Conflict Problems

Resolving Conflicts Between Competing Moral Obligations Or Values

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Conflict Problems

Conflict between two or more
• obligations
• values or interests

Resolving Conflict Problems:

a. Easy Choices
One obligation, value or interest clearly outweighs the other.

An engineer wants to make a product cheaper, but can only do so by making it unsafe.
• Obligation to employer to make profits
• Obligation to protect public safety

b. Hard Choices
One is not able to honor some real and important obligation, value or interest in a way that he would consider desirable.

Case 7:

i. Obligation to public to protect health and safety
ii. Obligation to neighbors not to harm their economic livelihood
iii. Obligation to protect employer’s interests
iv. Obligation to self to protect career

Note: We are distinguishing these conflict situations on the basis of how difficult it is to decide what is right, not how difficult it is to do what is right.

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Case 7:

Harry works for a large manufacturer in the town of Lake Pleasant. His company employs half of this town, which is in an otherwise economically depressed part of the country. Harry discovers that his company is dumping carcinogenic chemicals into the local lake. The lake is the town’s main source of drinking water. Harry is told that the company dumps these chemicals because disposing of them lawfully is so expensive that it would force the company to fold or move overseas.

Should Harry report his employers to the authorities?

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c. Creative Middle Ways

The conflicting obligations, values, and interests are valid and weighty. Find a third course of action that will allow you to satisfy all/more of the obligations.

Creative middle way for Harry’s case 7:

-- find an inexpensive way to recycle the chemicals for continued use in manufacturing.

Note: Technical solutions are often the best “creative middle ways”!

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Gilbane gold:

• Conflicting obligations, interests, and values?

• Is this a hard choice or an easy choice?

• Creative Middle Way?

• What Conflicts are resolved/lessened?
Option 1
The Solution to pollution is dilution.
After Plant Expansion…

37.5 ppb  →  7.5 ppb
250,000 gal/day  →  1,250,000 gal/day

Annual Cost
Fresh water Purchase (@ $0.25/1,000 gal) = $273,750
Sewage Cost (@ $0.75/1,000 gal) = $821,250
Total Cost = $1,095,000