IT, ethics and organizations

Tools for Ethical Decision Making

Mikael Laaksoharju
Overview

• Recap
• Examples
• Are tools necessary?
• What should the tools do?
• Some ideas
• Seminar II assignment
Recap

- Heteronomy and Autonomy

  Default: Heteronomy

  Deliberate: Autonomy

- Awareness and responsibility
  - Unintentional power
  - Escape from responsibility
"We are embedding Corporate Responsibility (CR) in our organisation through the management of our sites, the delivery of our operations, the core values of our people and our stakeholder relationships. Our framework for delivering a responsible and sustainable business is to structure our initiatives into four themes - our people, community, environment and marketplace."

(http://www.qinetiq.com/home/aboutqq/corp_resp.html)
Example of ethical problem

Let’s pretend that you have played a key role in a project developing an autonomous rescue robot. Someone secretly put it up to a “military Turing test” and to your surprise (and beyond your understanding) the robot actually passed, which means that it is in fact deployable in war. A company wants to either hire you to continue developing the robot or buy the rights to your yet unpublished code.

• How would/should you act? Responsibility?
• What information is relevant to gather before making a decision?
• What is a “good” decision?
How far can we reach with intuitive testing?

- the mother test
- the TV test
- the smell test
- the other person’s shoes test
- the market test
- the your-children-test
- etc.
Intuitive testing

• are best suited for quick and simple decisions
• will most likely result in politically correct decisions (always the best?)

• When we make a critical decision in a complex problem we probably need better justification than gut feeling
Discuss!

What are the benefits/risks with automated moral decision making (robots, computers, etc.)?

– 5 minutes in small groups (2-3 students)
– Write down most important result from discussion on the piece of plastic
Are tools necessary?

- Ethical problems are usually complex and by nature distorted by emotions.
- Many people hold protected (holy) values that they do not wish to trade off at any rate.
- Can we immediately identify all stakeholders and how their interests affect other stakeholders?
- What information is relevant to the problem? What is not? How do we digest the info?
- Claim: Ethical competence is dependent on the ability to process information about ethical problems and the great amount of information requires some kind of structuring method.
What should the tools do?

• Should help to organize information.
• Should involve a process that promotes a holistic perspective.
• Should stimulate autonomous thinking.
• Should block heteronomy.
• Most of existing tools aim to reach a result that is defensible in the light of this or that ethical theory.
Maner’s stages of moral decision making

- *The Preparing Stage* – Cultivation of moral awareness
- *The Inspecting Stage* – Definition of the problem, facts, stakeholders, relationships, etc.
- *The Elucidating Stage* – Classifying and identification of facts and presumptions
- *The Ascribing Stage* – Specification of the values, interests, principles, etc., that are the driving forces for a possible conflict
- *The Optioning Stage* – Brainstorming to develop alternative solutions
- *The Predicting Stage* – Prediction of potential consequences and considerations
Maner’s stages of moral decision-making

- *The Focusing Stage* – Choosing a set of stakeholders to consider more in detail
- *The Calculating Stage* – Quantification of risks, costs, likelihoods, etc.
- *The Applying Stage* – Application of theories, weighing of values and argumentations for and against options
- *The Selecting Stage* – The choice and common-sense verification of an option
- *The Acting Stage* – Planning and carrying through with the decision
- *The Reflecting Stage* – Monitoring the implementation of the decision and learning from errors if any, possibly restarting the process.
"Maner’s algorithm"

- Construct ethical-theory-list
- Construct personal-virtue-list
- Inspect situation
- Construct shared-value-list
- Construct list-of-parties
"Maner’s algorithm" (abbrev.)

FOR each party in list-of-parties
| Construct option-list for this party
| | Construct outcome-list for this option

FOR each party in list-of-parties
| Recall option-list for this party
| FOR each option in option-list
| |
| | Examine shared-value-list
| | Examine personal-virtue-list
| | Examine outcome-list for this option
| | Examine stakeholder-list
| | | Construct list-of-obligations party has to stakeholder
| | | | Examine list-of-obligations
| | | Examine ethical-theory-list
| | | Construct list-of-principles for this theory
| Sort option-list
Paramedic Ethics

Designed mainly for computer professionals (Collins and Miller, 1995).

1. Gather data systematically about the parties.
2. Analyze the data systematically for the alternatives.
3. Try to negotiate a social contract agreement in an imaginary meeting where all parties are represented.
4. Judge each of the alternatives according to ethical theories.
Iterate over:

- each involved party
- each pair of involved parties
- each linkage of rights with corresponding duties for each pair of involved parties
- each course of action open to each party
- each risk and benefit for each action for each party
- each ethical theory that may bear on each action of each party
Seminar II assignment

Revisit your ethical problem from seminar I. Use EthXpert and the feedback that you received from your fellow students to expand the problem further.