

Christopher P. Funk

Professor Nicholas D. Fila

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Term Reflection – Part 2

Learning

- 1. Describe the most important thing you learned by taking this course. Why is it important to you? How did taking the course support this learning?**

The most important things I learned in this course were different perspectives on how ethical issues can be approached. While I may not see these ethical theories as insightful or new, I do recognize that there is a certain value in providing an environment where the importance of carefully considering ethical issues is emphasized. In addition, I also see that ethical considerations are especially relevant to an engineer's practice. I believe that this course has provided an environment that stimulates this type of consideration regarding ethical issues.

- 2. Describe something you wish you had learned or developed more knowledge/perspective on. Why do you wish this? What might have helped you learn it?**

I believe it would be insightful to know more about what the motivation and personal history behind what led the people who helped formulate the various ethical frameworks decided that a synthesis of this ethical framework was important. Without the historical context of the person's reasoning, the formulations of these ethical frameworks can appear academic rather than practical and applicable to daily life.

Characteristics of Ethical Engineers

- 1. Look back at your Term Reflection – Part 1. What would you change about your "characteristics of an ethical engineer"? Why?**

Looking back at my first term paper, I believe I could have better emphasized the importance of forming a concrete justification for ethical decisions. I emphasized in my paper the importance of conviction, but I don't feel I emphasized enough the importance of convictions that are founded on solid and logical reasoning; that convictions should not be merely based on a person's reflexive reactions.

Convictions not backed by logic are generally the most dangerous form of conviction.

2. In what ways do you embody the characteristics of an ethical engineer you described? Give an example.

I would say that I strive to be reasonably objective in my assessment of ethical issues; however, part of being objective is recognizing the limits of my objectivity and being able to identify and acknowledge the areas where I am biased and realizing that those are the areas of my decision that should be held more loosely and that deserve more outside scrutiny. When I read the news or get other sources of information, I generally try to collect perspectives from different sides of the spectrum to get an idea of the various viewpoints and to check whether there is some consideration I have missed in my thinking.

3. In what ways do you not yet embody the characteristics of an ethical engineer? How might you develop those characteristics?

I don't find that I care for others as I should. One way I could improve this is by socializing a bit more and going out of my way to form relationships with other people. I like to believe that I am very different from other people, but what I really should focus on and think about is what similarities I have with other people. These are a few of the steps I could take to improve my level of consideration for others.

Course Participation

1. Rate (from 0–5) your level of participation (speaking during full class discussions, participating in group activities, attentiveness during lecture/discussion) over the second half of the semester.

I would rate my level of participation and attentiveness as 3. I must admit that, while I paid attention to most of the lectures, they sometimes did not resonate with me very much since they seemed somewhat abstract and removed from reality. I sometimes wondered if the ethical principles presented really do motivate and enable more ethical decision-making or if they merely are a form of posturing that can be applied to make a decision-making process have the appearance of being objective while behind the scenes, the people who are applying this ethical framework generally takes the same kind approach to the problem regardless of what kind of ethical framework they claim to be applying. This is what I would call the Skittles phenomenon. Just like the various colors of Skittles taste the same, while the different ethical approaches do highlight different aspects and ethical considerations (they look different on the outside), when a person claims to be

applying an ethical framework, their decision based on any of the ethical frameworks will generally be similar regardless of which ethical approach they use to analyze the situation. In my view, making consistently ethical decisions is almost wholly dependent on a person's integrity and level of consideration for others (e.g., their ethical sensitivity).

2. What helped you participate?

I much prefer commenting on concrete ethical cases rather than ethical theories. Having an interesting case to discuss helps give me insight into the motivation behind the various ethical frameworks being presented. Presenting a concrete case also enables me to reflect on how I would approach the ethical problem.

3. What hindered your participation?

I am generally a slow thinker, and therefore, I do not have deep thoughts unless I devote a substantial amount of time mulling the idea over in my mind. When I do have thoughts, I have difficulties articulating my thoughts verbally in a coherent manner because, after I start to speak, I realize that I did not fully pre-articulate my thoughts in my mind. Because of this, I tend to be more reluctant to share my thoughts. Additionally, rather than providing relevant and supportive insights, my thoughts tend to be more critical, questioning, and subversive and thus tend to be unhelpful and indicate that I wasn't really paying attention or that I did not deeply consider the topic at hand.

Advice for "Others"

1. What advice do you have for students who will take class next semester?

1. Don't be a degenerate! Stay off your phone!
2. Come to class and pay attention!
3. Eat salad and exercise regularly!

2. What advice do you have regarding engineering ethics for your future self (in 5–10 years)?

It takes discipline and self-control to be ethical. Maintain your self-control, don't become complacent and blind regarding ethical issues, losing your ethical sensitivity by allowing yourself to associate with people who show no consideration for ethics in their work.