

Chapter 2: The RF/FP approach

A combination of elements

RF/FP includes sound reasoning, for intelligent decisions, and fairness, as a moral basis. It also recognizes that some people, on some occasions, want more than is fair and are extremely reluctant to cooperate in a reasoned and fair way. For those people on those occasions, it may be worthwhile using power fairly to motivate or even impose a fair outcome. Also, if you have fair power then that encourages other people to stay with reason and fairness.

E.g. Imagine you live in a flat and your neighbours below have a loud party that continues until daybreak. You have work tomorrow and need to sleep. The next day after work you go downstairs and talk to your neighbour, calmly explaining the effect the party noise had on you. The neighbour is sincerely apologetic and promises it will not happen again. There are no more noise incidents. This is an example of reason and fairness in action.

But what if the neighbour is unreasonable? Suppose they seem apologetic and promise it will not happen again but a few days later it does. Again you visit after work the next day to remind them of the effect on you and ask for a reasonable arrangement, but this time they tell you to '**** off' and close the door in your face. You research your options and talk to your local council. When the next party starts a few days later you record the noise level using the council's app. This is the start of the process for getting authorities involved and, potentially, them taking legal action. The council officer has already offered to talk to your neighbours if they cause nuisance noise again. This is an example of fair use of power.

When we use reason and fairness, our discussions are cooperative, even during disagreements, and we share our thinking through descriptions, explanations, suggestions, and even recommendations. When we shift to fair use of power, we begin to give instructions backed by power.

The following sections explain more about the three elements: reason, fairness, and fair use of power.

Reason

Characterization

'Reason' here means the thinking that works best in objective tests of thinking effectiveness. Reason is not a system based on arbitrary choices of axiom or cultural

prejudices. The truth is not a matter of opinion. Reason is the thinking that really works.

This definition is simple in principle and, if you accept that effective thinking is a good thing, you should prefer methods that prove effective.

Of course, not every attempt to use reason is successful and sometimes a lucky guess can be correct, but over a long series of objective tests it is reason that will (almost) always win.

There is also a task where unsound thinking can perform quite well, and that is persuading someone to accept a wrong belief or poor course of action. In this task a person who does not use reason might convince themselves of something and have similar success convincing others.

With these minor qualifications, the ultimate test of reason is that it works.

Reason works to understand and sometimes influence or control systems that cannot be charmed or pleaded with. It's the thinking that can understand complex natural systems, cure diseases, raise agricultural productivity, understand people, win most games and sports, organize complicated human activities efficiently, make an aeroplane fly, and much more.

Reason has achieved scientific understanding and advanced technologies that have given life to billions of people who otherwise would have died early or never been born.

Reason also helps each of us be happier, contribute more, live longer, and alleviate stress, anxiety, and low mood.

The main elements of reason are a firm basis in reality and use of logic. These can be elaborated as follows:

Efficient observation: The foundations are meticulous observation (i.e. noticing specific factual details objectively), counting, timing, other measurement, and recording. This may be just passive but is usually more effective in exploratory trials, tests, and experiments. Sound reasoners understand how observations can be unreliable and design observation methods for reliability.

Orderly representation: It helps to summarize recorded observations in ways that promote understanding. This can be with graphical summaries (e.g. charts, animations), tables, breakdowns, summary statistics, and mathematical models that fit the data.

Possible explanations and other elements of thinking can also be represented in neat, orderly, precise ways. Sound reasoners use clear, precise language to say only what they intend to say. They use terms consistently and recognize when distinctions are needed. Their thinking is orderly and methodical. They document it and use explicit models, sometimes including mathematical models and simulations.

Logic: Sound reasoning is consistent with conventional propositional and predicate logic, and with conventional mathematics, but not restricted to situations of complete certainty. It is also consistent with the Bayesian meaning of probability as degree of belief and with probability theory. Facts and possible explanations are compared with each other. Deductions from alternative models are made and

compared with what has been observed to assess how likely it is that each model is the best.

Controlled, accurate doubt: Sound reasoning requires considering multiple possibilities carefully – not jumping to conclusions. Evidence accumulates, models are refined and combined, and yet there can still be doubt as to which is best and new evidence can prompt quite deep revisions.

To reason well it is important to minimize the extent to which you are confident of beliefs that are in fact wrong. This requires avoiding certainty on points for which evidence is weak. Premature certainty can distort observations and thinking. A sound reasoner also checks facts.

Sound reasoners understand statistical effects, psychological biases and illusions, and typical errors, especially in their areas of expertise, and work to avoid or overcome them. Sound reasoners are aware of the many ways that others might go wrong in their reasoning or attempt persuasive tricks, and they take precautions against them.

A lifetime of careful, sound reasoning is a great basis for continued sound reasoning.

Efficient design: Developing new technologies also involves design work. This is best done in an orderly, focused way, exploring the best alternatives first, driven by insight, unimpeded by habit, combining good ideas, and evaluating ideas using knowledge and practical tests.

The limits of reason

Successful reasoning is not just a matter of being smart. One issue is that it relies on knowledge. A brilliant reasoner might make predictions about the future based on what the reasoner knows but be wrong because other, unknown factors are more important.

Also, problem solving is a search process. If you happen to search in the right place initially, by luck, then you might solve a problem quickly while someone else with perhaps a better method or a quicker brain might fail.

Choice of method is also important. Some methods work better with some problems and we often do not know why. On average methods that are equally orderly and logical are not necessarily equally effective and efficient for a particular problem.

More generally, rationality is 'bounded' in the sense that most real problems are too complex and involve too much uncertainty for conclusions to be drawn without simplification and taking uncertainty into account in some way.

These limitations do not stop reason from being extremely powerful and useful, but we often must be patient and tolerate struggles to reach good conclusions.

The limits of influence by reason

Although reason is valuable and effective, it has limits as a method of influence.

Although many people rely on reason most of the time, especially on important matters where they have expertise, everyone makes mistakes sometimes and some

people make many more mistakes than others. Since the 1970s, when this theme first became popular with psychologists, thousands of studies have demonstrated that, on average, people are not completely rational.

However, the extent of irrationality has often been exaggerated. Studies usually must be designed carefully so that the irrationality is revealed because in most ordinary situations people perform too well, especially when the stakes are high, they are trying, and they have extensive, relevant, previous experience. For example, while many people might make mistakes in an abstract logic task, far fewer do when the same logic is put in a familiar real-world context.

Individual differences are important. In a typical study of irrationality, some people are significantly irrational while others are nearly or perfectly rational.

Despite our largely rational nature, some people cannot be influenced sufficiently by reason alone, at least at some times on some issues:

- Babies and very young children.
- People experiencing overwhelming emotions (though you might wait 30 minutes and try again).
- People with certain serious psychiatric problems.
- People with severe learning difficulties that have stopped them learning to reason effectively.
- People without the specific cognitive skills needed to understand the reasoning involved (e.g. if it involves mathematics).
- People too busy with other things they consider more important (though they may change their view if given a good, concise reason).
- People who have decided not to listen to you at all.
- Some religious people, especially on some issues.
- Some people immersed in ideologies with beliefs that insulate them from evidence and reason (e.g. some political positions, conspiracy theories, belief that the earth is flat).
- People who consider their own interests or those of their group but have no care for others.
- Addicts regarding their addictions.

In these cases, an alternative is to use power fairly. This usually involves rewards and punishments, not necessarily physical coercion. The more power you have the easier it is to deal with people on issues where they are not influenced by reason and fairness.

Developing reason

Although reason is now a recognizable approach with familiar elements, it has developed over centuries and is still being refined and improved. Early highlights include Aristotle's work on logic and Euclid's work on geometry.

Early mathematicians wrote equations as sentences in Latin, but today we use the familiar notation of letters for variables and special characters for operators, comparators, and a range of functions. Mathematics by hand is far more productive as a result and software has taken this further. For example, there are systems able to reason symbolically in calculus as well as crunch numbers.

In the 20th century great progress was made in understanding the cost of thinking and the idea of bounded rationality. Psychologists uncovered a variety of irrational behaviours, including biases and thinking mistakes, that good reasoners can learn to defend against. Experimental methods and research methods generally developed and some of these are improvements over past methods, at least in some situations.

Far more people today are interested in developing systematic ways to think about problems, especially difficult ones.

Breakthroughs in probability theory that began over 300 years ago continue to push forward as new computational technologies make modern Bayesian methods practical.

The frontiers of reason for humans have advanced and the same is true for groups of people and individuals. Countries can advance their reasoning, usually by absorbing and applying discoveries made by others. Individuals can make progress if they try.

Sound reasoning involves many skills. Use of some of these has been correlated with IQ test scores or numeracy skills, but not all. If you want to use sound reasoning more in your life then the main determinant of your success is your determination to learn and act differently. Opportunities to learn are available to almost everyone in the developed world. All you need is a public library or internet connection.

Potential confusions and concerns

The following paragraphs cover potential confusions and concerns about this idea of reason:

Other names: Synonyms for reason include 'sound reasoning', 'rational thinking', 'logical thinking', 'effective thinking' and some other permutations of these words. Philosophers and psychologists have written in detail about phrases like these and fine distinctions have been drawn. In this book there are no such distinctions.

Reason versus science: Reason probably sounds a lot like science but it is not the same. Good science makes intensive use of sound reasoning but (1) not all work presented as science is entirely done with sound reasoning and (2) much sound reasoning is done outside science.

E.g. Imagine two people open a small sandwich shop but at lunchtimes, when they are busy, work is chaotic and stressful. One evening they talk over what

happens, carefully itemize the problems, and consider possible solutions. The next day they make some changes to the layout of their shop, slightly change who does what, and prepare ingredients differently. Subsequently, as they work they are more aware of issues and try to evaluate the operation of the shop objectively. They continue to tweak their approach day after day. This thinking is not what most people would recognize as science but it is sound reasoning.

They did not do all the things that are typical of sound reasoning but they did enough to make good progress. It could have been much worse. They could have been less systematic or tried to work out their processes, shop layout, and menu from mystical principles, ignoring the evidence of their own observations and trusting in vibrations or a supernatural being to bring them success.

Reason and emotion: Reason is not an alternative to emotion. Our emotional responses are to situations *as we understand them*. (Sometimes that understanding is primitive and may be arrived at without cortical involvement. Nevertheless, it is an understanding of the situation and can be revised and improved.) Sound reasoning helps us understand situations correctly, and so react with appropriate emotions to the right things and to the right extent.

Also, using reason does not mean ignoring emotion in favour of more easily measured outcomes like money or time. Depending on your interpretation of fairness, the emotional consequences of a course of action could be important considerations. In some situations they might be quantifiable and measurable.

Rationality and selfishness: Some people associate the word 'rationality' with selfishness or money orientation but no such associations are intended here.

Competitive advocacy: Discussions using reason feel like cooperative analysis or problem solving, though they can be quite one-sided if one person has done most of the thinking on a problem. Being cooperative does not mean people are unwilling to find fault; it just means they are as determined to find faults in their own reasoning as in the reasoning of others.

In some situations our society relies instead on competitive advocacy, often applying rules to discourage the worst behaviour. Competitive advocacy is used in law courts, debates, and some scientific publications and conferences. Managed, competitive advocacy is a way to control bad behaviour and a potential fall-back if cooperative thinking cannot be achieved. It has disadvantages, one being the unfair advantage to the side with the most brain power.

Creativity: Reason is not restricted to analysis, as the descriptions of typical mental activities above make clear. Problem solving and design, including generating unexpected, fresh solutions, are crucial to reason.

Intuition: What we call 'intuition' is not a mystical unconscious process that operates outside reason. More often it is the result of pattern recognition and response or of simple reasoning that does not need to be put into symbols. Intuition can be developed by acquiring more skill, through reason.

Speed: Effective thinking is fast and efficient. In practice, unless thinking is carried out by a digital computer, we usually need lines of reasoning to be short and simple or we get confused and make mistakes. Mathematical reasoning is a remarkable

exception but even here there are arguments too long to be checked reliably by humans.

Fairness

Characterization

Our sense of fairness (roughly the same as justice and morality) must have begun to develop long before philosophers and clerics first proposed theories for it. Evolution operating through natural selection almost certainly started things off. Genes were selected if they promoted cooperation and taking care of one's own young and other genetically related people.

Beyond that there has probably been some cultural evolution. Groups with cultures that emphasise cooperation, mutual care, appropriate incentives, fair dealing, and so on have thrived more than others – lasting longer and growing larger.

In addition, human invention and deliberate implementation have operated. Ideas have been developed based on reasons rather than just randomly and have been taught, copied, and enforced (often implemented through the details of laws).

If we surveyed views across the United Kingdom and similar countries, then we would find many different opinions on the definition and principles of fairness. And yet there would be considerable agreement on how to deal with specific situations.

This is because the origins of fairness are in what works to promote a society that most people want to participate in, where they have good, enjoyable, long lives and there are few or no stragglers.

Just as reason is what works, so too is fairness. A fair society is one where people cooperate peacefully, live freely but considerately, and beneficial change is not impeded. The opposite is a society where those with the most power (e.g. the best fighters or most ruthless tricksters) just take what they want, leaving most people with miserable lives.

State-of-the-art fairness today is not the finished article but it works well. The better we do fairness the better the results when evaluated over everyone in a society and over time, considering the quality and length of lives enjoyed, and checking for stragglers rather than just looking at averages.

Fairness works for individuals and whole societies, and works best when everyone is fair consistently. Encouraging fairness is encouraging a form of cooperation that benefits those who participate. Discouraging or preventing unfairness is protecting those benefits of cooperation.

People who are largely successful in implementing reason and fairness in their lives:

- are good friends, neighbours, and citizens;
- work hard on their studies and to be useful to others;
- are considerate towards others, consume moderately, and clear up after themselves;

- stay well informed;
- take care of their health and fitness;
- take care of their property; and
- participate diligently when they join community activities.

The following pages offer an attempt to articulate fairness as guidelines with practical justifications. These are more complex than a handful of key moral principles but less complex and more fundamental than the law. I have focused on points I think most British people today would agree with and highlighted ways they promote well-being across a society.

Although I think each point would be supported by most people, you will still probably find points you disagree with and others you would have written and justified differently. Perhaps you favour a particular moral system from Western philosophy or rely on a religion. Perhaps you are an expert on the evolution of morality and recognize many of these mechanisms but have detailed quibbles about the theories or terminology.

The reason for setting out guidelines like this with pragmatic justifications is that they are more likely to be accepted when used in a discussion where others have a mixture of approaches to morals or you do not know their approach. This is a pragmatic approach most of us can go along with most of the time. It's a great starting point in trying to find common ground.

Summary

In this summary, fairness is defined by the system of guidelines collectively, with different guidelines being applicable in different contexts. There is no short definition from which everything else is deduced.

Here are the guidelines that describe fairness and their effects (excluding those related to use of power). The guidelines are explained in the following sections.

Decision methods

1. The hierarchy of acceptable group decision-making methods, starting with the most preferred (but not the most powerfully binding), is:
 - Consensus achieved entirely through reason and fairness.
 - Randomness used when there is no other basis for a decision.
 - Freely made decisions in a fair market.
 - Following agreed rules.
 - Voting.
2. When making decisions, predict the practical consequences for all affected.
3. Try to choose actions that lead to good outcomes when considered across all those affected.
4. Only value legitimate interests.

5. To get people to do the right thing, give them good reasons. If that fails then using rewards is acceptable. If that too fails then punishments may be used.

Cooperation

6. Look for ways to benefit from cooperation without creating possibilities that are very unattractive for some people.
7. Cooperate with arrangements designed for collective benefit (except in exceptional circumstances).
8. Tell the truth and keep your word (except in some specific exceptional situations).
9. Do not use, take, or damage property that belongs to others without their permission.
10. If you harm someone else or cause them a loss, deliberately or through negligence, then compensate them if you can.
11. When choosing people to cooperate with it is fair to favour close family members, people we have previously cooperated with, people who follow similar conventions or have similar values relevant to the cooperation, and people who are better able to cooperate.

Use of rules

12. If it is efficient then encode mutual commitments as rules.
13. Do not apply rules to behaviour that happened before the rule was put in place.
14. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.
15. Act fairly within the law.
16. Do not act like an official law enforcer unless you are one.

Personal attributes

17. It is desirable for people to be capable, rational, fair, and diligent.

Fair shares

18. Divide work and rewards equally if and only if there are no fair bases for unequal division.
19. Division of work and rewards should not be affected by irrelevant characteristics or behaviours.
20. At all levels of achievement, share work and rewards to encourage helpful, productive, diligent, honest, and otherwise fair behaviour and discourage bad behaviour.
21. Reward people for trying to improve their capability.
22. Incidences of good and bad behaviours do not fairly have everlasting effects on fair shares.
23. Expect less work from, and give more support to, babies and children, the elderly, the sick and injured, the disabled, those temporarily out of work, and those made homeless or destitute by a disaster.

24. The support given to people who are disabled, temporarily out of work, destitute, or homeless should not create an incentive to become disabled, out of work, destitute, or homeless.
25. It is fair for people to favour their own family, especially their immediate family, up to a point.
26. It is fair to make gifts and leave an inheritance for people in your family and others you consider worthy.
27. Recognize that losses tend to have more impact than gains of the same size and that losses have more impact on those who have little.
28. When sharing rewards, if resources are not proportional to the outcomes they produce then divide resources according to outcomes if this is practical, otherwise adjust towards division by resources.
29. Do not give special opportunities to high contributors to get away with behaviour that unnecessarily harms others.
30. Do not waste resources.
31. Build up reserves.

Fair deals

32. A fair deal is consistent with what would be achieved in a fair market.
33. Do not make fair markets unfair.
34. Accept prices from pre-agreed auction mechanisms.

Roles

35. The pairing of people with roles (e.g. jobs, home roles, places on educational programmes) should, ideally, be the most economically efficient for society as a whole within the constraints of what individuals want to do.
36. The pairing of people with roles at every stage in life should be unaffected by irrelevant considerations.
37. When judging people for roles it is their future performance that is important not their current ability or past performance (though these are usually informative).
38. Only compensate for unequal opportunities earlier in life by judging future performance.
39. Where roles are allocated through competition, it should be fair competition.
 - People should follow the rules to discover who is the best performer or most suitable for a role.
 - The rules should not give any competitor an advantage for irrelevant reasons.
 - Objective assessment is preferred to judgement because it is more reliable and less at risk from cheating.
40. The rewards linked to roles should be those that make best economic sense for the society as a whole. We should not pay more than is needed and should expect to pay more for roles that are, for example:

- valuable
- hard to do well, or
- unattractive (uncomfortable/painful, unglamorous, unsociable, insecure, dangerous, tiring, dirty).

Health, sex, and reproduction

41. Take care of your health and the health of your children.
42. Reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases.
43. Have no more than one lover at a time and limit your lifetime total number of sexual partners.
44. Do not have sex with people who are too young.
45. Do not have sex with people who are genetically closely related to you.
46. Make babies only when you have good prospects of being able to look after them to adulthood.

Decision methods

1. The hierarchy of acceptable group decision-making methods, starting with the most preferred (but not the most powerfully binding), is:

- **Consensus achieved entirely through reason and fairness.**
- **Randomness used when there is no other basis for a decision.**
- **Freely made decisions in a fair market.**
- **Following agreed rules.**
- **Voting.**

We make decisions involving more than one person in various ways.

The fairest way is to reach a consensus entirely through reason and fairness. A consensus is where everyone affected agrees. (Most of the guidelines below focus on this method.)

Another method uses randomness. When it is impossible to share and there is no fair basis for choosing who loses out, we prefer random choice, perhaps flipping a coin or drawing straws.

E.g. Who goes first in many games is decided by a randomizing mechanism such as a coin toss because someone has to start and there is no basis for choosing one team or person over the other.

E.g. Sometimes oversubscribed tickets are distributed by a lottery. The view in these cases is that everyone is equally entitled to a ticket so randomized selection is the best way.

Another favoured method is freely made decisions in a fair market. A fair market is one where no buyer or seller has significant control and unfair tactics such as price fixing, dishonest product descriptions, and lies about discounts are outlawed.

E.g. The problem of oversubscribed tickets can also be solved by auctioning them or by other pricing mechanisms. The view here is that those who want the tickets

most will pay most, and perhaps also those who have contributed most to society (net of consumption) and now have most money are more able to buy the tickets.

Decisions can also be made by passing and enforcing laws. This has proved a highly successful method even though some laws and some decisions have been unfair.

When a consensus based on reason and fairness is unlikely or impossible then the favoured method is often to resort to voting. Voting is better than selfish rule by a tyrant or oligarchy but has problems even when outright voter fraud is prevented. Voters often do not try to be fair, use reason, or be well informed. People trying to win votes often target gullible voters they can sway with tricks and lies. If a few people are affected very badly by something while most people are affected positively but only slightly then voting can be tough on the minority. A lot of damage can be done through the choice of what is put to the vote.

E.g. The saga of the UK's efforts to leave the European Union exposed many of the problems with voting mechanisms.

In court cases, jury voting is preceded by controlled competitive advocacy. Each side tries to put its case and win the arguments rather than reach the truth together.

The least preferred group decision-making methods are also the most binding, once agreed. Voting ultimately determines our laws, which constrain decisions in fair markets. Yet, reason and fairness remain our best guides and the best preparation for voting, law making, and market decisions.

Attempts to get decisions made without any of the above methods, through abuse of power, should be resisted. People who abuse power are encouraged to keep doing it if their tactics work.

2. When making decisions, predict the practical consequences for all affected.

Members of a fair society can expect others to think about their interests when making decisions, making participation in the society and its approach to fairness more attractive. Predicting consequences is the preparation for considering them in a decision.

Exact quantitative prediction is not common in practice but can be helpful.

Relevant outcomes will be in the future, perhaps the far future. Our current awareness of the need to live sustainably reflects increased understanding of the consequences of our actions for future generations.

3. Try to choose actions that lead to good outcomes when considered across all those affected.

This idea is applied to decisions by individuals for themselves, by individuals for groups, and by groups making decisions for themselves or others. Fairness is applicable to almost all the decisions we make.

E.g. Individual decisions on how much effort we each make to stay fit and healthy should consider the costs and benefits to ourselves and also the impact on others. These include, for example, the impact of our poor health on others and the

impact of time we spend exercising instead of doing things for other people (e.g. time with family).

E.g. Decisions on how much to pay people for the work they do in employment and on what basis are not simply a matter of negotiating for as much as we can get because fair agreements tend to last longer and promote better cooperation.

E.g. What we do with our rubbish affects others. It is wrong to drop rubbish instead of putting it into a rubbish bin. This ranges from petty littering to fly tipping. Why is it wrong? Dropping rubbish creates extra work for someone in picking it up and problems before that happens (if it ever does). Litter is unsightly and encourages more littering. It may harm people and other animals, attract vermin, catch fire, or make a nasty smell. The tiny convenience of dropping rubbish is outweighed by bad indirect consequences to the litterer and others. On a short-sighted, purely selfish view, littering may seem a worthwhile convenience but dropping litter is a mistake when the effects on the environment and others are factored in along with the benefit of being part of a considerate society.

Many of the guidelines below elaborate on points that may seem to be just consequences of choosing courses of action based on outcomes. However, they are often not obvious or are just one way to achieve similar ends.

4. Only value legitimate interests.

If a course of action would prevent someone from keeping property they have stolen, or make murder harder to get away with, or make fraud less profitable, then these losses do not count in the consideration of consequences for stakeholders. They are not consequences for legitimate interests.

Excluding illegitimate interests from consideration is in addition to punishing bad behaviour. Some bad behaviour is incentivized by the gains made from it and we should not be discouraged from removing these incentives as well as punishing bad behaviour.

5. To get people to do the right thing, give them good reasons. If that fails then using rewards is acceptable. If that too fails then punishments may be used.

Direct material incentives are not the only way to motivate people in a fair society. Ideally people do the right thing because they understand why they should do it.

E.g. The way we treat our children gradually changes as they grow up. When they are too young to reason with, we tend to encourage them with practical help and affection. When they can understand simple reasons, good parents explain why the child should do good things (i.e. not just because the parent says so). We typically treat our children generously and multiple children with equal generosity. Only if we are struggling to get through to them will we consider using direct material incentives (e.g. treats). Difficult children are treated differently from more cooperative, self-controlled children. This is partly to incentivize better behaviour and partly out of practicality. For example, if a child often behaves recklessly then it will usually be given fewer opportunities to do so.

We punish crimes and try to recover profits from crime to make crime less attractive. Prison sentences for crimes deter at least some future crimes. They also keep

criminals apart from law abiding citizens. Where people have a predisposition towards criminal behaviour due to genes or experiences then they need more incentives to behave well, not less.

Cooperation

6. Look for ways to benefit from cooperation without creating possibilities that are very unattractive for some people.

Fair decisions should ideally be good for each individual and society as a whole. As a result, each individual is motivated to participate or, at least, is not deterred and the group as a whole survives and thrives. It is a type of deal between people.

Our devotion to fairness is strongly motivated by enlightened self-interest. Fairness tends to create a safe, productive society in which most people can be relaxed and secure most of the time. It is almost as if each individual puts the good of society first, even though usually they do not.

Ethical rules that make innocent people fear for their lives tend to discourage participation in the society and so are not fair.

E.g. Suppose several people desperately need organ transplants and donors cannot be found among the recently deceased (e.g. from road accidents). A healthy, living person is found whose organs would be compatible and would save several lives, but they would die from having all the organs removed. In classic utilitarianism the good of the many outweighs the good of the individual and, in this case, the outcome of death is equally important for all involved. But many people would not want to live in a society where they might at any time be identified by a computer as a life-saving donor, apprehended, and killed to harvest their organs without their consent for the sake of people they probably do not know. In this situation, having no choice is off-putting.

It is fair to allow people to donate an organ they can live without if they want to, but not to compel people to donate their organs. We hope to keep the supply of donated organs high enough to avoid tougher choices.

E.g. In contrast, compulsory taxation is usually not harsh enough to destroy incentives, though it can persuade very rich people to go to another country where the tax rates are more competitive.

The organ donation example resembles an ethical dilemma written specifically to challenge a person's morality and educate them. In these dilemmas the rules are usually written to limit the choice to two horrible alternatives in which one person's gain is another's loss. Real life is rarely as clear cut. In addition, our preference is usually to seek another way that allows us to avoid the dilemma. We prefer outcomes where everyone wins to being forced to act uncooperatively.

7. Cooperate with arrangements designed for collective benefit (except in exceptional circumstances).

By this guideline we cooperate with collective arrangements even when unsure if they are collectively beneficial. We just need to think they have been designed for that purpose. This helps because we are often unsure of the eventual effect and non-cooperation by default would be catastrophic.

An everyday example of routine cooperation is queuing. Cooperating to limit the spread of an infectious disease is another important example.

With very good reasons we might still not cooperate with arrangements designed for collective benefit.

8. Tell the truth and keep your word (except in some specific exceptional situations).

Fairness expects people to tell the truth in nearly all situations and keep their word. Keeping your word extends to being punctual. Agreements made are to be honoured, whether in writing or not, with very few exceptions:

- Where keeping your word becomes impossible.
- Where other parties to the agreement have already broken it.
- Where the agreement was obtained under duress or by trickery.
- Where the agreement was greatly unfair.

When people are reliable like this, precautions can be reduced and life is easier. Cheats create problems and need to be warned, discouraged, and, ultimately, excluded from society. It is helpful for individuals to develop a reputation for honesty, reliability, and fairness. It encourages others to cooperate with them.

We try to be clear about what is promised and what is not because doubt creates problems.

9. Do not use, take, or damage property that belongs to others without their permission.

We respect the property of others. Human well-being is greatly helped by efforts to create and improve assets (e.g. our homes, vehicles, roads, farmland). Respecting property rights assures owners that their investments in assets will not be lost because the asset is taken or used by someone else.

Respecting property extends to not touching the property of others without their permission, explicit or implied, let alone using it. This also reduces the spread of infectious diseases.

10. If you harm someone else or cause them a loss, deliberately or through negligence, then compensate them if you can.

This system provides incentives to avoid causing unnecessary harm to others.

Exactly how, when, and to what extent we compensate is more complex. A rule sometimes used is to try to restore the loser to the position, financially at least, that they would have been in but for the loss caused.

Compensation is often paid directly to the individuals affected but sometimes the harm is distributed over many people and so compensation is to a government that then distributes the benefits across society, perhaps indirectly.

E.g. If a company produces a lot of pollution then many people will think the company should pay for doing that. It helps to compensate others and provides an incentive for the company to produce less pollution. This over-rides the fact

that the company and its employees and owners might be hit hard by paying the compensation. The compensation might be to people living locally or might be to a government agency that then distributes benefits in some indirect way to everyone in a society.

The cost of compensation is sometimes more than the liable person can afford. In some activities (e.g. driving vehicles) we require an insurance policy to remove this risk.

11. When choosing people to cooperate with it is fair to favour close family members, people we have previously cooperated with, people who follow similar conventions or have similar values relevant to the cooperation, and people who are better able to cooperate.

Choosing cooperation partners is like allocating roles, but broader.

The fair extent of favouring close family members is considerable but limited. Favouring people with whom we have previously cooperated is much like preferring friends, and also limited.

Previous cooperation needs to be relevant, though this might just have established that the person has a generally cooperative and trustworthy character. Following similar conventions and having similar values also need to be relevant to the cooperation.

E.g. If you were picking people for a football team then you might prefer people with experience of working with the formations and style of play you favour for the team. These are relevant conventions. Whether the player is used to driving on the right or the left is not relevant to their football skills and should not affect team selection.

Sharing conventions and values is valuable. In our own country we know the rules, norms, systems, and language so we are more comfortable and efficient. We have family and friends in the same position. These are two reasons to stay put and help our country thrive.

None of this means wishing harm on other countries because cooperation is better than conflict. We just do not go to such lengths to help others with whom we do not have such strong cooperative bonds.

Use of rules

12. If it is efficient then encode mutual commitments as rules.

The formal and informal 'deals' we make with others and our society involve mutual commitments as well as benefits, many ongoing. Often, they are more like arrangements or customs than contractual agreements.

However, it often helps to encode these mutual commitments as rules because this makes decision-making more efficient, makes us more predictable and so easier to cooperate with, and can be useful in guiding decisions under uncertainty.

E.g. If drivers always stop for a red light even when they see no other traffic, then this helps prevent accidents where people incorrectly think there is no other traffic.

At the highest level this use of rules gives us the 'rule of law'. This is vital for modern societies to live peacefully and efficiently. The UK's legal system, for example, involves thousands of pages of rules that are largely an attempt to apply principles of fairness to life in detail. We employ official enforcers of that law to keep the system working and respected.

13. Do not apply rules to behaviour that happened before the rule was put in place.

Rules are not usually made to apply retrospectively. Unfair behaviour before a rule is made that applies to it is still unfair – just not unfair or punishable under the rule.

14. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Laws are an important type of rule that typically apply to people within a country and often encode aspects of fairness.

The justification for saying that ignorance of the law is no excuse is that the law is a crystallization of fairness so a person should know they are doing wrong even if they do not know they are breaking the law. However, this principle applies even if the law involved is far from obvious. To allow ignorance as an excuse would invite ignorance defences in a huge number of court cases.

15. Act fairly within the law.

Using a loophole does not make a fair action unfair. You might be getting around a bad law. Using a loophole also does not make an unfair action fair.

E.g. Tax planners examine tax laws carefully and sometimes come up with imaginative ways to avoid paying tax. This is legal but if it leads to someone not paying tax that law-makers intended them to pay and would have been fair then the avoidance is unfair. Tax experts sometimes try to justify unfair avoidance by saying they have broken no laws, the laws should have been better written, and their job is to help their clients in a constant battle with tax collectors. That still does not make it fair to help people avoid fair taxes they should have been happy to pay.

16. Do not act like an official law enforcer unless you are one.

Although anyone can remind others of the law, help law enforcers with information, and even help arrest criminals (with stringent conditions), many tasks are reserved for the official justice system. These include making final judgements about who is guilty of offences and carrying out serious punishments such as fines, seizing property, and imprisonment. Violently taking the law into our own hands when we think the justice system is not going to act is unacceptable.

(The rules in action movies are different to real life. In action movies it is fine for the hero to brutally kill many henchgoons, especially if they represent any kind of threat to his daughter.)

Personal attributes

17. It is desirable for people to be capable, rational, fair, and diligent.

These are not the only desirable attributes. We look for more from friends and lovers.

Capability is important to develop because it increases the positive contributions a person can make to society.

Rationality is important because it supports capability and allows reason to be effective as a means of influence. This in turn helps develop collective capability.

Being fair is important for all the reasons that understanding fairness and the fair use of force are important.

Diligence is important because we do not expect people to be perfect all the time but would like them to keep trying to be good.

Fair shares

Fair distribution of consequences applies in a variety of situations. In particular, when we work together for mutual benefit there is usually a fair level of effort or other contribution from each person and a fair level of rewards to each person.

18. Divide work and rewards equally if and only if there are no fair bases for unequal division.

Fair does not usually mean equal because several factors can shift the distribution. However, if those factors do not apply then we expect equality.

E.g. When someone does something for us we usually expect to reciprocate by doing something for them that is of similar value and difficulty. However, there are several factors that can change this.

19. Division of work and rewards should not be affected by irrelevant characteristics or behaviours.

Although we are comfortable with justified differences in shares we do not like differences based on characteristics we think irrelevant.

E.g. While sickness and effort are relevant to decisions about how to distribute consequences between people, a person's race and gender are, typically, irrelevant in themselves and should not usually affect shares.

When people champion equality they usually mean shares should not be affected by irrelevant characteristics. They do not mean that, for example, people should get equal rewards even when some make a great effort and others make none.

It is better to assess individuals than use group averages. This is especially so if we focus on their behaviour because this creates an incentive for good behaviour.

E.g. For deciding motor insurance premiums it is fairer to assess how safely each individual drives (through periods without claims and by monitoring driving behaviour) than to use group averages for different sexes, ages, or postcodes.

However, when individual assessment is not practical, we will accept statistically guided decisions as fair enough, at least until individual assessment becomes practical.

E.g. Imagine you are walking along a quiet street after dark and a group of ten young people is approaching. It is fair to be more worried if the group is all male than all female, other things being equal. This is because you have no opportunity to assess the people individually and, objectively, there is more danger if they are male. Also, the action you might take (e.g. crossing the road to avoid them) is not harmful to them. It would be unreasonable for them to take offense at this, though they might.

20. At all levels of achievement, share work and rewards to encourage helpful, productive, diligent, honest, and otherwise fair behaviour and discourage bad behaviour.

Other things being equal, honest, hard-working, cooperative people should get more rewards than dishonest, lazy, uncooperative people. At all levels of achievement, the more you put in the more you are entitled to take out.

Incentives may encourage helpful, productive, fair behaviour. Withholding incentives or applying punishments can discourage bad behaviour. Both may be desirable.

E.g. If a consequence of a course of action is that people who drop litter will suffer fines then their suffering does not reduce the appeal of the course of action.

Incentives are not limited to money.

21. Reward people for trying to improve their capability.

This encourages people to work hard at their studies, apply themselves in a useful, legal job, try to stay fit and healthy, and continue to develop useful skills throughout their lives.

22. Incidences of good and bad behaviours do not fairly have everlasting effects on fair shares.

Transgressions are forgiven and more quickly if evidence suggests future behaviour will be better. Similarly, incidents of good behaviour do not have an everlasting effect on fair shares. Good behaviour needs to continue.

23. Expect less work from, and give more support to, babies and children, the elderly, the sick and injured, the disabled, those temporarily out of work, and those made homeless or destitute by a disaster.

This lifelong mutual care is attractive to most people. You are helped when least capable in return for giving help when more capable. Anyone can find themselves in need through no fault of their own though taking care greatly reduces the risk.

Often, helping the needy avoid the worst consequences of their situation and get through crises reduces the burden on others.

E.g. It is better for a sick person to be cared for, recover, and return to productivity than to die.

E.g. In a less extreme example, it is also better to help people fill in official forms if trying to do it on their own would lead to errors and confusion.

This special consideration is given to people with an obvious and usually temporary reason for being less productive than usual. It does not extend to people who are less capable for reasons that cannot be confirmed as this would undermine incentives; lazy people could claim their low contribution was due to a fictitious disadvantage. Ideally, the fair share of rewards for people with low capability but none of the visible reasons for it will be enough for an adequate life but still capable of significant improvement.

24. The support given to people who are disabled, temporarily out of work, destitute, or homeless should not create an incentive to become disabled, out of work, destitute, or homeless.

There are limits to the help provided. We do not help disabled people into jobs they will do poorly (even with reasonable accommodations) because their poor performance would harm them and others. We also do not give struggling people luxuries that ordinary people do not get because this would create perverse incentives and be wasteful. A motive to take care to avoid getting into difficulty is beneficial.

E.g. A person who has lost a leg at work and is not wealthy should get help with adjustments to their home but is not entitled to a luxury home with a swimming pool, extra bedrooms for guests, and a private cinema. The resources for these luxuries are better used to support others with extra needs.

Also, we recognize that a person's contribution to their own misfortune is important.

E.g. A person who breaks a leg while skiing on holiday (trying to show off with a stunt) should get less special support than a firefighter whose leg is broken while rescuing a family from a burning building.

25. It is fair for people to favour their own family, especially their immediate family, up to a point.

This is typical of many species and probably has an evolutionary basis: genes that look after themselves survive better. However, there are limits to this because favouring one's family undermines wider cooperation.

E.g. It is not acceptable to murder someone to advance your son or daughter's career.

E.g. A less obvious example illustrates the dividing line. It is acceptable to run a 'family business' where owners and most of the top managers are family members, not necessarily the best people willing and available to do the jobs. However, it is not acceptable to join a company that is owned by someone else and appoint your relatives regardless of ability. It reduces the effectiveness of the company and rewards for its stakeholders. The acceptability of a family business perhaps is less when that business is very large and so affects the economic interests of many people.

26. It is fair to make gifts and leave an inheritance for people in your family and others you consider worthy.

Gifts and inheritances are considered broadly fair, though we resent people gifted huge wealth by their parents who now live a useless life spending it. Gifts and

inheritances are an extension of the idea of taking care of your own family and tend to put assets into the hands of people likely to use them wisely.

A person who is unusually productive and frugal is likely to reach the end of their lives with more wealth than most others. They have provided value to others in exchange for money and, instead of spending it to consume resources, they have lived frugally and simply built up wealth. Consequently, wealth and the power to make things happen that it provides are concentrated, to some extent, in the hands of people who are productive and frugal. They are more likely to take care of their assets (e.g. houses and businesses) than people who are less productive.

Their children, typically genetic descendants and raised by the productive and frugal parents, are more likely to be productive and frugal themselves. Passing assets and power to them is usually better than passing them to someone chosen at random or spreading them across the whole population.

27. Recognize that losses tend to have more impact than gains of the same size and that losses have more impact on those who have little.

A serious loss for one person may be more important than the aggregate of small gains for many others.

The non-linear relationship between money and the value it provides is known as the diminishing marginal utility of money. It means that most actions that take money from a rich person and share it out between many poor people will improve overall well-being, but only short term. Complete reallocation is not done because it destroys incentives.

28. When sharing rewards, if resources given are not appropriately related to the outcomes they produce then divide resources according to outcomes if this is practical, otherwise adjust towards division by resources.

Sometimes it is clear that resources given as rewards are not directly related to the outcomes enjoyed from those resources, leading to unfairness, so adjustment is desirable.

E.g. In a society very short of food, everyone having the same food ration would mean some obese people losing weight beneficially, some slim but small-framed people having plenty of food, and some slim and large-framed people slowly starving. Fair shares would give everyone a calorie intake adequate for their needs or cause similar starvation.

This idea of giving outcomes rather than resources is moderated by resource constraints. If giving everyone otherwise fair outcomes would consume huge resources meeting the challenging needs of a special few then resources may constrain sharing and what is considered fair is adjusted.

This idea is rarely applied, probably because it typically applies to particular material resources but not money. Money can be exchanged for such a variety of goods and services that we assume the relationship between money and the benefits of spending it.

29. Do not give special opportunities to high contributors to get away with behaviour that unnecessarily harms others.

Nobody should be 'above the law'. Incentives are so important that we do not give high contributors exemption from punishments. Even though it sometimes seems irrational in the short term (e.g. imprisoning a leading cancer researcher for a sex crime) we stick to our approach.

30. Do not waste resources.

Wasting resources, including human labour, is not only inefficient but also unfair on others. If we use resources then, usually, they are not available for others so wasting resources on things that give us little if any real benefit is unfair to others.

This applies to resources generally, including our own labour and the labour of others, whether we have paid for it or not.

This idea is not applied stringently by many people in developed countries and wasteful lifestyles are common. However, examples of extremely wasteful consumption (e.g. lavish parties by movie stars, huge houses and yachts, 10 children, extreme obesity) still elicit disapproval, many people have a more frugal lifestyle out of concern for sustainability, and most people are unhappy when someone else creates needless work for them.

31. Build up reserves.

Having reserves (typically money saved) provides a protective buffer against misfortune. If a person has not obtained food for two days then having some stored in a cupboard means they will not go hungry. If a person's income drops for a while then they may not need extra help from others because of their saved money.

People who waste resources are less likely to have reserves. If a person wastes resources, consequently has no reserves, and then suffers a fall in income they should still get help from others but this typically is less sympathetic and less generous. They need to learn to live less wastefully and give a higher priority to building reserves.

Fair deals

32. A fair deal is consistent with what would be achieved in a fair market.

Our sense of a fair deal reflects an understanding of basic economics. A fair market is a busy market where no buyer or seller has significant influence over prices (because there are lots of buyers and sellers and nobody is too big), the rule of law helps ensure that people honour agreements, and various tricks that involve mis-describing goods or services are banned.

This applies to goods and services and the supply of labour. People sell their labour to employers and a fair market requires that there are many employers to choose from and many employees.

Fair markets eliminate the worst inequities of pricing but not all deals are made within a fair market. With no fair market we consider deals fair if consistent with what we estimate a fair market would have reached. Estimates can be made in various ways.

If there is a market for a good but it is not always busy enough to be fair then recent prices reached when it was fair are used as a guide. However, there is a limit to this and if it is recognized that a good has become obsolete then the fair price is lower.

E.g. If you want someone to clean your house each week then it may be hard to find someone. However, the price agreed will rarely reflect that temporary state of affairs and will usually be a lower rate reflecting the typical supply of cleaners over a longer period.

If a good is unique then there often is no fair market for it. However, by looking at fair market prices for similar goods and interpolating we get a sense of the fair price for the unique good.

E.g. Many antiques are unique (or at least there is only one item like it in the market at one time) but similar to others. For example, there are many silver cream jugs of different designs, sizes, ages, and in different conditions. The typical prices vary but if two friends were to agree a sale then they would settle on a fair price reflecting typical prices on fair markets for similar jugs.

Another approach is to look at the costs of buying or producing a good and put in reasonable amounts for labour cost and profit.

If someone takes full advantage of a temporary rise or fall in demand or supply then we see that as unfair. It is price 'gouging' or 'profiteering'.

33. Do not make fair markets unfair.

To make markets fair where possible we prefer to prevent the formation of monopolies, oligopolies, cartels, large buying clubs, and large unions. However, there is a limit to this and, where a buyer or seller has significant control, we accept that the other side can band together to match it (e.g. with buying clubs and unions).

Making large purchases or sales with the intention of affecting prices and then exploiting them is unfair. Creating fake news to influence prices is also unfair.

Most people who don't work in finance would regard automated high frequency trading and short-trading as unfair if they understood them. Speculation on markets helps keep prices fair but can also distort prices and allows people who add no real value to become rich (or poor) depending on their luck. Most people would prefer investment to be based on genuine assessments of projects, companies, and countries rather than on exploiting the psychology and algorithms of other investors, or just guessing.

34. Accept prices from pre-agreed auction mechanisms.

When selling to people we have an ongoing cooperative relationship with we usually avoid auctions and prefer to agree a fair price by conversation. However, when selling to others we are happy to accept a price arrived at by a pre-agreed auction mechanism even if it is very different from the typical price of the good, provided the mechanism has not been subverted. This is seen as a matter of luck and so these market mechanisms are used without fuss.

To reduce the risk of selling at an unusually low price we also will often set a reserve price when selling, which means that the item is not sold unless it is for at least the reserve. Consequently, sale at a very low price reflects our reserve decision and that makes the price fair.

Roles

35. The pairing of people with roles (e.g. jobs, home roles, places on educational programmes) should, ideally, be the most economically efficient for society as a whole within the constraints of what individuals want to do.

Usually this means people with roles to fill and people looking for roles are involved in discovering the pairings. Roles can be made more attractive (e.g. by paying more) and this changes what individuals want to do.

Fair discrimination between people is necessary to achieve this and so desirable. This is different from unfair discrimination, which is undesirable.

E.g. In the UK the percentage of women doing paid jobs has increased over the past five decades (Office for National Statistics, 2021). At the same time the percentage of men doing paid jobs or looking for paid jobs has decreased. During this period role allocations became less dependent on sex and more dependent on capability and willingness.

36. The pairing of people with roles at every stage in life should be unaffected by irrelevant considerations.

Examples of irrelevant considerations include the skin colour of a computer programmer, the political party supported by a nurse, or the physical attractiveness of a maintenance engineer.

Individual assessment is fairer and better than assessment using statistical generalizations across demographic groups. This avoids excluding from roles good people who are not typical of the demographic groups to which they belong.

E.g. Imagine you are to interview two people for a job. You see them waiting outside before you consider their details or conduct interviews. Having seen only that one is a young male and the other a young female you could make a choice at this point based on statistical knowledge that tells you the female is more likely to be academically well qualified, diligent, and well behaved. However, this would be unfair because you have an opportunity to assess the candidates individually based on their personal academic results, work history, and how they behave in interview. Also, the consequences of your choice are important to the candidates.

37. When judging people for roles it is their future performance that is important not their current ability or past performance (though these are usually informative).

Someone who currently performs the same as someone else despite less training and experience probably has greater potential to improve and should usually be judged more suitable.

E.g. Imagine that a job candidate has poor skills due to poor parenting and schooling but aptitude tests suggest good future potential. The employer should anticipate poor performance initially, which could be a big problem, but improved performance later if an investment in training is made. Those poor skills count against the candidate but the assessment of longer-term future performance might be more important.

38. Only compensate for unequal opportunities earlier in life by judging future performance.

Going further and giving some people special help to get roles to which they are not suited harms them and others. For example, it may lead to a person having to drop out of an educational course because they cannot keep up. Instead, we should equalize opportunities earlier in life and wait for that to feed through.

39. Where roles are allocated through competition, it should be fair competition.

- **People should follow the rules to discover who is the best performer or most suitable for a role.**
- **The rules should not give any competitor an advantage for irrelevant reasons.**
- **Objective assessment is preferred to judgement because it is more reliable and less at risk from cheating.**

Handicap systems in sport are an exception used to make results less predictable for betting purposes and to share out the experience of winning. This approach is not used to allocate roles because we know the win does not have the significance of a win in a properly fair competition.

A fair market relies on a blend of objective assessment and judgements.

40. The rewards linked to roles should be those that make best economic sense for society as a whole. We should not pay more than is needed and should expect to pay more for roles that are, for example:

- **valuable;**
- **hard to do well; or**
- **unattractive (uncomfortable/painful, unglamorous, unsociable, insecure, dangerous, tiring, dirty).**

With fair pairing of people and roles inherited talent will also affect income, not just effort, honesty, and reliability. This is because, in the interests of others, we want the best performers in the most economically important roles and those roles return value that allows employers to compete for the most capable people. However, this does not imply that people who are unproductive – perhaps even disruptive – must be left destitute. It also does not imply that people in better paid jobs are always more productive; role discovery takes time and mistakes are made.

Health, sex, and reproduction

41. Take care of your health and the health of your children.

Getting diseased due to carelessness means you will be less productive and fail to do your fair share while needing more care. People should try to eat and drink healthily, avoid addictive substances, take suitable exercise and generally be physical active, avoid obesity, maintain oral hygiene, avoid postural faults, avoid self-harm, avoid and remove parasites such as ticks, worms, and lice, and get treatment from a medical professional for diseases that cannot be treated safely at home.

42. Reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

To do this we keep a distance, do not sneeze or cough over others, do not touch things that are the private property of others, keep things clean and tidy, and take care over food hygiene.

The importance of this guideline has probably increased over the past two hundred years as more people have become aware of the risk from (1) infection by invisible micro-organisms and (2) chemical poisoning.

43. Have no more than one lover at a time and limit your lifetime total number of sexual partners.

The guidelines relating to sex and reproduction have a long history but the strengths of their practical justifications have changed over time. This guideline is less important for many people today than at some points in the past.

One reason for avoiding promiscuity is to reduce the risk of becoming a parent without being in a committed relationship with someone that gives good prospects of caring for the child to adulthood. As contraception and education about contraception have improved, especially during the 20th century in the UK, the risk of accidentally making a baby through sex has greatly reduced. However, in 2019 over 200,000 abortions were carried out in England and Wales¹, showing that contraception has its limits.

Promiscuity increases the risk of a woman being in a relationship with one man while carrying a baby by another. Typically, males in a variety of species are less keen to support offspring that are not genetically theirs and may even kill such offspring (e.g. the case of lions).

Promiscuity increases the risk of getting and passing on a sexually transmitted disease. The risks from this have also reduced over time with more powerful medical treatments. However, some of these diseases are very serious even today. HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, was first discovered in humans in 1981 and radically changed the risk level of sex. The most common sexually transmitted infection in the UK is chlamydia and, while easily treated with antibiotics, it usually has no symptoms and long-term infection can have serious consequences including infertility. In the UK in 2019 over 450,000 new diagnoses of sexually transmitted infections were made².

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/891405/abortion-statistics-commentary-2019.pdf

2

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914184/STI_NCSP_report_2019.pdf

Yet another practical reason for this guideline is that promiscuity makes a person less attractive as a long-term mate and parent. It looks like they cannot remain committed to one person. Child rearing is a long, tough task and much easier if two committed parents are present all the time. Again, this is less important in developed countries today because welfare provisions allow lone parents to look after children with little or no need to do paying work.

44. Do not have sex with people who are too young.

Ideally, lovers should be old and mature enough to decide competently if they want to have sex or not. Beyond that, if there is a risk of pregnancy then both partners should be capable of becoming competent parents.

The legal age of consent is probably a compromise between the ideal (which suggests an age of consent in the early 20s) and the practical impossibility of stopping people having sex earlier.

45. Do not have sex with people who are genetically closely related to you.

This relates to the risk of genetic problems from inbreeding.

46. Make babies only when you have good prospects of being able to look after them to adulthood.

To do otherwise is unfair on the children and on others in society. People instinctively know that much of life is a struggle to reproduce and they can be angered by the sight of a single mother with many children who relies on government support. It feels like the mother is taking advantage of society's generosity to do something unfair.

However, many relationships between parents fail for reasons that were hard to predict or avoid so lone parenthood is accepted in modern, developed societies, though not recommended. These are guidelines for fairness, not rules.

The limits of fairness

Fairness does not resolve all disagreements because we do not entirely agree on how fairness should work in every detail. Here are some grey areas:

- Fairness often involves compromises and deciding on the exact point of compromise can be difficult.

E.g. How should you weigh the interests of your family against someone else's family? It is acceptable to prefer your own family to some extent but how much preference is too much in a particular context?

E.g. How should we weigh immediate consequences against those further in the future? To some extent it is reasonable to assume that technological advances will allow future generations to easily do things that now are very hard. But how far does that justify leaving future generations with hard problems to solve because solving them now is inconvenient?

E.g. How much should rewards vary with contribution? Some arrangements, such as winner-takes-all competitions, amplify the relationship. Mass communication

systems have made some people celebrities; they are winners in a competition for a limited pool of opportunities and wealthier by far than others who have worked just as hard and not made it to the top. More generally, situations where the economic position of many people is affected by the actions of a few can make those few very important and wealthy. This seems to be the usual basis of great wealth for individuals. Differences in income reflect the scale of a society and of organizations.

- How much weight should be put on the interests of non-human creatures? Is there a difference between an ant and an elephant in this respect? What about a mouse? What about a colony of ants?
- How should we deal with cases where a person's needs and contributions are affected by something we could see as either their fault (e.g. not trying hard enough) or as their misfortune (e.g. genetic bad luck that leaves them lacking in energy)?
- How should we deal with historical wrongs? If A steals something from B then A should give it back. But what if A's descendants continue to hold the thing? Should they forever after be expected to give the thing back to B's descendants? I personally would say somewhere around the second generation that obligation should go away, but it's far from clear what should happen. If A harms B (but does not steal from them) then I would say that the expectation of compensation dies with A and does not continue to their descendants at all.
- How should we weigh imagined impacts that arise from religion? A religious person might say they have been greatly hurt by something that involves no physical damage to body or property. They might say they will suffer in some kind of afterlife or that their suffering is spiritual. In the extreme this could mean someone saying 'I have to kill you in the name of God, and if I don't then I will go to Hell and be tormented forever. You are a non-believer and will go to Hell whatever I do. So, overall, the least suffering will result if I kill you now.'
- How should we weigh the impacts of emotions that are unusually intense for the circumstances? When someone gets more emotional than most others would does that give their interests extra weight?
- It is hard to decide exactly how much tax to charge citizens but also to decide what to tax. In the UK today we tolerate taxes on earning and on spending (consumption) designed to take more from high earners and buyers of luxuries respectively. We also tolerate a tax on wealth taken when a person dies. Could these be fairer? It might be interesting to adjust the rate of income tax to reflect the taxpayer's wealth rather than income. Why tax income at all since we do not want to discourage people from being productive and getting rewarded for it? What about taxing people according to the real resources they have available to them (and from which they could generate value) to encourage productive use of those resources or selling them on to someone else?

- Is leaving an inheritance to your child still acceptable if the inheritance is huge? Surely it is unlikely that a child will be so worthy that starting life with thousands of times more wealth than most people in the same country is reasonable.
- Imagine a child is kidnapped and held as a hostage. The kidnappers threaten to kill the child unless the parents pay some money and say the parents will be responsible for the death of the child if they don't pay. In law the parents would not be responsible and in the long run it is better for society to resist paying and avoid inciting future kidnapping. However, many parents will want to pay and some will even agree that they would be responsible for the death of their child if they did not pay. What is the correct way for parents to look at this?
- Most of the mechanisms in fair markets are considered fair but what about speculation? Speculation seems to be an important part of the boom-and-bust cycle that sometimes afflicts fair markets. If someone buys and sells just to make a profit by buying low and selling high, are they making a valuable contribution or siphoning off wealth without giving anything in return? This depends on details and is not generally well understood.

The limits of influence by fairness

Fairness will not influence someone who cannot reason correctly, so many of the limits of reason are shared with fairness.

In addition, some people have a poor understanding of fairness in at least some situations or an alternative understanding that is a reasonable alternative. On some points there is doubt as to what is most fair because of grey areas in our system of fairness and aspects of fairness that are changing.

Some have ideologies inconsistent with modern fairness. This includes rules they see as moral that now have no practical basis. For example, some religions have rules on what you can eat and when, forbidding work on particular days, requiring fasting, or requiring the genitals of children to be mutilated.

Another problem is ideologically driven rules reflecting misunderstood reality. Reason and fairness might be influential but for the ideological rule. For example, science has shown that, contrary to most religious views, sexuality is not a moral choice.

Ideologues sometimes take an element of fairness too far, over-riding other elements. For example, 'tolerance' might be taken to the extreme of tolerating behaviour that is unfair rather than trying to reduce it. 'Equality' might be taken to the extreme of treating everyone the same even though some have made a greater effort, undermining incentives. 'Mutual lifelong care' might be taken to an extreme where only the serious suffering of a minority is considered important and the minor consequences for many, many others are completely discounted.

And then there are people who are not interesting in being fair. They just want what they want. It may be possible to influence them with reason if it can be shown that what they want is not the best for them but fairness is not part of this argument.

Developing ideas on fairness

As with reason, fairness is well-developed and recognizable today to most people in the UK but has changed over time and will continue to develop and improve in future. Humans as a whole, particular groups, and individuals can improve their systems of fairness.

The main principle of fairness in the UK today, in practice, is to pursue human well-being (or perhaps the well-being of life on earth). We might not always recognize it but it is there. In this idea of fairness there is a simple guiding principle and the rest is design detail that can be improved through reason, adapting to new ideas and discoveries. That design detail includes the exact definition of the principle itself.

Religions and philosophy have influenced the development of fairness for centuries but the greatest influence may have been the guiding effect of success. In other words, societies with better systems of fairness have thrived and lasted.

Scientific study of fairness by biologists has looked at the potential evolutionary origins of cooperation. There are many examples of symbiosis where plants and animals of different species help each other. There are species that form hives, flocks, herds, and so on, and gain from living together. There are animals that live in large family groups.

Ideas of reciprocation and equality have been identified in non-human primates so, presumably, have a very long history among humans – longer than religions. The idea of different rewards for different contributions has been observed even in young children.

Non-religious ideas on ethics have been developing for centuries. One tradition focuses on the consequences of actions. Another searches for rules that must be adhered to no matter what. There have been attempts to find a single principle or test that can be applied to any ethical matter. The differences between systems have sometimes been reduced by refinements such as the idea of enlightened self-interest.

Humans are an outstanding example of a creature that does poorly finding all its food and shelter alone; we even lack the fur that would allow us to live in most of the parts of the world where we now live. Yet, living together, adopting specialized roles, and using technologies, we have been able to spread across most of the world. The most advanced societies of human now live remarkably long, peaceful, orderly, pleasant lives, in which even tiny infringements of fairness cause anger and activity.

Our sense of fairness is also influenced by discoveries about the world. For example, views on homosexuality have changed as it has become clear that people do not become homosexual by choice and cannot become straight by choice either. The idea that being homosexual is a moral failing does not apply because it was never a moral choice.

Exposing others to second-hand cigarette smoke is a moral issue today in most developed countries but was not a century ago when it was not known that the smoke causes deadly diseases. In these examples it is science that has changed the details of what is seen as fair.

Our views on what is ethical have also changed as technology has given us new powers. For example, early human tribes struggling to exist would have eaten whatever food was readily available. For tribes where it was impossible to survive without eating meat the idea of adopting a vegan diet for ethical reasons is absurd. For people in the UK the apparent abundance of all types of food makes morally motivated veganism seem at least viable.

This flexible approach that progresses through reason over time is very different from the main religions, where there is a rule book that does not change and most reinterpretations are contested.

As we each go through life, we can develop a more refined sense of fairness. We absorb morals from stories, from direct teaching, from personal experiences, and from wrestling with difficult choices. Following a religion can impede this, especially if the religion emphasises rigid application of the rules of the religion.

Our efforts at self-development can make a huge difference.

E.g. Imagine two people. One works hard, helps people, takes care of things and people, abides by the law, keeps things clean, is frugal, and thinks carefully before voting. The other does not work, does not help, is careless with things and people, lives in filth, is wasteful and showy, and does not bother to vote.

Imagine that both of them are found to be recycling their waste incorrectly. One of them, when this is raised, is concerned and anxious to read the instructions again and fully understand what is now recommended so that the waste can be recycled in the best way in future. The other angrily dismisses the criticism as a fascist, totalitarian, or nanny-state imposition, saying they will deal with their waste as they wish and nobody has the right to tell them how. This person also complains about other ways that the council and government treat them badly.

Which of the two people do you think reacts with concern and which with anger and refusal? Obviously, the angry refuser is more likely to be the person who does not care about others, as they have shown by so many other actions, who continues in this pattern, blaming other people for their own poor behaviour. They have not learned to be productive members of society but have learned tricks to defend their behaviour.

Potential confusions and concerns

The following are issues that may be confusing or concerning:

Alternative names: Fairness addresses the same issues as morality, ethics, justice, and even social justice. People use those terms in different ways and distinctions are sometimes claimed.

What about the obvious buzz phrases?: Many people today would say their morality is based on human rights, tolerance, equality, democracy, the rule of law, and perhaps also free speech. How does fairness relate to these?

- Human rights are lists of 'rights' written into documents. As such they are like laws and usually reflect the principles of fairness without articulating them.

- Tolerance is just not punishing people for characteristics beyond their control (e.g. race) or for some characteristics that are within their control (e.g. religion). Tolerating *all* behaviours would lead to serious problems. Fairness helps to clarify what is to be encouraged and what is to be discouraged.
- Equality is only one aspect of fair distribution of consequences. It is related to which factors are relevant when considering the distribution of consequences.
- Democracy (through voting) is one of the more preferred forms of group decision-making but not the best.
- The rule of law is a very important development of fairness.
- Free speech gets discussed when there is disagreement over what is acceptable discussion and what constitutes crime. Surprisingly many speech acts are already illegal and for good reasons, such as conspiring to commit a robbery, inciting a murder, or giving away important state secrets.

What about the Golden Rule?: The Golden Rule is something like: 'treat others as you would wish to be treated.' At first this seems like it might simplify fairness but there are fundamental problems. (1) Personal preferences: If I personally followed this rule I would not give my friends free tickets to a show, food including raw tomatoes, or anything else I do not like but many others do. Often, what we should do is distribute consequences so that they suit each individual. For example, the raw tomatoes should go to people who like raw tomatoes, and not to me. (2) Consequences of bad behaviour: If I did a crime I would not want to be caught and punished. If I was lazy and incompetent in a job I would not want to be paid less because of it.

Defenders of the Golden Rule have claimed that such context should be considered but of course that is not in the rule. Rescuing the rule requires knowing how to deal with the other factors and what is good for us which is why we need more than the Golden Rule.

Don't religions provide morals that would clash with fairness?: Many people think of religions as providing a strong moral guide. When I was growing up in the UK in the late 20th century it was generally thought that a Christian person would live according to 'Christian values' and be kind, generous, trustworthy, tolerant, clean living, and so on. Other religions have had similar reputations at various times. Prayers and sermons often urge listeners to be good people (i.e. people who are pious, righteous, and follow the rules of the religion). However, the detailed advice is frequently not relevant to everyday modern fairness. Instead of covering topics like fair sharing, fair deals, decision processes, or considering the practical implications for those affected it focuses on following ancient rules about diet, clothing, and rituals. Consequently, there may be many aspects of fairness that can be learned and applied independently of a follower's religion, though there is a risk that some of the rules clash with fairness.

Cultural differences: Alternative systems of fairness do not promote well-being equally. Most people understand this, as evidenced by our intense debates on changes to what is considered fair. Differences between cultures are partly due to

different systems of fairness. Some systems are considerably better than others, but comparison can be difficult, especially if some guidelines work better within some systems of fairness than within others.

Use of rules versus complete reliance on rules: When a matter is considered using reason and fairness, we often encode the results in a rule (e.g. a habit, routine, agreement, or law). This lets us reuse the results of one time-consuming analysis efficiently in future situations. However, this is very different from trying to settle questions using rules *alone* because of the character of the reasoning that creates the rules and the willingness to review and change rules over time.

Effectiveness of incentives: Incentives (e.g. monetary rewards, punishments) are not always effective with everyone. For example, people often commit crimes after being released from prison. Perhaps they have a psychiatric problem, brain damage, an addiction, or a criminal circle of friends. For some it may be that living in prison is preferable to looking after themselves so, for them, prison is an incentive to commit crime rather than a punishment. People often feel that very small price changes (for example on tobacco or alcohol) have no effect on their behaviour. There is even evidence that, in some tasks, a larger monetary incentive reduces performance. With all these points in mind some people wonder if incentives are necessary or even important for a fair society.

However, the bigger picture is that incentives have a useful effect most of the time when considered over many people and situations. Some crime is economic and the result of deliberate decisions. Price changes on food and drink do affect consumption overall, so at least some people are influenced, some of the time, even if they do not realize it. Finally, the tasks where incentives reduce performance involve solving problems where the usual solutions are not effective because the new problem is different from old ones in a subtle but crucial way. Most of the time using strategies that worked in the past is effective, so across most tasks the problem does not arise. Also, most work that people do gets boring, tiring, and uncomfortable when done for a whole working day so incentives are helpful in keeping us doing them after the fun has stopped.

These were just some exceptions to the usual pattern that incentives work. For most other decisions incentives are important and it helps to have them in our system of fairness.

Sole reliance on incentives: Incentives alone would be a poor system. We also use education. We use reason and fairness to try to convince people to act well. However, since that does not always work, we also have incentives.

Rewards versus opportunities: A common mistake is to confuse rewards with opportunities. In the phrase 'equal opportunities' the word 'opportunities' refers to the opportunity to take a role, usually a job. What you get paid, the healthcare you might get, the holidays you might be given, and so on are all rewards, not roles for this purpose.

Equal opportunities versus equal outcomes: Because of the need to incentivize effort, most people support equality of opportunity (ignoring personal characteristics, which are not equal) but not outcome (which covers both roles and rewards). Some people will *say* they support equal outcomes (e.g. everyone paid equally regardless

of the job they do, and/or everyone equally likely to get each role) but when asked if they would give something they have strived to earn for themselves to someone else to even things up they realize the problem. They might give to someone who is needy and a low achiever despite persistent, honest effort, but they draw the line at gifts to people who fail to do their fair share and rely on handouts. We know helpful incentives are needed.

Even the idea of equal opportunities is not something that is sensible and supported in all situations. If people are applying for a job as a surgeon then it is typical to exclude anyone without some basic medical qualifications, making clear from the start that they are necessary. This saves time and confusion, and almost certainly will not exclude anyone who is suitable for the role.

Over-emphasizing equality: Some approaches to fairness focus exclusively on equality of rewards or roles, leaving out the need for incentives. This has been encouraged by politics and many experimental studies of fairness showing that people and other animals prefer equal division of rewards. However, these studies created situations where there was no difference in contribution. Studies that vary contribution show that people, even young children, prefer to allocate rewards in a way that rewards greater contributions.

Wealth and consumption: Wealth is unequally distributed in human societies but this is misleading. Wealth is usually the result of spending less money than you receive so a person who earns just enough to cover their expenses each month does not become wealthier but a person who saves a bit each month gradually accumulates wealth. (Many people accumulate wealth in their youth then live on it during retirement.) Income differences are less than wealth differences, on average. Expenditure differences are, on average, smaller than income differences because most high earners are also high savers; their expenditure does not match their earnings. Finally, resource consumption differences are smaller even than expenditure differences. For most goods and services, if you spend ten times as much on something, it does not require ten times the resources to provide it.

Ways to get rich: Sometimes people act as though all rich people are bad people. This is not a safe generalization. Some people become rich by inheriting wealth, by marrying it, by stealing it, by extorting it, through other crime or cheating, or some other means that does not involve them doing useful things for other people. However, many other people become wealthy by:

- doing useful things for others, for a price agreed as fair; and then
- not asking others to do much for them.

It is the difference between the money received for value provided and the money spent on value received that makes them rich.

Fair use of power

Characterization

Not all uses of power are abuses. There are times when people want more than they are fairly entitled to and will not cooperate rationally and fairly. They might be bad, selfish, uncooperative people or they might be misinformed or mistaken. They may mistakenly think they are up against someone who is bad and will not listen to reason and that any tactic is legitimate if it achieves what they mistakenly think is a fair outcome. Whatever the underlying problem, if they will not respond to reason and fairness then it is fair to motivate or even impose a fair outcome through power.

The power is exercised directly by us or, more often, indirectly when we ask others to intervene. Advanced societies have many structures that allow people to instruct others to apply power (e.g. an army general giving orders to subordinates) or call on others for help (e.g. an ordinary citizen calling the police to stop a crime).

Fair use of power includes (1) changing the costs and benefits faced by others to guide them to a fair course of action and (2) using physical control to restrain and perhaps move a person (e.g. to prevent them being violent). What may be done or threatened is to provide or take away:

- Opportunities to participate in decisions: e.g. attendance at meetings, committee membership, getting committee documents, voting rights, opportunities to speak or submit evidence, inclusion in consultations, ability to broadcast or be found on the internet.
- Support: e.g. votes, money, administration, service from companies and other organizations.
- Income: e.g. a paid job, customers and their purchases, the right to trade, having your products carried by a retailer, having your work promoted by a publisher.
- Assets: e.g. money (a reward, fine, or compensation payment), weapons, a home, life.
- Other freedoms: e.g. being imprisoned, access to a country, access to a building, access to space around a person, having to do work for no pay (e.g. a community service sentence), having to take an educational course (e.g. speed awareness course for people caught speeding).

The effects might be one-offs, for a short period, or indefinite in duration. The person affected is usually the person who wants more than is fair but could be someone they are allied with or care for.

Typically, there is a system of escalation so that if someone does not comply with an official instruction then harsher measures are invoked. For example, a person who does not pay a small fine imposed by a court may find the next step is a larger fine or imprisonment.

A fair deal is not an example of using power. However, paying more than a fair price to get someone to do something is an example of using power.

Using power includes using force. Using force includes using physical control (e.g. picking up a small child who is having a tantrum and putting the child in its buggy against the child's wishes). Threatening or using physical restraint or severe punishment counts as coercion.

Most of us have little direct power of our own that we can fairly use. We must rely mostly on calling on others to help and on the limited impact of our voluntary support (e.g. voting, donations, voluntary work). We cannot fairly withhold support that is paid for and agreed (e.g. refusing to do our paid jobs) unless the agreement has been voided by someone else's behaviour.

Summary

47. Use power only to achieve fair outcomes.
48. Use power, even force, if necessary to prevent others doing what is unfair, and especially to prevent unfair physical damage, pain, unwanted sex, or property theft.
49. Use power in an open and clear way.
50. Use only power you acquired honestly and can use legitimately.
51. Do not use more power than needed.
52. Do not unnecessarily endanger people who are not fighting you.
53. Do not use or threaten force unless the goal is to impose a fair outcome and there is no reasonable alternative.
54. Do not use or threaten force to make others take an unfair course of action they would not have taken otherwise.
55. Do not use or threaten force to take the legitimate property or territory of others and keep it.
56. Do not use power to obtain sex.

Fair use of power

47. Use power only to achieve fair outcomes.

Fairly using power is not the ideal way to influence but is appropriate in some situations. Coercion is justified in some cases. Even violent, physical coercion is justified in some situations.

E.g. If an employee is consistently lazy and uncooperative then it is fair to threaten disciplinary action, potentially ending in dismissal, to push them to do their fair share of the work.

E.g. Robbery is bad but using just the physical force needed to prevent a robbery or apprehend a robber and recover property is acceptable if reason and fairness are not effective.

E.g. Invading a neighbouring country to take their territory permanently is bad but going to war to just the extent necessary to prevent this is acceptable if

reason and fairness are not effective. If this requires invasion then, when the war is over, it is important to withdraw as soon as *safely* possible.

Good actors are safe neighbours to other good actors but bad actors are a threat to everyone. This is not just a social construct or a matter of perspective. There really is a difference between good and bad actors and good actors are the ones you want as neighbours.

The guidelines for fair use of power are learned by most people in the UK today as children from stories. In those stories the true situation is usually easy to see. Sadly, it is usually harder to see the true situation in the real, modern world. Part of being a bad actor today is passing yourself off as something else and painting the good actors as bad. The modern dictator is more likely to hold elections but subvert them. The modern invader talks about a point in history when a country's borders were different and claims to be just righting a wrong. The modern religious zealot intent on gaining permanent control of a society appeals for religious tolerance until he or she is too strong to need it.

48. Use power, even force, if necessary to prevent others doing what is unfair, and especially to prevent unfair physical damage, pain, unwanted sex, or property theft.

This includes self-defence and defence of others. This is expected of law enforcement officers. For others, small property theft does not justify use of force.

Fair use of power may be needed to resist the effect of the unfair pressure. If someone else is using power unfairly (e.g. terrorist tactics, disruptive protests) then decisions should not be swayed by that. Giving in invites further abuses of power.

49. Use power in an open and clear way.

It should not be by hints or veiled threats. Its use should not be a secret unless that is necessary to prevent unfair actors from resisting.

50. Use only power you acquired honestly and can use legitimately.

It should not be, for example, threat of illegal violence or reputation damaging lies. Tactics that may fairly be used include:

- Offering a reward or promising a penalty for doing or not doing something.
- Promising legal and proportionate punishments to discourage doing or not doing something.
- Removing a person's ability to do something by legally taking property they have, such as weapons.
- Reducing a person's power and influence by making the truth about them known by spreading publicly available information about them that is true and fairly put and was obtained without illegally invading their privacy.
- Calling on others to use their power legitimately.

The source of power is often delegated authority within a society or organization (i.e. having a role that gives you powers), in which case there is usually an

enforcement system to support decisions. Sometimes the source is wealth. Sometimes something else.

It often seems we have little or no power that can be used legitimately. However, we can usually call on help from others and we are often providing some voluntary support ourselves (or could offer to). Your voluntary (i.e. not already contractually agreed) support might include your:

- public or private endorsement of a powerful person or group (which might include your vote, signature, or publicity);
- labour, expertise, or services;
- equipment or consumables; or
- money.

You also have power if you can influence others providing support. You could threaten to go beyond withdrawing your endorsement and explicitly signal your disapproval to people with more power, to an audience you have a good reputation with, or to the public in general. Having a large, established audience gives you power.

For your support to provide power you must be able to withdraw that support. It may help to have other things to do instead so you are not dependent on a venture and unable to pull out.

You can threaten to call on others with more power, withdraw your support, or make public criticisms to push people to:

- stop using unfair tactics
- give sufficient time for explanations and deliberations
- make the effort to learn information and reasoning available to them
- behave rationally and fairly, or
- comply with a fair course of action.

51. Do not use more power than needed.

However, an impressive show of power is often helpful in convincing others to respond promptly. Where force is used a quick and decisive win is sometimes the least damaging.

E.g. Imagine that a small demonstration is organized but in support of a cause often associated with violence and looting. The local police force deploys many officers for the event. This is not excessive use of power because power has not been used at this point. The show of strength may discourage violence. A fight breaks out between two demonstrators and an observer, so fifteen police officers move in and arrest the fighters. This too is not excessive use of power because the many officers are able to restrain the fighters more easily and safely. However, if officers were to beat the fighters with batons after restraining them then that would be excessive use of power. There is no need for a beating.

In a battle, use of force should cease when the opponent stops fighting. Because they have stopped fighting, prisoners should not be brutalized or killed.

52. Do not unnecessarily endanger people who are not fighting you.

For example, in a war the combatants should not attack civilians deliberately, should focus on military targets, and should not put civilians around their own military assets. Terrorist attacks on civilians also violate this guideline.

53. Do not use or threaten force unless the goal is to impose a fair outcome and there is no reasonable alternative.

Physical aggression is an undesirable alternative to cooperating for mutual benefit in part because constantly taking precautions against physical violence is costly and stressful. Being and feeling safe are extremely valuable in a society.

Keep physically distant from people who might be fearful and stay out of their private spaces. This includes anyone who does not know you and, especially, people much smaller than you and children. At a close distance a person can attack so quickly that defence is nearly impossible, so getting close is threatening.

The expectations are complex. In a crowded situation the acceptable distance is reduced but the danger is reduced by the presence of many others. So, being pressed against a stranger in a packed tube train is acceptable but a stranger coming within 50 cm on an isolated and empty beach would be frightening.

Keeping at a distance also cuts the spread of infectious diseases.

54. Do not use or threaten force to make others take an unfair course of action they would not have taken otherwise.

Use reason, perhaps by making a fair deal, to bring about desirable outcomes instead.

55. Do not use or threaten force to take the legitimate property or territory of others and keep it.

If we want the property then we must buy it or exchange it for something else of value and the other party must consent freely to the deal.

56. Do not use power to obtain sex.

While it is obvious that using force to obtain sex is very bad there is sometimes a finer line with other forms of power. Some people are more willing to have a sexual relationship with someone they think will buy things for them or help them get attractive roles. This must be distinguished from explicitly offering money or a job in exchange for sex, with no further relationship.

The limits of influence by power

Much can be accomplished with enough power. If the person you want to influence is too irrational to understand threats then you can shape them with rewards and punishments. If they lack the skills to do what you want then you can provide coaching. If they lack the time needed to do what you want then you can take away some of their other problems so that time becomes available. If they lack the equipment or other resources then you can provide them. If they are powerful

fighters then that is no problem if you have even more powerful fighters. If they are rich then that can be overcome if you are richer.

The main limitation of power is that often we do not have enough of the right kind of power. Using power is often costly so it is rarely an efficient approach in the long term.

Also, there are some things that are hard to achieve even with plenty of power. Gaining sincere agreement through power may take a long time or fail completely. People struggle to solve problems creatively under pressure so this can also limit the effectiveness of power.

Developing ideas on fair use of power

The ideas above on fair uses of power should be familiar to most readers but these ideas have developed over the centuries and will continue to change. Throughout most of history people in many societies saw conquest of neighbours to take their land and resources as admirable. That changed during the twentieth century in many developed countries, seemingly linked to the Second World War.

Potential confusions and concerns

The following points concern potential confusions and concerns:

Fair payments: Not all payments are using power as a last resort. Many, probably most, are simply fair deals.

When you have no power: If you have no power at all then there is no last resort and only reason and fairness are available. You can and should still use reason and fairness when you have no power.

E.g. An example of this is a typical ethical problem at work. If your employer is considering doing something unethical, perhaps even illegal, you may feel that you could lose your job and career if you blow the whistle or threaten to resign. Power is not available. However, you might be able to discourage unethical behaviour by clearly pointing out how it would look to other people (e.g. the people being cheated, the police, the auditors). Sometimes people have not thought about that and the realization stops the problem immediately.