

# Ethics in Computing

A YOUNG  
PROFESSION  
COPING WITH  
ETHICAL DEBT



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@POSTWAIT

FOUNDER CIRCONUS



# DISCLAIMER

I AM NOT AN ETHICIST.  
THIS TALK HAS MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS.

# ἠθος -> ηθική

- ▶ The philosophy of ethics is about systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.
- ▶ Normative Ethics can be viewed from three lenses
  - ▶ Virtue Ethics
  - ▶ Deontology (Duties & Rules)
  - ▶ Consequentialism (Consequences)

# Virtues

- ▶ Perfect virtues vs. continence
- ▶ Understanding the importance of practical wisdom

# Change Over Time

- ▶ Ethics exist only within the context of human society.
- ▶ Human society changes
  - ▶ Globalization
  - ▶ Scientific understanding
  - ▶ Supernatural belief structures

# Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy





# Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ Medical



# Applying Ethics

- ▶ Clergy
- ▶ Medical
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Professional
  
- ▶ Computing

DOMHNALL GLEESON alicia vikander OSCAR ISAAC

ex machina

WHAT HAPPENS TO ME IF I FAIL YOUR TEST?

UNIVERSAL PICTURES INTERNATIONAL and FILM 4 present a TOWA FILMS production "EX MACHINA" DOMHNALL GLEESON ALICIA VIKANDER and OSCAR ISAAC with FRANKIE MANSLER with BEN SALISBURY and GERT DABROWY  
SCREENPLAY BY SAMMOT FREEMANVILLE COSTUME DESIGNER SAMMY SHELDON DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MARK DUNN EDITOR MARK DUNN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JUANAN SUAREZ PRODUCED BY ANDREW ALEXANDER PRODUCED BY SCOTT WOODEN ELLI HUGHES AND TESSA TRUSS  
UNIVERSAL FILM 4 meer-ava.com COMING SOON DIRECTED BY ALEX GARLAND A24



VW

Emissions



# Uber Greyball



# Uber Autonomous Vehicle Operation



# Strava Global Heatmap



# Technical Concepts Hand Soap Dispenser



# Software Licensing

# Antecedotes ~ What now?

- ▶ What can we do?
  - ▶ From day to day ask, “what can I do?”
- ▶ Is this really my responsibility?
  - ▶ **Yes** it &\$%@\*ing is.
- ▶ Build more diverse teams.



# Dissenting

- ▶ Be aware that you are not alone
- ▶ Understand that ethics are a spectrum
- ▶ Keep records
- ▶ Build a dispassionate defense
- ▶ Work the system
- ▶ Resigning

# Start The Conversation

- ▶ I don't come with answers... I come with questions.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with a code of ethics for computing.
  - ▶ ACM's Ethics policy (current 1992, new one expected 2018)
  - ▶ ACM's "Ask and Ethicist"
- ▶ We need to ask "what are the ethical implications?" all the time.

# Notes

Virtue Ethics:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>

ACM Code of Ethics

<http://ethics.acm.org/code-of-ethics/>

ACM “Ask an Ethicist”

<http://ethics.acm.org/integrity-project/ask-an-ethicist-faq/>

IEEE Dissentation Guidelines

<http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/5707>

Uber Greyball

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/technology/uber-federal-inquiry-software-greyball.html>

Uber’s Brazen Illegal Behavior

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/16/uber-self-driving-cars-california-illegal-unethical-tactics>

Soap

<https://gizmodo.com/why-cant-this-soap-dispenser-identify-dark-skin-1797931773>

Volkswagen Emissions Scandal

<https://www.npr.org/tags/443453659/volkswagen-emissions-scandal>

Strava Global Heatmap

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/28/fitness-tracking-app-gives-away-location-of-secret-us-army-bases>