

# **Kidder's Checkpoints for Ethical Decision-Making**

- 1. Is there an ethical dilemma?**
- 2. Whose dilemma is it?**
- 3. Distinguish facts from assumptions.**
- 4. Test for Right-versus-Wrong issues.**
- 5. Test for Right-versus-Right paradigms.**
- 6. Apply the Resolution Principles.**
- 7. Can we escape the dilemma?**
- 8. Make the decision.**
- 9. Revisit and reflect — learning.**

## **Is there an ethical dilemma?**

**Very important:**

- 1. identify issues needing attention, and**
- 2. separate ethical issues from matters of mere manners and social conventions, or conflicting values, or æsthetics, or ...**

**But: too much diligence → self-righteous moralist  
and too little → apathy or cynicism.**

## Whose dilemma is it?

**Who is the actor?**

**Who is *responsible*? — Who is morally obligated and empowered to act in the face of the moral issues raised?**

**(We're all involved, through society, but few are responsible.)**

**Not stakeholders: Stakeholders are separate, and of concern only to utilitarians.**

**Since Kantians seek obedience to a fundamental principle so universal that it operates equally for everyone: stakes are irrelevant.**

**But both utilitarians and Kantians need actors.**

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## **Distinguish facts from assumptions.**

**Good decision making requires good understanding of facts.**

**How did things happen? What finally happened? What else might have happened? Who said what to whom? Who might have suppressed information? Who was culpably ignorant, and who innocently unaware?**

**Details determine motives; character reflected in context.**

**Assessment of future potential.**

## **Test for Right-versus-Wrong issues.**

### **Various tests:**

- 1. The *legal test*: is lawbreaking involved?**
- 2. The *stench test*: does it smell? does it go against the grain of your moral principles somehow?**
- 3. The *front page test*: what everyone (including your mother, aunt, etc) suddenly knew what you were up to? OK?**
- 4. The *Mum test*: if I were my Mum — or any moral exemplar — would I do this?**

**Note: The Stench test ~ Kantian (no consequences)**

**The Front page test ~ utilitarian, outcomes.**

**The Mum test ~ the Golden Rule.**

## **Test for Right-versus-Right paradigms.**

**If not Right v Wrong, then which of the four dilemma paradigms?**

**Truth v Loyalty? Short term v Long term?  
Justice v Mercy? Self v Community?**

**Not just classification, but to emphasise it is a genuine dilemma, pitting two deeply held core values.**

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## **Apply the resolution principles.**

**Apply the three resolution principles: Utilitarian, Kantian, and Golden Rule.**

**Not a vote of 2 against 1, or 3 against 0, but to identify a line of reasoning that seems most relevant and persuasive.**

## **Escape the dilemma?**

**At any time: is there a third way through the dilemma?**

**Sometimes a compromise.**

**Sometimes a highly creative and unforeseen course of action.**

**e.g. the lesbian to the school formal**

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## **Make the decision.**

**Enough with the talk and thinking!**

**Analysis  $\neq$  action; theory  $\neq$  practice.**

**To act, to do, often requires *moral courage*: this distinguishes us from the animals.**

## **Revisit and reflect.**

**Seek lessons in the analysis and the denouement.**

**To build expertise, to adjust the moral compass, to provide new examples for future discussion and reflection.**

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## **Wednesday's Homework (individual)**

- 1. Read the paper by Steidlmeier and the press clippings on Google in China (2) and the pieces from Tuesday's *FT*. Answer the questions in the Course Outline under Wednesday's HW.**
- 2. Complete your third Reflections diary note.**
- 3. Due by 9am tomorrow, max four pages or less. (Be prepared to share in class.)**