

Computer Engineering Ethics

Lecture 4:

Moral Reasoning

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Updated 9/3/2021

Ethical Dilemmas

- Situations in which moral reasons come into conflict...
- Or, in which the applications of moral values is unclear, *it is not immediately clear what should be done*

Ethical dilemma examples

- Medical experiments on humans.
- To report/expose wrongdoing by your employer (whistle-blowing).
- Denzel Washington vs. Gene Hackman in Crimson Tide.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB2SDmV9oDs>

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

- Moral Clarity, *identify the relevant moral values*
- Conceptual clarity, *clarify key concepts*
- Get informed about the facts, *obtain relevant information*
- Get informed about the options, *consider all options*
- Make a well-reasoned decision, *only humans can do this!*
 - Example: factory discharging harmful materials to soil or water resources

Why we disagree

- To a large extent, moral disagreement occurs against the background of widespread moral agreement.
- Disagreement about moral matters is often more a matter of disagreement about facts than moral values.
- Disagreement is also sometimes about conceptual matters—what concepts mean and whether they apply in particular circumstances.

Exercise: Do you agree with the underlined statement?

Six months ago the region of Forestville increased the speed limit for vehicles traveling on the region's highways by ten miles per hour. Since that change took effect, the number of automobile accidents in that region has increased by 15 percent. But the speed limit in Elmsford, a region neighboring Forestville, remained unchanged, and automobile accidents declined slightly during the same six-month period. Therefore, if the citizens of Forestville want to reduce the number of automobile accidents on the region's highways, they should campaign to reduce Forestville's speed limit to what it was before the increase.