

Ethics 2

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Question #1: Provide an appropriate definition, discuss your understanding, and provide an illustrative example of the term "ethical dilemma." (minimum 100 words, excluding the definition)

Definition

Ethical dilemma is a complex situation that will often involve an apparent mental conflict between moral imperatives, in which to obey one would result in transgressing another (Ethical Dilemma).

My Understanding

There are times when one may face a situation where there are two possible courses of action, both of which are ethical or moral, but both of which would result in a bad outcome (one course of action may be doing nothing, which only complicates the issue). The dilemma becomes choosing which course of action to take, weighing the pros and cons of each action and their results. Both end badly for different reasons, and the choice is extremely difficult. The phrase, 'caught between a rock and a hard place' immediately comes to mind. This choice will involve one's personal ethics, and will require a tradeoff in priorities.

Example

There is a famous dilemma thought-exercise called, 'The Trolley Problem' (Trolley Problem). There are a number of variations, but the idea is that a person is standing on a bridge over a trolley track, and there is a runaway trolley below that has in its path five people tied to the tracks, about to be run over. On the bridge is a switch that will cause the trolley to take a different track in time, but there is one person tied down to that track. To push the switch will save five people but kill one. What should the person on the bridge do?

Most people, when asked this question, respond that they would push the switch because saving five people promotes the greater good better than only saving one. But let's raise the ante here. Let's say that the one person tied to the other track is actually a child of the person on the bridge, as is one of the five people on the first track. Now, what do you do? Which child do you let die? I won't even pretend I know the answer to this.

Question #2: Identify, list and briefly explain the steps to the "Problem Solving Process." Process steps may vary depending on the student preference and source. (minimum 100 words each step; citation of source for process required)

For this question I will be using "The Problem Solving Process" page from the *Global Development Research Center* web site. I will also give an example for each step of a problem that I have been working on lately.

There are six steps to this process in my source. They are, Problem Definition, Problem Analysis, Generating Possible Solutions, Analyzing the Solutions, Selecting the Best Solution(s), and Planning the Next Course of Action (Next Steps).

1. Problem Definition

First of all, a problem will need to be clearly identified. What is it, and what makes it a problem? Writing a problem down can make it concrete – it will no longer be a vague idea in the mind, but will rather require articulation and clarification.

One problem we have in ADF is that we communicate primarily through the Internet and many folks who are not members of Groves tend to feel isolated. They can read articles on the website and ask questions on the lists, but there is little personal, face-to-face interaction and many things we do, like perform rituals, can be hard to understand.

2. Problem Analysis

At this point we need to take a close look at the problem and see how it relates to the situation in which it arises, what sort of issues surround the problem, and what sort of environment it exists in. What are we already doing right? How do these processes help or hurt the problem?

After analyzing the problem, it might help to go back and see if the problem has actually been correctly identified.

In ADF, a common answer to folks who feel isolated is to attend festivals, where they can meet many of the people they see on the lists and attend rituals performed by some of our best folks. But while this may be good advice to people living near festival sites, it is of little use to the average member living many states away, the issue being cost. ADF has some money, but not enough to subsidize festival attendance. We do have a few videos of rituals on the web site, and they can be very helpful.

3. Generating Possible Solutions

Now that the problem has been identified and analyzed, the time has come to start coming up with possible solutions. Be sure to write down any good and bad points for each idea. It's also very important here that these solutions not be analyzed at this time, because sometimes a viable solution might be immediately rejected as ridiculous when in fact it could turn out to be a good idea.

Possible solutions to our isolation problem might be:

- a. *Create more ritual videos*
- b. *Do a live video feed of a festival available to ADF members*
- c. *Do live video and IRC chats*
- d. *Take a few priests on the road to visit Protogroves (PG's) and groups of solitaries for one-day mini festivals with workshops and rituals.*

4. Analyzing the Solutions

Now it's time to analyze all the possible solutions that you came up with in the previous step. Write down all the good and bad points for each one. It may be that one of these points might be unique enough to make a possible solution far more attractive than previously thought.

- a. *Create more ritual videos*
Good Points – 1) A good record of different styles of ritual can be preserved and presented.
2) Different hearth culture videos can be created.
3) Good outreach and PR for ADF.
Bad Points – 1) While helping teach ritual, this doesn't help with isolation.

- b. *Do a live video feed of a festival available to ADF members*
Good Points – 1) Members could attend workshops and rituals live from afar.
2) The feel of a festival might be transmitted as well.
Bad Points – 1) Expensive and requires special equipment
2) Festival sites may not have sufficient Internet connection or bandwidth.
3) Only members with broadband could access the video feed.
- c. *Do live video and IRC chats.*
Good Points – 1) These are live and interactive.
2) With video chats, faces can be seen talking, and body language is visible.
Bad Points – 1) Only available to members with broadband Internet.
2) IRC is text only, and not that much different from the lists, though answers to questions can be more immediate.
- d. *Take a few priests on the road to visit PG's and groups of solitaries for one-day mini festivals with workshops and rituals.*
Good Points – 1) There would be face-to-face contact between priests and members.
2) Members could participate in rituals led by experienced ritualists.
3) Live workshops with questions answered immediately.
4) Would be good outreach and PR for ADF.
Bad Points – 1) Would be expensive.
2) Could be far more requests than the clergy could fulfill.
3) Matching clergy hearth cultures to member ones could be tricky.

5. **Selecting the Best Solution(s)**

Here you have to go through all the possible solutions and decide if any of them are really viable. Which can you consider, and which do you have to discard? Sometime these decisions will need to be made using only concrete facts and figures, and other times intuition will be needed. In any case, the solutions can be narrowed down to a short list that can be further refined with more research, if necessary. Sometimes there may be a number of good solutions, sometimes only one, and sometimes none at all, in which it would be necessary to go back to step #3 to generate more possible solutions.

- a. *Create more ritual videos – This is still good thing to do, even if it doesn't help with the isolation factor all that much. We need these on the web site and more and more folks in ADF are showing that they have the talent and ability to create these.*
- b. *Do a Live Video Feed of a festival available to ADF members – The technical aspects of this solution are just too great at this time to implement. The only way to have enough bandwidth to accomplish this might be to rent a satellite truck for a live uplink, and this would be prohibitively expensive.*
- c. *Do live video and IRC chats – These are beginning to happen now, and are certainly better than nothing. They still favor those with broadband Internet connections, however.*
- d. *Take a few priests on the road to visit PG's and groups of solitaries for one-day mini festivals with workshops and rituals – The face-to-face contact between clergy and members solves the isolation problem as well as the ritual examples and skills*

problem. If these are open to friends of members as well, they would generate great PR. The problem is money. There is a clergy travel fund already that has over \$3000 in it currently. Kirk, are you willing to keep topping this up to make this happen?

6. Planning the Next Course of Action (Next Steps)

This is the step where you decide what it is you will need to do next. Write down how you plan to make this happen and start involving more people in the planning process. This is how solutions become reality.

Take the idea to the Clergy Council for discussion and buy-in. Devise rules and criteria for subgroups to apply for visits. Make a schedule of available clergy and when they can travel, as well as which hearth cultures they can work well in. Decide which workshops need to be included in all visits, and which clergy are best suited to give them. Also create a list of other workshops that can be selected for inclusion by the subgroups.

Question #3: Provide the following information for each of the situations described below.

a. Explain how you would utilize the problem solving process to resolve the situation. Discuss an effective resolution and why you believe the resolution would be effective. (100 words minimum)

b. Discuss how your personal Code of Ethics was utilized in the resolution of the issue presented. (100 words minimum).

c. Discuss whether you consider the situation to be an "ethical dilemma?" Why or why not? (100 words minimum)

Situation 1: Alcoholic Waters of Life and members of AA

a. *Define the problem* – There is an attendee who cannot be asked to drink alcohol at our event, where the only Waters of Life we have are alcoholic, served in a single vessel.

Analyze the problem – We can't just switch to water because the Grove as a whole prefers alcohol. We only have one blessing vessel.

Possible solutions – We could bless water and then add it to a bottle of the alcohol we use. We could also bless alcohol in the main vessel and plain water in a cup or flask or bowl (whatever we can find). We could just use water and leave it at that.

Analyzing the possible solutions – The good part about using the blessing cup to bless water only, and then add it to a bottle of alcohol is that it would be less obvious that the AA member is being singled out. The bad part is that only they could drink from that cup. The good part about blessing two vessels (the main one and a cup of water) is that it would be clear which one held what. The bad part is that the cup holding water wouldn't be as cool looking as our main cup. The good part about using water only is that it would not be apparent that the AA member is being singled out, and the bad part is that the Grove would be disappointed.

Selecting the Best Solution – Since we only have one cool blessing vessel, the best idea might be to use water only for this rite, and then buy or get a second vessel for future rituals. This person is our guest, and to single him or her out as different would be bad *ghosti- and we would be poor hosts.

Next Steps - However, now that we have run across this problem, we should perhaps prepare for the future by buying more vessels. We can elevate one vessel of water and pour that into two passing vessels, one with alcohol and one with plain water, so that there is always a choice, and no one is singled out.

In this scenario, only water would be used for the Waters of Life. This is the best choice because we only have one vessel of ritual quality, and to do otherwise could embarrass the visitor, which would not be acceptable.

b. Number seven in my code of ethics states:

Support of ADF and Its Members – Part of my mission as an ADF Priest is to support and promote the piety, goals and creative efforts of ADF and its members. I will not undermine anyone's attempts to connect with the Kindreds, though I will also uphold the ADF Core Order of Ritual for High Days.

While this visitor is not an ADF member, he or she soon could be, and it would be wrong to undermine his or her piety by bad hospitality. Also, in my number four, Discrimination and Harassment, I will avoid actions and slurs that could be considered harassment of anyone. To allow someone to become embarrassed when it is not necessary would violate that part of my code.

c. This could only be considered an ethical dilemma in a small way. The only dilemma I see is between embarrassing a guest and making the Grove members unhappy for a day. While I can see the importance of keeping the Grove happy in terms of morale, and future attendance at High Days and other events, it cannot weigh against the virtue of hospitality. And this could be seen as an excellent 'teaching moment' for the Grove. What a wonderful opportunity this could be for the Grove members to actually put the 9 Virtues into action, to 'walk the walk' and not just 'talk the talk'. True, some members might be really angry about this decision, but the Grove will only grow stronger and more pious as a result of this decision.

Situation #2 – The Hand-Fasting couple

a. *Define the problem* – A couple that have written vows professing a desire for a healthy relationship as equal partners appear not to be living that way. One partner does all the talking and refuses to let the other one participate in decisions.

Problem analysis – Could this be a Master/slave couple? Or were their vows written by the dominant party in order to look good to family and friends? More information is needed.

Generating possible solutions – I could refuse to marry the couple outright. I could insist that the couple talk about their relationship with me separately, insisting on equal time for each. I could refer the couple to a therapist. I could explore if there is any physical abuse going on, in which case I would refuse to marry the couple without therapy.

Analyzing the solutions – While simply refusing to marry the couple is the easy way out, it doesn't give them a chance to explain themselves. In a setting where I can speak to each person individually, I could explore the Master/slave possibility. In any case, I would need to find out from the submissive partner if there is abuse going on – any bruising? If so, I might need to get them together and find out if they agree that the submissive can hit the dominant, too. This usually flushes them out. Referral to a therapist is probably necessary if abuse is probable, with the marriage put off until successful completion of therapy.

Selecting the best solution – More talk is needed to find out if there is abuse going on. If so, then the marriage ritual is off until they successfully complete therapy, and the therapist agrees.

Next Steps – After the meeting with the couple is completed, and abuse is what I think is going on, the marriage rite is cancelled and a referral to a therapist is made. If this is refused, I would contact the submissive separately to convince him or her to go to a shelter (that I would recommend) and seek help.

b. In my code of ethics under number seven, Support of ADF and Its Members, I make it clear that I will do nothing to undermine the piety, goals and creative efforts of our members. This scenario is not clear about whether this couple are grove members or not, but even if they

aren't, piety and creativity certainly cannot exist in an abusive relationship. And to sanctify such a relationship would violate my ethics. I also agree to obey the civil law (number 3 in my code). Domestic abuse is against the law and while I might not be able to do anything legal about this (the submissive would have to agree to press charges), it would be unethical of me to just sit by and do nothing. However, it is not my place to interfere in the lives of consenting adults. We all have our own lives to live and I have experience with couples in Master/slave relationships, and understand the dynamics and can tell the difference between SM and abuse in these situations. Bruises don't tell the whole story, and there is a big difference between pain and damage. A submissive person in a Master/slave relationship might *require* the submission and the pain, for a time at least, in order to be stable enough to engage in piety, as hard as that may be for some folks to understand.

c. This might be an ethical dilemma. Do I believe them if they claim to have a Dominant/Submissive relationship? And if so, what about their oath? It is not my place to interfere in the lives of consenting adults, and force them to out themselves before their family and friends. On the other hand, the vows they make before the Gods need to reflect the truth, and I cannot allow myself to be party to a public lie. If it is an abusive relationship, though, the dilemma is not there. I cannot allow an abuser to get up before the Gods and swear a lie, for this could rebound back upon the entire congregation, especially if I was aware of the lie. I would not be practicing the virtue of integrity and I would be violating my own ethics.

Situation #3 – Possible Child Abuse

a. *Define the problem* – A child tells me that his stepmother hurts him, and shows me a horseshoe shaped belt mark on his back.

Problem analysis – Children cannot consent to abuse. The law is clear that suspected cases of child abuse must be reported to the authorities in the state of Washington, and indeed, my own personal ethics (Obeying Civil Law and Supporting ADF and its Members) would require it.

Generating possible solutions – Call the police. Confront the parents for an explanation and if the answer is not sufficient then call the police.

Analyzing the solutions – To just call the police would not be fair to anyone, including the child. It is just possible that the mark I see could have been caused by an accident somehow, and not by a belt. Also, children do lie, and if the child hated the stepmother for whatever reason (like daring to 'replace' the real mother) this could all be false. The law, however, is the law.

Selecting the best solution – In this case the law is clear, and the police must be called while the mark on the child is still visible. As mandatory reporters, we have no control over the outcome, but I would also try to speak to the parents at the earliest opportunity to explain what I have done and why.

Next Steps – Spiritual support will need to be given to the family, if they will accept it from me. If not, perhaps someone else can be found to offer it. This will be a horrible time for them regardless of guilt or innocence. Damage control may need to be done to protect the Grove and its members. No media should be called by any means, but if they call me, I need to have a statement ready to give to them. Also, the Grove may need to be told the same thing so that they are not taken by surprise should this appear in the media. There is no question that whether or not the police investigation finds any guilt on the part of either parent that the relationship between them and the Grove may be irreparably damaged. If the parents are innocent I can only hope that they can forgive me for a terrible wrong done to them, but there is no choice here.

b. My ethical code is clear, once again, that I must obey the civil law, and that law is clear in regards to suspected child abuse. Under the circumstances laid out in this scenario I have to report the parents. Also, I may do nothing that could interfere with or undermine the piety, goals or creative efforts of our members, and child abuse is a violation of all three. It is part of my job to protect those who need protecting, if I can. The problem comes in with the idea that this may not be as the child says, that this wasn't abuse and only an accident that is being used to get

back at the stepmother. I know that I was a particularly clumsy child and often was covered with bruises, and at no time was I ever abused.

c. There is a great ethical dilemma here. On the one hand, it is my legal and moral duty to protect a child from abuse. The child may have come to me as an authority figure that could save him from pain and suffering. On the other hand, it would be wrong and extremely damaging to report the parents for something that they didn't do. Not only would it negatively impact the family, it might also create fissures in the Grove, not to mention be a flagrant violation of trust and hospitality.

This is a very hard issue to deal with. Following the law and reporting them to the police, regardless of their guilt or innocence, is the easy way out, but also the only legal one. In this way my own ethical decisions have been short circuited by the law and my hands are tied. I pray that the Gods never put me in this position.

Situation #4 – Handicap Accommodation

a. *Problem definition* – A wheel chair bound woman with an uncontrolled seizure disorder wants to attend ritual. The ritual site that has been booked is not wheel-chair accessible, and in any case, the woman's full-care attendant is opposed to Neopagan religion and refuses to be in the ritual space during the rite to keep an eye on her charge.

Problem analysis – The Grove always holds its summer rites in this space and there are not obvious other sites that could be used, as far as I can tell. There's not enough time or possibility to create a proper wheel-chair access in time for the rite. This could also be a major inconvenience for the regular worshippers who attend, and could seriously distract from their religious experience. But is it fair to exclude a sincere person?

Generating possible solutions – Tell the woman that because of limited access she may not attend the rite. Get some strong men to carry the woman to a chair in the ritual space and tell her that her attendant must be in visual contact with her at all time, and if there is a problem, she must come into the space to help her, or the woman cannot attend the rite. Try to find a new location for the rite, if possible. Try and cut a wheel chair route to the site beforehand.

Analyzing the solutions – Just telling her to stay away would be rude and a violation of hospitality and integrity, if nothing else. Assuming there are some strong men who wouldn't mind carrying her to the rite from the parking lot and putting her in a chair (and assuming the woman is willing) might solve the access problem. The caregiver would have to agree to attend outside the ritual space and enter it if necessary. If not, then nothing can be done. Finding a new ritual location is possible, if there is enough time, but if not, that's out for this particular rite, though one might be found for future rites. Cutting a wheel chair route through the rocks is impractical.

Selecting the best solution – Assuming that we have the strong men and that everyone is willing to do the second possible solution (including the caregiver), then this is the best way. We don't have to move the rite at short notice and the woman gets to attend. If this is not possible, then the woman will need to be told that she's welcome to attend if she can get to the site (explaining the difficulties) and her caregiver agrees, but if this isn't possible for her, then we will attempt to find a more accessible spot for our rites in the future.

Next steps – The woman's attendance will have to be organized. And an alternate site, with handicapped access, needs to be identified for the future.

b. Number four in my code of ethics reads:

Discrimination or Harassment – As a Priest, I will avoid any actions that could be deemed as discriminating against any individual, group or class, and will avoid slurs or other language deemed offensive against any group or person based on gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. Sexual harassment will not take place.

This very clearly says that I will do nothing to discriminate against someone due to their class, which includes physical handicap. Therefore, I must do what I can to get this woman into the rite. Also, in my number 7 (Support of ADF and Its Members) I am clear that I will do nothing to undermine a person's piety. Not allowing the woman to attend would violate both of these. But there is also a balance here – I cannot go so far to accommodate one person if it totally disrupts the ritual for everyone else, for the same reason as I gave for her in my number 7.

c. There is an ethical dilemma here. On the one hand it would be very unethical to deny someone a religious experience because it isn't easy to accommodate them. But it would also be unethical to significantly interfere with everyone else's religious experience while trying to accommodate the one person. If at all possible, I must try and include the handicapped lady, but if it simply is not possible for this rite, then I must consider the experience of everyone else and exclude her this time. However, this makes it imperative that I come up with ways to make this work for future rites.

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