

Moral Dilemmas

The Heinz Dilemma (Kohlberg)

A woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$400 for the radium and charged \$4,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about \$2,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, having tried every legal means, Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

Should Heinz steal the drug? *A = Yes* *B = No*

The Torture Dilemma

A terrorist attack is imminent, and it is likely that many innocent people will be killed as a result of this attack. Security services have a suspect in custody and have strong evidence that he has knowledge that could prevent the attack. It is known that, under duress, suspected terrorists are likely to give disinformation or incorrect information; however, there is a small chance that the suspect may give truthful information that could stop the attack. The interrogation will involve use of techniques that will cause physical and psychological pain and distress (waterboarding, box confinement, stress positions, solitary confinement, threats) but nothing that involves long-term physical injury or death.

Should the security services interrogate the suspect? *A = Yes* *B = No*

The Psychologist Torture Dilemma

A psychologist, who is a member of the APA and an expert in body language, receives a call from a CIA operative at a 'black site' containing prisoners suspected of being involved in terrorism (although they have never been through a legal process in any country). The CIA believe that one of their prisoners has crucial

information that could stop an imminent, high-profile attack that will kill thousands of innocent people, but they need an expert in body language to assist them in their interrogation as this is likely to be the key to gaining this information; without an expert to do this it is almost certain that the attack will take place. The operative assures the psychologist that there will be no enhanced techniques used – they are simply going to talk to the suspect and the psychologist will monitor the suspects' responses. However, the psychologist knows that their membership of the APA forbids engaging with interrogation of suspects under such conditions.

The CIA agent finishes their explanation of the situation with the words 'You are the only person who can help in this situation; your country needs you and without you thousands of innocent people will die'.

Should the psychologist assist in the interrogation? A = No B = Yes

The Researcher Dilemma

You are carrying out your final-year dissertation, measuring participants' reactions to stressful stimuli using galvanic skin response equipment. Whilst attaching the electrodes to a young female participants' abdomen you notice bruising around her ribs that look as if they have been inflicted by a fist. The woman quickly pulls down her clothes to cover the bruising and looks embarrassed and ashamed.

Should you speak to the woman about what you have seen? A = Yes B = No

The Supervisor Dilemma

A student in the second year of their undergraduate degree is caught cheating in an exam by having written notes on their person that they tried to refer to. The student is mortified and explains that they were overcome by stress which impaired their thinking, and that this is totally out of character for them and will never happen again. After receiving a formal warning the student goes on to complete their degree, gaining first class honours and showing no signs of cheating on any of their subsequent assessment. After their undergraduate degree the student submits an excellent PhD proposal, but the potential

supervisor is aware of the academic misconduct case in their second year and the reasons for it.

Should the supervisor take this student on as a PhD candidate? A = Yes B = No

The Pandemic Dilemma

This one is part-dilemma, part real-world current issue; locking down the UK for the Covid pandemic will result in several hundred deaths by suicide, and increased levels of mental harm and hardship (but falling short of death) for younger people whilst thousands of (mainly older) people will die. However, not locking down will reduce (but not eradicate) the mental health and suicide issues, but will lead to an increase of many thousands more (mainly older) people dying.

Applying the same processes of logical thinking that you have applied to the previous dilemmas, address the question:

Should the UK try to control the Covid-19 pandemic by using lockdowns?

A = No B = Yes

Short Dilemmas

If a politician is good at their job of dealing with issues in government, but has many vices such as drug-taking and engaging in extra-marital affairs, should they be a politician?

If a scientist working in an academic institution is extremely good at their job, is scrupulous in their research ethics, and spends their time at work teaching and carrying out research, but has a conviction for monetary fraud, should they keep their job?