



ENGINEERING ETHICS & ATTITUDE

Lecture 3.

**MORAL DECISION MAKING &
MORAL CONFLICTS
RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

Dr. András Timár

professor emeritus

**University of Pécs, Hungary
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
Department of Civil Engineering
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ETHICS VS MORALS

	ETHICS	MORALS
<i>What are they?</i>	The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group or culture as being good , or bad .	Principles or habits with respect to right or wrong conduct. While morals also prescribe dos and don'ts, morality is ultimately a personal compass of right and wrong .
<i>Where do they come from?</i>	Social system - External	Individual - Internal
<i>Why we do it?</i>	Because society says it is the right thing to do.	Because we believe in something being right or wrong.
<i>Flexibility</i>	Ethics are dependent on others for definition. They tend to be consistent within a certain context, but can vary between contexts.	Usually consistent, although can change if an individual's beliefs change.
<i>The "Gray,, (a field between clear and dark)</i>	A person strictly following Ethical Principles may not have any Morals at all. Likewise, one could violate Ethical Principles within a given system of rules in order to maintain Moral integrity.	A Moral Person although perhaps bound by a higher covenant, may choose to follow a code of ethics as it would apply to a system. "Make it fit"
<i>Origin</i>	Greek word "ethos" meaning "character"	Latin word "mos" meaning "custom"
<i>Acceptability</i>	Ethics are governed by professional and legal guidelines within a particular time and place	Morality transcends cultural norms

WHAT IS MORALITY?

- Generally, morality is a *system of rules* that modifies our behaviour in social situations
- It's about the doing of good instead of harm, and it sets some *standards* of virtuous conduct
- Personal intuitions are important when moral values actually work in our everyday lives, but morality generally comes into play when people interact with each other (*morality is social*)
- This suggests that morality is a system of "*shared*" values which "*justify*" actions, and as such, morality is about deciding on best courses of action in all situations

SHARED VALUES

- Moral values are generally *shared values*: if we didn't have any values in common, it would be difficult to agree on any course of action
- Since there is often disagreement as to what is the **right** thing to do in any situation, we can see that in fact, various values are shared to a *greater or lesser extent*
- On some values there will be *nearly unanimous agreement*, while on others, there may be *considerable disagreement* (they have different importance in a hierarchy of values)
- Truth-telling, loyalty, justice, promise-keeping, refrain from doing unnecessary harm to other people are *strong/high ranked* moral values in several cultures

CONFLICT OF VALUES

1

- If we all agree on which values are important, we may still disagree over the *relative importance* of the various values
- Which is *more important*, when values conflict?
- If faced with lying to protect someone's feelings, which value should take *priority*?
- Morality is social, so we need to analyse the situation *to justify* our actions to each other



EXAMPLE 1. Personal Friendships

Ernest had several friends including Robert and Daniel. Robert has recently met and started dating a wonderful lady named Eve. He is convinced this is a long term relationship. Unknown to Robert, Ernest observed them in a park several days ago and realized Eve is the wife of his other friend Steve.

Ernest is deciding whether to tell Robert that Eve is married when he receives a call from Steve. Steve suspects his wife is having an affair and since they and Ernest share many friends and contacts, he asks if Ernest has heard anything regarding an affair.

To whom does Ernest owe greater friendship to in this situation? No matter who he tells, he is going to end up hurting one, if not both friends. Does he remain silent and hope his knowledge is never discovered?

CONFLICT OF VALUES

2

- Probably there is no *generally correct answer* to questions like, "*Which is more important, telling the truth or preventing harm?*,"
- In some cases, telling the truth is probably *more important* than to prevent harm
- A lot depends on *context* made up by factors like time and place, type and nature of the relationships involved, other people's reasonable expectations, and the relevant history of the situation



EXAMPLE 2. Information Access

Phoebe, a data analyst for a major engineering firm, is working after normal business hours to finish an important project. She realizes that she is missing data that had been sent to her co-worker George. Phoebe had inadvertently observed George typing his password some days ago and decides to log into George's computer and resend the data to herself.

Upon doing so, Phoebe discovers E-mails related to sensitive details of their project George discussed with a friend working for a competing firm. Employees of the firm are forbidden to reveal that type of information, to avoid any hint of conflict of interest.

Phoebe knows she should report this but would have to admit to violating the company's information technology regulations by logging into George's computer. If she warns George to stop his discussion, she would also have to reveal the source of her information. What does Phoebe do in this situation?

MEANING OF MORAL JUSTIFICATION

- *Justification* is commonly used in two different senses, one **positive** and the other **negative**
- The *negative sense* is the one which is typically accompanied by an accusation that the justifier is being insincere: it suggests that the "justifier" is merely coming up with excuses for his/her behaviour, excuses that even he/she doesn't believe
- The *positive sense* involves bringing others to see our actions as reasonable, i. e. a course of action is justified if there are better reasons **in favour** of it than there are **against** it
- Moral justification, then, means showing that there are **more** or **better** moral reasons weighing **for** a course of action than **against** it



IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

- Our rights and obligations spring largely from the relationships which we have with people and institutions (our family, friends, clients or patients, students; our workplace, profession, religious or cultural traditions, fellow citizens, and nation, etc.)
- It is important to think not just of the fact that a given relationship exists, but also about the nature and history of that relationship, and about the legitimate moral expectations that go along with it.



EXAMPLE 3. Importance of Context and Relationships

Julia, a relative of Peter reveals that she has committed manslaughter when attacked by a stranger, and that she's very remorseful about it. Peter is called into court to testify. He knows that if he tells the truth, she will go to jail (i.e. suffer a harm).

The remorse she shows suggests that she will never commit another crime if she is not sent to jail. Peter's instincts probably tell him that he should nonetheless tell the truth in such a case, even if it seems likely to do more literal harm than good.

His decision might be made on the grounds that truth telling is part of supporting a system of justice that we think overall fair and very valuable. However, this may lead to the question, whether acting in compliance with the existing (and changing) laws is always moral?

MORAL QUESTIONS ARE QUITE FUZZY

- Moral problems are not limited to any particular kind of situation, so morality isn't a separate, *special domain* which needs to be consulted only on rare occasions: moral issues surround us all the time
- Many decisions we make have moral aspects, or consequences, the *challenge* is just a matter of recognizing that fact
- Morality is best seen as involving *the best choice overall*, once matters of prudence, economics, and technical appropriateness have been taken into consideration, and balanced against other sorts of values

THE IMPORTANCE & PLACE OF MORAL THEORY

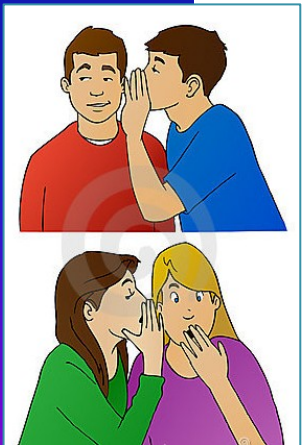
- If morality is about *shared values*, then why do we need moral theory? Why should we care what *philosophers* have to say? Why not just take an *opinion poll* and figure out exactly what our shared values are?
- Moral theory seeks to introduce a degree of *rationality* and *rigour* into our moral deliberations and decision making
- Moral beliefs must not be strictly *rational*, but *considered beliefs* are better from the point of view of society and peaceful co-existence, than knee-jerk reactions to individual issues

MORAL DECISION MAKING 1

- There is no *formula or algorithm* for moral decision making, so it isn't a process which can easily be based on a determinate *set of rules*
- Moral decision making involves *more* than just acting on hunches or intuitions, though these, too, are important
- Moral decision making *involves*
 - a) knowing the *straight facts* of the situation, and
 - b) *careful consideration* of the moral values (some call these *principles*) that are *relevant* to a given situation
 - c) *sensitivity* to the moral dimensions of everyday situations
 - d) an *awareness* of the range of *interests* involved in specific decisions

MORAL DECISION MAKING 2

- **Discussion** takes a central place in moral decision making: it is important and **reassuring** that others around us agree with - or at least understand - our moral decisions
- Ways in which **we can learn** from discussing moral questions with others:
 - short term gain: involving others in our moral decision making means that these others can provide insight or experience which is different from our own
 - long term gain: the quality of our moral decision making is improved by listening to the sorts of reasons provided by others
- Issues of **privacy** and **confidentiality** will sometimes limit possibilities for discussing particular problems with others



GUIDE TO MORAL DECISION MAKING

1. Recognizing the *moral dimension*
2. Who are the *interested parties*? What are their *relationships*?
3. What *moral values* or principles are involved?
4. Sketch out *options* - not just actions, but *courses* of action
5. Weigh the *benefits* and the *burdens*
6. Look for *analogous* cases
7. Discuss with *relevant* others
8. Does this decision comply with legal and organizational rules?
9. Am I *comfortable* with this decision?

(Source: Chris MacDonald, Canada, 2010)

THE WISE JUDGE

Two women were brought before King Solomon. Both these women had a quarrel over a single baby. Each woman was saying that she was the baby's mother.

One lady said, "Oh King! I am the baby's mother".

The other lady said, "Oh King! Believe her not. She is not the mother. I am the mother of the child".

King Solomon was confused. After a deep thought he said, "Cut the baby into two and give one part to each mother". One woman was silent. The other cried "Oh King! Let she have the baby. Let the baby live". The king gave the child to the crying mother.



APPROACHES TO MORAL DECISION MAKING

1

1. Utilitarian Approach

It was developed in order to determine how morals could reflect law making. All of the decisions available at the time should be considered to determine who these decisions will impact and whether it will be positive or negative. The decision that provides the most ethical answer will be the one to choose.

2. Considering Rights

Every human being is granted a set of rights and it is imperative to make sure that your decision does not take advantage of such rights. The decision must maintain the dignity of all parties and ensure that their personal choices are respected.

3. Justice Approach

Used to eliminate bias and to ensure that there is no discrimination and favoritism involved with the moral decision making. A solution that shows favoritism to a particular party without having a justified reason is the wrong solution to choose.

APPROACHES TO MORAL DECISION MAKING

2

4. Common-Good Approach

A way to ensure that you are making an ethical decision, it is important to consider the common-good of the individuals and the community. Your decision must not only benefit a group of people, but it must benefit the community as a whole. This can apply to a variety of different situations, including the workplace.

5. Virtue Approach

It appeals to the belief that there are particular goals that humanity is to reach in order to ensure the success of our species. Through the reflection of our past, we are able to determine whether our decisions can assist us with building and living a better future. With the use of the virtue approach we are able to ensure that humanity is working to the best of its ability.

VIRTUES

- Virtue is *moral excellence* or dedication to the common good, toward which we should strive and which allow the full development of our humanity
- A virtue is a *trait* or *quality* deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of moral principles and necessary element of ethical behaviour
- Personal virtues are human *characteristics* valued as promoting collective and individual greatness and success
- The opposite of virtue is *vice* (a habitual, repeated practice of wrongdoing)



TRADITIONAL VIRTUES

- Virtues were embodied by *deities* during early history of Mankind
- The classic (ancient Greek) *cardinal* virtues:



Temperance

Prudence

Courage

Justice

- The seven Christian (or *heavenly*) virtues refers to the union of two sets of virtues: the four cardinal virtues, and the three theological virtues, from the letters of Saint Paul of Tarsus:

Faith

Hope

Charity/Love



SEVEN HEAVENLY VIRTUES & SEVEN DEADLY SINS 1.



1. Chastity

MEANING

- Discretion of sexual conduct according to one's state in life; the practice of courtly love. Cleanliness through cultivated good health and hygiene, and maintained by refraining from intoxicants.
- To be honest with oneself, one's family, one's friends, to all of humanity, and to all of God's creations.
- Ignorance breeds suffering; education and self-betterment embraces moral wholesomeness and achieves purity of thought.
- The ability to refrain from being distracted and influenced by hostility, temptation or corruption

VICE

Lust



2. Temperance

MEANING

- Restraint, temperance, justice. Constant mindfulness of others and one's surroundings; practicing self-control, abstinence, moderation and deferred gratification.
- Prudence to judge between actions with regard to appropriate actions at a given time; proper moderation between self-interest, versus public-interest, and against the rights and needs of others.

VICE

Gluttony



3. Charity/ Generosity

MEANING

- Generosity, charity, self-sacrifice; the term should not be confused with the more restricted modern use of the word charity to mean benevolent giving. In Christian theology, charity—or love—is the greatest of the three theological virtues.
- Love, in the sense of an unlimited loving kindness towards all others, is held to be the ultimate perfection of the human spirit, because it is said to both glorify and reflect the nature of God. Such love is self-sacrificial.

VICE

Greed

SEVEN HEAVENLY VIRTUES & SEVEN DEADLY SINS 2.



4. Diligence

- A zealous and careful nature in one's actions and work; decisive work ethic, steadfastness in belief, fortitude, and the capability of not giving up.
- Budgeting one's time; monitoring one's own activities to guard against laziness.

Sloth



5. Patience

- Forbearance that comes from moderation; enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity.
- Building a sense of peaceful stability and harmony rather than conflict, hostility, and antagonism; resolving issues and arguments respectfully, as opposed to resorting to anger and fighting.
- Showing forgiveness and being merciful to criminals and sinners.

Wrath

6. Kindness

- Charity, compassion and friendship for its own sake; empathy and trust without prejudice or resentment.
- Unselfish love and voluntary kindness without bias or spite. Having positive outlooks and cheerful demeanor; to inspire kindness in others.

Envy



7. Humility

- Humility is thinking of yourself less. It is a spirit of self-examination; a suspicion toward yourself and charity toward people you disagree with. Modest behavior, selflessness, and the giving of respect.
- The courage of the heart necessary to undertake tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous, and to graciously accept the sacrifices involved. Reverence for those who have wisdom and those who selflessly teach in love.
- Giving credit where credit is due; not unfairly glorifying one's own self. Being faithful to promises, no matter how big or small they may be.
- Refraining from despair; the ability to confront fear and uncertainty, or intimidation.

Pride



HABITS

- Virtues are developed through *learning* and through *practice* into *habits*
- Formation of habits is the process by which a behavior, through regular repetition, becomes *automatic* or *habitual* – once acquired, they become characteristic of a person
- If a person has *control* over his/her own behavior, then it is already a habit
- A person's *character traits* are not developed in isolation, but *within* and *by the communities* to which he/she belongs, including family, church, school, friends, companies, professional bodies, private and public associations, etc.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MORALITY

1



- To some, *morality* and *secularism* may seem like *mutually exclusive* concepts - this stems from a belief that morality is intrinsically linked to religion (remember *divine command theories*)
- Therefore, nonbelievers - those who don't look to a God for moral guidance - must be immoral; yet this concept is simply *untrue*
- *External morality* essentially refers to following rules (which may come from *any authority*) that state what is **right** and what is **wrong**; whether they are *just* is irrelevant
- The idea of external morality is that these rules will be followed because the authority says they should be followed (*blind faith*)



INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MORALITY

2

- *Internal morality* uses one's own personal values (principles) to determine what is right and wrong; it often begins with learning about external rules or commandments, however, these rules are then considered against personal experience, knowledge and *critical thought* before a decision is made to follow or disregard them
- That is not to say that religious people operate *only* and *exclusively* from an external morality while nonbelievers solely function from internal morality - the World is never that black and white
- Morality as a whole is a *complicated mesh* of both externally and internally motivated decisions

SELF-INTEREST OR EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM 1

- One argument for a lack of morality in nonbelievers hinges on the idea that moral choices are dependent on a *hope for reward* or a *fear of punishment*
- Potential *consequences* aren't the only motivating factor when making any moral decision - according altruism hypothesis *empathy* for other human beings also motivates people to help each other, regardless of personal gain
- Social psychologists have explored the question of whether moral decisions are based on *self-interest* or *altruism* (probably on both)



SELF-INTEREST OR EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM 2

- A person might choose to save someone else from pain and sorrow because he want to *earn a place in Heaven*, or *avoid eternal torture in Hell*
- But that person may also make the same decision for *secular reasons*, such as the praise of society or simply because they feel pity for another human being (refugee) in pain and sorrow
- Who would you *trust* more, someone whose moral principles are absolute (black & white), or someone who carefully considers the *rights* and *wrongs* of specific situations before leaping to judgment?



ACCOUNTABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY

1

- A challenging area of moral reasoning involves deciding where to *draw the line* between **permissible** and **impermissible** actions
- Even if we know that some actions are clearly **right** and others are **wrong**, there may be *gray areas* where making moral decisions (i.e. accepting responsibility) is difficult
- Any decision making is related to eventual *accountability* and depends upon a certain degree of *responsibility* (considered by the decision-maker as acceptable)
- Responsibility can be *shared*, while accountability can't

ACCOUNTABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY

2

- **Accountability** in ethics and governance, means answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving *after* an action (explanation owed publicly to others)
- **Responsibility** means being in charge, being the owner of a task *before* an action (explanation isn't necessarily owed – except to the person's own conscience)



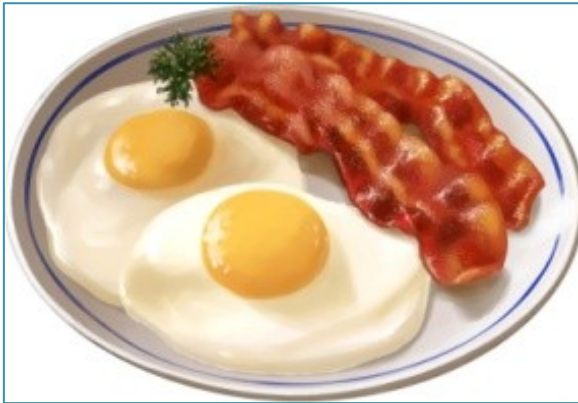
EXAMPLE 4. Accountability & Responsibility

ENRON began as a pipeline company in Houston in 1985. Following market deregulation it expanded into an energy broker, trading electricity and other commodities and began to design increasingly varied and complex contracts. Corporation's executives and its accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, had warnings of various financial problems before ENRON stock price collapsed in 2001.

Members of the executive board were indicted for their illegal and unethical actions; CEO Kenneth Lay was one of the people indicted. He insisted that the collapse was due to a conspiracy waged by short sellers, rogue executives and the news media — implying that while he could be held **accountable** as the CEO and leader of the organization, he wasn't in any way **responsible** for the fraud in the company. A jury found him guilty of conspiracy and fraud, making the CEO responsible as well as accountable for the downfall of the company.

The scandal led to the bankruptcy of ENRON and to the dissolution of Arthur Andersen, which was one of the world's five big audit and accountancy partnerships.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



- Speaking about responsibility and accountability - are there any similarities with the relationships of pigs and chickens to a full English breakfast of eggs and bacon?
- The chicken is *involved* but the pig is *committed* (i. e. „sacrificed”)!
- Thus the chicken is *responsible*, while the pig becomes *accountable*...

HOW TO FIND THE ETHICAL WAY OUT?

