

Jason S. Fish
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SYGN 502 – Summer 2

Untangling the Snarl as Best I Can

I think; therefore, I am obligated to think critically and purposefully. My code of ethics is taking shape as I progress farther into adulthood, acquiring responsibility and experience. I have encountered ethical challenges as a scientist-in-training, notably of dubious mentorship, which have given me a glimpse of the larger challenges ahead in my career.

Consequentialism aligns most frequently with my perspective on professional morality, though admittedly I don't believe this ethical theory can serve as a ubiquitous metric. I accept the limitations of this theory, namely the limited vision of humankind. But, I believe in training my mind to stare into the vast tangle of human choice and discern the best way forward, no matter the problems I encounter. Living **morally** by this philosophy involves two key factors: 1) personal accountability, especially when consequences are harsh and unexpected outcomes occur, and 2) accepting that following it will likely become more difficult at higher levels of leadership with increased obligations.

The tenants of my scientific ethical code are given below to summarize my methodology for navigating the moral snarls ahead of me:

- **Practice Humility:** Arrogance is fatal to good science and good life. Avoid stereotyping to a fault. Look for the rationale in all actions.
- **Reputation is the Gold Standard:** Respect prior work with vigilant critical analysis, give credit with careful attention to the literature.
- **Err on the Side of Meticulousness:** The little details can often be the most critical.
- **Objectivity with a Side of Objectivity:** Actively fit hypotheses to (reproducible!) results not vice versa.
- **No One is an Island (thanks Paul Simon):** Study the culture, politics, and social mores around the research environment. These elements are all interconnected.
- **I Like Ike (Iacocca):** Emulate leadership styles of first responsibility. Combat the urge to create layers of deniability within organizations.
- **To the Next Generation:** Pass on the essences of these moral tools to future scientists-in-training. Encourage open minds and critical interpretation of consequences.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason S. Fish" with a horizontal line extending to the right.