

Bass, kenneth,
barnett, brown.
individual difference,
variables, ethical
judgemen...

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This is an ethical dilemma that I have faced recently. I had a friend whose pet dog was very sick. If the vet were able to perform an operation, but there was only a small chance that the dog would recover. This surgery was very expensive, though. They didn't have the money, but they could take out a personal loan in order to save their dog. Money was already tight, and my friend was having trouble paying their bills as it was. My friend asked me to help them resolve this dilemma, as it was a hard decision to make.

This is how my friend and I decided to resolve this dilemma. We looked at all of the possible moral choices that were available and weighed them against one another. In this case, there were really only two decisions. Either pay the money, hope the dog would survive, and try to make it work or just let the dog go. It was hard for my friend to make a decision based on logic alone, as they were very attached to their dog. The issue is that if they were to pay the money, and the dog were to die, then they would be in a more difficult position for no reason. However, if my friend were to simply let their dog die, they probably wouldn't have been okay with it. These are the consequences that I focused on regarding the various choices.

Another issue with this decision is that my friend had a little sister who also really loved the dog. They were worried that if they simply had the dog put to sleep it would affect the way the girl perceived her responsibility towards pets. In this way, my friend and I had a responsibility to uphold a sense of morality so that those who see us make our decisions will have a good example. This is how I considered my actions would affect others' lives in the

community. In this sense, it seems that we both had the innate sense that a pet owner has a sense of responsibility towards their animals. The idea of stewardship, those who have the strength to protect those weaker or less intelligent than them should, is how I applied a moral rule that I believe has universal authority.

When making this decision, I couldn't help but think about how my father might handle the situation. If at all possible, I know he would have tried to help his animal. He always taught me that a person's actions are what determine their morality. This is how I considered a person I admired might handle it. "As a thinking individual, you create yourself through the choices that you make much as a sculptor gradually forms a figure through countless cuts of the chisel. If you create yourself as a moral person, you create a person of character and worth, with an acute sense of right and wrong and the power to choose appropriately. But if, out of ignorance, you don't choose to create yourself as a moral person, your soul gradually becomes corrupted." (Chaffee)

While we attempted to approach the situation in a utilitarian way, it gave way to an ethical idealism. This is the ethical theory that we've studied that resembles my approach. We couldn't, in the end, approach the decision completely rationally, as we had an emotional attachment to the animal.

When listing out the possible actions and their outcomes, it became obvious that in a utilitarian approach, it would have been logical to simply let the dog go, as it wasn't likely that it would survive either way. At a certain level, it is difficult to implement utilitarian ideas, as an emotional connection makes it hard to make difficult moral judgments. However, it seems important to keep

emotion in ethics, as it is a largely human issue that shouldn't be subjected to rationales in the absence of personal values.

So, while we initially tried to approach this from a logical standpoint, utilitarianism, we couldn't allow ourselves to make the decision based on what we considered to most likely bring about the greatest amount of happiness. Perhaps, though, instead of considering the most likely scenario, happiness was achieved through the eventual recovery of my friend's dog.

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