

Tutorial 3

Question 1

What are the advantages of using an ethical theory in which all humans are treated equally and guidelines are developed through a process of logical reasoning?

- Fairness and Justice
 - Equal Treatment: Treating all individuals equally is a fundamental principle of fairness. This ensures that no one is unfairly privileged or disadvantaged based on arbitrary criteria such as race, gender or socioeconomic status.
- Universal Applicability
 - An ethical theory that treats all humans equally is often more universal in its application. It transcends cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries, providing a framework that can be applied to diverse situations and contexts.
- Respect for Individual Rights
 - Emphasizing equal treatment often aligns with the protection of individual rights. It acknowledges and respects the autonomy and dignity of each person, fostering an environment where human rights are upheld.
- Ethical Decision-Making
 - Logical reasoning can help individuals and societies navigate complex ethical dilemmas. By relying on a systematic approach, ethical theories can provide guidance on how to make decisions that consider the well-being of all individuals involved.

Question 2

What do we mean when we say an ethical theory is rational?

When an ethical theory is rational by rational we mean based on logical reasoning, systematic analysis and a coherent framework for ethical decision making. Rationality in ethics involves the use of reason and critical thinking to derive ethical principles, evaluate more dilemmas and guide ethical behavior.

A rational ethical theory is internally consistent. It avoids contradictions in its principles and does not allow for incompatible rules. Logical Consistency ensures that the ethical guidelines are coherent and can be applied systematically.

Rational ethical theories often provide a structured framework for evaluation moral issues. This may involve the identification of fundamental principles, the consideration of relevant factors

and the application of reasoning to reach ethically sound conclusions.

Rational ethical theories strive for objectivity by minimizing personal biases and emotional influences in ethical decision making. They encourage users to approach moral issues with a clear and objective mindset relying on reason rather than subjective preferences.

Question 3

What is the many/any fallacy? Invent your own example of this fallacy.

Say person A - Many people claim that Diet X is effective for weight loss. Therefore, it must work for everyone."

In this example the fallacy occurs when Person A assumes that something is true because it works for a large amount of people but this overlooks the fact that individual variations exists. The fallacy lies in the unjustified leap from a statement about the effectiveness of the diet for many people to the conclusion that it will work for any person.

Question 4

Come up with your own example of a moral rule that would violate the Categorical Imperative.

Categorical Imperative - Moral Principle that suggests an action is morally acceptable if and only if one can consistently will that everyone should adopt the same action in similar circumstances without leading to logical contradictions.

Violating Categorical Imperative - Involves imagining a rule that, if universally applied, would lead to a contradiction/

Consider a scenario where a person is facing financial difficulties and is tempted to steal money to meet their immediate needs. To justify this action, they formulate a moral rule:

Person A: "It is morally acceptable to steal money whenever one faces financial hardship."

Now, let's apply the Categorical Imperative test:

- 1. Universalizability:** If everyone were to adopt this rule as a universal law—stealing whenever facing financial hardship—there would be a logical contradiction. If everyone stole whenever they faced financial difficulties, the concept of personal property would become meaningless.
- 2. Contradiction in Concept:** The contradiction arises in the very concept of personal property. The rule undermines the idea of individuals having exclusive rights to their possessions, leading to a breakdown in the concept of property itself.

Question 5

What is the difference between a consequentialist theory and a non-consequentialist theory?

Consequentialist Theory - Evaluates the morality of an action based on its consequences or outcomes. The fundamental idea is that the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by the overall balance of good and bad consequences it produces.

The most well known form of consequentialism is utilitarianism, which holds that the morally right action is the one that maximizes overall happiness or utility.

Non Consequentialist Theories - Do not assess the morality of actions solely based on their consequences. Instead, they emphasize the inherent nature of the actions themselves or the principles that dictate those actions.

Question 6

What is the problem with moral luck ?

The moral assessment of an action depends on factors outside the agents control such as the actual consequences of the action. Example - Two drivers may engage in the same risky behavior, but if one causes serious accident while the other does not, the moral assessment of their action might differ, even if their intentions were the same.

Question 7

Why do businesses and governments often use utilitarian thinking to determine the proper course of action?

Maximization of Overall Welfare:

Utilitarianism emphasizes the maximization of overall happiness or welfare. In both business and government, the goal is often to create the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This aligns with utilitarian principle of seeking outcomes that result in the greatest overall benefit'

Utilitarian thinking often involves a focus on quantifiable outcomes. This can make Decision-making more efficient, especially in situations where outcomes can be measured and compared in terms of their impact on well-being, economic prosperity or other relevant factors.

Question 8

Evaluate the four scenarios presented below from a rule utilitarian perspective.

IRAC - ISSUE, RULE ANALYSIS , CONCLUSION USE THIS TO ANSWER THE QUESTION

SCENARIO 1

Alexis, a gifted high school student, wants to become a doctor. Because she comes from a poor family, she will need a scholarship in order to attend college. Some of her classes require students to do extra research projects in order to get an A. Her high school has a few older PCs, but there are always long lines of students waiting to use them during the school day. After school, she usually works at a part-time job to help support her family. One evening Alexis visits the library of a private college a few miles from her family's apartment and she finds plenty of unused PCs connected to the Internet. She surreptitiously looks over the shoulder of another student to learn a valid login/password combination. Alexis returns to the library several times a week and by using its PCs and printers she efficiently completes the extra research projects, graduates from high school with straight A's and gets a full ride scholarship to attend a prestigious university.

Issue: The issue in Scenario 1 is whether Alexis's actions, which involve accessing a private college's library computers without permission and using someone else's login/password, are morally acceptable from a rule utilitarian standpoint.

Rule:

- Rule utilitarianism emphasizes the importance of adhering to rules that, when followed consistently, maximize overall well-being or utility.
- Rules that promote honesty, respect for property, and adherence to established rules are generally considered to align with the goal of maximizing utility.

Analysis:

- Alexis's actions involve accessing the private college's resources without permission, which is a form of trespassing and dishonesty.
- While her actions result in personal benefits, such as academic success and a full scholarship, they also potentially violate rules and cause harm to the private college by misusing their resources.
- If everyone were to follow the rule of surreptitiously using someone else's login/password to access resources without permission, it could lead to chaos, privacy violations, and harm to educational institutions. The private college's resources could be overwhelmed, potentially harming legitimate students.

Conclusion: From a rule utilitarian perspective, Alexis's actions in Scenario 1 would likely be considered morally wrong. Her actions involve violating rules and potentially causing harm to an institution. If her behavior were to become widespread, it could lead to negative consequences that outweigh her individual gain. Rule utilitarianism encourages adherence to rules that

promote social order, cooperation, and the overall well-being of society, even when there may be short-term individual benefits to breaking those rules.

SCENARIO 2

An organization dedicated to reducing spam tries to get Internet service providers (ISPs) in an East Asian country to stop spammers by protecting their email servers. When the effort is unsuccessful, the anti-spam organization puts the addresses of these ISPs on its "black list". Many ISPs in the United States consult the black list and refuse to accept email from the blacklisted ISPs. This action has two results. First, the amount of spam received by the typical email user in the United States drops by 25 percent. Second, tens of thousands of innocent computer users in the East Asian country are unable to send email to friends and business associates in the United States.

Issue: The issue in this scenario is whether the anti-spam organization's decision to put the addresses of ISPs in an East Asian country on its "black list," leading to reduced spam for U.S. email users but also hindering tens of thousands of innocent computer users in the East Asian country, is morally acceptable from a rule utilitarian perspective.

Rule:

- Rule utilitarianism emphasizes adhering to rules that, when consistently followed, maximize overall well-being or utility.
- Rules that promote reducing spam and improving the online experience for email users are generally considered positive.

Analysis:

- The anti-spam organization's decision to put the addresses of ISPs in the East Asian country on its "black list" is intended to reduce spam, which aligns with a rule that promotes the well-being of email users by reducing the annoyance and potential harm caused by spam.
- As a result of this action, the amount of spam received by the typical email user in the United States drops significantly, improving their online experience and overall well-being. This aligns with the goal of maximizing utility in the United States.
- However, the action also has negative consequences. Tens of thousands of innocent computer users in the East Asian country are unable to send email to friends and business associates in the United States. This restriction negatively affects their ability to communicate, potentially causing frustration and harm to their well-being.

Conclusion: From a rule utilitarian perspective, the anti-spam organization's decision to put the addresses of ISPs in the East Asian country on its "black list" is a morally complex issue. While

it achieves the positive outcome of reducing spam for U.S. email users and aligns with a rule aimed at improving their well-being, it also has negative consequences by restricting the communication abilities of innocent computer users in the East Asian country. The evaluation ultimately hinges on whether the reduction in spam for U.S. users outweighs the harm caused to innocent users in the East Asian country.

A rule utilitarian analysis would require a careful consideration of the overall consequences and the net effect on well-being. It would also prompt a discussion of potential alternative approaches to reducing spam that minimize harm to innocent users.