# Ethics as Algorithmic Decision Process

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I am working on teaching a postsecondary survey course on ethics. I want to adopt a new approach for this class that centers on teaching ethics as algorithm, an intentional process of rules or decision making. One premise of this is helping students dissect or analyze ethical decisions in component parts. This reminds me of the practice of disagreeable sentences into their component part. Using this idea in the context i described, help me to visualize how diagram an ethical dilemma might look.  
Edit  
What an intriguing pedagogical approach! Breaking down ethical dilemmas into component parts, much like parsing sentences, could really help students understand the underlying structure of moral reasoning.  
Let me create a visual diagram that shows how this might work:  
Ethical Dilemma Component Analysis Diagram  
Interactive artifact  
This diagram illustrates how you might break down ethical dilemmas into their component parts, similar to how sentence diagramming reveals grammatical structure. The approach creates a systematic "algorithm" for ethical analysis that students can learn and apply.  
The key pedagogical benefits of this approach include:  
Structural Clarity: Just as sentence diagramming shows how words relate grammatically, this shows how ethical elements connect logically. Students can see that values conflict with other values, actions emerge from contexts, and frameworks provide systematic ways to evaluate choices.  
Repeatability: Like learning to diagram any sentence, students can apply this same structure to different ethical scenarios, building analytical muscle memory.  
Component Isolation: Students can focus on one level at a time - first getting good at identifying all the actors and facts, then recognizing competing values, then brainstorming options, etc.  
Framework Integration: Rather than teaching ethical theories in isolation, this shows students how to systematically apply multiple frameworks to the same dilemma.  
You could have students practice by giving them scenarios and having them fill out each level, or by giving them partially completed diagrams to finish. The visual structure helps students who might struggle with purely abstract ethical reasoning by giving them concrete steps to follow.  
Would you like me to modify any aspect of this diagram or create additional examples for different types of ethical dilemmas?  
Retry  
**C**  
One element i would like to introduceit's that as adult learners, I am trying to integrate andragogical principles, specifically the idea is adults as role motivated meaning in want students to identify their own compelling roles and the ethical algorithms they have already created connected to those roles. Many of the tensions connected to those dilemmas come from the unresolved tensions between roles, which is central to the purpose I see for the course. How might I more clearly articulate this so students can include this into their own activity within the course.  
Edit  
This is a brilliant insight! You're recognizing that adults don't approach ethics as blank slates - they already have sophisticated ethical systems developed through their lived roles. The real learning happens when they make these implicit algorithms explicit and examine the tensions between them.  
Let me create a framework that helps students identify and articulate their role-based ethical algorithms:  
Role-Based Ethical Algorithm Framework for Adult Learners  
Document  
# Role-Based Ethical Algorithm Framework for Adult Learners

## Core Premise  
As adult learners, you don't enter this course ethically neutral. You've already developed sophisticated ethical decision-making processes through your various life roles. T  
This framework helps students recognize that they're not learning ethics from scratch - they're archaeologists excavating and refining the sophisticated ethical systems they've already built through their lived experiences. The key andragogical principle here is honoring existing knowledge while providing tools for examination and improvement.  
Some additional thoughts on implementation:  
Early Course Positioning: Start the first class with "You're already ethical experts" rather than "Let's learn about ethics." This immediately validates their adult experience and positions formal frameworks as enhancement tools, not replacement systems.  
Role Conflict as Curriculum: Instead of treating role tensions as problems to solve, make them the central content. Most adult ethical dilemmas aren't about good vs. evil - they're about competing goods embedded in different role expectations.  
Peer Learning Power: Adults learn powerfully from each other's role experiences. A nurse's algorithm for patient advocacy might illuminate a teacher's student advocacy challenges, even though the contexts differ.  
Real-Time Application: Encourage students to bring current role conflicts to class. The course becomes a laboratory for refining their actual ethical operating systems, not just an abstract exercise.  
Would you like me to develop any particular aspect further - perhaps specific activities for excavating role-based algorithms, or ways to help students articulate the decision rules they may have never consciously examined?  
Retry  
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Nope. I Am still just working on conceptualize and visualization. Not trying to turn this into working prompts yet.  
Edit  
Got it - you're still in the conceptual development phase, not ready for implementation details yet.  
The role-based approach really shifts the foundation from "here are ethical theories to learn" to "here are the ethical systems you've already built - let's make them visible and examine their interactions." It positions the course as helping students become more intentional about algorithms they're already running, rather than installing new ones.  
The tension between roles becomes the core content rather than a side effect - which seems much more authentic to how adults actually experience ethical complexity. Most real ethical dilemmas aren't textbook scenarios but exactly these role conflicts: the parent-professional tension, the friend-citizen tension, the individual-community member tension.  
Are there other aspects of this conceptual framework you're still working through, or other angles you want to explore for how this role-based algorithmic approach might reshape the course structure?  
Retry  
**C**  
My intent then is too look at the ethical models as additional code designed to be integrated into their own algorithms or how to rectify code conflicts between roles. I want to look at these models as questions that are raised that have not been satisfactorily addressed with other models that students need to accommodate into their models.  
Edit  
Ah, that's a much more sophisticated approach! You're positioning ethical models not as authoritative frameworks to adopt, but as diagnostic tools that reveal gaps or conflicts in students' existing algorithmic systems.  
So instead of "Here's utilitarianism - learn it," it becomes "Utilitarianism asks questions about consequences that your current role-based algorithms might not be addressing systematically. Where do you see those gaps in your own decision-making?"  
Each ethical model becomes a code review for their existing algorithms:

* Deontology asks: "Are you consistently applying universal principles, or are your rules situational in ways that create problems?"
* Virtue ethics asks: "What kind of person are your algorithms shaping you into across all your roles?"
* Care ethics asks: "How do your algorithms account for relationships and context that formal rules might miss?"

The models reveal unhandled exceptions in their current code - situations where their role-based algorithms either conflict, produce unsatisfying results, or simply don't have clear guidance.  
This frames the learning as algorithmic debugging and integration rather than replacement. Students aren't abandoning their role-based systems; they're identifying where those systems need patches, updates, or better integration protocols.  
The course becomes less about "learning ethics" and more about "refining your ethical operating system" - which feels much more authentic to adult learners who know they already have working ethical systems, even if they haven't examined them systematically.  
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**C**  
So going back to the first request, what would a visualization of this look like?  
Edit  
Role-Based Ethical Algorithm Integration Model  
Interactive artifact ∙ Version 2  
This visualization shows ethical models as diagnostic tools rather than replacement systems. The central conflict zone becomes where students' existing role-based algorithms crash into each other, and the ethical models on the right provide different debugging questions that reveal gaps or inconsistencies.  
The key shift is that students aren't learning "new" ethics - they're doing sophisticated code review on ethical systems they've already built through lived experience. Deontology doesn't replace their existing decision-making; it asks questions about consistency that might reveal bugs in their current algorithms.  
This positions the learning as much more authentic to adult experience - they know they already make ethical decisions successfully most of the time. The course helps them understand why sometimes their system crashes, and gives them tools to patch and integrate rather than rebuild from scratch.  
Retry  
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And it invites change, but doesn't require it. So the idea is they begin by identifying a core dilemma, either one they already lived, are living, or anticipate living in the future, and the rules that were, are, or will be connected. So the core functionality of the course is working through finding ways, if they are willing, to resolve the tension that caused it to be a dilemma in the first place as a means of engaging in future practice.  
Edit  
Exactly! This positions the course as optional ethical system maintenance rather than mandatory overhaul. Students bring their own compelling dilemmas - the ones that actually keep them up at night or create real stress in their lives - and the course becomes a workshop for resolving those tensions if they choose to.  
The visualization would show this as:  
Student's Core Dilemma (the one they select as meaningful to them) sits at the center, with their existing role-based algorithms producing the conflict that made it a dilemma in the first place. The ethical models become optional diagnostic tools they can choose to apply or not.  
Some students might discover their dilemma resolves just by making their existing algorithms explicit and seeing where they conflict. Others might find that one ethical model's questions help them patch a gap. Still others might decide their current system is actually working fine for them, and that's a valid outcome too.  
The key insight is that the dilemma exists because their current algorithms are insufficient for that particular situation - otherwise it wouldn't be a dilemma. But the resolution path is entirely up to them. The course provides tools for system debugging, not system replacement.  
This makes the learning intensely practical and personally relevant. They're not studying abstract cases - they're working on their own actual ethical operating system bugs using their own real conflicts as the test cases. The "future practice" element means they're not just understanding the dilemma better, but actually preparing to handle similar conflicts more effectively going forward.  
It's like bringing your own broken code to a programming workshop instead of working on hypothetical exercises.  
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**C**  
Yep. I'm just trying to create an easy to conceptualize image that explains this process to students.  
Edit  
Got it - you need a clean, simple visual that immediately communicates "bring your own dilemma, use these tools if you want, resolve the tension on your own terms."  
Something like a personal workshop setup where the student's real dilemma is the centerpiece, their existing role algorithms are the "equipment they already own," and the ethical models are "additional tools available if needed" - with the whole thing focused on "fixing what's broken" rather than "learning new theory."  
The visualization should make it obvious this is about their problem-solving process, their choice of tools, and their definition of resolution. Not about mastering external frameworks, but about debugging their own ethical operating system using whatever diagnostic tools prove helpful.  
A clear "this is your workshop, these are optional tools, work on what matters to you" kind of image that students immediately understand as practical and self-directed rather than prescriptive.  
Retry  
**C**  
Yep can you create that for me?  
Edit  
Personal Ethics Workshop  
Interactive artifact ∙ Version 3  
This visualization immediately communicates the workshop concept - students bring their own "broken" ethical situation to fix using tools they already have, with optional additional tools available if they choose to use them. The emphasis is on personal agency, practical problem-solving, and voluntary engagement with the diagnostic tools.  
The workbench metaphor makes it clear this is about fixing something specific that matters to them, not learning abstract theory. The "YOUR WORKSHOP" label reinforces that this is their space, their project, their choice of tools, and their definition of success.  
Retry  
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