Exam #2

Question #1

I believe confidentiality is extremely valuable for any profession. Especially a profession that places an emphasis on communication with the client. I feel like we as professionals should care about this topic of confidentiality because it could affect how successful the company is. For example, if a company has a reputation of disrespecting client’s confidentiality, that company won’t be in business for too much longer. I feel that confidentiality should only be broken as a last resort. If there is a critical danger to someone else that can be avoided by breaking confidentiality, I feel like it should be done. I want to iterate that breaking confidentiality should be done as a last resort. If the issue can be solved internally then focus on that kind of solution first.

My thought on warning clients of professionals breaking confidentiality is that it is the right thing to do as long as the professional won’t be harmed by doing so. For example, if a therapist promises a confidential meeting at the beginning of a session, then I feel the therapist is obligated to let the client know his/her intentions as long as the client won’t harm the therapist.

I feel that of the three ethical theories that involve confidentiality, the discussion brought up by Armstrong I feel is the best. He goes through the grounds on when it should be allowed to break confidentiality. Her first point on when someone should be ok to break confidentiality is that there will be a positive cause that is confirmed to outway the negatives. Meaning that you for sure know that it will provide more good than harm. Her second reason to break confidentiality is that there aren’t any other options. The next guideline is that you infringe as little as possible. This to me means that if you have to break confidentiality, you need to only tell the parts that involve the harm to others. For example, if a client has issues that don’t correlate to the situation that is causing harm, those issues need to stay confidential. Her last point goes hand in hand with the last point. The point states that you try to minimize infringement effects.

Armstrong then goes into more specific details about certain professions on what precautions should be taken when breaking confidentiality. To state a few, in the medical field, you must always obey the law no matter what. In the engineering field, public safety is a paramount duty.

Question #2

In my profession of computer science, I feel honesty is very important to have. As an example, if I am working with a client and they make a request for me to make a program that I won’t be able to do, I would be honest with my client. I realize that if I do so that I have the potential to lose business with them, but I would rather lose a project then give a client something that they didn’t ask for. Another reason honesty is valued in my profession is if someone is asking for advice on what kind of action to take for a project, being honest will go a lot further than lying and it costing you a large amount of money. Another virtue that I value that pertains to my profession is confidence. If you are trying to present a strong idea that can better a company then you should be able to do so with confidence. If you are not confident with your proposal, then your peers will find your idea to be weak and fail to see what points you were trying to make on why your proposal was great.

I believe that a virtue based approach is best suited for a computer science environment. My main reason why I feel this way is because not every situation is the same and will not be clear for a rule book on what you are supposed to do. In certain situations you may not have time to try and figure out what rule would be best suited for that particular situation. I also feel that checking a rule book on how you need to handle situations can waste time that could have been used being productive.

There are both positives and negatives to virtue ethics in this situation. For the positives, I feel that that it is very open ended so it can adapt to any situation. It is solely based off of what virtues that professional selects to be the most important. It’s like equipping yourself with the appropriate virtues for the job. One of the major downfalls with virtue ethics is how open ended it is. If a person is trying to use virtue ethics to solve a problem they have to figure how one of their moral exemplars or role models would handle the situation. A person maybe confused on what virtues to take from their moral exemplars. Especially if the person has multiple moral exemplars with conflicting views. For example, if I had my grandpa and my older brother as moral exemplars, and I had to make a decision on whether or not I wanted to take a job in California. I would be stumped on which person to listen to. My brother would want me to go out there and seek new opportunities while my grandpa would look at how expensive it would be to live out at that end of the country.

Question #4

I feel that actions should be done for the right reasons not just because someone told them to. For an example of everyday ethics, you hit your brother because he was screen peaking in a videogame and killed your character because of his cheating. You should tell your brother sorry for hitting him because it was wrong and you feel bad, not because your mom told you that you would be in far worse trouble if you refused to apologize. Motive to me is extremely important. If a person expresses they are completing a task out of joy rather than no reason more than they have to, they are more likely to go above and beyond and give that task everything they have opposed to just completing the task as fast as possible. I feel that from an ethical stand point, a person is more likely to be ethical if they are more willing to do the ethical thing in the first place.

I feel there is a middle ground between what Kant is saying and what Utilitarianism stands for when it comes to motive. I don’t think that motive is the only thing that defines an action unlike Kant, but I feel like it has a part in what make something ethical unlike Utilitarianism. To take the example from class about the attempted murder that fixes a problem with the victim. The guy was trying to murder someone but ended up fixing the person’s bad back instead. Because the murderer did something that was good in the end that still doesn’t exclude the intent to kill in the beginning. A Utilitarian would have zero issue with what happened in this scenario since the victim ended up better than when the scenario started. I feel that the middle ground for both of these theories is to prioritize the intent at the start and the end result of what happens. For instance, if I were to perform a selfless duty like helping someone open a door while their hand are full, I would want my intentions and the end result to both be ethically good. I would want to help this person because they needed help and I would want to successfully open the door for them.

I don’t feel that doing something ethically good for the wrong reasons is as ethical as doing something good for the right reasons. If you are going to do a good action so that later you may harm someone else, to me that is just as bad as just flat out harming someone. So to me, motive plays a big part in whether someone is being ethical or not. Here is an example on how this idea relates. Picture a professional athlete that is working for a charity company working to raise money for a new well in Africa to give fresh water to a village. The action itself is ethical to help others in a time of need, however it could become unethical if the motive for the athlete is not in good faith. If the athlete is doing this service to gain publicity so the athlete can sell more jerseys and make more money, I personally feel the athlete is now doing it for the wrong reasons.