IE 380, The Responsible Engineer

Good Work: Religious Ethics Applied
Overview

- The Problem: Bad Work
- A Buddhist Approach To Designing Good Work
- A Christian Approach To Designing Good Work
- Dimensions of Good Work
- Addendum: Common Ethics Across Time and Culture
The Problem: Bad Work

- Low/no pay
- Dangerous
- Isolated: no social interaction
- Boring, repetitious
- Ugly environments
- No feedback (or only negative)
- No feeling of accomplishment or status
- Too demanding (or not demanding enough)
- No autonomy (or too much)
- End product or service of unknown or little value
- Little/no opportunity for growth
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Foxconn anti-suicide nets.  
A Buddhist Approach To Designing Good Work

• History of Buddhism (Rahula xv-xvi)
  • 6th century BC, N. India (now Nepal)
  • Siddattha Gotama (Sanskrit: Siddartha Gautama), son of ruler of Sakyas
  • Dissatisfied with life, left at 29 to find release from suffering
  • Wandered, studied, practiced ascetic discipline
  • Attained enlightenment at 35 (under the Bo-tree, “Tree of Wisdom”)
  • Taught first sermon to 5 disciples in the Deer Park near Benares.
  • Taught until his death at 80
  • Buddhism practiced today by 400 – 600 million adherents

• Principles: The Four Noble Truths (Rahula 16-49)
  I. Dukkha: suffering
  II. Samudaya: the origin or arising of dukkha
     thirst, craving, greed, desire for and attachment to sense-pleasure, existence, wealth, power, ideas, ideals, … anything!
  III. Nirodha: the cessation of dukkha
  IV. Magga: the way leading to the cessation of dukkha
Buddhist Ethics: *Magga*, The Noble Eightfold Path
(Rahula 45-49)

- **Wisdom**
  1. *Right Understanding*: including the Four Noble Truths
  2. *Right Thought*: selflessness, beneficence, non-maleficence, etc.

- **Ethical Conduct**
  3. *Right Speech*: no lying, slander, speech leading to disharmony
  4. *Right Action*: peaceful, no killing, stealing, or dishonest dealing
  5. *Right Livelihood*: no work that causes suffering

- **Mental Discipline**
  6. *Right Effort*: to cultivate good and wholesome states of mind
  7. *Right Mindfulness*: attention to the body, mind, sensations, ideas, etc.
  8. *Right Concentration*: towards joy, happiness, tranquility, awareness, etc.
The Buddha's Specific Advice to Servant Holders (Lee “Basics of Buddhism ...”)

- Be mindful of the servant's abilities.
- Provide adequate food, wages, and time to recover from illness.
- In general, treat servants with generosity.
Buddhist Guidelines for Work Design
(Lee et al 567)

1. Avoid isolation and division.
   - Cultivates compassion and mutual understanding
   - Beneficial spillover effect.

2. Promote information sharing and learning.
   - Withholding information = false speech
   - Leads to more capable employees & decisions, leading to personal mastery
   - Increases knowledge of one's place in the world
   - Generates greater sense of value & motivation
Buddhist Guidelines (cont'd)

3. Promote efficient use of resources.
   • Sentient centered, ecocentric values
   • Results of mindless overproduction: waste, the degradation of humans and nature

4. Better means of motivation
   • Results of focus on financial rewards
     • Individual and social effects
   • Examples of better means of motivation
     • Intrinsic motivation
5. Pay attention to the physical, mental, and socioeconomic well-being of workers.

- Conditions for a well-oiled workplace
- Historical lessons: Scandinavia (Volvo), Japan (*karoshi*) ... China (Foxconn suicides)
- Know yourself: actions, decisions, motivations
A Christian Approach To Designing Good Work

- History of Christianity
  - ~0 AD Jesus born
  - ~30 AD Jesus begins ministry
  - ~33 AD Jesus crucified (and, believers claimed, resurrected)
  - >33 AD Christianity begins spreading

- Main Ethical Principles
  1. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
  2. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.
     or
  Do to others as you would have them do to you.
Christian Perspective On Work:  
More Specific Principles for Work Design

- *Imago Dei* (man, the image of God; Genesis 1:1, 27)  
- Sabbath rest (e.g., Genesis 2:30)  
- Affliction of forced labor (e.g., Exodus 1:11)  
- Wise work (e.g., Proverbs 8:22, 30)  
- Work as source of satisfaction (e.g., Ecclesiastes 2:24)  
- Value of co-workers (e.g., Ecclesiastes 4:9)  
- Fair compensation for work (e.g., Matthew 10:9-10)
Christian Perspective On Work: More Principles for Work Design

- Man to cultivate the Garden - sustainability (Genesis 2:15)
- Evil of prodigality, waste (Luke 15:11-32)
- Divine Order (John 1:1; 1 Corinthians 14:33; James 3:16)
- Seek good of all men (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
- Love neighbor as self (Matthew 22:39)
Christian Guidelines For the Design of Good Work

1. Work should develop and exercise the worker's creative abilities.
2. Work should permit adequate rest.
3. Work should require reasonable physical and mental pace and load.
4. Work should give the worker opportunity to develop and exercise wisdom.
5. Work should be for worthy ends.
6. Work should be collaborative and cooperative.
Christian Guidelines For the Design of Good Work

7. The worker should receive fair pay for his work.
8. Work should minimize waste and pollution.
9. The workplace should be well ordered, but not overly constraining.
10. The worker should have some autonomy.
11. Work should provide opportunity to demonstrate trustworthiness.
12. Work should promote the health and safety of the worker.
Summary: Characteristics of Good Work
(Lee About Good Work 18-26)

1. Appropriate compensation
2. Safety
3. Social interaction
4. Variety
5. Aesthetics
6. Feedback
7. Contribution to accomplishment and status
8. Appropriate demand
9. Appropriate autonomy
10. Valuable product or service
11. Opportunity for technical growth
12. Opportunity for personal growth
Addendum: Common Ethics Across Time and Culture
(Lewis 93-121)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common ethics:</th>
<th>Found in</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• beneficence</td>
<td>• ancient Egyptian</td>
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<tr>
<td>• respect for and duties to parents, elders, ancestors</td>
<td>• Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• duties to children and posterity</td>
<td>• Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• justice</td>
<td>• old Norse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• honesty, truthfulness</td>
<td>• Babylonian</td>
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<tr>
<td>• good faith, veracity</td>
<td>• Hindu</td>
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<tr>
<td>• mercy</td>
<td>• Confucian</td>
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<tr>
<td>• magnanimity*</td>
<td>• Christian</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• native American</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Anglo-Saxon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>• ancient Greek cultures</td>
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* Nobility or generosity of spirit; superiority to petty resentment or jealousy; noble or generous disregard of insults or injuries (*OED*)


