

# Ethics Essay

What are ethics? Ethics are principles of right conduct. Many times, when one hears the word “ethics,” they immediately think of morals. Although ethics and morals are very similar, they are not exactly the same. Morals deal with a more universal judgment of right and wrong. Ethics can be specified for a certain group of people, say a field of engineering. Morals are more universal in that they apply to all people.

Now that we’ve defined ethics, we can see why it is important to have a standard “Code of Ethics” for a particular group of people (engineers in this case). Having this “Code of Ethics” is valuable because it sets a standard for professionalism, and it also builds confidence and gives assurance to outsiders so that they can know that a certain organization or group of people abide by a specified standard.

Personally, when I go about making an ethical decision, I like to consider several things. First, I like to consider how the parties involved will be affected. Will it harm them? Will it make them frustrated or lose trust in me? Will it greatly benefit one party, but bring detriment to another party? Secondly, I like to think about how my decision will affect the party that I’m representing. Will my actions give a poor reflection of my party? Will my actions cause other members of my party to lose trust in me? Now that I am aware of a clear cut “Code of Ethics” from IEEE, I can always check that my decision is in line with their specified ethics.

In my group during class, we did not really look into our case study very in-depth. Instead, we talked about the difference between something being unethical and illegal, and about each item in the IEEE Code of Ethics. For something to be illegal, you are actually working against the law and can be fined and put in prison. Something unethical does not necessarily result in imprisonment or receiving a fine. It could result in others losing respect or trust in the party you are representing, though. The case study we briefly touched on was about Volkswagen deploying software in order to cheat emissions test. The professor we were discussing with these matters did say that he thought that this was not only unethical, but it was illegal.

Looking on the “Virtue of Ethics,” I believe that the case study about Volkswagen deploying software to cheat emissions tests relates to integrity, honesty, and responsibility. I chose integrity because a lack of integrity is shown when a company puts time and effort into developing software to cheat emissions tests. I chose honesty because company members knew that they were being dishonest in deploying software that they claimed was satisfactory. I chose responsibility because the leaders of Volkswagen showed a lack of responsibility in knowing what their employees were developing, and they did not correct their actions to develop cheating software. I think self-discipline could also apply to this case study. Volkswagen showed little self-discipline by developing this software. Self-discipline would say that even though I can do this thing to cheat and get good results, I’m not going to – I can control myself. The virtue of charity is less relevant because there is little relating to compassion and mercy in this case study. Fidelity is somewhat relevant, but it’s not as relevant as the other three (or four) because it doesn’t have a lot to do with remaining faithful. I don’t really think that there is

another virtue that should be added here. I think these three are the main virtues that this company violated in this case study.