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ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT ETHICS?

- ✘ What kind of life do you want for yourself?
- ✘ What kind of life do you want for your loved ones?
- ✘ What kind of life do you want for your friends?
- ✘ What kind of life do you want for your community?
- ✘ A FLOURISHING LIFE?

PROBLEM

- ✘ The way people *ought* to think about ethics is sometimes very different from the way they actually *think* about ethics.

NEED

- ✘ In order to discuss certain issues, it is beneficial to know how ordinary people make their ethical decisions.
- ✘ Are there any general ideas or principles most people incorporate in their practical moral codes?

MORAL DILEMMAS

- ✘ Sometimes, posing a moral dilemma helps us better understand our basic beliefs and ideologies about ethics.
- ✘ Sometimes we learn new things.
- ✘ Sometimes we modify our ethics.

- ✘ Our morality and ethics are constantly evolving.

MORAL DILEMMA: THE FAT MAN

- ✘ You and 5 of your friends are exploring a cave. The only way out is through the tunnel in which you came.
- ✘ Your fattest friend goes first.

DECISION TIME

- ✘ Bad news: He gets stuck.
- ✘ Worse news: Water is rising quickly. 5 of you will drown if you cannot get out.
- ✘ Worst news: The only way you can save the 5 is to blow your friend out of the cave with a stick of dynamite you have.

What do you do?

Why do you do it?

MORAL DILEMMA: THE FAT VILLAIN

- ✘ Same as before.
- ✘ Your stuck friend is actually an evil person.
- ✘ Need more information before making your decision?

DECISION TIME

- ✘ What do you do?
- ✘ Why do you do it?

ADEQUATE MORAL THEORY

- ✘ Necessary components:
 - + Justice.

 - + Beneficence and Non-Maleficence
 - ✘ Consequentialism.

 - + Autonomy/respect for the rights of people.

James Rachels and Gary Comstock

FIGURING OUR WAY OUT OF MORAL DILEMMAS

- ✘ Questions of meaning come before questions of truth.
- ✘ Principle of Charity
- ✘ In order to discuss ethical issues and find some sort of consensus or compromise, it is vital to know the practical moral codes in play.
- ✘ As long as the result is ethical, it does not matter what rules people use to get there.

PROBLEMS FOR EACH DECISION PROCEDURE.

- ✘ A step by step procedure for making ethical decisions is a pipe dream.
- ✘ Ethical decisions are not made the same way each time.
- ✘ Procedure is often interpreted as a rigid list that must be accomplished in order.
 - + Although the feeling of completing a check list is gratifying, it can lead to some really bad decisions.

A PRACTICAL DECISION PROCEDURE

× Caveat:

- + The following guide can be useful, but does not take the place of common sense ethical reasoning.

STEP 1: WHAT IS THE QUESTION/ISSUE?

- ✘ Use the “questions of meaning come before questions of truth” principle.
- ✘ It might be the issue is too large to address at once. Try breaking it into smaller components.
- ✘ Knowing the issue allows you to find evidence.

STEP 2: EVIDENCE

- ✘ Evaluate the evidence.
 - + Is the information legitimate?
 - ✘ Reliable? Applicable? Useful?
 - + Is it information from a reputable source?
 - + Are there contradictions in the evidence?
- ✘ Your result might send you back to Step 1 to reframe the issue or question.

STEP 3: THINK!

- ✘ Given the moral issue,
- ✘ Its circumstances,
- ✘ The evidence, and
- ✘ Your need to
 - + pursue good,
 - + avoid evil,
 - + produce justice,
 - + respect people,what are reasonable solutions?

STEP 4: RECONSIDER

- ✘ Now that you have reasonable solutions and know what to look for, do you have to look for more evidence to make a decision between the reasonable solutions?

STEP 5: EVALUATE

- ✘ Given the evidence and solutions, what do the relevant moral principles -- beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, respect -- tell you to do?

STEP 6: STEP BACK

- ✘ After considering Step 5, do you need to find more evidence? (Are you unsure that you have done due diligence in collecting evidence?)
 - + If yes, then go back to Step 2.
 - + If no, then go to Step 7.

STEP 7: MAKE A DECISION

- ✘ Using your reason, which solution is best supported and why?
- ✘ Using your emotions or “gut” reaction which solution is best supported and why?
- ✘ If the answers above are different, then control your emotions with your reason and control your reason with your emotions.

SECOND CHECK

- ✘ Sometimes, we rationalize our decision rather than make our decision rational.
- + How would your decision look if it was printed on the front page of the local newspaper?

GROUP WORK – A CASE STUDY

- ✘ Narrative - Crop-hail insurance.
 - + Small farmer – 1,000 acres.
 - + Loyal customer for years.
 - + Has a family, including small children and spouse.
 - + Has to work off the farm to generate enough revenue for the family.
 - + Has the insurance but cannot afford multi-peril crop insurance.

DISASTER

Drought hits the area after a good planting season.

Small farmer cannot irrigate his 1,000 acres sufficiently.

His crop is in poor shape.

He is not covered for this disaster.

HAIL!

- ✘ Freak hail storm comes through the area.
- ✘ Farmers in the area suffer great damage to their irrigated crops.
- ✘ Finishes off your small famer's crop.
- ✘ If the loss is exaggerated a bit, then the small farmer will survive.
- ✘ If the actual loss is given, then the small farmer will have to sell up.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- ✘ Assume you, individually, are making the decision about how to report the loss.
 - + What would you do next?

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- ✘ Elect a spokesperson for your group.
- ✘ Discuss your decision within your group.
- ✘ Come to a consensus judgment on what should be done

DISCUSSION

- ✘ Each spokesperson reports on what the group thinks is the correct decision.
- ✘ General discussion about what is the right solution, and strengths and weaknesses of it.

QUESTIONS

- ✘ Would more information be needed?
 - + What do you need to know?

RE-EVALUATE

- ✘ Within your group, re-think your position.
- ✘ Given the new information, make any changes you deem appropriate.
- ✘ Generate a new consensus judgment or defend the old judgment.

DISCUSS

- ✘ Is there a change in your position?
 - + Why or why not?

TEST

- ✘ Argue for a different conclusion.
 - + State what additional facts would have to exist in order to change your mind about the situation.
 - + Why are these facts able to change your mind?

DEVELOP YOUR OWN CASE STUDY

- ✘ Develop a narrative that supports different reasonable solutions to the ethical issue you raise.
 - + Could be something that has happened to you.
 - + Could be fiction.
 - + Should be something that will make people think about what he or she should do.
 - + Should not be an easy case to solve.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN CASE STUDY

- ✘ List three questions that you would like for people reading your narrative to answer.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN CASE

- ✘ Add more to your narrative.
 - + You want more information that will make people reconsider their previous answer to your moral dilemma.
 - ✘ They don't have to change their minds, but it should be information that makes them think about the issue again.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN CASE

- ✘ What moral questions do you want your readers to answer?

SHARE

- ✘ Exchange your case with a different group.

EVALUATE

- ✘ Examine the case you have been given.
 - + Try it out.
 - + Is there room for improvement?
 - ✘ Offer suggestions.
 - ★ Could be additional questions or information.

RETURN THE CASE TO ITS OWNERS

- ✘ Look over the suggestions.
- ✘ Discuss whether they should be adopted or not.
 - + Modify your case if appropriate.

ONE FROM THE FLOOR

- ✘ Volunteer one of the cases for the whole room to use.

THE END

- ✘ The Northern Plains Ethics Institute is building an ethics database for our website. We would like to use your case study in our database.
 - + Names or not. It is up to you.
- ✘ Thank you for your participation.
 - + Photos from www.turbophoto.com