

Understanding Agency in Unethical Environments

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Guiding Theme

The institutionalization of ethics is a counterproductive exercise which results in the diffusion of individual responsibility.

Methods

In an attempt to better understand why unethical decisions go unchallenged, I conducted a study on the Volkswagen emissions scandal that came to light in 2015.

In parallel, I conducted a multidisciplinary examination of human cognition, philosophical ethics, learning models and biases and conflicts.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my wife, Simma. Without her encouragement I would not have even applied to the HDO Program.

My Capstone is inspired and informed by the following individuals; Morgan Housel, Daniel Kahneman, Stanley Milgram, Mary Crossan, Brenda Nguyen, Jack Ewing, Sam Harris, Art Markman, Daniel Bonevac, Paul Woodruff, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, John Rawls, Immanuel Kant, Kent Genzlinger Jeremi Suri, Zachary Elkins

Results

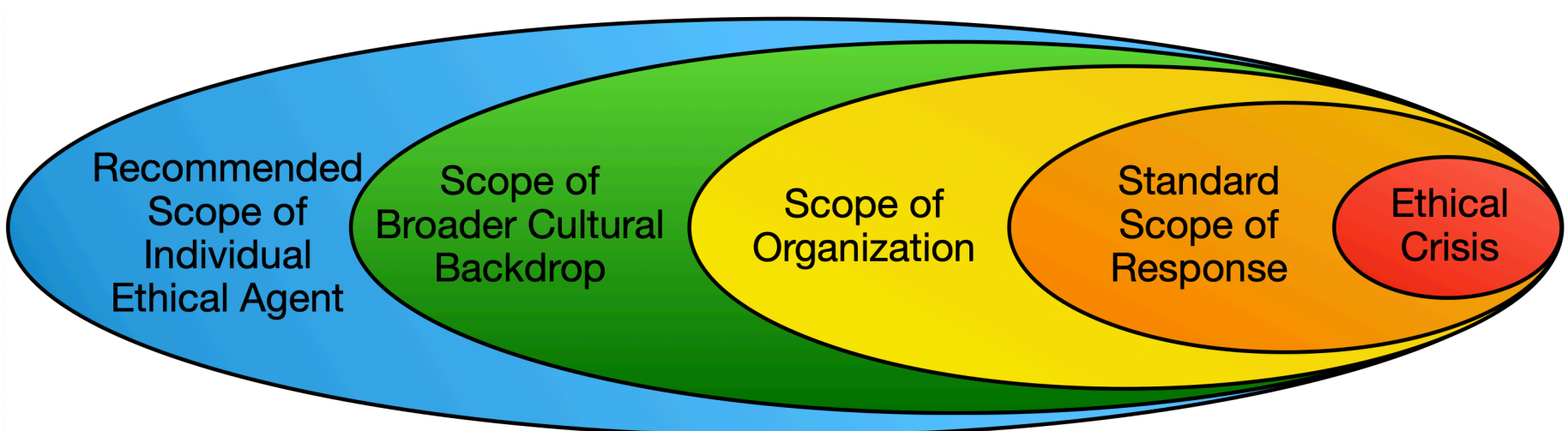
Reasoning and Learning Models

OODA Loop	Deming/ Shewhart Cycle	Innovation Adoption Curve	Messy Talk	Double Loop/ Learning Organizations	Character-Infused Ethical Decision Making
Observe	Plan	Awareness, Interest	Mutual Discovery	Scan, Anticipate, Detect	Moral Sensitivity, Awareness
Orient	Do	Evaluation	Critical Engagement	Develop Questions, Challenge Assumptions	Moral Judgment
Decide	Check	Trial	Knowledge Exchange	Emergence of Strategic Direction	Moral Motivation, Intent
Act	Adjust	Adoption	Synthesis and Resolution	Evolve	Implementation, Behavior

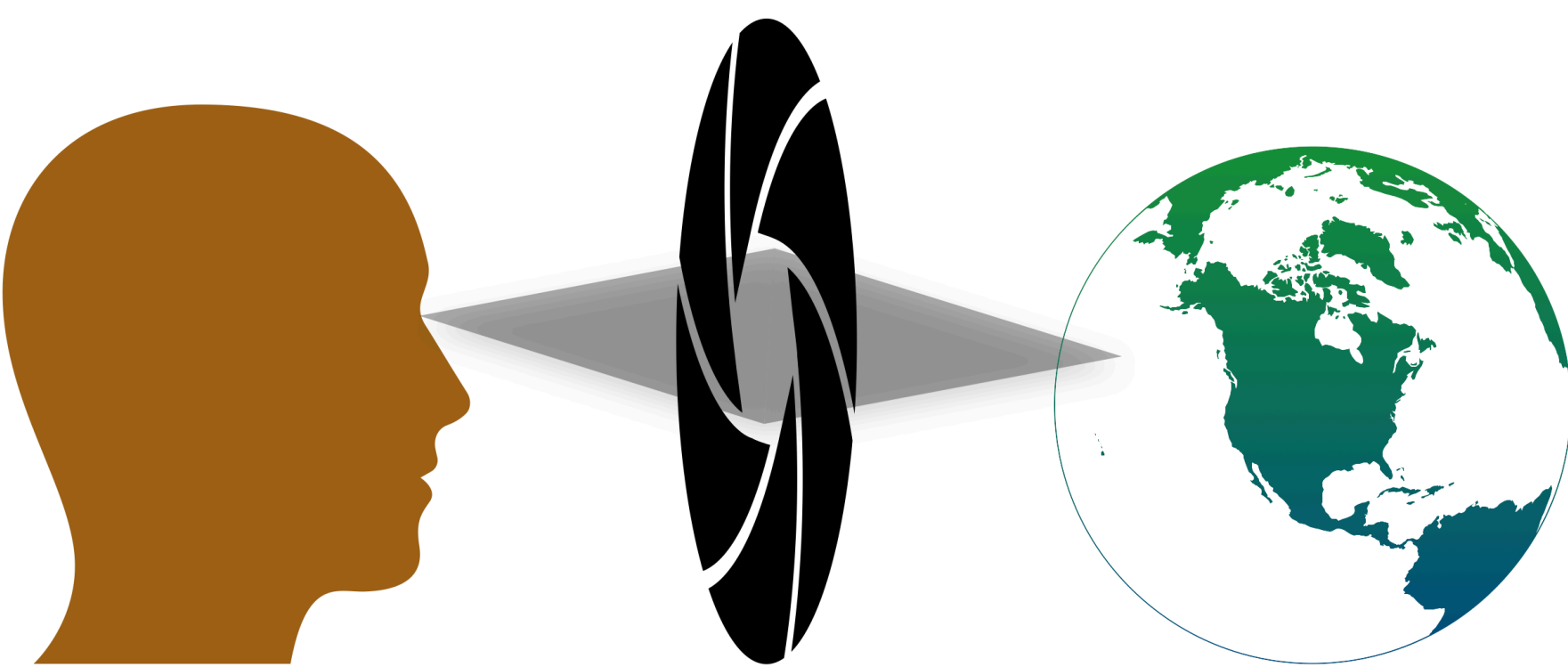
1. Moral Sensitivity - Intake and interpretation of context
2. Moral Judgment - Conscientious decision making based on perception of what is right
3. Moral Motivation - Primacy of what is right above all other factors, intention to act.
4. Moral Character - Conviction and social/psychological competency necessary for action

Reasoning and Cognition

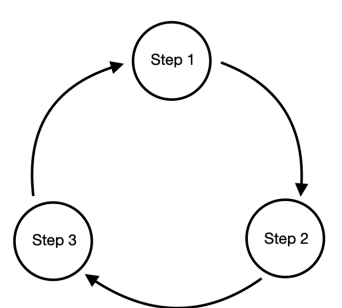
System 1	System 2
Reasoning by Analogy	Reasoning by First Principles
Fast	Slow
Inductive Reasoning	Deductive Reasoning
Approximation	Simulation
Autonomous	Conscientious
Organic	Mechanistic
Requires Low Fidelity Information	Requires High Fidelity Information



Moral Agent Decision Model Context

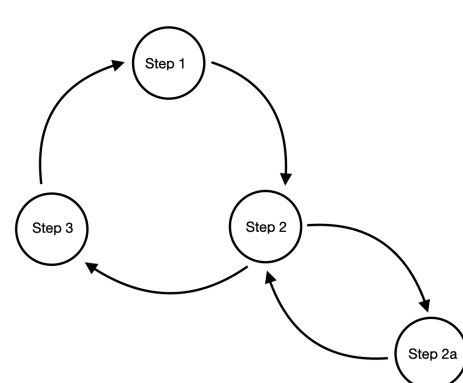


Single-loop Learning



Step 1 = the process of sensing, scanning, and monitoring the environment.
Step 2 = the comparison of this information against operating norms.
Step 2a = the process of questioning whether operating norms are appropriate.
Step 3 = the process of initiating appropriate action.

Double-loop Learning *



* Recreation of Morgan's Exhibit 4.2 - Morgan, Gareth. Images of Organization. SAGE Publications, 2006. 85.

Conclusions

- Command and control cultures stifle dissent
- Ethical behavior is a multidisciplinary practice
 - Developing an ethical framework is necessary but insufficient
- Reasoning is fundamental to ethical conduct
 - Influenced by Kant and Rawls
- Individuals within groups cannot control a group, they can only hope to impart influence

Recommendations

- Continually reorient
- Be mindful of conflicts and biases
- Be willing to exercise judgment
 - Work to understand your culture and context
 - Work to understand yourself
 - Be decisive

Literature Cited

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