



Ethics Center at Fresno State: <http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/ethicscenter/>

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

1. See the Problem for what it is

- **Factual vs. Value Conflict:** Descriptive disagreement vs. normative dispute
- **Limits and Severity of Conflict:** Toleration & Civility vs. Proactive Intervention

2. Understand who has an obligation to do what; and to what extent

- **Standards of Professional Practice:** Behavior required by a professional code
- **Negligence:** conduct that fails to do what is professionally required—or that falls below a standard of due care expected of a reasonably prudent person
- **Supererogation:** Going above and beyond the call of duty

3. Clarify the nature of your judgment

- Is it aesthetic, cultural, legal, religious, moral, etc.?
- Problems: Relativism, Emotivism, Intuitionism, Objectivism, Absolutism

4. Understand and Apply value systems

- **Natural Law:** Ethics discovered by reason discerning the nature of the world
- **Virtue Ethics:** Ethics focused on developing character and role models
- **Utilitarianism:** “Greatest happiness for the greatest number”
- **Kantian deontology:** “Do your duty!” “Respect Persons!” “Universalize you maxims!”
- **Social Contract:** Ethics is what we decide and promise to reciprocate
- **Care Ethics:** Ethics is about care, nurturance, and relationship (cf. Golden Rule).

5. Recognize the depth and nature of Value Conflicts

- **Dilemma** = “good v. good” or “right v. right”
 - **Vs. Temptation** = “right v. wrong” or “good v. evil”
- **Dilemma Paradigms** (cf. Kidder)
 - Truth v. Loyalty
 - Individual v. Community
 - Short term v. Long term
 - Justice v. Mercy

6. Reflect, Reassess, and Reform

- Ask for advice/help
- Admit failures and apologize
- Make amends and look for improvement

Resources

- Markkula Ethics Center at Santa Clara University (<http://www.scu.edu/ethics>)
- Rushworth Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices* (Harper, 2009)
- Barbara MacKinnon and Andrew Fiala, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 8th edition (Cengage Learning, 2014)
- Contact the Ethics Center Director, Andrew Fiala: afiala@csufresno.edu