Principles of Ethical Reasoning

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a general term for any view that holds that actions and policies should be evaluated on the basis of the benefits and costs they will impose on society. In any situation, the “right” action or policy is the one that will produce the greatest net benefits or the lowest net costs (when all alternatives have only net costs).

Many businesses rely on such utilitarian cost-benefit analyses, and maintain that the socially responsible course to take is the utilitarian one with the lowest net costs.

Jeremy Bentham founded traditional utilitarianism. His version of the theory assumes that we can measure and add the quantities of benefits produced by an action and subtract the measured quantities of harm it will cause, allowing us to determine which action has the most benefits or lowest total costs and is therefore moral. The utility Bentham had in mind was not the greatest benefit for the person taking the action, but rather the greatest benefit for all involved. For Bentham:

"An action is right from an ethical point of view if and only if the sum total of utilities produced by that act is greater than the sum total of utilities produced by any other act the agent could have performed in its place."

Also, it is important to note that only one action can have the lowest net costs and greatest net benefits.

To determine what the moral thing to do on any particular occasion might be, there are three considerations to follow:

1. You must determine what alternative actions are available.
2. You must estimate the direct and indirect costs and benefits the action would produce for all involved in the foreseeable future.
3. You must choose the alternative that produces the greatest sum total of utility.

Utilitarianism is attractive to many because it matches the views we tend to hold when discussing governmental policies and public goods. Most people agree, for example, that when the government is trying to determine on which public projects it should spend tax monies, the proper course of action would be for it to adopt those projects that objective studies show will provide the greatest benefits for the members of society at the least cost. It also fits in with the intuitive criteria that many employ when discussing moral conduct. Utilitarianism can explain why we hold certain types of activities, such as lying, to be immoral: it is so because of the costly effects it has in the long run. However, traditional utilitarians would deny that an action of a certain kind is always either right or wrong. Instead, each action would have to be weighed given its particular circumstances. Utilitarian views have also been highly influential in
economics. A long line of economists, beginning in the 19th century, argued that economic behavior could be explained by assuming that human beings always attempt to maximize their utility and that the utilities of commodities can be measured by the prices people are willing to pay for them.

Utilitarianism is also the basis of the techniques of economic cost-benefit analysis. This type of analysis is used to determine the desirability of investing in a project (such as a dam, factory, or public park) by figuring whether its present and future economic benefits outweigh its present and future economic costs. To calculate these costs and benefits, discounted monetary prices are estimated for all the effects the project will have on the present and future environment and on present and future populations. Finally, we can note that utilitarianism fits nicely with a value that many people prize: efficiency. Efficiency can mean different things to different people, but for many it means operating in such a way that one produces the most one can with the resources at hand.

Though utilitarianism offers a superficially clear-cut method of calculating the morality of actions, it relies upon accurate measurement, and this can be problematic. There are five major problems with the utilitarian reliance on measurement:

1. Comparative measures of the values things have for different people cannot be made; we cannot get into each others' skins to measure the pleasure or pain caused.
2. Some benefits and costs are impossible to measure. How much is a human life worth, for example?
3. The potential benefits and costs of an action cannot always be preliably predicted, so they are also not adequately measurable.
4. It is unclear exactly what counts as a benefit or a cost. People see these things in different ways.
5. Utilitarian measurement implies that all goods can be traded for equivalents of each other. However, not everything has a monetary equivalent.

The critics of utilitarianism contend that these measurement problems undercut whatever claims utilitarian theory makes towards providing an objective basis for determining normative issues. These problems have become especially obvious in debates over the feasibility of corporate social audits.

Utilitarians defend their approach against the objections raised by these problems by saying that though ideally they would like accurate measurements of everything; they know that this is largely impossible. Therefore, when measurements are difficult or impossible to obtain, shared or common-sense judgments of comparative value are sufficient.

There are two widely used common-sense criteria. One relies on the distinction between intrinsic goods and instrumental goods. Intrinsic goods are things that are desired for their own sake, such as health and life. These goods always take precedence over instrumental goods, which are things that are good because they help to bring about an intrinsic good. The other common-sense criterion depends on the distinction between needs and wants. Goods that bring about needs are more important than those that bring about wants. However, these methods are intended to be used only when quantitative methods fail.
The most flexible method is to measure actions and goods in terms of their monetary equivalents. If someone is willing to pay twice as much for one good than for another, we can assume that the former is twice as valuable for that person. Many people are made uncomfortable by the notion that health and life must be assigned a monetary value. Utilitarians point out that we do so every day, however, by paying for some safety measures but not for those measures that are considered more expensive.

The major difficulty with utilitarianism, according to some critics, is that it is unable to deal with two kinds of moral issues: those relating to rights and those relating to justice. If people have rights to life, health, and other basic needs, and if there is such a thing as justice that does not depend on mere utility, then utilitarianism does not provide a complete picture of morality. Utilitarianism can also go wrong, according to the critics, when it is applied to situations that involve social justice. Utilitarianism looks only at how much utility is produced in a society and fails to take into account how that utility is distributed among the members of society.

Largely in response to these concerns, utilitarians have devised an alternative version, called rule utilitarianism. In this version, instead of looking at individual acts to see whether they produce more pleasure than the alternatives, one looks only at moral rules at actions of a particular type. If actions of a kind tend to produce more pleasure or have lower costs, then they are the moral types of actions. Just because an action produces more utility on one occasion does not show it is right ethically.

Rule utilitarianism may not completely answer all of the objections raised by critics of utilitarianism. A rule may generally produce more utility and still be unjust: consider rules that would allow a large majority to take unfair advantage of a smaller minority.

The theory of the rule utilitarian, then, has two parts, which we can summarize in the following two principles:

1. An action is right from an ethical point of view if and only if the action would be required by those moral rules that are correct.
2. A moral rule is correct if and only if the sum total of utilities produced if everyone were to follow that rule is greater than the sum total utilities produced if everyone were to follow some alternative rule.

Thus, according to the rule-utilitarian, the fact that a certain action would maximize utility on one particular occasion does not show that it is right from an ethical point of view.

Thus, the two major limits to utilitarianism—difficulties of measurement and the inability to deal with rights and justice remain, though the extent to which they limit utilitarian morality is not clear.

**Rights**

In general, a right is a person's entitlement to something; one has a right to something when one is entitled to act a certain way or to have others act in a certain way towards oneself. An
entitlement is called a legal right. Entitlements can come from laws or moral standards; the latter are called moral rights or human rights. They specify, in general, that all humans are permitted to do something or are entitled to have something done for them.

In our ordinary discourse, we use the term right to cover a variety of situations in which individuals are enabled to make such choices in very different ways. First, we sometimes use the term right to indicate the mere absence of prohibitions against pursuing some interest or activity. Second, we sometimes use the term right to indicate that a person is authorized or empowered to do something either to secure the interests of others or to secure one's interests. Third, the term right is sometimes used to indicate the existence of prohibitions or requirements on others that enable the individual to pursue certain interests or activities.

The most important rights are those that impose requirements or prohibitions on others, enabling people to choose whether or not to do something. Moral rights have three important features defining them:

1. Moral rights are closely correlated with duties.
2. Moral rights provide individuals with autonomy and equality in the free pursuit of their interests.
3. Moral rights provide a basis for justifying one's actions and invoking the aid of others.
4. Moral judgments made on the basis of rights differ substantially from those based on utility.

First, they are based on the individual, whereas utilitarianism is based on society as a whole. Second, rights limit the validity of preferring numbers and social benefits to the individual. On the other hand, although lights generally override utilitarian standards, they do not always do so. In times of war, for example, civil rights are commonly restricted for the public good.

Besides negative rights, which are defined entirely in terms of the duties others have not to interfere with you, there are also positive rights. Positive rights imply that others have a duty not only to refrain from interference, but also to provide you with what you need to pursue your interests. Privacy is an example of a negative right; the rights to food, life, and health care are positive. In general, more liberal theorists hold that society should guarantee positive as well as negative rights; conservatives wish to limit government to enforcing negative rights. Positive rights were not emphasized until the 20th century. Negative rights were often employed in the 17th and 18th centuries by writers of manifestos (such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights), who were anxious to protect individuals against the encroachments of monarchical governments. Positive rights became important in the 20th century when society increasingly took it on itself to provide its members with the necessities of life that they were unable to provide for themselves.

There are other rights as well. Those most closely connected to business activity are contractual rights, sometimes called special rights and duties or special obligations. These lights attach only to specific individuals, and the duties they give rise to attach only to specific individuals. In addition, they arise out of specific transactions between parties and depend upon a pre-existing public system of rules. Without the institution of contracts, modern businesses could not exist. There are four ethical rules governing contracts:
1. Both parties to a contract must have full knowledge of the nature of the agreement.
2. Neither party must intentionally misrepresent the facts.
3. Neither party must be forced to enter the contract.
4. The contract must not bind the parties to an immoral act.

Generally, a contract that violates one or more of these conditions is considered void.

One of the most powerful groundings for moral rights (and therefore the ethical rules governing contracts) comes from Immanuel Kant. His principle, called the categorical imperative, requires that everyone be treated as a free and equal person. It states, "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law." A maxim, according to Kant, is the reason a person has for doing what he plans to do. Therefore, an action is morally right if the person's reason for doing it is a reason he would be willing to have every person in a similar situation act upon. For Kant:

"An action is morally right for a person in a certain situation if, and only if, the person's reason for carrying out the action is a reason that he or she would be willing to have every person act on, in any similar situation."

The categorical imperative incorporates two criteria for determining moral light and wrong: universalizability and reversibility. Universalizability means the person's reasons for acting must be reasons that everyone could act on at least in principle. Reversibility means the person's reasons for acting must be reasons that he or she would be willing to have all others use, even as a basis of how they treat him or her. That is, one's reasons for acting must be reasons that everyone could act upon in principle, and the person's reasons must be such that he would be willing to have all others use them as well. Unlike utilitarianism, which focuses on consequences, Kantian theory focuses on interior motivations.

The second formulation Kant gives of the categorical imperative is this: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." Or never treat people only as means, but always also as ends. What Kant means by "treating humanity as an end" is that everyone should treat each human being as a being whose existence as a free rational person should be promoted. For Kant, this means two things: (a) respect each person's freedom by treating people only as they have freely consented to be treated beforehand, and (b) develop each person's capacity to freely choose for him or herself the aims he or she will pursue. Kant's second version of the categorical imperative can be expressed in the following principle:

"An action is morally right for a person if, and only if, in performing the action, the person does not use others merely as a means for advancing his or her own interests, but also both respects and develops their capacity to choose freely for themselves."

This version of the categorical imperative implies that human beings have an equal dignity that sets them apart from things such as tools or machines and that is incompatible with their being manipulated, deceived, or otherwise unwillingly exploited to satisfy the self-interests of another.

However, even if the categorical imperative explains why people have moral rights, it cannot by itself tell us what particular moral rights humans have. And when rights come into conflict, it
cannot tell us which right should take precedence. Still, there seem to be three basic rights that can be defended on Kantian grounds:

1. Humans have a clear interest in being provided with the work, food, clothing, housing, and medical care they need to live.
2. Humans have a clear interest in being free from injury and in being free to live and think as they choose.
3. Humans have a clear interest in preserving the institution of contracts.

Despite the attractiveness of Kant's theory, critics have argued that, like utilitarianism, it has its limitations and inadequacies. A first problem that critics have traditionally pointed out is that Kant's theory is not precise enough to always be useful. Second, some critics claim that although we might be able to agree on the kinds of interests that have the status of moral rights, there is substantial disagreement concerning what the limits of each of these rights are and concerning how each of these rights should be balanced against other conflicting rights. A third group of criticisms that have been made of Kant's theory is that there are counterexamples that show the theory sometimes goes wrong. Most counterexamples to Kant's theory focus on the criteria of universalizability and reversibility.

A very different view of rights is based on the work of libertarian philosophers such as Robert Nozick. They claim that freedom from constraint is necessarily good, and that all constraints imposed on one by others are necessary evils, except when they prevent even greater human constraints. The only basic right we all possess is the negative right to be free from the coercion of other human beings.

Libertarians may pass too quickly over the fact that the freedom of one person necessarily imposes constraints on other persons, if only that others must be constrained from interfering with that person. If I have the right to unionize, for example, I constrain the rights of my employer to treat me as he sees fit. Though libertarians tend to use Kant to support their views, there is no consensus on whether or not this is actually possible. There is also no good reason to assume that only negative rights exist.

**Justice and Fairness**

Justice and fairness are essentially comparative. They are concerned with the comparative treatment given to the members of a group when benefits and burdens are distributed, when rules and laws are administered, when members of a group cooperate or compete with each other, and when people are punished for the wrongs they have done or compensated for the wrongs they have suffered. Justice generally refers to matters that are more serious than fairness, though some philosophers maintain that fairness is more fundamental. In general, we think that considerations of justice are more important than utilitarian concerns: greater benefits for some do not justify injustices to others. However, standards of justice to not generally override individual moral rights. This is probably because justice is, to some extent, based on individual moral rights.

There are three categories of issues involving justice:

1. Distribution justice is concerned with the fair distribution of society's benefits and burdens.
2. Retributive justice refers to the just imposition of penalties and punishments.

3. Compensatory justice is concerned with compensating people for what they lose when harmed by others.

Questions of distributive justice arise when there is a scarcity of benefits or a plethora of burdens; not enough food or health care, for example, or too much unpleasant work. When resources are scarce, we must develop principles to allocate them fairly. The fundamental principle involved is that equals should be treated equally (and unequals treated unequally). However, it is not clear in just what respects people must be equal. The fundamental principle of distributive justice may be expressed as follows:

"Individuals who are similar in all respects relevant to the kind of treatment in question should be given similar benefits and burdens, even if they are dissimilar in other irrelevant respects; and individuals who are dissimilar in a relevant respect ought to be treated dissimilarly, in proportion to their dissimilarity."

Egalitarians hold that there are no relevant differences among people that can justify unequal treatment. According to the egalitarian, all benefits and burdens should be distributed according to the following formula:

"Every person should be given exactly equal shares of a society's or a group's benefits and burdens."

Though equality is an attractive social ideal for many, egalitarianism has been strongly criticized. Some critics claim that need, ability, and effort are all relevant differences among people, and that it would be unjust to ignore these differences.

Some egalitarians have tried to strengthen their position by distinguishing two different kinds of equality: political equality and economic equality. Political equality refers to an equal participation in, and treatment by, the means of controlling and directing the political system.

This includes equal rights to participate in the legislative process, equal civil liberties, and equal rights to due process. Economic equality refers to equality of income and wealth and equality of opportunity. The criticisms leveled against equality, according to some egalitarians, only apply to economic equality and not to political equality.

Capitalists argue that a society's benefits should be distributed in proportion to what each individual contributes to society. According to this capitalist view of justice, when people engage in economic exchanges with each other, what a person gets out of the exchange should be at least equal in value to what he or she contributed. Justice requires, then, that the benefits a person receives should be proportional to the value of his or her contribution. Quite simply:

"Benefits should be distributed according to the value of the contribution the individual makes to a society, a task, a group, or an exchange."

The main question raised by the contributive principle of distributive justice is how the "value of the contribution" of each individual is to be measured. One long-lived tradition has held that contributions should be measured in terms of work effort. The more effort people put forth in their work, the greater the share of benefits to which they are entitled. The harder one works, the
more one deserves. A second important tradition has held that contributions should be measured
in terms of productivity. The better the quality of a person's contributed product, the more he or
she should receive.

Socialists address this concern by stating that the benefits of a society should be distributed
according to need, and that people should contribute according to their abilities. Critics of
socialism contend that workers in this system would have no incentive to work and that the
principle would obliterate individual freedom.

The libertarian view of justice is markedly different, of course. Libertarians consider it wrong to
tax someone to provide benefits to someone else. No way of distributing goods can be just or
unjust apart from an individual's free choice. Robert Nozick, a leading libertarian, suggests this
principle as the basic principle of distributive justice:

"From each according to what he chooses to do, to each according to what he makes for
himself (perhaps with the contracted aid of others) and what others choose to do for him
and choose to give him of what they've been given previously (under this maxim) and
haven't yet expended or transferred."

"If I choose to help another, that is fine, but I should not be forced to do so." Critics of this view
point out that freedom from coercion is a value, but not necessarily the most important value, and
libertarians seem unable to prove outright that it is more important to be free than, say, to be fed.
If each person's life is valuable, it seems as if everyone should be cared for to some extent. A
second related criticism of libertarianism claims that the libertarian principle of distributive
justice will generate unjust treatment of the disadvantaged. Under the libertarian principle, a
person's share of goods will depend wholly on what the person can produce through his or her
own efforts or what others choose to give the person out of charity.

John Rawls' theory of justice as fairness is an attempt to bring many of these disparate ideas
together in a comprehensive way. According to his theory, the distribution of benefits and
burdens in a society is just if:

1. Each person has an equal right to the most extensive basic liberties compatible with equal
   liberties for all (the principle of equal liberty); and
2. Social and economic inequalities are arranged so that they are both:
   a. To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged (the difference principle), and
   b. Attached to offices and positions open fairly and equally to all (the principle of
      equal opportunity).

Rawls tells us that Principle 1 is supposed to take priority over Principle 2 should the two of
them ever come into conflict, and within Principle 2, Part b is supposed to take priority over Part
a.

Principle 1 is called the principle of equal liberty. Essentially, it says that each citizen's liberties
must be protected from invasion by others and must be equal to those of others. These basic
liberties include the right to vote, freedom of speech and conscience and the other civil liberties,
freedom to hold personal property, and freedom from arbitrary arrest. Part a of Principle 2 is
called the difference principle. It assumes that a productive society will incorporate inequalities,
but it then asserts that steps must be taken to improve the position of the most needy members of society, such as the sick and the disabled, unless such improvements would so burden society that they make everyone, including the needy, worse off than before. Part b of Principle 2 is called the principle of fair equality of opportunity. It says that everyone should be given an equal opportunity to qualify for the more privileged positions in society's institutions.

Therefore, according to Rawls, a principle is moral if it would be acceptable to a group of rational, self-interested persons who know they will live under it themselves. This incorporates the Kantian principles of reversibility and universalizability, and treats people as ends and not as means. Some critics of Rawls point out, however, that just because a group of people would be willing to live under a principle does not mean that it is morally justified.

Two final types of justice are retributive and compensatory justice, both of which deal with how best to deal with wrongdoers. Retributive justice concerns blaming or punishing those who do wrong; compensatory justice concerns restoring to a harmed person what he lost when someone else wronged him. Traditionally, theorists have held that a person has a moral obligation to compensate an injured party only if three conditions pertain:
1. The action that inflicted the injury was wrong or negligent.
2. The action was the real cause of the injury.
3. The person did the action voluntarily.

The most controversial forms of compensation undoubtedly are the preferential treatment programs that attempt to remedy past injustices against groups.

The Ethics of Care

As the Malden Mills fire and rebuilding shows1, there are perspectives on ethics that are not explainable from the point of view of utilitarianism, rights, or Kantian philosophy. The owner had no duty to rebuild (or to pay his workers when they were not working) from any of these perspectives; still, he maintained that he had a responsibility to his workers and to his community. Rather than being impartial (which all of these theories maintain is crucial), this owner treated his community and workers partially.

This is central to the point of view known as the ethics of care, an approach to ethics that many feminist ethicists have recently advanced. According to this method, we have an obligation to exercise special care toward the people with whom we have valuable, close relationships. Compassion, concern, love, friendship, and kindness are all sentiments or virtues that normally manifest this dimension of morality. Thus, an ethic of care emphasizes two moral demands:
1. We each exist in a web of relationships and should preserve and nurture those concrete and valuable relationships we have with specific persons.
2. We each should exercise special care for those with whom we are concretely related by attending to their particular needs, values, desires, and concrete well-being as seen from their own personal perspective, and by responding positively to these needs, values,

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desires, and concrete well-being, particularly of those who are vulnerable and dependent on our care.

An ethic of care, therefore, can be seen as encompassing the kinds of obligations that a so-called communitarian ethic advocates. A communitarian ethic is an ethic that sees concrete communities and communal relationships as having a fundamental value that should be preserved and maintained.

The demands of caring are sometimes in conflict with the demands of justice, though, and no fixed rule exists to resolve these conflicts. Critics point out that the ethics of care can easily degenerate into unjust favoritism. Though the ethics of care can also lead to burnout, the advantage of the theory is that it is a corrective to the other approaches that are impartial and universal.

**Integrating Utility, Rights, Justice, and Caring**

This is a basic outline of the four main kinds of basic moral considerations:

1. Utilitarian standards - must be used when we do not have the resources to attain everyone's objectives, so we are forced to consider the net social benefits and social costs consequent on the actions (or policies or institutions) by which we can attain these objectives.
2. Standards that specify how individuals must be treated - must be employed when our actions and policies will substantially affect the welfare and freedom of specifiable individuals. Moral reasoning of this type forces consideration of whether the behavior respects the basic rights of the individuals involved and whether the behavior is consistent with one's agreements and special duties.
3. Standards of justice - indicate how benefits and burdens should be distributed among the members of a group. These sorts of standards must be employed when evaluating actions whose distributive effects differ in important ways.
4. Standards of caring - indicate the kind of care that is owed to those with whom we have special concrete relationships. Standards of caring are essential when moral questions arise that involve persons embedded in a web of relationships, particularly persons with whom one has close relationships, especially those of dependency.

One simple strategy for ensuring that all four kinds of considerations are incorporated into one's moral reasoning is to inquire systematically into the utility, rights, justice, and caring involved in a given moral judgment. One might, for example, ask a series of questions about an action that one is considering:

(a) Does the action, as far as possible, maximize social benefits and minimize social injuries?
(b) Is the action consistent with the moral rights of those whom it will affect?
(c) Will the action lead to a just distribution of benefits and burdens?
(d) Does the action exhibit appropriate care for the well-being of those who are closely related to or dependent on oneself?
Unfortunately, there is not yet any comprehensive moral theory to show when one of these considerations should take precedence.

An Alternative to Moral Principles: Virtue Ethics

Many ethicists criticize the entire notion that actions are the subject of ethics. The central issue (as Ivan Boesky shows²) is the kind of person an agent ought to be and what the character of humans ought to be. This does not mean that the conclusion of this type of ethics (called virtue ethics) will be much different, however. Rather, the virtues provide a perspective that covers the same ground as the four approaches, just from a different perspective.

A moral virtue is an acquired disposition that is a valuable part of a morally good person, exhibited in the person's habitual behavior. It is praiseworthy, in part, because it is an achievement whose development requires effort. The most basic issue, from the perspective of virtue ethics, is the question: What are the traits of character that make a person a morally good human being? Which traits of character are moral virtues? According to Aristotle, moral virtues enable humans to act in accordance with their specific purpose (which he held to be reasoning). Other philosophers, such as Aquinas, have come up with different lists of virtues. The American philosopher Alasdair Macintyre has claimed that a virtue is any human disposition that is praised because it enables a person to achieve the good at which human "practices" aim. Pincoffs suggests that virtues include all those dispositions to act, feel, and think in certain ways that we use as the basis for choosing between persons or between potential future selves. In general, the virtues seem to be dispositions that enable people to deal with human life. However, it also seems that what counts as a moral virtue will depend on one's beliefs and the situations one faces.

Virtue theory says that the aim of the moral life is to develop the dispositions that we call virtues, and to exercise them as well. The key action guiding implication of virtue theory, then, can be summed up in the claim that:

"An action is morally right if, in carrying out the action, the agent exercises, exhibits, or develops a morally virtuous character, and it is morally wrong to the extent that by carrying out the action the agent exercises, exhibits, or develops a morally vicious character."

The wrongfulness of an action can be determined by examining the character the action tends to produce (or the character that tends to produce the action). It also provides a useful criterion for evaluating our social institutions and practices.

An ethic of virtue, then, is not a fifth kind of moral principle that should take its place alongside the principles of utilitarianism, rights, justice, and caring. Instead, an ethics of virtue fills out and adds to utilitarianism, rights, justice, and caring by looking not at the actions people are required to perform, but at the character they are required to have.

**Morality in International Contexts**

² [http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id316.htm](http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id316.htm)
Though the principles discussed so far are clear enough, how they are to be applied in foreign countries is more complex. Petty bribery, which is considered unethical in the U.S., is standard practice in Mexico; nepotism and sexism occur as a matter of course in some Arabic business environments. Should multinationals follow the laws of the less developed countries in which they operate? Should they try to introduce their own standards? How do they treat their own employees doing the same job in two very different countries? Do they pay them the same wage?

The following four questions can help clarify what a multinational corporation ought to do in the face of these difficulties:

1. What does the action really mean in the local culture's context?
2. Does the action produce consequences that are ethically acceptable from the point of view of at least one of the four ethical theories?
3. Does the local government truly represent the will of all its people?
4. If the morally questionable action is a common local practice, is it possible to conduct business there without engaging in it?