Ethical competence and leadership
Ethics of technology and science
Optional

Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos
The course

- Lectures, workshop, group project, seminar
- *Literature*: Rachels & Rachels, links, papers
- *Examination*: Participation, group project, presentation, essay
- Focus on ethical competence and practical tools
## Program

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Leadership

• Intellectual capacity, creativity, ability to produce new knowledge, mental skills
  - leaders in science, pioneers in ideas, methods and laboratory work

• Emotional capacity, confidence and security, anxiety tolerance, responsibility
  - leaders in the group or scientific community, proposing and defending, participating or initiating dialog with public and society, handling personal dilemmas and conflicts inside the scientific community/group and in society
Ethical issues

• Funding, conducting, applying
• Research collaboration, colleagues, supervisor
• Publishing, authorship etc.
• Methods, experimenting, laboratory animals, etc.
• Impact on society, human life, environment
• Privacy, intellectual property, etc.
• Plagiarism, handling of data
• ….
Ethics and research

- Ethical aspects have an increasing impact on research planning, funding, process, publication and implementation
- Good research does not cause problems, conflicts or catastrophes
- People will not adopt and use research findings that do not satisfy their values, independently of any other benefits
- Good research satisfies important values and interests
Do we know what is right?

- World: changing, global, unpredictable, complex
- Scientific and technical development
- Problems vary, are personal, different
- People are complex, isolated, undefined
- No functioning authorities & guidelines
- Decentralization, delegation
- Intense public and media interest
Is ethics education possible?

• There are really no problems! Just follow the law, the rules, or your moral feeling!
• Education in ethics cannot make people better!
• It is impossible to use ethics education in real life!
Ethics and morality

• Morality is “knowledge”, i.e. answers to choices we feel we need to make in our lives as persons or groups

• Ethics is about the process of gaining this “knowledge”
Answers or questions?

- **Content:** “Right actions are moral but wrong actions are immoral” - Common sense definition based on moral *content* and normative aspects, focused on satisfaction with the result

- **Choice:** “Morality and ethics are related to choice” - Philosophy and psychology base the definition on *choice* and option, focused on the quality of the process
Philosophy and psychology

**Platon:** Socrates’s *Maieytike* and *Aporia*

κυβερνήτης = governor, leader, philosopher

**Aristoteles:** *Phronesis*

**Kant:** Categorical Imperative, Dialectic Process, Heteronomy – Autonomy

**Piaget:** Skills to handle moral problems

**Vygotsky, Kohlberg:** Education and support for development
Philosophizing is difficult

• Moral issues are controversial, open, chaotic
• Irrational or non-logical ways work fine
• Strong need for constraints and beliefs
Ethical constraints and beliefs

Handling of moral issues creates a big risk: *Important myths can be destroyed*

- *For persons*: Resolution of problems, personal development, but risk to lose enthusiasm, get disoriented, lost, cynical
- *For organizations, society*: Hero, e.g. whistle blowing (courageous, responsible), or offend persons and principles (show no respect, disloyalty, treason, hostility)
What do we need?

- *Ethical competence*: Know how to handle ethical issues, how to think
- *Ethical processes*: Roles, procedures, mechanisms in organizations
- *Ethical confidence*: Know that we can find good solutions and trust our ability (i.e. know that our skill and our way of handling moral issues is working)
The normal way

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

• **Autonomy**: Critical searching, systematic thinking, supervision, holistic

• **Disadvantages**: Demands time, resources and skill, create anxiety

• **Advantages**: Good control, insight, awareness, responsibility, easy to explain
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.
Ethical competence
Φιλοσοφείν - Philosophizing

- Processes and skills, and methods and tools used by persons and groups, are most important to focus on
- We need training and education to support such process and skills
Focus of training

1. Ethical awareness
2. Personal skill in ethical problem solving and decision making
3. Organizational processes in handling ethical issues
4. Formulating principles, rules and guidelines
5. Argumentation
6. Application and use of skills in real life
7. Ethical confidence, emotional strength