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Reaction to Ethics Discussion

The field of engineering ethics examines and sets the obligations by engineers to society, to their clients, and to the profession. As a scholarly discipline, it is closely related to subjects such as the philosophy of science, the philosophy of engineering, and the ethics of technology. Each engineering discipline may have their own individual code of ethics. As aspiring electrical engineers, we follow the IEEE code of ethics which states various rules and regulations on how to act in a given work dilemma or problem. In class, we were asked to decipher two separate ethical dilemma questions and what would be the best way to react to each situation. The first question dealt with the manufacturing of an automobile that is ultra-efficient with a very light weight, but making this car has correlated to more fatalities. The second question asked deals with more efficient mechanisms of energy being more costly and those who are unable to pay for this mechanism are more at risk and that a new mechanism to fix this problem is to be created. After both of these questions were asked, we were asked to analyze the ethical situations. When referring to the automobile question, I think that it is safe to say that another way of making the car is to be found. If people are being injured and possibly dying, the work must stop because the code of ethics says that no work should put any other worker or anyone at all in harm's. A utilitarian may argue that if the number of satisfied people outweighs the number of unsatisfied people then work should continue. Utilitarianism is the argument that whatever brings the greatest number of happiness to the greatest number of people should overrule. With that being said, if the satisfaction rate is higher, then the automobile should stay on the market. When looking at the second argument, I believe that there really isn't too much of an "ethical" dilemma

here per say. If it is an engineer's job to make mechanisms that are more efficient as well as cheaper, than that work should be done. If the engineer in this situation decides to not come up with a solution, then there would simply no work to be done. An engineer's job is to continue coming up with greater solutions to help people in the cheapest and most efficient way possible.

With all that being said, I believe that engineering ethics and ethics/philosophy interfere a little too much sometimes. Ethics as a whole is flawed, there are too many contradicting arguments that if applied on an engineering standpoint, dilemmas would always occur. That is way engineers stick to a code of ethics within their given field, to maximize the product and minimize the risk of dilemma.