Solving Conflict Problems, continued: Rule Utilitarianism

Act Utilitarianism

Right action = action with best consequences

Rule Utilitarianism

1. Right action = action which accords with the best rule

2. best rule = rule that would maximize happiness if people generally followed it

(Rule: general principle of action)

Note: differences between
--consequences of a single act A
--consequences of people always doing A in circumstances of type T
Rule Utilitarian method:

1. Identify conflicting obligations, values and interests.

2. Determine alternate relevant rules.

3. Determine relevant audience.

4. Determine consequences of each alternative rule for everyone in audience.

5. Select rule that maximizes happiness.

6. Select action that follows the best rule.
Case 12: Hospital case:
1. Conflicting values: life of one person v. life of several.

2. Alternate rules:
   **Rule 1:** Harvest organs from **healthy** person when more than one person can be saved.
   **Rule 2:** Never harvest organs from healthy people.

3. Audience: whole society

4. Consequences
   a. Rule 1: ...rumors will get out, **general** fear of doctors/hospitals
   b. Rule 2: ...people will go to hospital

5. Rule 2 has better consequences
6. Therefore, Dr. Jones can’t cut up man.
Case 13: Company loyalty case

Act 1: Put in a good proposal, which will very likely win government contract.
Act 2: Put in lousy proposal, which will likely lose government contract.

Rule 1: Employees should do the best work they can for their companies.
Rule 2: Employees should not always do the best work they can for their companies.

Consequences of act would be good, consequences of rule would be bad.

Act utilitarianism says botch proposal. Rule utilitarianism says don’t.
Case 11: City v. Town Case

Rule 1: Always put waste dumps in the least populated area available.
Rule 2: Distribute the burdens of waste disposal as evenly as possible.

Advantages of Rule Utilitarianism:
• Does better job with cases involving inviolable rights (hospital case)
• Does a better job with cases that involve fairness issues/issues about distribution of benefits and burdens (city v. town case)
• Does a better job with cases involving “role-centered obligations” (company loyalty case)
Case 14: (6.2 in book)
At T&D Manufacturing, the company’s engineers often design the new tools that they need and then solicit bids from outside vendors to make the tools. T&D also has an internal tool and die dept. In the past, this dept has been used primarily to resharpen and repair the tools that are purchased outside. Now the head of that dept has received permission from management to allow them to offer a price to produce the tooling internally. Next, the tool and die department head calls the head of the purchasing dept and asks for the prices from the outside vendors before he submits his quote. “We’re all part of the same company,” he says, “We should work together.”
TIPS ON FORMULATING RULES:

First think about alternative actions
Then generalize intention behind the action

Bad example:
Rule 1: Let an inside supplier who is just starting out have access to the first set of bids.
Rule 2: Don't let an inside supplier who is just starting out have access to the first set of bids.
(Too narrow)

Bad example:
Rule 1: Help your co-workers succeed.
Rule 2: Don't help your co-workers succeed.
(Too general)
Good example:
Rule 1: Let inside suppliers have access to bids.
Rule 2: Don’t let inside suppliers have access to bids.

Conflicting values in Case 14:
- obligation to help coworkers succeed
- obligation to keep promises (to vendors who expect bids to be blind)

Good alternative rules will help you compare conflicting values
--won’t focus on just one of them
--won’t distract you from values

General Practice = Rule
Some cases are more appropriate for Act Ut. analysis rather than Rule Ut.

- Some cases are unique, there is no way to formulate an appropriate rule ex: Truman dropping bomb on Japan

- Cases where you know others are not going to follow the best rule, and there will be worse consequences if you follow it alone.

  Ex: It would be best overall if everyone paid a higher wage for unskilled laborers. Your product will be priced uncompetitively if only you do it.

Smoke Detector Case
(Dr. Don Russell)
Problem:

- Are Act- and Rule-Utilitarianism too demanding?

Rule 1: Donate 10% of profits to charity.
Rule 2: Do not donate 10% of profits to charity.

Utilitarianism doesn’t detect the difference between:
Moral duty: what you must do vs.
Supererogation: Going above and beyond the call of duty.

- Problem of Justice
- Problem of Knowing all of the facts (consequences of actions)