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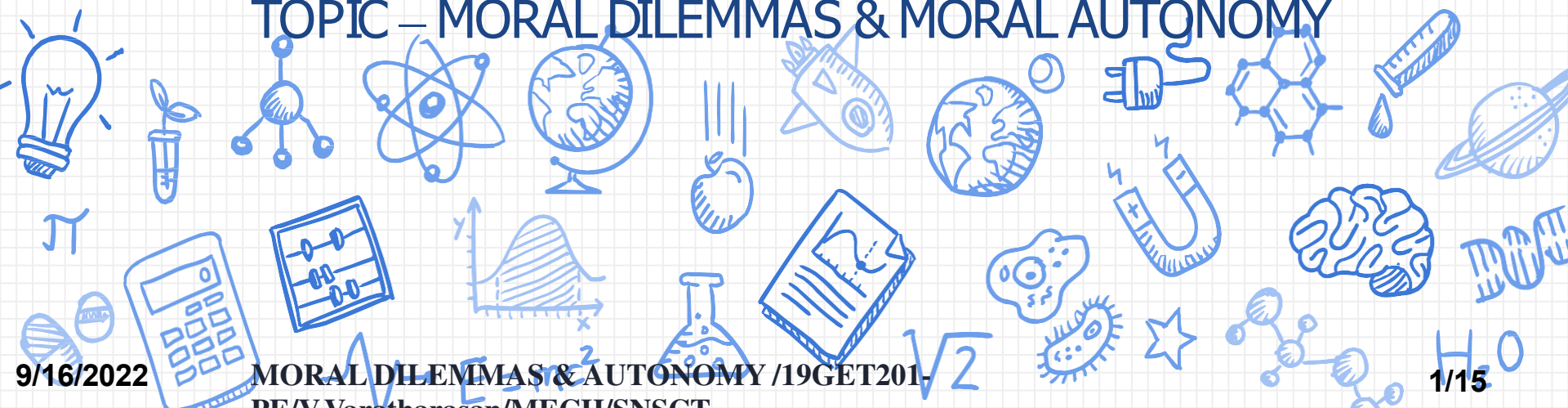
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DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
19GET201–PROFESSIONAL ETHICS & HUMAN VALUS
IV YEAR VII SEM

UNIT 1–ENGINEERING ETHICS

TOPIC – MORAL DILEMMAS & MORAL AUTONOMY

MORAL DILEMMA

Definition:

Dilemmas are situations in which moral reasons come into conflict, or in which the application of moral values are problems, and one is not clear of the immediate choice or solution of the problems.

✗ Moral reasons could be rights, duties, goods or obligations.

✗ These situations do not mean that things had gone wrong, but they only indicate the presence of moral complexity.

✗ This makes the decision making complex.

For example, a person promised to meet a friend and dine, but he has to help his uncle who is involved in an accident-one has to fix the priority.

The three complex situations leading to moral dilemmas are:

✗ The problem of *vagueness*: One is unable to distinguish between good and bad (right or wrong) principle. Good means an action that is obligatory.

For example, code of ethics specifies that one should obey the laws and follow standards. Refuse bribe or accept the gift, and maintain confidentiality.
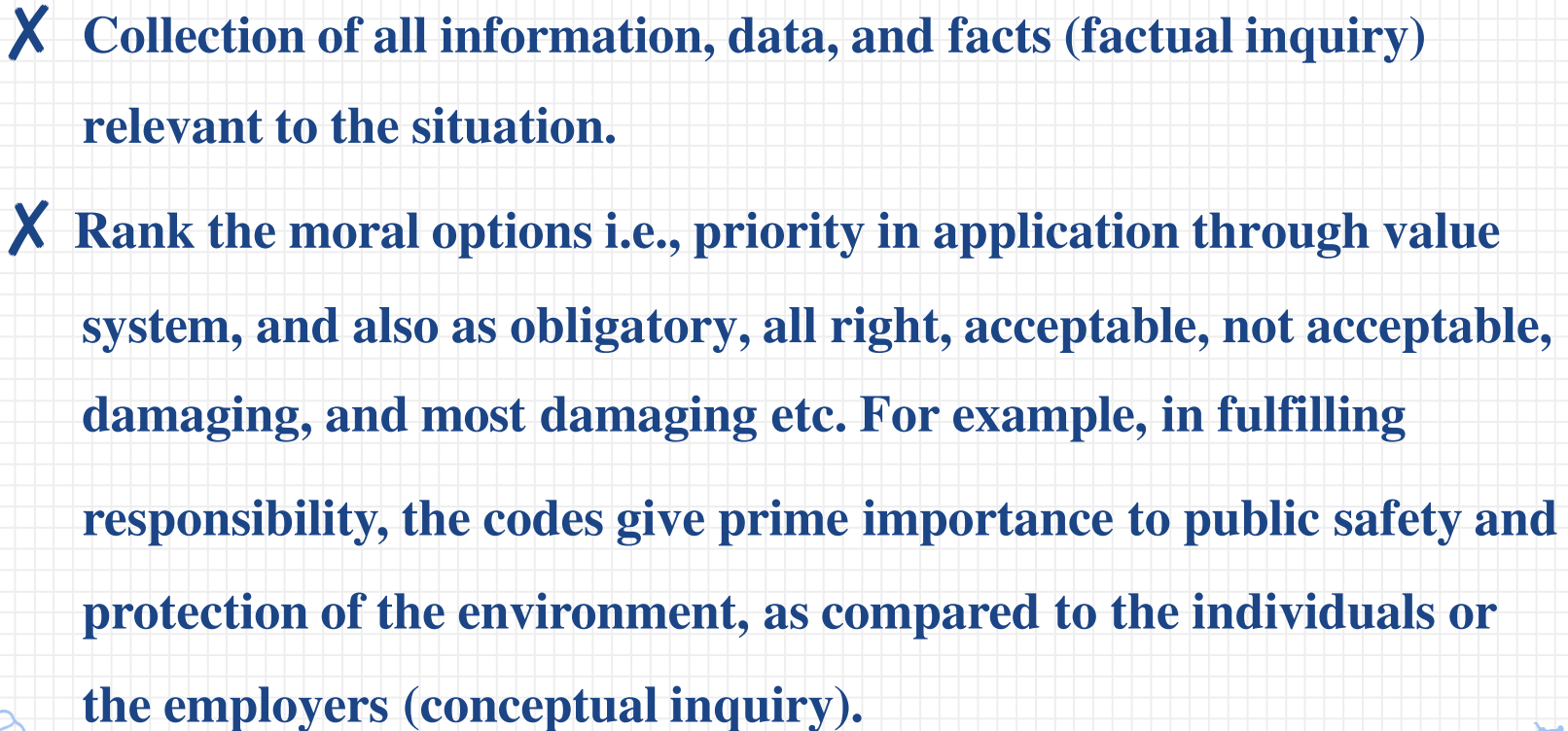
✗ The problem of conflicting reasons: One is unable to choose between two good moral solutions. One has to fix priority, through knowledge or value system.

✗ **The problem of disagreement: There may be two or more solutions and none of them mandatory. These solutions may be better or worse in some respects but not in all aspects. One has to interpret, apply different morally reasons, and analyze and rank the decisions.**

✗ **Select the best suitable, under the existing and the most probable conditions.**

Steps to Solve Dilemma :

The logical steps in confronting moral dilemma are:

✗ Identification of the moral factors and reasons. The clarity to identify the relevant moral values from among duties, rights, goods and obligations is obtained (conceptual inquiry).

✗ The most useful resource in identifying dilemmas in engineering is the professional codes of ethics, as interpreted by the professional experience. Another resource is talking with colleagues who can focus or narrow down the choice of values.

✗ **Collection of all information, data, and facts (factual inquiry) relevant to the situation.**

✗ **Rank the moral options i.e., priority in application through value system, and also as obligatory, all right, acceptable, not acceptable, damaging, and most damaging etc. For example, in fulfilling responsibility, the codes give prime importance to public safety and protection of the environment, as compared to the individuals or the employers (conceptual inquiry).**

✗ **Generate alternate courses of action to resolve the dilemma. Write down the main options and sub-options as a matrix or decision tree to ensure that all options are included.**

✗ **Discuss with colleagues and obtain their perspectives, priorities, and suggestions on various alternatives.**

✗ **Decide upon a final course of action, based on priority fixed or assumed. If there is no ideal solution, we arrive at a partially satisfactory or 'satisficing' solution.**

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MORAL AUTONOMY

✗ **Moral autonomy is defined as, decisions and actions exercised on the basis of moral concern for other people and recognition of good moral reasons.**

✗ **Alternatively, moral autonomy means 'self determinant or independent'.**

✗ **The autonomous people hold moral beliefs and attitudes based on their critical reflection rather than on passive adoption of the conventions of the society or profession.**

✗ **Moral autonomy may also be defined as a skill and habit of thinking rationally about the ethical issues, on the basis of moral concern.**

The engineering skills related to moral autonomy are listed as follows:

✗ **Proficiency in recognizing moral problems in engineering and ability to distinguish as well as relate them to problems in law, economics, and religion,**

✗ **Skill in comprehending, clarifying, and critically-assessing arguments on different aspects of moral issues,**

✗ **Ability to form consistent and comprehensive view points based on facts**

- Awareness of alternate responses to the issues and creative solutions for practical difficulties,

- Sensitivity to genuine difficulties and subtleties, including willingness to undergo and tolerate some uncertainty while making decisions,

- Using rational dialogue in resolving moral conflicts and developing tolerance of different perspectives among morally reasonable people, an

- Maintaining moral integrity.

SKILLS FOR IMPROVING MORAL AUTONOMY

✗ Moral autonomy reflects the concept of individuality. This relates to the idea of building one's self with the moral values one has while developing psychologically.

✗ To have moral autonomy in all the aspects, one should have a lot of **patience** and interest. One should adhere to the basic principles of humanity and should be strict with the Don'ts he has in mind and liberal with his Do's.
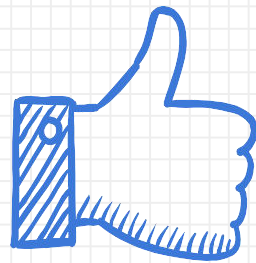
✗ A Person must have adequate knowledge about the use of ethical language to tell his views with others. He must have better **knowledge** in understanding the importance of suggestions and better solutions while resolving moral problems

✗ All should understand the importance to maintain **moral honesty** and should be liberal to understand the human behavior under certain circumstances.

ASSESSMENT

DEBATE:

✗ Need Ability to think critically and independently about **moral** issues and should know how to apply this **moral** thinking to situations that arise in the course of professional **engineering** practice.

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THANKS!