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Ethics in engineering is one of the most important aspects to understand well and the ability to execute well-thought-out decisions based on ethics is crucial. Firstly, it is important to establish why ethics are so valuable, how they affect decisions for me, how they affect decisions for others, and how they are relevant to various cases.

The importance of ethics in the workplace is immense as, without them, businesses would be making immoral and harmful decisions all of the time. The importance of having such a “Code of Ethics” is to establish a starting point for people to base their ethics on. Without this, important factors could be left out, items could be forgotten about, and more that could ultimately lead to some regrettable, awful decisions being made. However, with the “Code of Ethics” existing, people are committing to a baseline. It could be taken further, but there is a starting point at the very least. In fact, in the IEEE Code of Ethics, the following is stated, “...the members of IEEE... do hereby commit ourselves to the highest ethical and professional conduct and agree:...” (IEEE, 2020). The ethics that are followed go on to be listed later, but this statement alone shows that people are committing themselves to a base-level set of ethics. In doing this, a minimum has been set, basics will not be forgotten, and standards are raised.

As for me personally, this comes into place as I do think about these same exact factors when making decisions relating to ethics. In particular, I make decisions by looking at the overall impact it will have on others, what that impact is, how important the positives are, and how awful the negatives are. Through this, I am able to weigh the pros and cons of a decision before making it to see if the pros outweigh the cons. Specifically in relation to the Code of Ethics, I do my best to follow all of the rules set forth, however, of most importance to me, are the following: (1) accepting responsibility, (3) honesty, (9) avoiding harming others, and (10) assisting others in following these ethics (IEEE, 2020). As stated previously, I believe all of the ethics listed in the Code of Ethics are extremely important, but these are the main four that I tend to follow. Firstly, I believe accepting responsibility and being honest is absolutely crucial to gaining the trust of others and building yourself to be a better person. Avoiding any harm to another person, their property, etc. allows for decisions, even if technically ‘wrong’, to not cause irreversible damage and thus improve the lives of others. Finally, by assisting others in following the Code of Ethics, that will allow for it to be more widespread thus causing an overall better end product in which decisions were made with as much care taken as possible.

In discussions for the class, there were multiple ethical issues brought up, but the most popular topic was the Amazon Echo. The issue that was brought up with this was that of a murder occurring where the Echo could have heard what was happening, which may have helped solve the case. However, due to Amazon's policies of not storing data unless a keyword has been spoken recently, it is likely not much information has come of it due to the Echo, and Amazon's refusal to give up the recordings they did have shows their ethics (Buhr, 2016). The issue that arises here though is whether or not Amazon is right in withholding the information and whether or not the Echo, or similar devices, should be recording and saving information such as this. As

for similarity to other issues brought up, the only other two issues were the following: a Volkswagen emission output lie, see works cited, and whether or not someone working on a project should handle sensitive, see works cited, personal information because he was asked despite him not wanting to. Amazon and the personal information issues are similar in that they both directly involve personal information and these two are similar to the Volkswagen one in that it comes back to the core concept of fair treatment to all. As for differences, the Volkswagen issue deals heavily with being honest to customers in all regards whereas the Amazon one is more focused on maintaining their own promises, and the personal information issue is primarily focused on making a decision to keep a project versus making the more ethical decision.

Coming back to the Amazon issue, the most popular topic, the main conclusion drawn from the class in this regard seemed to be that Amazon was most definitely in the right for withholding the information to keep the privacy of their customers unless a warrant was provided in order to retrieve the information. Further, it seemed to be of general consensus that as long as Amazon continues to follow these general ethics and has their products doing *exactly* as advertised, all will be well and there will be no ethical issues to come of it. To arrive at these final general consensuses, we discussed, in-depth, some of the P's of ethics in relation to the issue and each of our opinions on what was the right decision and why.

In relation to the previously discussed Amazon Echo issue, "Virtue Ethics" can relate directly to this case. In particular, the three most important of the six listed, are honesty, fidelity, and responsibility. Honesty focuses on ensuring to stick by any statements made and never lie; fidelity focuses on loyalty; responsibility focuses on taking accountability for your own actions and doing good for the benefit of others. I chose these three because they are extremely important in basically all walks of life as honesty is crucial to nearly everything, fidelity/loyalty is crucial to relationships, whether that be intimate, friendships, business-customer, etc., and responsibility is crucial to gaining the trust of others, which is extraordinarily important in a business. These three items apply directly to the Amazon Echo issue with honesty being that Amazon has to do exactly as they say in their advertisements which also bleeds into the idea of loyalty. They have to stay loyal to their customers and never stray away from their claims to "make a quick buck." Finally, responsibility is important in this issue in that Amazon has a responsibility to keep their customer's personal information private and, as the name suggests, personal. The other three virtues, integrity, charity, and self-discipline are definitely important but do not as directly apply to this particular case as the original three. Integrity does not apply directly because although Amazon has to keep good judgment, I feel the issue was less about that and more about honesty. As for charity, this revolves around the idea of giving to others, which does not apply to this situation. Finally, self-discipline is not as relevant because it is the idea of avoiding "excessive" behavior, which was not an issue here. Outside of the scope of the six virtues of ethics given, the idea of fairness is extremely relevant in this issue. Amazon must be fair to its customers by not providing information in one situation and then providing it in another. Amazon did a good job here in making sure not to provide any personal information to the government unless they provided Amazon with a warrant.

In conclusion, the “Code of Ethics” is crucial to establishing a base point for ethical debate, ethics directly affect my decisions, as well as my colleagues, and an example of how they apply to a particular case, the Amazon Echo case. Ultimately, all decisions should be rooted in some sort of ethical debate in order to ensure the best decision is made, at all times.

Works Cited

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