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Moral Theories

1. Utilitarianism:

Moral Value $\rightarrow$ Greatest good for the greatest number of people.

① Cost-benefit Method:

- Step 1: What are options for action.
- Step 2: Assess costs and benefits of each option.
- Step 3: Pick option with greatest benefits and least cost.

- Limitations $\rightarrow$ Implies the worst for the least?
Not all costs/benefits are easily quantifiable.

② Maximizing good consequences:

- Absent monetary values for costs/benefit, maximize good outcomes or consequences.
- Emphasis is also on audience $\rightarrow$ people impacted by outcome.

③ Rules and practices:

- Use existing rules or practices to guide actions if they tend to produce the most good for the most people.

2. Respect for persons:

Moral values $\rightarrow$ Actions are right if they give equal respect to each person as a moral agent.

Moral agent $\rightarrow$ Autonomous being that acts with will or intention.

① Golden Rule:

- To act towards others as you would expect them to act towards you.

② Self Defeating Criterion

Question - If everyone else did what I was doing (or planning on doing), would it undermine my ability to do this same thing?

Yes → Action is wrong.

No → Action is right.

(Positive)

(Negative or obligation on others)

③ Rights - Entitlement to act or to have others act in a certain way.

Example - Right to life

Tiers of Rights:

1 - Basic - Life, freedom from harm (Bodily, psychological harm), health.

2 - Maintaining - Freedom from deception, ^{from being} cheated, informed, consent, etc. Legal process.

3 - Increasing - Right to education, right to property, right to earn a living, etc...

How to decide the right thing to do?:

1 - Look at the options for action.

2 - Look at the rights that come into play.

3 - What tier of rights are involved?

4 - Decide on option with least infringement of rights. (Higher tier > Lower tier)

3 • Virtue Ethics:

Definition - Act in the way that the good or virtuous person would act in the given circumstances.

- Examples of Virtue: Courage, Generosity, Loyalty, wisdom, Justice, Temperance

- Professional virtues: Medicine - Compassion for patients.

Law - Loyalty to client.

Engineering - professional care,
- respect for nature.

Pro - Open ended, - Ethical view

Con - Lacks specificity for individual cases

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How to apply virtue ethics:

1- List options for actions.

2- Which virtues are involved with different options?

3- Choose: a) virtue over vice, b) Most appropriate virtue for the circumstances.

4- If no clear appropriate virtue, then options may be equally permissible.