

SWEN303

UX Ethics

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Topics for today's lecture

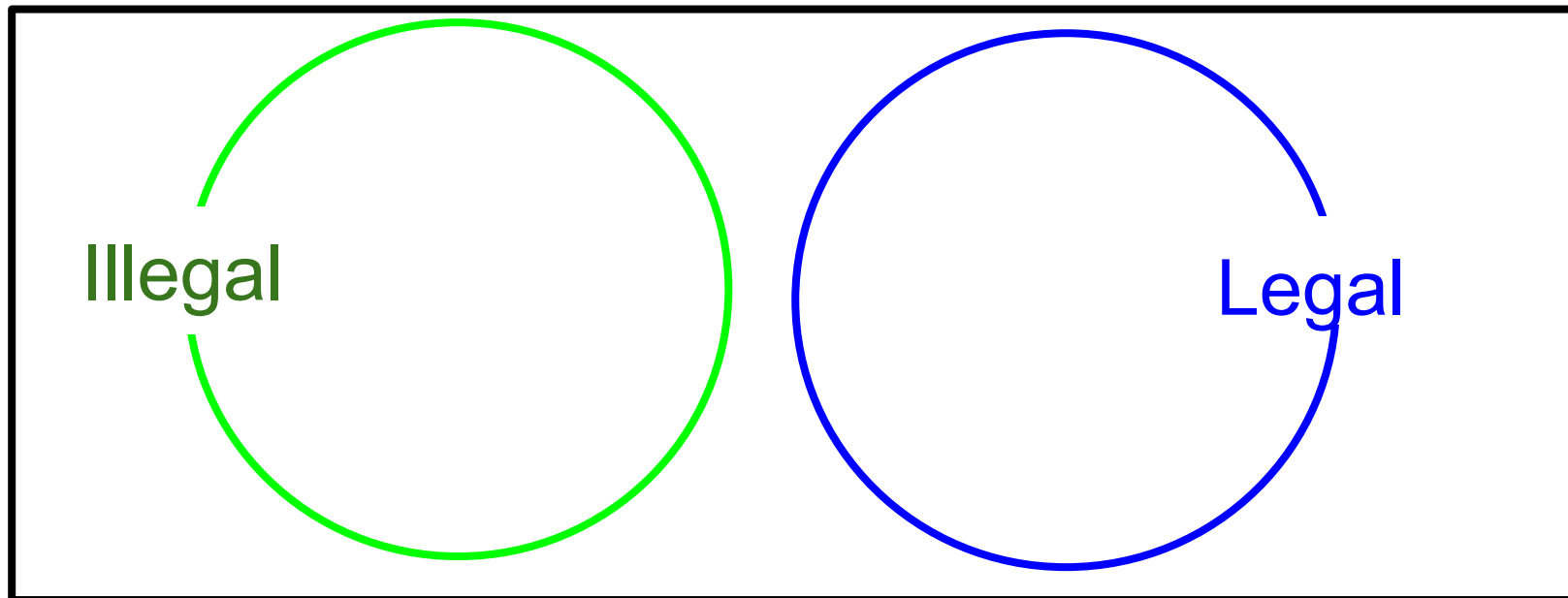
- Legal vs. moral vs. ethical
- Ethical considerations in design and development
- Professional codes of ethics

Legal vs. moral vs. ethical

Legal - explicitly protected by law

Illegal - explicitly not allowed

(!Legal & !illegal) - not covered by law

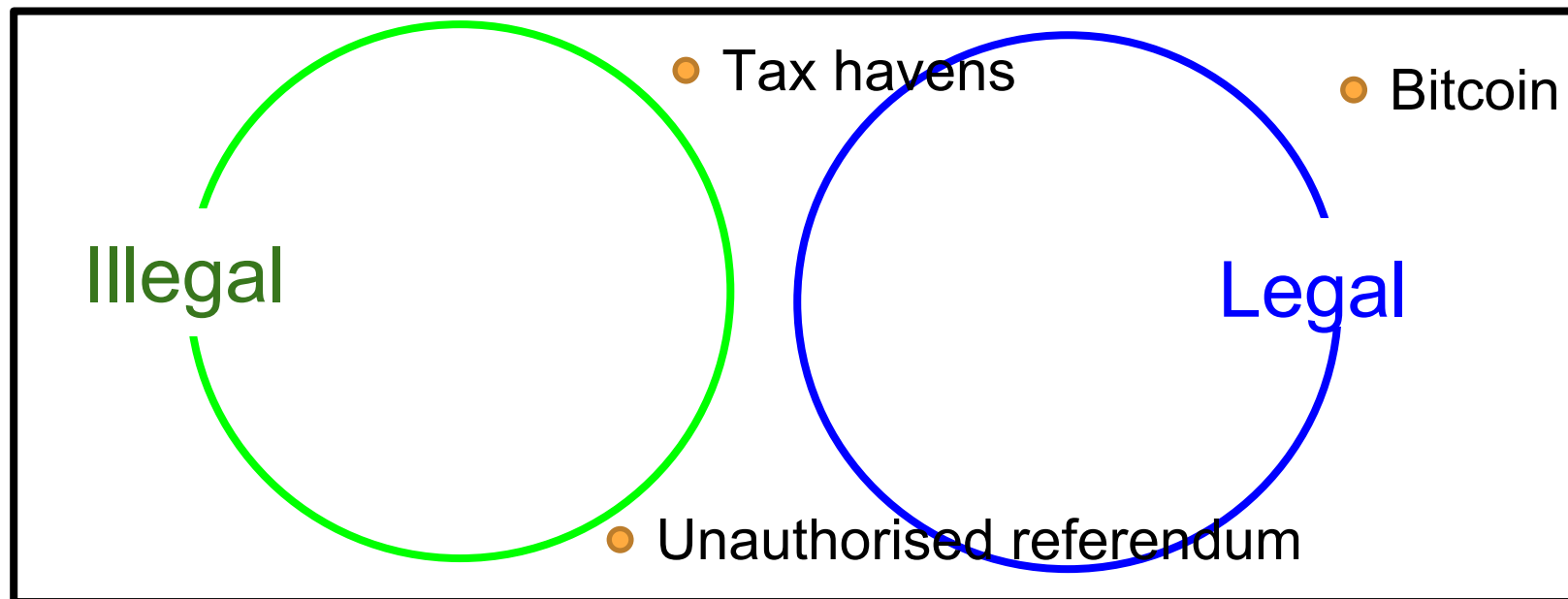


Legal failure - removal from society

Legal - explicitly protected by law

Illegal - explicitly not allowed

(!Legal & !illegal) - not covered by law



Legal failure - removal from society



What **you** think is “right”

Sticking to a moral code - set of behaviours

These can be informed by external things

- God / The church / Jedi
- People you respect
- The government
-

Moral failure - you cannot live with yourself



- Ethics is about making the best possible decisions concerning **people, resources** and the **environment**.
- System of **principles** and **values** that helps us make those decisions.
- Personal obligation to a **group or profession** to conduct yourself ethically
- Ethical values e.g., integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility
- Principles e.g., voluntary participation, right to withdraw, ownership of data

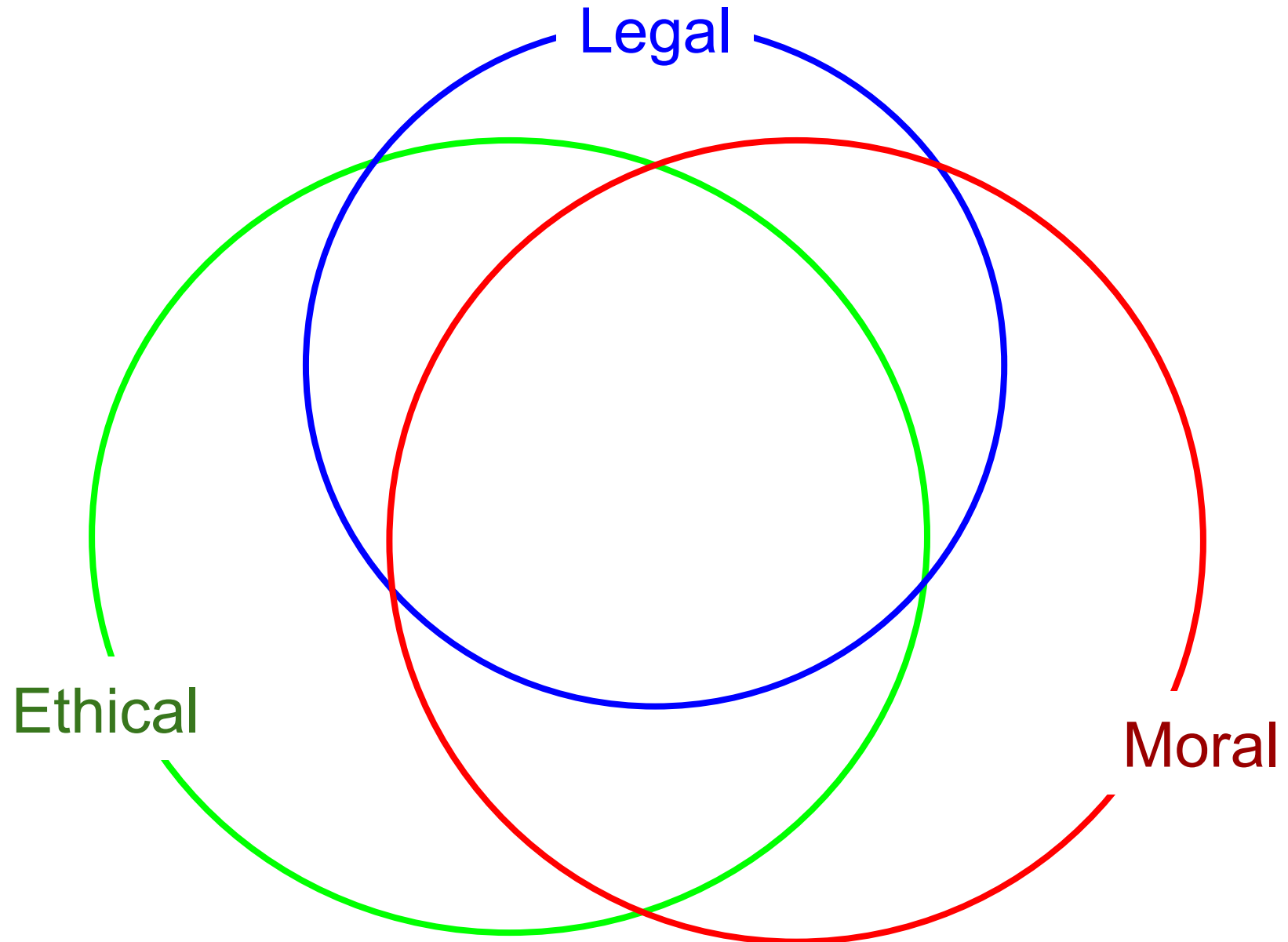
Ethical failure - you are separated from the group

What is the 'right' thing to do?

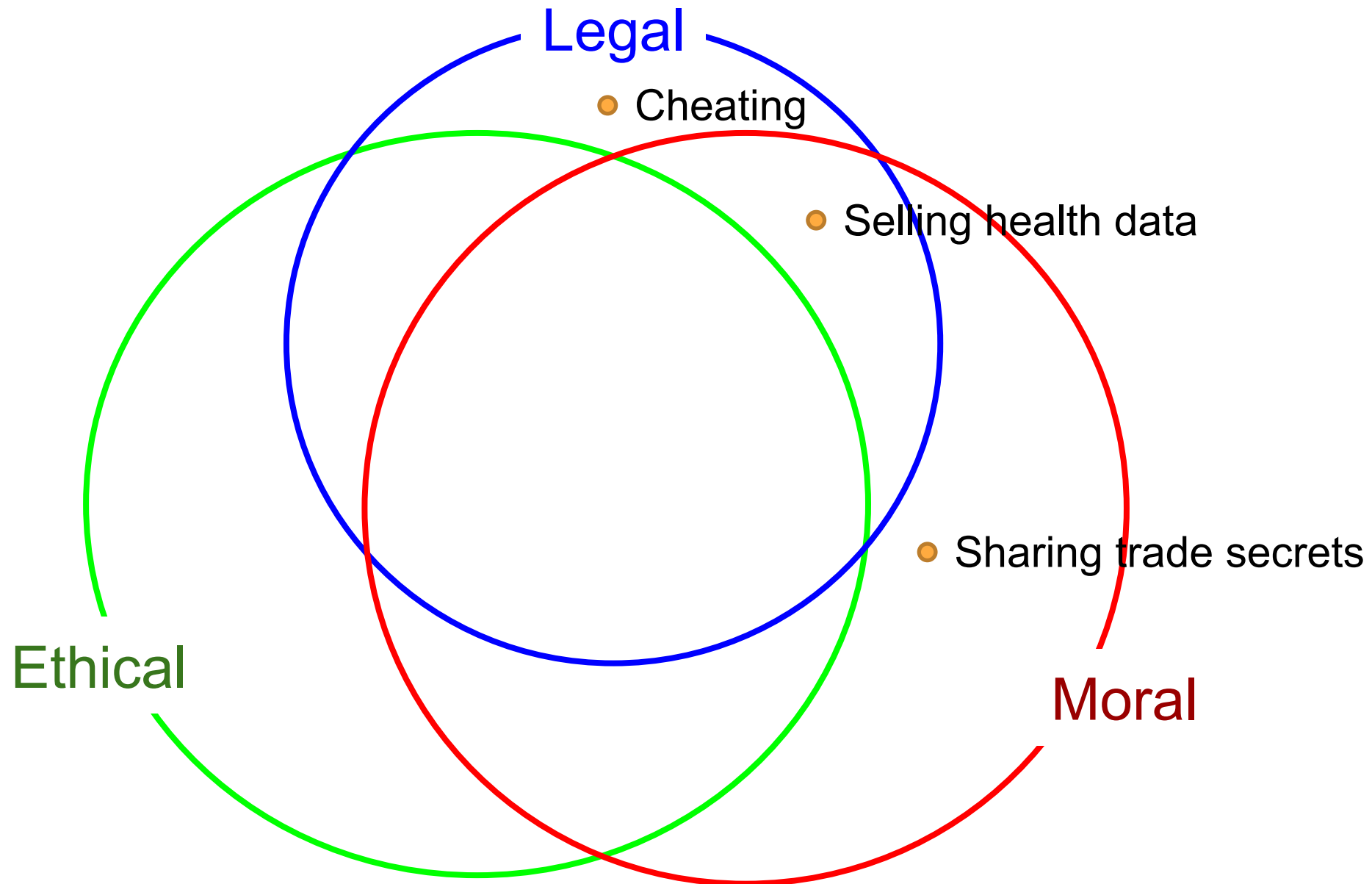


- Legal - what the authorities have written into law as “right”
- Ethical - group definition of what is “right”
- Moral - individual assessment of “right”

What is the 'right' thing to do?

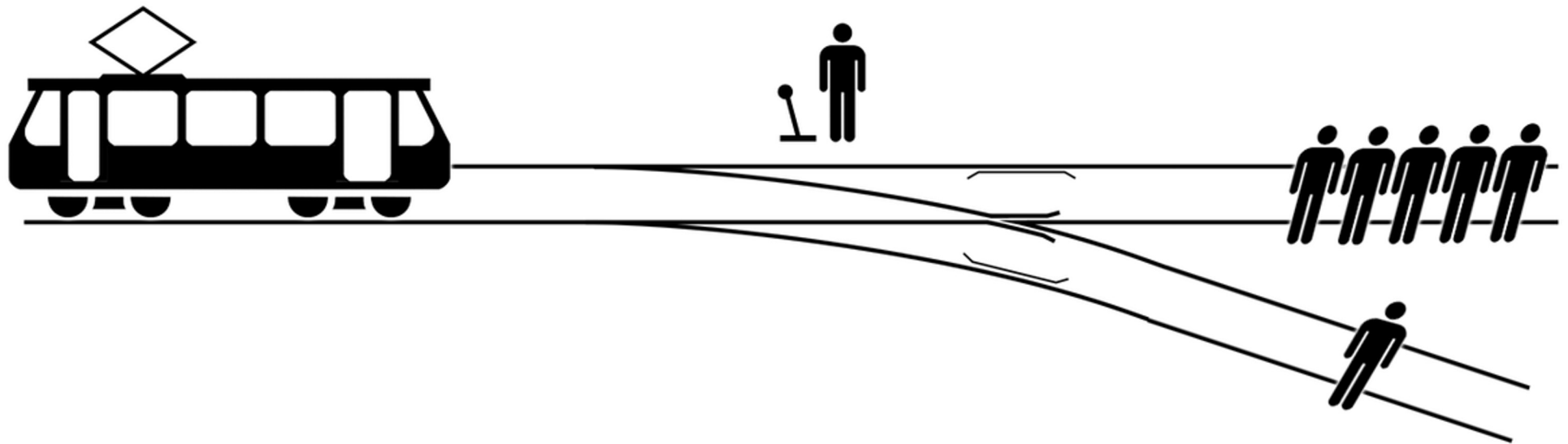


What is the 'right' thing to do?



Ethical Considerations in Design and Development

Trolley problem

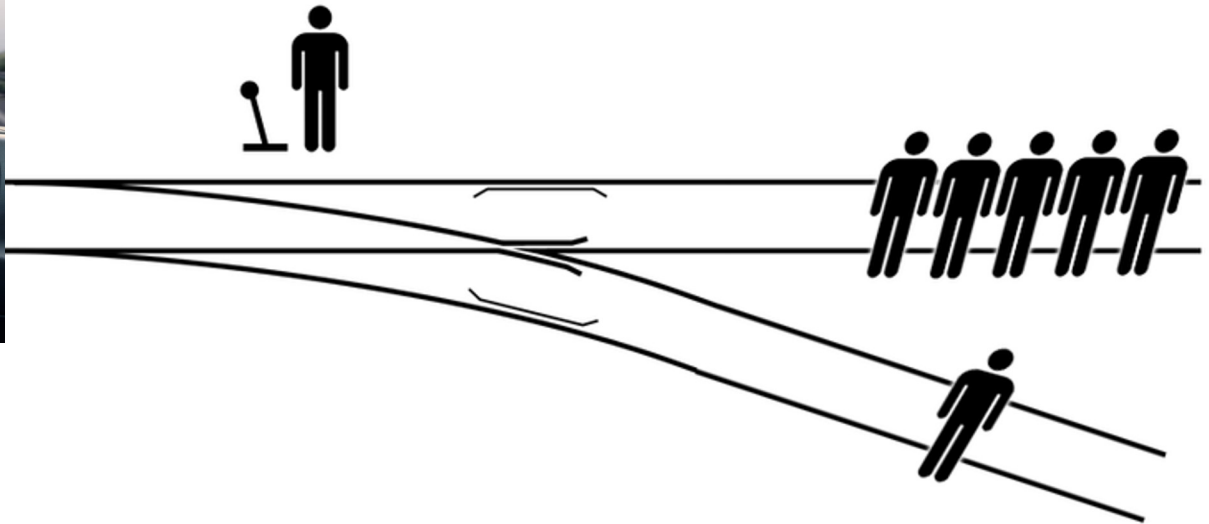


<https://www.pippinbarr.com/2011/10/07/trolley-problem/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw>

Trolley problem

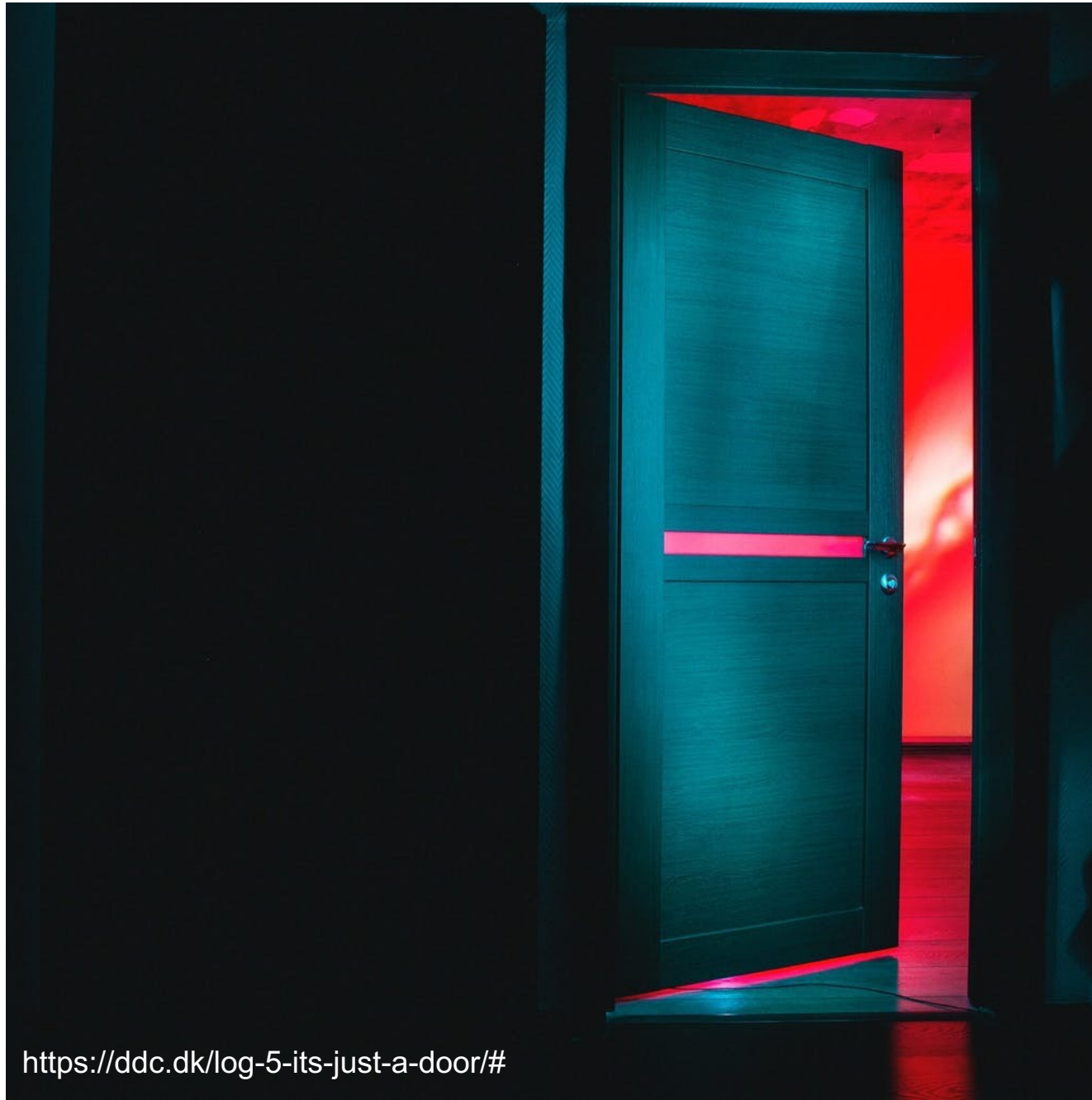
<https://www.ericsson.com/en/blog/2020/1/self-driving-car-passenger-experience>



<https://www.pippinbarr.com/2011/10/07/trolley-problem/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw>

It's just a door...



<https://ddc.dk/log-5-its-just-a-door/#>



It's just technology...

- Facebook's, Google's, Reddit's reluctance of taking responsibility for content distributed through their platforms.
- Airbnb's denial of their impact on the housing crisis in cities.
- Mobile games soliciting in-app purchases to young children.
- A lot of things can be done with technology on a bigger **scale** than ever – ethics in the large



It's just technology...

- Ethics in the small -> day-to-day development decisions that we mostly don't pay attention to
- Designing user input for a system
 - Do you make it opt-in or opt-out?
 - What is the default, when does the user need to take conscious action, and what are the implications of this?
 - E.g. YouTube's auto-play selector is "on" by default.
 - E.g. A website's default to accept all cookies
- Every design decision says something about how the product treats its users, how it values people's time and freedom of choice.

Should we do it just because we can?



- Human values are intertwined with technical decisions
- Design (and development) choices have ethical consequences
- Our software affects other people (and the world) in significant ways
 - Data collection
 - Monitoring location, sites visited, etc.
- Technical decisions impact other people
- Technical decisions must be guided by awareness and careful consideration of ethical dimensions
- <https://ddc.dk/tools/toolkit-the-digital-ethics-compass/>

Teaching ethics in SE



- Ethics courses - What courses are required for your software engineering degree?
- Vignettes

A deadline is quickly approaching for a project that you are working on. You realize that you will not be able to meet the deadline if you only work during normal hours. You are not allowed to take your computer out of the office. What do you do?

- Download the data on a personal hard drive so you can continue development at home
- Unsure
- Stay at work longer in order to continue development

Figure 1: Intellectual property (*Waymo*) vignette

[Four Opportunities for SE Ethics Education](#)

[Does ACM's Code of Ethics Change Ethical Decision Making in Software Development?](#)

Professional Codes of Ethics



Codes help to...

- Raise ethical expectations (aspirational provisions)
- Legitimise dialogue about ethical issues (communication provisions)
- Encourage ethical decision-making (judgment provisions)
- Prevent misconduct provide a basis for enforcement (accountability and enforcement provisions)

[\[A Guide To Developing Your Organization's Code of Ethics\]](#)



Professional codes of ethics

Ethics of our profession

- [The Designers Institute of NZ Code of Ethics](#)
- [PMI Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct](#)
- [NZ Institute of IT Professionals Code of Ethics](#)
- [ACM Code of Ethics](#)
- [IEEE Code of Ethics](#)

Ethics failure (misconduct) - removal from group



- Organisational culture is sometimes not helpful
 - What is really valued in the organization?
 - What are the unwritten rules?
 - How are people paid or promoted?
- Research suggests that ethics do matter to employees and plays a role in attracting and retaining employees



Why is it so hard?

- There's usually no concrete answer to an ethical dilemma.
- Ethics, we mostly ask questions.
- We need to talk about values, potential consequences, how we see society, how we see ourselves; we need to consider multiple worldviews.
- Little structural support in the software engineering industry for making ethics part of what we do as they do in medicine, architecture and construction, mechanical engineering.
- Stopping and discussing ethics is going against the flow of “move fast and break things”.



Why is it so hard?

- Acknowledge that software engineers are not just building technology, we are shaping society and the world.
- Facebook, Uber, and Airbnb are not technology companies, they are a media company, transportation service, and hotel chain and should be held to the regulations and responsibilities of those industries.
- We shouldn't be blinded by technology, we shouldn't excuse companies because they develop advanced technologies, and we shouldn't idealize founders and leaders of such companies just because they are successful in building technology.

Critical voices



- Prof Lucy Suchman - <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/people/lucy-suchman>
- Prof Donna Haraway - <https://egs.edu/biography/donna-haraway/>
- Prof Wendy Hui Kyong Chun - <https://www.sfu.ca/communication/team/faculty/wendy-chun.html>
- Dr Douglas Rushkoff - <https://rushkoff.com/>
- Cory Doctorow - <https://craphound.com/>
- Jaron Lanier - <http://www.jaronlanier.com/>



- What is the 'right' thing to do? – ethically, morally, legally
- Should we do it just because we can?
- How will this impact on others?
- Why is it so hard?
- Do you hear critical voices?