

Ethics in Computing

A YOUNG
PROFESSION
COPING WITH
ETHICAL DEBT



Theo Schlossnagle

@POSTWAIT

FOUNDER CIRCONUS



DISCLAIMER

I AM NOT AN ETHICIST.
THIS TALK HAS MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS.

ἠθος -> ηθική

- ▶ The philosophy of ethics is about systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.
- ▶ Normative Ethics can be viewed from three lenses
 - ▶ Virtue Ethics
 - ▶ Deontology (Duties & Rules)
 - ▶ Consequentialism (Consequences)

Change Over Time

- ▶ Ethics exist only within the context of human society.
- ▶ Human society changes
 - ▶ Globalization
 - ▶ Scientific understanding
 - ▶ Supernatural belief structures

Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy





Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ Medical

Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ Medical
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Professional

- ▶ Computing

DOMHNALL GLEESON ALICIA VIKANDER OSCAR ISAAC

ex machina

WHAT HAPPENS TO ME IF I FAIL YOUR TEST?

UNIVERSAL PICTURES INTERNATIONAL and FILM4 present a DNA FILMS production "EX MACHINA" DOMHNALL GLEESON ALICIA VIKANDER and OSCAR ISAAC STORY BY FRANCINE MASSLER AND BEN SALESBURY AND SCOTT BARROW
SCREENPLAY BY FREEMANTLE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GUY RITCHIE COSTUME DESIGNER SHARON COOPER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARK DUNN AND MARK DUNN PRODUCED BY ANDREW MACDONALD AND ALLAN REICH WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ALEX GARLAND
R PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
FILM4 MPAA-34-5000 COMING SOON
A24



VW

Emissions



Über Greyball



Strava Global Heatmap



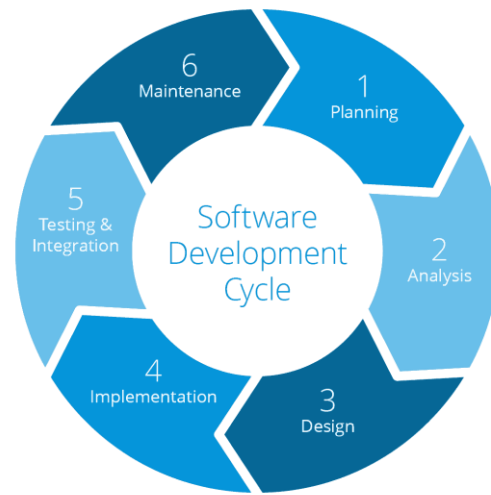
Technical Concepts Hand Soap Dispenser

Antecedotes ~ What now?

- ▶ Is this really my responsibility?
 - ▶ **Yes** it &\$%@*ing is.
- ▶ Many ethical infractions are the result of privacy violations
 - ▶ Privacy is a human right
- ▶ Forecasting ethical consequences can be hard
 - ▶ It requires anticipating the consequences to humans (that don't look or think like you)
 - ▶ Build more diverse teams.
- ▶ The software development lifecycle is not a universally fixed thing
 - ▶ Capitalize on its flexibility by introducing “ethical considerations”
 - ▶ From day to day ask, “what can I do?”

Start The Conversation

- ▶ I don't come with answers... I come with questions.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with a code of ethics for computing.
 - ▶ ACM's Ethics policy
 - ▶ ACM's "Ask and Ethicist"
- ▶ We need to ask "what are the ethical implications?" all the time.



Dissenting

- ▶ Be aware that you are not alone
- ▶ Understand that ethics are a spectrum
- ▶ Keep records
- ▶ Build a dispassionate defense
- ▶ Work the system
- ▶ Resigning

Notes

Virtue Ethics:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>

ACM Code of Ethics

<http://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/>

ACM “Ask an Ethicist”

<http://ethics.acm.org/integrity-project/ask-an-ethicist-faq/>

IEEE Dissentation Guidelines

<http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/5707>

Uber Greyball

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/technology/uber-federal-inquiry-software-greyball.html>

Soap

<https://gizmodo.com/why-cant-this-soap-dispenser-identify-dark-skin-1797931773>

Volkswagen Emissions Scandal

<https://www.npr.org/tags/443453659/volkswagen-emissions-scandal>

Strava Global Heatmap

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/28/fitness-tracking-app-gives-away-location-of-secret-us-army-bases>