The Three Rules of Humanity

We must all strive to live by some code or set of rules. Each of us must find or adopt that code which can be cast into our hearts and become a true part of ourselves. The process to find and adopt our personal code of ethics can take many years; some never quite finish the task. Those that do find and adopt their code, will fine life simpler and yet more colorful. I have written these down in the hope that others, perhaps my children, will read and learn what I think to be a true philosophy.

The inspiration for the Three Rules of Humanity came from my interest in science fiction (Isaac Azimov) and studies of classical western philosophy (Kant, Ross and Rawls). I originally formed this three rule code as an assignment in a business ethics class. I have continued to reflect upon it and develop it over the years and will refine it further in the years to come. The framework is simple, flexible but still very broad in its application to daily life. It may be viewed without religious bias or intent except in the furthest extension of the code; the "Zeroth Rule", which is a more recent development.

Kant's Categorical Imperative

First Formulation;
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 and similar situation.

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

Azimov's Three Laws of Robotics

Accepting the second formulation, for now, and using the first formulation let us examine the Three Laws of Robotics:

1. A robot will not cause harm to a human, and will not through inaction allow harm to come to a human.
2. A robot will follow the instructions of a human except where it conflicts with law #1.
3. A robot will insure its own survival except where it conflicts with laws #1 and #2.

We may now universalize the three laws to apply to human actions and attempt to answer the questions "Did Azimov’s robots act in a moral fashion?" and "Can we as humans act in a moral fashion using similar rules?"

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Emmet's Three Rules of Humanity

The framework for the *Three Rules of Humanity* is a simple hierarchical code which is flexible but still broad enough to be applied to actions in daily life. The three rules are:

1. *A person will not cause harm to another human being, nor will they allow harm to come to a human being through their inaction.*
2. *A person will follow the instructions or disciplines of a person or agency placed in a position of authority by society and for the benefit of society except where those instructions conflict with rule #1.*
3. *A person will strive for self actualization and the full development of their potential within their environment except where this action conflicts with rules #1 and #2.*

**First Rule:**

Under the first rule, is one of non-malficence (Ross) where a person's actions promote the continuation of the species and save, secure environment to live in. Please note that "person" refers to an individual or to a collective agency (Rawls). By this a group of people or a company would not be able to injure any person through action or inaction. Also by Kant's second formulation, no action is morally right if harm is caused for personal or economic gain. This is the *rule of sacrifice* to others and is the one that clears the way for all other rules.

**Second Rule:**

The second rule is the *rule of service* to others. This rule sets the duty to remain faithful to the social contract with authority; fidelity. That authority is recognized for it's beneficence and appeals to or compels people who may not share a high standard of virtue of happiness (Ross).

Our society today is complex and requires many special talents (communications, transportation, law, protection, public health, public safety, etc.) for its continued operation. This rule also recognizes the need for paternalism (Rawls) in areas where it would be impossible for all individuals in a society to maintain the skills and abilities necessary for the continuance of that society. When the an agent or agency is acting within its defined sphere of control, it is necessary for members of that society to submit to that authority. We also have the responsibility to remove that agent or agency when it is no longer required and is a burden or it no longer acts to the benefit of society (as per rule one).

**Third Rule:**

The third rule is the *rule of self fulfillment*. This rule addresses the duty of self improvement (Ross) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Personal survival and safety are but the lower tier of needs (basic needs) and we must, by our human nature, extend upward to needs of love and esteem and personal attainment of our full potential. It is here that we have the duty to perfect ourselves through self discipline and recognizing wisdom as a gift when it is presented to us.
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**Zeroth Rule**

Azimov introduced the Zeroth Law\(^3\) to resolve a higher need in robots than that of one individual for another; for the need to sacrifice one individual or oneself for the good of humanity. We have a similar rule that places the devotion to God (in whatever form) above our personal needs and wants. We must not diminish the role of the ultimate Truth which has existed from before time and will exist after eternity. We must therefore recognize that the sacrifice made by holy people for their beliefs is or was justified. To honor God is placed above honor to others or our self.

**The Conclusion**

Under the presumption that all people would prescribe to these rules and be bound by them, each individual would be afforded an equal right to the greatest amount of liberty (principle of justice, Rawls). No person would receive preferred consideration as rule one would be equally applied to the collective of human beings without regard to race, sex or other superficial distinction. The absolute hierarchical nature these rules makes it possible to determine the relative weight and merit of conflicting duties. Also the simplicity of these rules (even without rule Zero) reduces the need for a definition of "sufficient mental maturity." The hierarchical nature and simplicity is fundamental to responding to unique circumstances by acting in unique but consistent fashion within the rules.

The justice of this position (The Three Rules) is NOT based upon equality being dependent or contingent but is based upon a act of good will which is good in itself (Kant); and act of universal good is intuitively recognized. The prima facie duties of the three rules (plus zero) need not be reasoned of justified but are instituted, not to produce the greatest good (though that may indeed result) but because and action which is good is self justifying and fundamental.

In short we should be kind to others, respect due authority and strive for perfection of our physical selves and enlightenment.

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\(^3\)Isaac Azimov, *Robots and Empire*, © 1985 Doubleday.