Case Study 1 – Career, Honesty and Gender

Graham Pellegrini

March 1, 2025

1 Question 1

Is it ethically right for Ben to conceal his idea from his employers? (Group A - Yes)

Group A - No Group B - Yes

The debate began with Group A asserting:

- Ben has the right to adhere to his moral beliefs.
- The idea is not fully developed, raising ethical and contractual considerations.
- From a utilitarian perspective, concealing the idea benefits more lives.

Group B countered by arguing:

- Concealing the idea breaches transparency and employer trust.
- Decision-making on such dilemmas should be left to legislators, not employees.
- Sharing the idea responsibly could prevent misuse.

Group A reinforced that the idea is not concrete and does not deprive the company of valuable information. They emphasized that Ben's pacifist stance was known when he was hired, so expectations should align with his beliefs.

Group B introduced counterarguments:

- Ben benefits from company resources and owes contribution in return.
- Military advancements can protect soldiers and deter threats.
- The idea could have broader scientific applications beyond military use.

Group A responded:

- The contract only covers developed ideas, and this one remains undeveloped.

- A perpetual arms race could result in catastrophic consequences.
- Forcing Ben to work against his beliefs could be unproductive and detrimental to morale.

Further counterarguments from Group B emphasized:

- Decisions of this magnitude should be made transparently within a committee.
- Concealment hinders company growth and potential partnerships.
- Military advancements often lead to public technological benefits.
- If Ben does not develop the idea, someone else will, potentially without ethical considerations.

Group A concluded by highlighting:

- The risks of escalating military capabilities, especially in the current political climate.
- The company is not in the military sector, so Ben did not sign up for this work.
- If technological advancements are inevitable, Ben still has the moral right to abstain.

2 Question 2

You are a computer engineer and you are assigned on the Manhattan Project. Do you think it is ethical to work on this project? (Group A No) *Group A - No Group B - Yes*

Group A began by arguing:

- They would not contribute to the atomic bomb, even if it meant ending the war sooner, as they would still bear the moral burden of the deaths.
- Japan was already weakened, and Germany had been defeated. Alternative measures could have ended the war.

Group B countered:

- After the bomb's creation, scientists established the Federation of American Scientists to regulate atomic energy and consider public interests.
- Beyond warfare, the research led to significant scientific advancements.

Group A responded:

- Nuclear energy could have been developed without the atomic bomb.
- Weapons of mass destruction are inherently unethical and unjustifiable.

Group B argued that from a utilitarian perspective, if the bomb ended the war and saved more lives than it took, then developing it was ethical. Additionally, from a rule-utilitarian standpoint, no established rule at the time deemed it unethical.

Group A countered that even under utilitarianism, the bomb was unjustifiable. It caused long-term harm to people and the environment, ultimately outweighing any perceived benefit.

Group B pointed out that, at the time, it was an arms race. If the U.S. had not developed the bomb, Germany might have. Furthermore, nuclear energy advancements were driven by wartime pressures and funding.

Group A noted:

- Scientists failed to consider long-term ethical responsibilities, a principle now emphasized in issues like climate change.
- Unlike scientists in some other countries, those in the U.S. were not forced to participate—they had a choice.

Group B stated that given the urgency of the war, U.S. efforts focused on national defense and preventing further attacks like Pearl Harbor.
Group A emphasized:

- These were the only atomic bombs ever used in warfare. Extensive testing had already provided insights into their effects, making live deployment unnecessary.
- The U.S. is often seen as the hero of the war, yet it remains the only country to have used nuclear weapons in combat, acting in its own self-interest like other nations.

Group B concluded that while the bomb was dropped on a civilian area, the Japanese government had received prior warning to evacuate.

3 Question 3

Positive discrimination in favour of women is often proposed as a measure to address gender imbalance. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such measures? (Group A in agreement of positive discrimination) *Group A - Yes Group B - No*
Group B began by arguing:

- Positive discrimination can undermine an individual's sense of achievement, as they may be recognized not for their merit but to fulfill a quota.

- Opportunities should arise from personal merit and interest rather than being imposed by an external agenda.

Group A countered that positive discrimination considers not only merit but also an individual's potential. Since men and women have different emotional intelligence, they bring varied skills that may currently be undervalued.
Group B argued that positive discrimination is a short-term solution, a mere "band-aid" that does not address the root problem. They believe it may worsen the situation by fostering a perception of tokenism.
Group A responded that positive discrimination is necessary because women face unique challenges that men do not. Without it, natural biases—such as those arising from life experiences like maternity leave—would continue to create disparities.
Group B asserted that positive discrimination can negatively impact hiring by prioritizing diversity over competence, potentially lowering workforce quality.
Group A concluded that while positive discrimination may seem like a temporary fix, it can have long-term benefits by inspiring future generations of women through relatable role models.
Group B argued that positive discrimination attempts to disrupt natural tendencies in career choices, as certain groups may naturally excel in specific fields—such as women in nursing and men in STEM.
Group B also noted that positive discrimination can lead to reverse discrimination and that it tries to use a negative idea (discrimination) to achieve a positive outcome.

4 Question 4

You are the CEO of a local computer engineering company that employs 150 people. What measures and policies will you put in place to move towards a gender balance?

The strongest points discussed were:

- Establish clear career advancement criteria to ensure equal opportunities and eliminate ambiguity in promotions and discrimination.
- Implement blind recruitment, where potentially discriminatory information is concealed from hiring managers to ensure a fair selection process.
- Include both male and female representatives in hiring panels to promote fairness and minimize bias.
- Increase the visibility of women in underrepresented fields to inspire others. For example, feature women in STEM on company websites or host industry events showcasing female professionals.

- Collaborate with educational institutions to challenge stigmas and encourage equal participation in all fields.
- Accommodate diverse employee needs by offering flexible work hours, maternity leave, and childcare facilities.