

Software Ethical Dilemma

CPSC 311, Group Work 1

Group Members

- David Huang 889433256
- Chukwudi Ikem 889294070
- Derrick Lee 889227930
- Namanh Tran 889433595

Kantian Ethics

According to Kantian ethics, we should try to stop the software from being released to the public. Although failing to prevent harm to our customers may be permissible, it is ultimately up to us whether or not we think it is rational to block the software from being released. We are obligated to treat our customers not as a means to an end but as an end itself. Therefore, treating the totality of our customers as an end should prevent us from releasing the software.

Utilitarianism

A Utilitarian would claim that it is my moral obligation to hold the product until a patch develops. The reason for this obligation is due to the fact that the product will be causing more overall happiness if the release date is held. There are two scenarios, in the case that the product is released there may be an initial response of joy. However, I believe it will be overshadowed by the people who run into the security breach. I believe the overall harm caused by a security breach would harm the customers and the reputation of the company - thus producing more harm than good. It is safe to assume a company that has lost the trust of their customers is one that will grow unstable. Such instability is sure to cause layoffs along with other negative impacts on the company that would trickle down to even the supervisor who ordered you to halt prior.

As far as the other case goes, I believe that if we choose to halt the software released we may get some irritated fans - this is far less alarming than allowing for people to have their data exposed. I believe even in Kantian ethics. We should remain good-willed - try to prevent harm to people.

Egoism

For egoism, you as the developer should make a choice based on what would benefit you. In this case since there is a chance you could get fired if you delay the software you should release the software because it would be more beneficial for you to have a job in the long run. A person using egoism reasoning should only choose what will benefit them in the long run or else it would be morally impermissible. Even though both

choices would make you feel lousy, egoism wants the decision that would help you long-term, not short-term. It would be morally permissible to release the software to avoid getting fired since having a job would be in your best interest. Unlike utilitarianism which chooses an outcome of most happiness and Kantian which says do no harm, egoism says to only act in a way to help you in the long-term.

Virtue Ethics

In a situation like this, a person with virtue ethics would delay the project because it takes courage to do so. Webster dictionary's definition of "courage" is "mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." The fact that their supervisor is threatening the lead developer shows that the supervisor is hoping that fear will keep the lead developer from delaying the project. To withstand and persevere fear takes courage, which is a virtue trait. To cave into the alarm would be a morally impermissible action because it would be a cowardly act which is the complete opposite of being courageous. Therefore it is morally imperative for the virtuous lead developer to take the only ethically permissible action, to delay the project.