

Four Resolution Principles

(After Kidder)

- I. **“Do what’s best for the greatest number of people.”**
— ends-based or utilitarian (J S Mill)
- II. **“Follow your highest sense of principle.”**
— rule-based or Kantian
- III. **“Do as you would be done by.”**
— care-based, the Golden Rule
- IV. **“Live admirably.”**
Virtuous ethics.

Case 1: Publish and be Damned?

KF is the editor and publisher of a daily paper.

A banker's son is under investigation for arson of a popular restaurant.

The banker also owns a competing restaurant.

Unconfirmed leaks: indictment of son is imminent, but not generally known.

Advice to KF: *publish now, lest we are scooped.*

The banker to KF: *my son has been framed—publication of rumours would ruin his life. And he won't be charged.*

KF owes the banker for past (open) favour.

**Conflict between KF and the executive editor:
*Publish now!***

Case 1, continued

Type of dilemma: Truth v Loyalty

Resolution: gather information, seek alternatives, otherwise a moral principle?

- I. Ends-Based: What's the greatest good? — the story? The greatest number? — not the banker and his family, but the public.**
- II. Rule-Based: The highest rule? — “Publish the truth and hang the consequences”? “Always protect the innocent?” Other editors in similar conditions?**
- III. Care-Based: Who are “others”? — the banker's son? the banker? KF: in the banker's shoes, don't publish.**

Case 1 continued

Result: Hold the story!

Why?

Was seeing the competition sufficient to risk ruining someone's life and reputation? What public interest is there in publishing *early*? Yes, she owed the banker, but irrelevant. Same decision even if father unknown? — Yes.

A week later the son was indicted, and the paper still published first.

Case 2: What the tow-truck driver saw.

Driver pinned in cab after hitting a tree.

Cab on fire — could explode at any moment.

Police arrived: driver — *Shoot me! Shoot me!*

Flames spread. Policeman draws his revolver.

Then, instead, the cop grabbed a can of CCl₄.

Sprayed the driver's face — unconscious. Cab explodes.

The cop's dilemma: Short v Long, Justice v Mercy.

Case 2 continued

- I. **Ends-based: saving 1 v losing both? easing pain v agony of burning?**
- II. **Rules-based: “Never kill!” (and can’t foresee consequences 100% — fire brigade?)**
- III. **Golden Rule?**
 1. **Assumptions of the driver/the cop — a third way?**
 2. **Police don’t kill, or ethical heroism to break the law and shoot?**

Case 3: May's ex and his new girlfriend

May is a counsellor at an STD clinic.

Finds she has 2 STDs herself, but sex only with her long-term partner.

Confronted, he denies infidelity. The relationship ends.

Later May counsels a young ♀ with 1 STD, whose boyfriend, she learns, is her own ex.

May's dilemma: warn the ♀ or keep quiet?

Dilemmas: Truth v Loyalty, Self v Other, Short v Long.

Case 3 continued

- I. **Ends-based: consequences? diseases spread to others? May compromised if silent? May scaring ♀ off her ex if she tells? ∴ Tell (to save community)**
- II. **Rules-based: (consequences mere speculation). Rule: “Save life!” whose?**
- III. **Golden Rule: if May the ♀, then Tell.**

Third alternative: turn the ♀ over to another counsellor?

Case 4: The Loyal Employee

Bill works with Maud, a very loyal employee, wrapped in work.

But never in 20 years of service did she quite fit any position.

Generous, careful, slow, deliberate, technophobic, a creature of habit.

Unable to change, no family, no savings, 6 years from retirement.

Cost cutting → Maud replaced by a computer, and no other work for her.

The firm can't easily carry Maud; but Maud needs the job until retirement.

Bill's dilemma: self v community.

Case 4: continued

- I. **Ends-based: risk the community's survival for a single person? No.**
- II. **Rule-based: consequences not certain — a new need for Maud? her loyalty is extreme — use it? favourite niece of a rich old uncle? ∴ stick to the rule? “People are ends, not means?” Less an employee, more a family member?
Or: “Always strengthen the team?” how? fire? or keep?**
- III. **Care-based: who is “other”? Maud? Other employees, at risk?**

Resolution depends on knowing Mary really well.

Tuesday's Homework (individual)

- 1. Read the Ford Pinto case and Damian's summary of Jackall (both handed out). Answer the questions in the Course Outline under Tuesday's HW.**
- 2. Can you resolve two questions from Mr Ethicist or the Australian CEO using the principles of resolution?**
- 3. Complete your second Reflections diary note.**
- 4. Due by 9am tomorrow, max five pages or less. (Be prepared to share in class.)**