

Technology and ethics Ethical skills

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How do we think?

- *Heteronomy*: automatic, dogmatic, constrained, authoritarian thoughts, instincts and reflexes
- *Advantages*: Quick, safe, economic, avoid responsibility
- *Disadvantages*: Bad control, chancing, difficult to explain

2

Could we do better?

- *Autonomy*: Critical searching, systematic thinking, supervision, holistic
- *Disadvantages*: Demands time, resources and skill, create anxiety
- *Advantages*: Good control, insight, awareness, responsibility, easy to explain

3

Ethical Competence

1. Ethical awareness
2. Personal skill in ethical problem solving and decision making
3. Organizational processes in handling ethical issues and creating principles
4. Argumentation
5. Ethical confidence, emotional strength

4

Ethical Competence

Ethical competence is the ability of a person or a group, who confronts a moral problem, to choose the right way to handle the problem at hand.

To do this one has to be able to see the difference between different ways of handling moral problems, and to be a master of thinking and acting in a way that independently, systematically and critically considers all relevant values, principles, interests, feelings, duties, needs and beliefs.

5

One example

You are the president of a company developing a new personnel administration system for another company where information on its employees will be stored. There are many security levels to choose among but your customer wants the cheapest one which also happens to be the less secure. You are convinced that hackers or even employees will be able to access this information. You have warned your customer but they want to take the risk.

6

Heteronomy: giving up control and responsibility,
one thought dominates

Automatic reactions

- It is going to be a big scandal!
- It is the customer's responsibility!
- Don't worry! It's going to be alright!
- This is the way to do things, etc.

Dogmatic fixations

- People's integrity must be respected!
- You should always obey the law!
- Image is very important!
- Finances are very important!
- Customers should be respected!

7

Autonomy: take control and responsibility, holistic

Relevant values and interests

- Do I want to support the customer?
- Is the relationship to my customer important?
- What do customer's employees feel?
- Do I care about my image or finances?

Possible alternative actions

- Design according to customer?
- Follow your own plans?
- Negotiate more?
- Give up?

How do the different alternatives affect values?

8

Autonomy Skill

- Analysis of the concrete situation instead of general moral principles
- Specification of own and relevant others' essential interests, values and feelings
- Generation of alternatives and weighing against the essential values
- Building a comprehensive picture of the problem situation to reflect upon before decision or action

9

Autonomy Skill

Autonomy thinking		All relevant values, interests, duties, feelings, needs, etc.					
		Own economy	Employees' integrity	Customer's finances	Own reputation	(cont.)	...
All possible solutions	Design acc. customer	<i>Positive but risk for bad image</i>	<i>Risks for personal integrity, but still at work</i>	<i>Chance to make profit but risk for conflict</i>	<i>Cynical, but responsible for own company</i>	...	...
	Negotiate	<i>Customer get tired, but maybe a safer contract</i>	<i>Chance to secure rights, but risk to lose job</i>	<i>Higher losses, but avoidance of conflict</i>	<i>Indecisive, fearful, but cautious and serious</i>		...
	... (cont.)	...	...	...	...	...	...

Ethics more difficult in organizations

- Social loafing
- Conformism
- Group polarization
- De-individuation
- Authority obedience
- Groupthink

Ethical competence in organizations

- Processes for construction of ethical codices and guidelines
- Processes for revision of ethical codices
- Dialog groups, support structures, ethical committees etc.
- Special roles, e.g. ethical officers, coordinators
- Continuing education for ethical competence
- Ethical leadership focusing on organizational and personal development

Ethical codices and competence

- Codices have to be created by people who know how to do this
- Codices demand always interpretation and adaptation. Rules and principles cannot applied automatically
- Ethical codices can work against their goals:
 - They can never be exhaustive and what is missing can be interpreted as being allowed
 - Rules can be used with rigidity, with fanaticism or simply in a wrong way

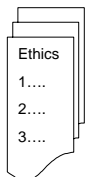
13

Types of Ethical Codes

- Marketing, goodwill
 - Prescriptions, laws, punishment and reward
 - Checklists created by external experts
 - Knowledge support in problem solving
- Only the last one can work as the others but it has to be created by the users and it has to be continuously adapted

14

Construction and use of rules



Knowledge tool based on and used to support ethical skill

Flexible guidelines and critical thoughts in their form and content

All have to get prepared and to participate

Continuously ongoing process

15

One example

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16

Construction of ethical rules

Autonomous principle construction		All involved values, interests, persons, groups, organizations, society, etc.				
		Economy	Work climate	Law	(cont.)	...
Organizational actions, decisions, functions, etc.	Actual	<i>Constrains flexibility, but safer planning</i>	<i>Good, but difficulties in discussing problems</i>	<i>Follows the law but risk for violation of information</i>	...	...
	Possible					
	...					

17

An example of a rule...

¹Our actions must always respect the integrity of the employees because it is according to the law, it facilitates internal relations and cooperation, and allows safer planning of business activities.

²However, there is a risk for lower business flexibility, violation of employees' and others' right of information, and may be difficult to handle internal conflicts openly. ³If we do not care about the integrity of the employees we could easier adapt and handle difficult business situations, ⁴but there is a great risk for internal conflicts, bad image, and difficulties to hire new employees...

(^{1, 2, 3, 4} All four parts have to be included!)

18

Is ethical competence moral?

- **Necessary:** There is nobody who can tell us what is right and wrong
- **Classical response:** It depends how people use their ethical competence
- **Satisfactory:** The ethical competence is the only way to good moral
- **Risk:** Essential myths can be disclosed
