

Tutorial 4

Perform a Kantian Analysis using IRAC with this

- Ann the Acme Accountant Ann is an accountant at Acme Corporation, a medium-sized firm with 50 employees. All of the employees work in the same building, and Ann knows all of them on a first name basis. In fact, Ann distributes pay checks to Acme's employees at the end of every month. Ann's 10-year-old daughter is a Girl Scout. During the annual Girl Scout cookie sale, Ann sent an email to all of the other Acme employees, inviting them to stop by her desk during a break and place orders. (There is no company rule prohibiting the use of the email system for personal emails.) Nine of the recipients were happy to get Ann's email, and they ordered an average of four boxes of cookies, but the other 40 recipients did not appreciate having to take the time to read and delete an unwanted message; half of them complained to a co-worker about Ann's action. Did Ann do anything wrong?

Issue: The issue in the scenario is whether Ann, the Acme accountant, acted ethically by sending an email to all Acme employees inviting them to place orders for girl scout cookies during the annual cookie sale

Rule - Kantian ethics, based on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, emphasizes the importance of moral duties and universal principles.

According to Kant, individuals should act according to maxims that can be consistently willed as a universal law without contradiction.

Analysis - Ann, as Acme employee, used the company's email system to send a personal email inviting colleagues to purchase girl scout cookies for her daughter.

Kantian ethics would assess the action based on the universalizability principle: Could Ann's action be consistently willed as a universal law without contradiction.

Consistency Check - If everyone were to use the company email system for person purpose, it might lead to a flood of unwanted messages for employees and disruptions in the workplace.

Universal Law Test - Ann's Action, if universally adopted, would result in a situation where the company's email system is routinely used for personal matters, potentially causing inconvenience to other employees.

From a Kantian perspective, Ann's action of using the company's email system for personal purposes, while not explicitly prohibited by company rules, may be considered ethically questionable. Kantian ethics would suggest that if everyone were to adopt Ann's behavior, it

could lead to a workplace where company resources are consistently used for personal matters, potentially causing disruptions and inconvenience for employees.

Act Utilitarian Analysis

Rule:

- Act utilitarianism, based on consequentialism, evaluates the morality of actions based on the overall happiness or utility they produce.
- According to act utilitarianism, an action is morally right if it maximizes overall happiness or well-being.

Analysis:

- Ann used the company's email system to send a personal email inviting colleagues to purchase Girl Scout cookies for her daughter.
- Act utilitarianism would assess the action based on the consequences it produces in terms of overall happiness and well-being for all affected parties.

1. Positive Consequences:

- Nine employees were happy to receive Ann's email and placed orders for an average of four boxes of cookies each.
- Ann's daughter benefits from increased cookie sales, contributing to the success of the Girl Scout program.

2. Negative Consequences:

- Forty recipients did not appreciate receiving the email and had to take the time to read and delete an unwanted message.
- Half of them complained to a co-worker about Ann's action, suggesting a negative impact on workplace morale and relationships.

3. Overall Utility Assessment:

- The positive consequences involve increased happiness for Ann's daughter, those who placed orders, and potentially for Ann herself.
- The negative consequences include inconvenience and potential annoyance for the employees who did not appreciate the email.

Conclusion: From an act utilitarian perspective, Ann's action of sending the email could be considered ethically acceptable if the overall happiness or utility produced by the action outweighs the negative consequences. The positive impact on those who placed orders and the potential benefits for Ann's daughter might contribute to overall happiness.

However, the negative consequences, particularly the complaints and potential negative impact on workplace relationships, should also be considered. If the overall utility, taking both positive

and negative consequences into account, is positive, then Ann's action may be deemed morally right from an act utilitarian standpoint. If, however, the negative consequences substantially outweigh the positive ones, the action might be considered morally questionable.

Rule Utilitarian Analysis

Rule:

- Rule utilitarianism emphasizes adhering to rules that, when consistently followed, maximize overall well-being or utility.
- Rules that promote workplace harmony, efficiency, and respect for company resources may be considered positive.

Analysis:

- Ann, as an Acme employee, used the company's email system to send a personal email inviting colleagues to purchase Girl Scout cookies for her daughter.
- Rule utilitarianism would assess the action based on whether it conforms to rules that, if consistently followed, would maximize overall well-being for all affected parties.

1. Consistency Check:

- If everyone were to use the company email system for personal purposes, it might lead to a flood of unwanted messages for employees, potentially disrupting the workplace and decreasing overall efficiency.
- The action may conflict with the principle of using company resources primarily for work-related purposes.

2. Rule Assessment:

- If there is no explicit company rule prohibiting the use of the email system for personal emails, Ann's action may not be in direct violation of a stated rule.
- However, rule utilitarianism goes beyond explicit rules and considers whether the action aligns with broader principles that, if followed by everyone, would lead to a more harmonious and efficient workplace.

From a rule utilitarian perspective, Ann's action may be considered ethically questionable. While there might not be an explicit rule against using the email system for personal matters, the action may conflict with broader principles that, if consistently followed by everyone, could decrease overall workplace efficiency and potentially lead to disruptions.

Social Contract Theory Analysis

- posits that individuals implicitly agree to follow certain rules and norms for the sake of social order and mutual benefit.

- Actions are evaluated based on their alignment with the implicit or explicit social contract governing a community or society.

Analysis:

- Ann used the company's email system to send a personal email inviting colleagues to purchase Girl Scout cookies for her daughter.
- Social Contract Theory would assess whether Ann's action aligns with the implicit or explicit rules and norms governing workplace behavior and relationships.

1. Respect for Company Resources:

- Social Contract Theory would likely emphasize respect for company resources and the implicit agreement among employees to use these resources primarily for work-related purposes.
- Ann's action may be seen as potentially breaching this implicit agreement.

2. Workplace Harmony and Efficiency:

- The theory would consider whether Ann's action contributes to workplace harmony and efficiency or if it disrupts the social order by introducing personal matters into the professional environment.
- The negative reactions of some employees suggest potential disruptions to workplace harmony.

Conclusion: From a Social Contract Theory perspective, Ann's action may be considered ethically questionable. The implicit social contract within a workplace generally involves an agreement to use company resources responsibly and prioritize work-related communication. Ann's use of the company email system for personal matters may be seen as a breach of this implicit agreement.

Virtue Ethics Analysis

- emphasizes the development of virtuous character traits and the pursuit of moral excellence.
- Actions are evaluated based on whether they align with virtues such as honesty, integrity, and compassion.

Analysis:

- Ann used the company's email system to send a personal email inviting colleagues to purchase Girl Scout cookies for her daughter.
- Virtue Ethics would assess whether Ann's action reflects virtuous character traits and contributes to her moral development.

1. Honesty and Transparency:

- Virtue Ethics would consider whether Ann's action reflects honesty and transparency. If Ann was forthright about her intention and the purpose of the email, it might align with virtues.
- If Ann was misleading or manipulative, it could be seen as inconsistent with virtues.

2. Compassion and Consideration:

- Virtue Ethics would assess whether Ann's action reflects compassion and consideration for others. If Ann considered the potential impact on her colleagues and whether they might appreciate or be bothered by the email, it could align with virtues.
- If Ann acted without regard for the feelings or preferences of her colleagues, it may be seen as lacking in virtue.

Conclusion: From a Virtue Ethics perspective, Ann's action may be evaluated based on whether it reflects virtues such as honesty, transparency, compassion, and consideration.

- If Ann was open and honest about her intention, considering the potential impact on her colleagues, her action might align with virtues.
- If, however, Ann's action lacked transparency or consideration for her colleagues' preferences, it might be seen as falling short of virtuous behavior.