Data Ethics Portfolio Assignment 1

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Comparing Ethical Models: Utilitarianism vs. Deontology

Living in the age of AI isn't easy! the world has shrunk into a small village. We can search and learn almost anything. But how do we discriminate what is right from what is wrong? Each of us receives content tailored to our preferences, often without questioning what we see. We don't realize that everything we watch and believe we enjoy is recommended by a machine!! one that cannot think, feel, or even distinguish between right and wrong.

Ethics remains something I have yet to fully understand, and making sense of the world around me can often be challenging. When faced with difficult situations, I tend to rely on my own values (though sometimes the reality is far more complex than that) in order to keep things straightforward. Among the many ethical theories, I find myself most connected to Utilitarianism and Deontology.

Foundational Principles

Utilitarianism: Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. (Mill, 1879). To be honest I had to look what that means, so I got the modern English translation: We don't need to spend much time on the silly mistake of thinking that people who believe in utility as the basis of morality are somehow against pleasure. That's just not true.

In standard deontology, the basic concern is with right action or moral duty and the basic moral truths are propositions about our duties. The fundamental moral truths are judgments about rational agency, such as judgments about the maxims that a rational agent could will to be universal laws or judgments about the respect owed to rational agency (COPP, 2006). So the translation that I could find is: morality is about doing the right thing because it's your duty not because of the consequences. Moral truths are based on principles that respect human reason and dignity, like treating others as ends in themselves and acting only on rules you'd want everyone to follow. It's about honoring rational choice and universal moral laws.

Decision Making Approaches

Utilitarian decision-making is consequentialist and flexible, often involving cost-benefit analyses to assess potential pleasure versus pain outcomes. Choices pivot on predicted net utility, which can adapt to varying contexts and scale from personal decisions to public policy design (Utilitarianism Vs. Deontology - A Comparative Analysis, n.d.).

Deontological reasoning follows rule-oriented processes: identify relevant moral duties, consult universal maxims, and act in alignment with them. This method offers clear, principled guidance without weighing outcomes, emphasizing respect for individuals and inviolable rights (Comparison of Utilitarianism and Deontology, n.d.).

Strengths and Advantages

Despite their differences, Utilitarianism and Deontology share some important similarities:

Utilitarianism	Deontology
Prioritizes outcomes, often advocating for policies that maximize overall welfare, even if that requires sacrificing the interests of certain individuals or groups	Strict adherence to principles can hinder pragmatic decision-making in public contexts where outcomes cannot be ignored.
decision-making based on outcome	insists on adherence to duty and moral principles regardless of the consequences
policies may endorse cost-benefit analyses in environmental regulation	resist such trade-offs, instead emphasizing the inviolability of human rights

(Iyioke)

Conclusion

Utilitarianism and deontology are two different ways to think about right and wrong. Utilitarianism looks at how actions affect overall happiness, while deontology focuses on always following moral rules. Knowing how each works helps people make better choices when facing difficult ethical decisions.

In my opinion is Deontology's more suited for data ethics. It is duty based focus on individual rights, consent, and privacy. That makes it more suitable for guiding responsible data ethics practices.

Citation

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