

Concentric lines and grid circles essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Concentric lines versus grid circles In this paper, we will describe the ethical dilemma between concentric line and grid circle thinking, in what I believe the Japanese warrior tradition, bushido, terms as the dilemma between “ giri” and “ ninjo”, or loosely translated, duty and compassion. Let us first begin by describing examples of these ethical dilemmas. Let us say that you are a samurai, a Japanese warrior, sworn to give your life for your liege lord, and whose commands you are sworn to obey. Thus, when your liege lord orders you to kill someone who has transgressed on his territory and, for example, injured one of his retainers. You might think that murder is immoral, but in this case, your duty to your liege lord is the primary concern, and you would go out and kill the person he has commanded you to.

Thus, a fairly simple case that does not require much moral deliberation, or even any moral deliberation at all for you to arrive at the right answer. Duty comes first, in this case. Now let us examine the other side of the coin, a situation where compassion obviously comes first. You are making all haste towards the border in a cart, where your liege lord has asked you to meet visitors and escort them to his castle. As you are traveling, you happen across a peasant by the side of the road, dying and helpless, having been knocked down by someone else’s cart.

Stopping to help him might make you late for your rendezvous with your liege lord’s visitors, but in this case, with compassion for your fellow human being the paramount concern, you would stop to help him, even if it meant incurring your lord’s ire because you were late to meet his visitors, an insult in Japanese society at the time. This is yet another fairly simple case that requires little to almost no moral deliberation for you to arrive at the right

answer. So after examining two fairly easy cases, let us examine the flip side of that coin, and think of hard cases where giri and ninjo clash, with no obvious easy answer. The first example we can think of is you, as a samurai, have certain class obligations, both to your warrior status and to your feudal lord. Yet, you have the bad taste to fall in love with a girl who is not only a peasant, but also belongs to an enemy clan. Now you are torn between both sides of the coin.

Do you renounce your warrior status and your sworn oath to your feudal lord for your love, or do you give up your love for the girl and continue to serve the lord that you swore your oath to? Duty versus compassion, with no self-evident resolution. Another example of a not so easily resolved clash between these two principles of giri and ninjo would be a samurai who considers the master whom he has sworn his oath to do be dishonorable. For example, your master could send you out to a village to force the disobedient villagers to pay their taxes. However, upon reaching the village, you discover that the villagers are extremely poor, and the taxes imposed on them ruinous. They have not a single cent to their name, and to force them to pay this next round of taxes would drive them all to starvation and death.

Even worse, you discover that they have informed your master of their plight, and not only has he ignored their pleas for help, but has even gone to the extent of sending you to extort from them what they cannot give, by using military force. What do you do now? Do you obey your sworn duty to your master and extort the taxes out of the people, or do you disobey your duty and side with your feelings for the humanity of the people? Yet another ethical dilemma between duty and compassion. To understand why these

dilemmas even arise, we must examine the Japanese culture itself. The Japanese culture has always placed an utmost importance on the fulfillment of duty, of social obligation, and the Japanese samurai brought this to fanatical levels. They would choose to die rather than to be found disloyal or in dereliction of duty, and these clashes between their duty and their human feelings, which they are taught also hold a place of utmost importance in their lives, have been a mainstay of Japanese tales and movies. Although our sense of duty and compassion is not as strong as is defined by the Japanese warrior code, it is still present in us nonetheless, which explains why we too, can experience the same moral dilemmas.

So, what can we do to resolve this problem? I propose that the principle underlying all of the dilemmas has to do with self-interest. Self-interest, I believe, plays a big part in most people's decision making. Thus, I would propose that the principle I would use to solve all these dilemmas would be to advance your own self-interests at any costs. This deals neatly with the problem of conforming to societal expectations as well, as societal acceptance versus societal condemnation is also part of protecting yourself and enhancing your position in society. For example, in the first case, your own self-interest would tell you it would be wise for you to complete your duty to your liege, even though it involves the killing of a person.

If you disobeyed, not only would you have to suffer the punishment of your master, you would also be outcast from society as disloyal and renegade. In the second easy example, stopping to aid the person would not only gain you respect as a compassionate warrior in society's eyes, it would also stand you in good stead with your liege lord, for he would too gain respect as a lord

for having such a compassionate warrior, which would make up for the comparatively trivial insult of failing to be punctual in meeting his visitors, thus it would enhance your own self-interest to stop and aid the person. Now, moving on to the hard cases. In the first case, your own self-interest would probably tell you that you should suppress your feelings for the rival clan girl, so as not to jeopardize your high position in society and also risk being outcast from your clan and left to wander clanless. It would also probably tell you that you could have your pick of the women from your own clan, and that you could have no idea if the relationship with the peasant girl would work out anyway. Thus, this principle of putting your own self-interest first would tell you to suppress your feelings.

In the other hard example, it would depend on your assessment of your situation. If your liege lord rules with an iron fist, with a strong army loyal to him, nothing you could do for the peasants would change what would happen to them, and any aid you gave them would simply result in you being cast out of your clan at the very least, and most likely in death. However, if you believed that your lord was reasonable, and attempting to aid the peasants and reasoning with your lord to stay his hand of execution would not risk you incurring his wrath, but instead earn you and your lord the eternal gratitude of the people, coupled with the people's respect for your obvious ability as a warrior to balance both duty and compassion, would definitely be in your own interest. Of course, as with any argument, there are counter-arguments. The self-interest argument will be protested by people who hold a firm belief in their convictions, who believe that their principles are more important to them than any sort of consequences they have to face.

However, I believe that the self-interest argument also manages to encompass this moral aspect. If your convictions are so firmly held, and you place them above the material gains you could make, then it would be in your own self-interest to uphold these convictions, for you would spend your life regretting the fact that you did not, in the interest of materialistic gain. I believe the self-interest argument extends beyond materialistic gain; it encompasses your own moral convictions and the depths of your beliefs, and it encompasses a whole range of factors, depending on the importance you place on these factors. To give an example, using the first case, if you felt extremely strongly that you should never kill a fellow human, it would be in your own self-interest to disobey the order from your liege, regardless of the consequences, or you would have to live with the overwhelming guilt for the rest of your life. Thus, I believe that self-interest can be a good principle for us to base our decisions on.

However, the principle of self-interest is by no means perfect as well. People might still feel conflicted over which decision would favour them more, and it essentially changes the conflict from something more abstract, that of social obligation versus feelings, to something a little less abstract, that of which decision would favour me more. In addition, it is also reliant on your ability to judge the reactions of others to your own decisions, for making mistaken judgements can easily result in your actions not being in your self-interest, whereas a principle which relied on your own moral convictions would not have such a problem, as it is possible for you to accurately judge yourself as compared to others. However, I feel the foundation that the principle of self-interest helps lay in our decision-making process outweighs the possible

problems, as it gives us a uncomplicated base upon which to make our decisions; we only have to weigh which decision favours us better, as compared to whether we should choose between duty or feelings. In conclusion, the principle of self-interest has larger implications then just helping us to make decisions. Our society tends to elevate selfless, noble people who are willing to make sacrifices for abstract concepts such as duty and patriotism, and we tend to want to uphold the ideals of these people.

Thus, it could be argued that it would be in our own self-interest to be selfless, that being selfless could actually have a selfish motive, and that the entire argument about duty versus feelings is just one of selfishness concealed versus selfishness revealed. Do you do your duty, and pretend to be selfless in order to further your own selfish ambitions, or do you succumb to your feelings, and be obviously selfish? And of course, to complicate matters further, duty in some cases may be the selfish choice, whereas following your feelings the selfless one. Concentric lines versus grid circles In this paper, we will describe the ethical dilemma between concentric line and grid circle thinking, in what I believe the Japanese warrior tradition, bushido, terms as the dilemma between “ giri” and “ ninjo”, or loosely translated, duty and compassion. Let us first begin by describing examples of these ethical dilemmas. Let us say that you are a samurai, a Japanese warrior, sworn to give your life for your liege lord, and whose commands you are sworn to obey.

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