theory

Definition

Social contract theory is a philosophical concept that describes the relationship between individuals and the society or government they live in as a kind of unwritten agreement. This idea suggests that people willingly come together to create a society. In doing so, they give up some of their natural rights and agree to abide by the rules and laws of that society in exchange for protection, order, and the benefits of living within a community.

In this framework, the social contract serves as a theoretical foundation, symbolising the agreement that individuals implicitly make with their fellow citizens and the governing authority. It's what legitimises the authority of the government and the moral obligations that citizens have to follow the laws and norms of their society. Social contract theory has been explored by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who have delved into the nature of this contract and the balance between individual rights and the authority of the state.

Consent & Cooperation

The concepts of consent and cooperation are pivotal in social contract theory, serving as the foundation for the legitimacy of governmental authority and the ethical obligations of individuals within a given society. Within this framework, individuals come together and implicitly consent to a social contract in which they agree to cooperate, following established rules and norms, in exchange for the advantages and protections provided by the society or government.

As an example, think about individuals adhering to traffic regulations in a contemporary society. When people drive on public roads, they implicitly consent to a social contract that encompasses abiding by traffic laws. This consent is based on their recognition that by following these rules, they contribute to the collective safety and organisation of the road network. In return for this cooperation and compliance, they anticipate benefits such as safer and more efficient travel, a decrease in accidents, and the overall functionality of the transportation system. This practical instance illustrates how the concepts of consent and cooperation are at the core of social contract theory in the context of everyday life.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Contract Theory

Social contract theory excels in its ability to promote fairness and cooperation within society. It provides a framework for addressing issues of justice by highlighting the voluntary nature of the social contract. This notion that individuals willingly come together to form a just and orderly society fosters a sense of fairness and shared responsibility. Furthermore, the theory strikes a balance between individual rights and the common good, acknowledging the importance of preserving individual liberties while recognizing the need for certain limitations and rules to maintain social order and safeguard the well-being of all members of the community.

However, social contract theory is not without its criticisms. One notable challenge is its difficulty in defining a universal social contract that can be applied to all societies, given the diverse cultural, historical, and political contexts that shape the values and norms of different communities. What is considered just or acceptable in one society may not hold true in another, making it challenging to establish a single, universally accepted social contract. Additionally, the theory may face limitations in effectively addressing the rights and concerns of minority or marginalised groups within a society. In some instances, the majority might use the concept of a social contract to justify policies or practices that disproportionately affect these minority populations, raising questions about the theory's ability to protect the interests of all members of society equitably. In conclusion, social contract theory's strengths lie in its capacity to promote fairness, cooperation, and the balance between individual rights and the common good. Nevertheless, it grapples with the challenges of defining a universal social contract and ensuring that the rights of marginalized groups are adequately considered, necessitating on-going ethical and political discussions to adapt the theory to diverse social contexts.

**Conclusion**

In our exploration of four major ethical theories, Utilitarianism, Deontology, Virtue Ethics, and Social Contract Theory; we've uncovered distinct approaches to understanding and practicing ethics.

Utilitarianism places the focus on the consequences of actions, striving for the greatest overall happiness. Deontology, on the other hand, stresses the importance of moral rules and duties, evaluating actions based on their intrinsic moral quality.

Virtue Ethics places character development at the core of ethical decision-making, emphasising virtues such as courage, compassion, and honesty. Social Contract Theory offers insights into the implicit agreements and cooperation that underpin societal ethics.

Each of these theories provides valuable insights and perspectives, contributing to a well-rounded understanding of morality.

Ultimately, the choice of which ethical theory to apply in a given situation may depend on the specific ethical dilemma, personal values, and the broader cultural and societal context. The variety of these approaches enriches our ethical discourse and offers a comprehensive framework for addressing complex moral questions.