

# Moral Reasoning in Seven Questions

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Ethics Professor (Ret.)

28 October 2021  
1530-1630

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# Presenter

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- Distinguished Military Professor of Ethics, United States Naval Academy (2018-2021)
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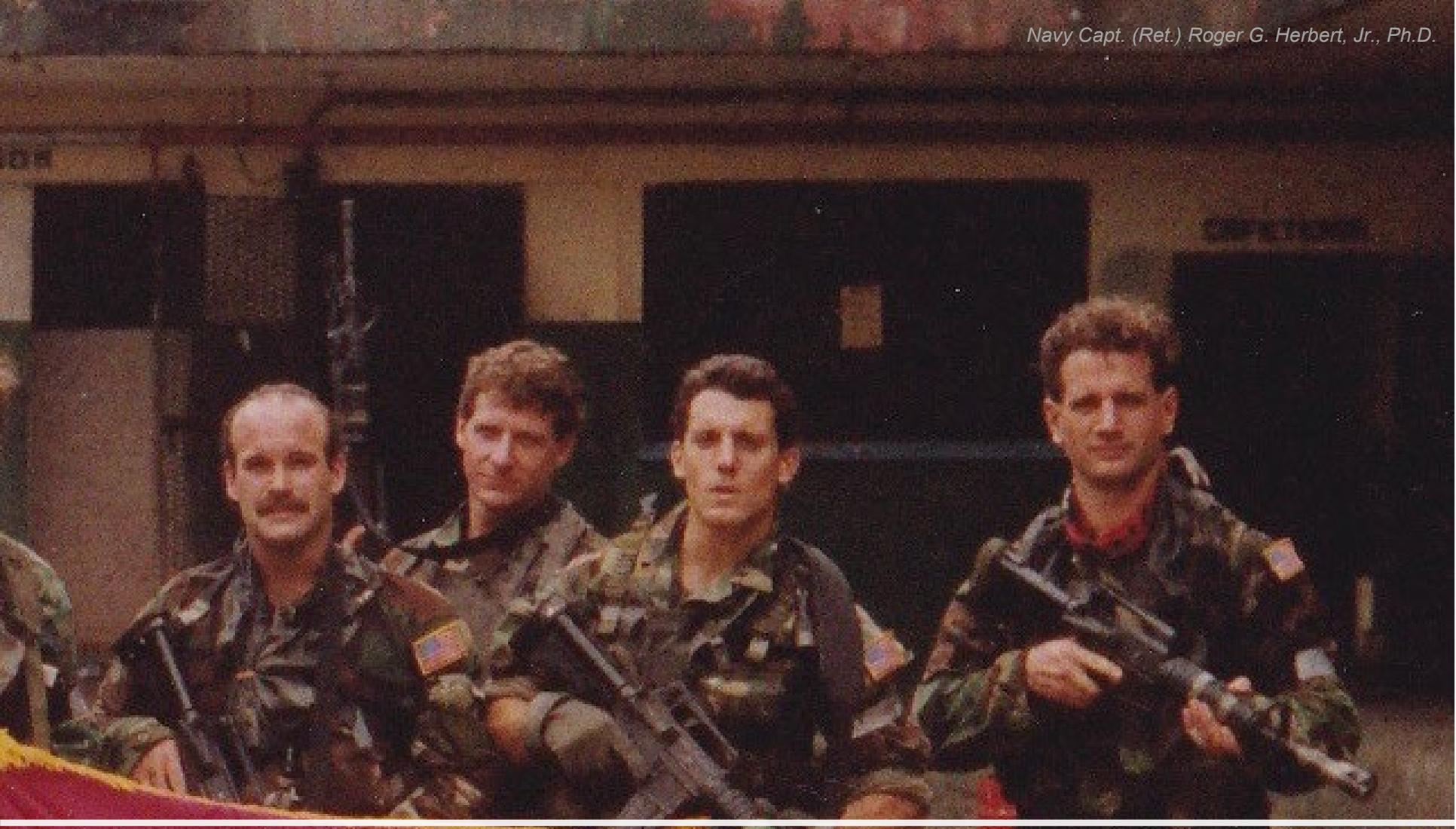
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# Learning Objectives

**At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to:**

1. Summarize the seven-questions framework.
2. Explain the difference between a routine moral choice and a decision that warrants deliberate moral reflection.
3. Differentiate between tests of integrity and moral dilemmas.
4. Apply “ethical triangulation” to a moral dilemma.



## My Worst Day in the Navy



# Question #1

Routine moral  
decision making

OR

A decision that  
warrants deliberate  
moral reflection

“The Moral  
Thermocline”<sup>1</sup>

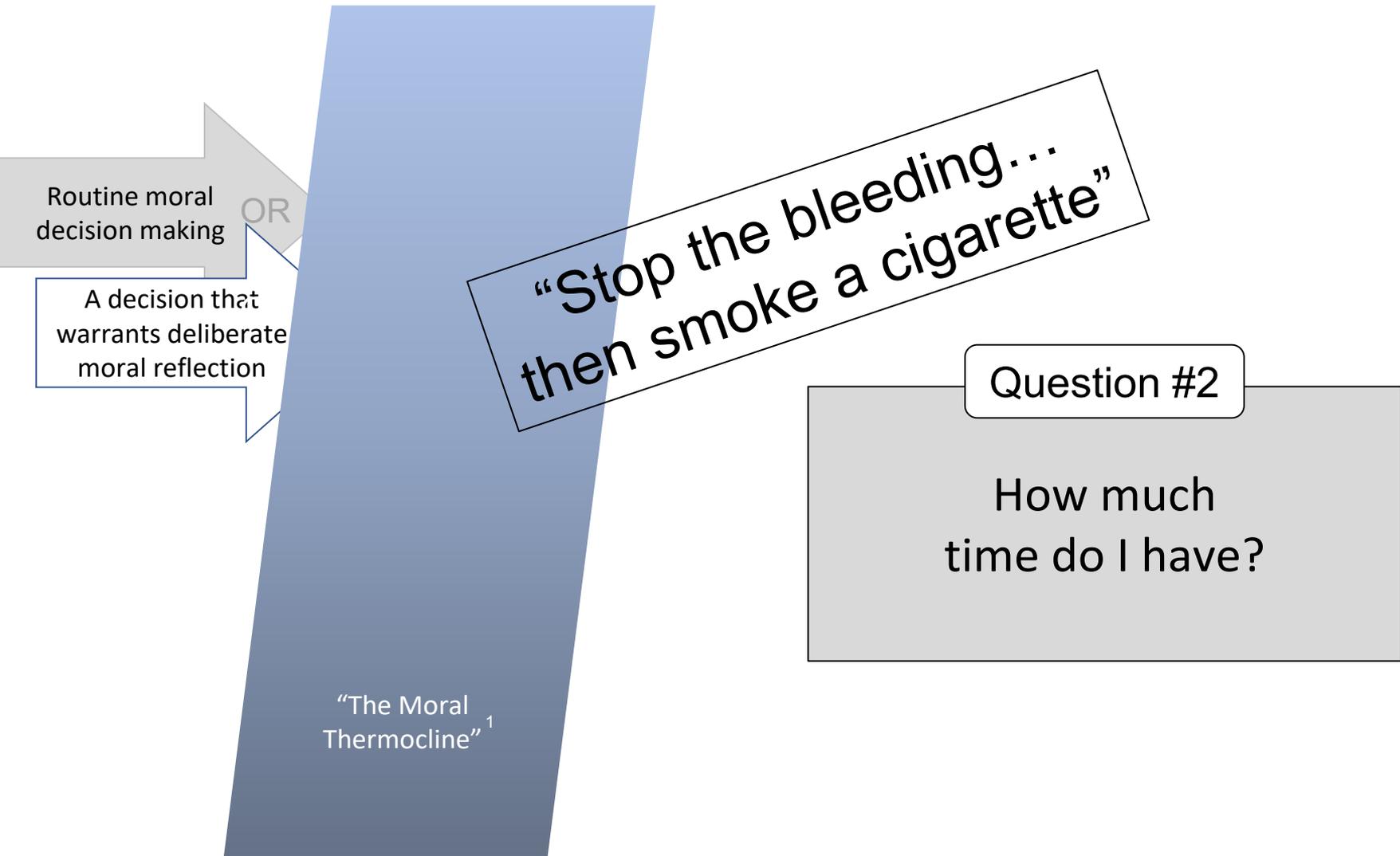
## Question #1

Is this a “routine” moral  
choice...or one that warrants  
deliberate moral reflection?

### Alerts

- “Huh...I’ve never seen this before!”
- Conflicting moral obligations
- “I could get in trouble for either choice”

# Question #2



# Question #3

Routine moral  
decision making

OR

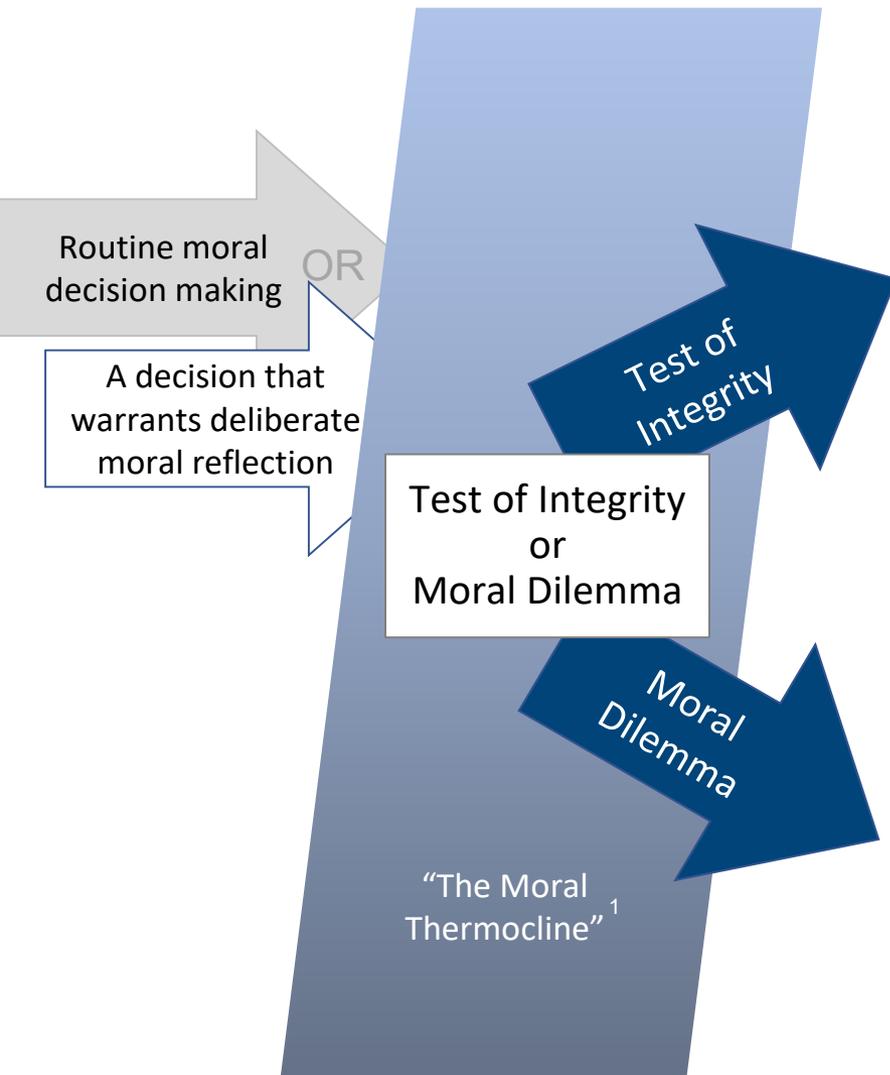
A decision that  
warrants deliberate  
moral reflection

“The Moral  
Thermocline”<sup>1</sup>

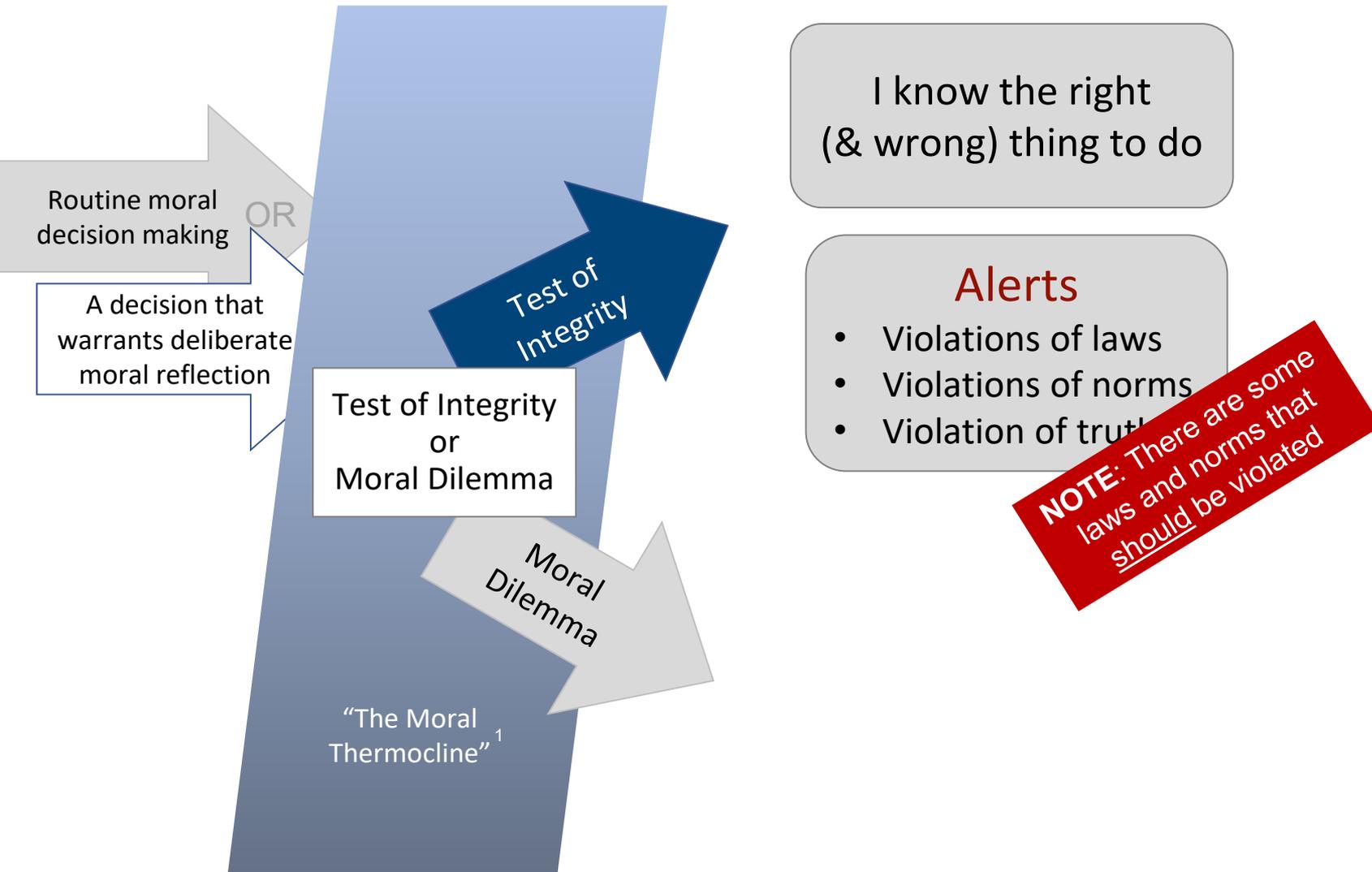
Question #3

Is this a “moral dilemma”  
or a “test of integrity”?

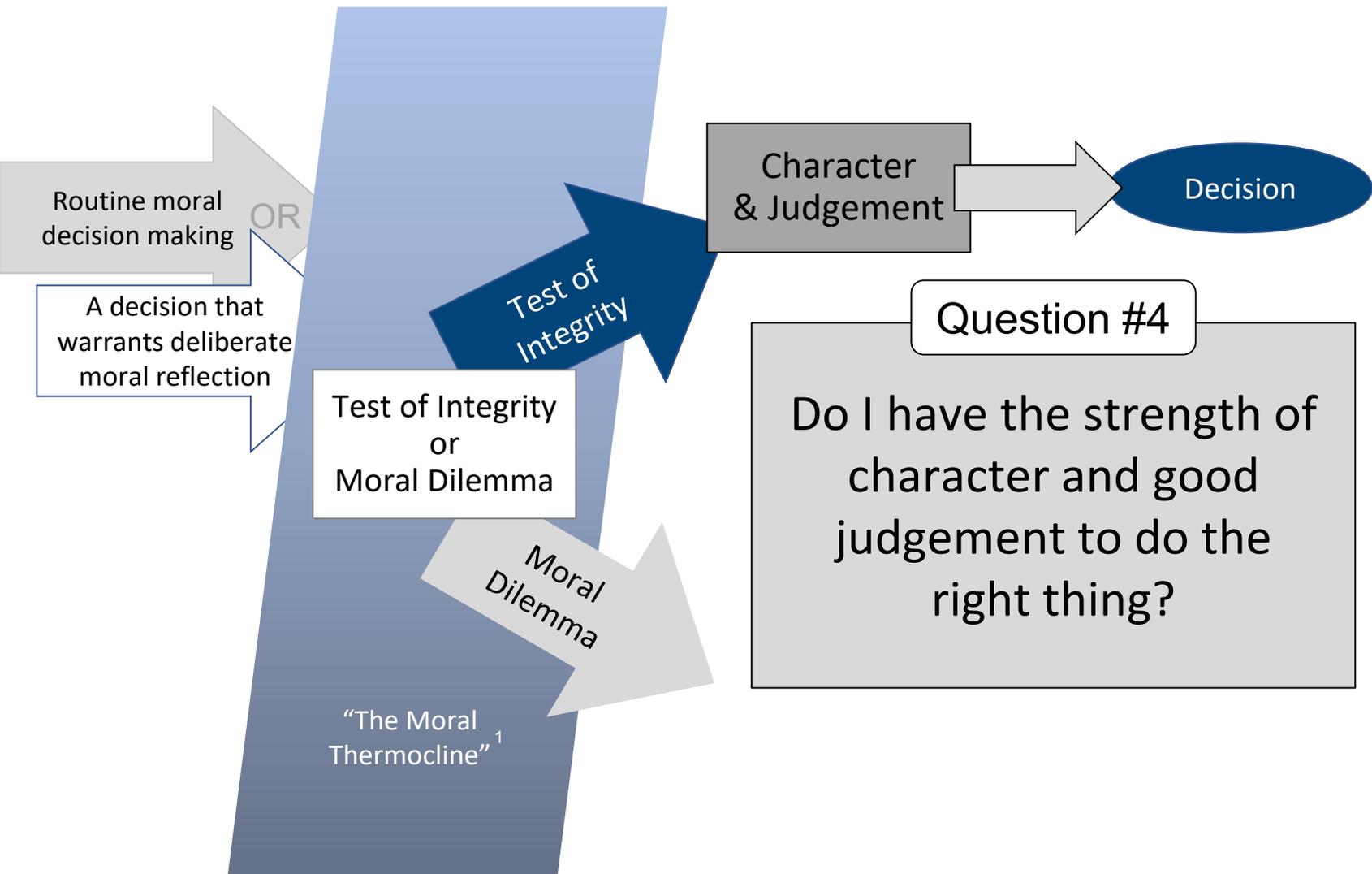
# Question #3



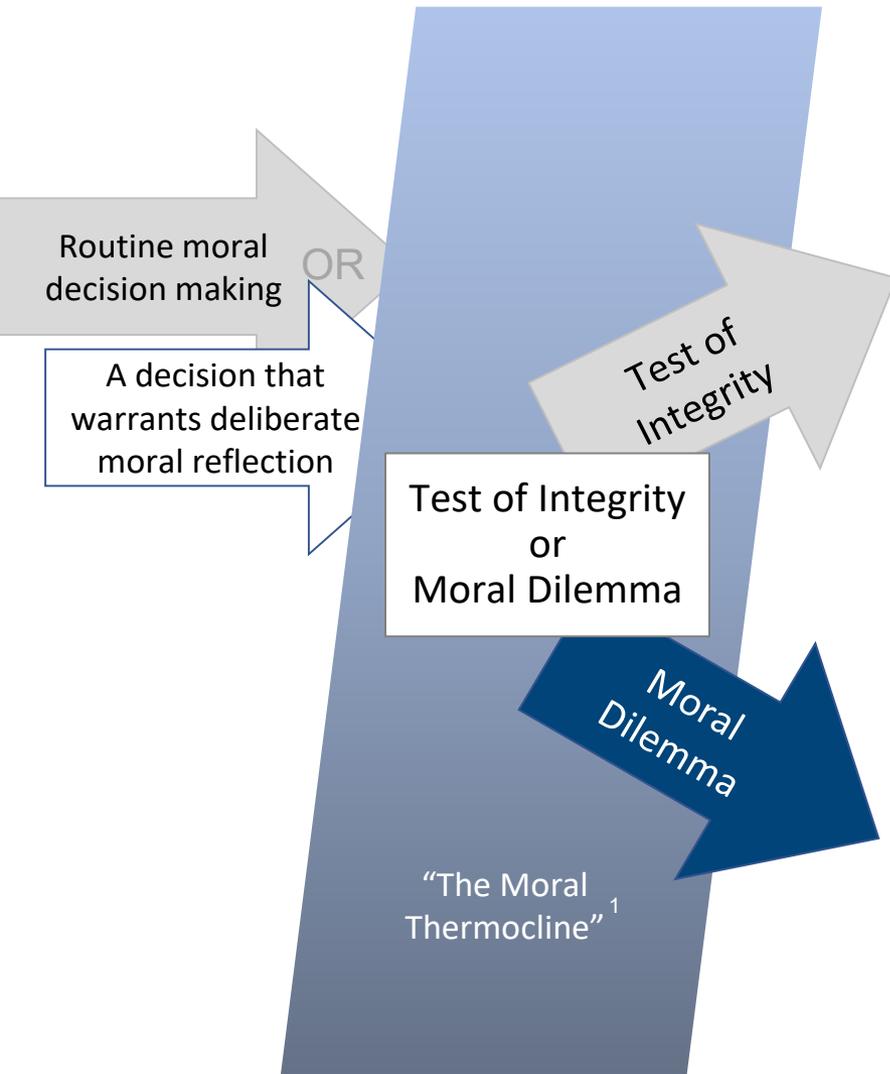
# Question #3 continued



# Question #4



# Question #4

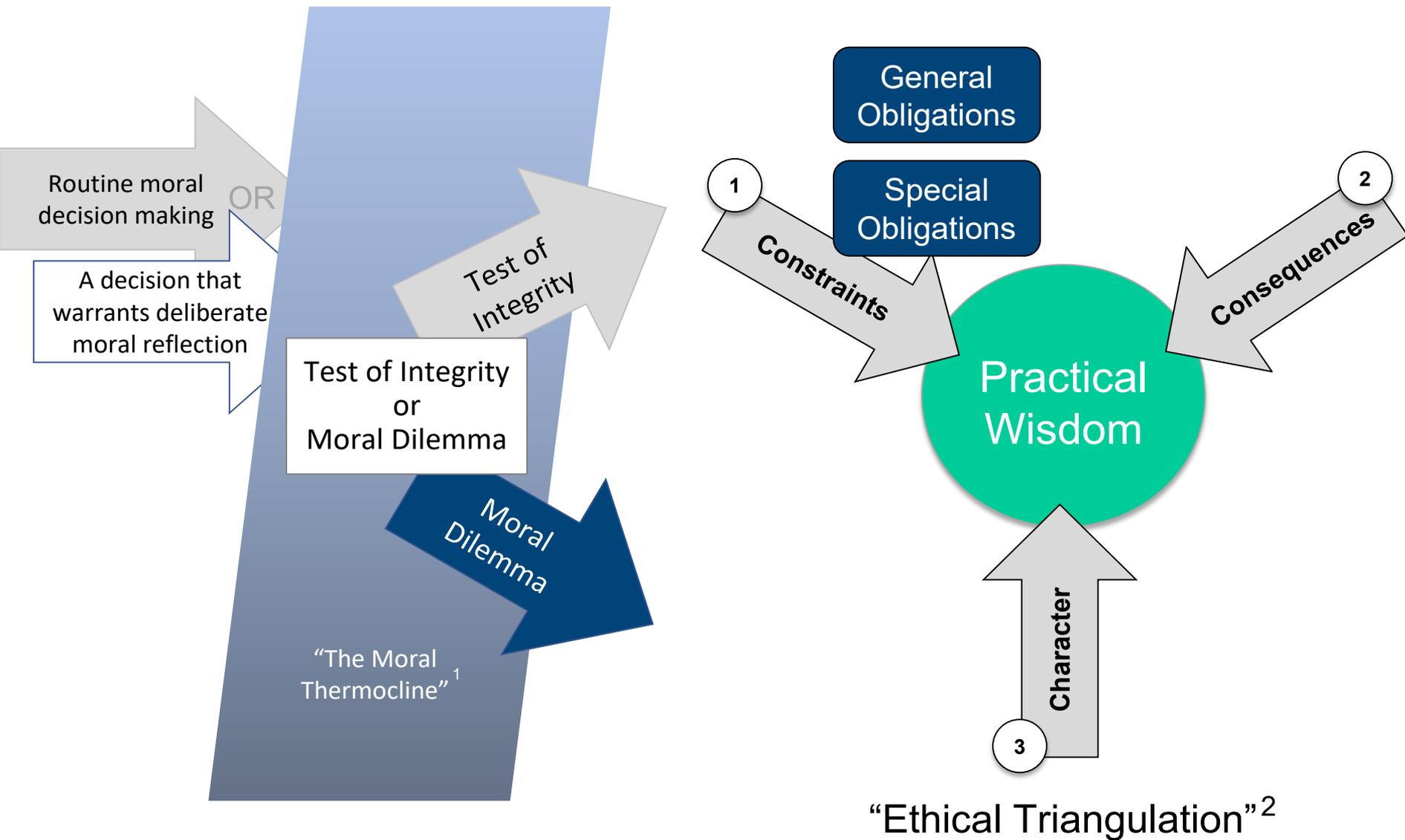


I don't yet know the right thing to do

## Some classics

Truth vs. loyalty  
Justice vs. mercy  
The few vs. the many  
"Us" vs. "Them"  
Long vs short term

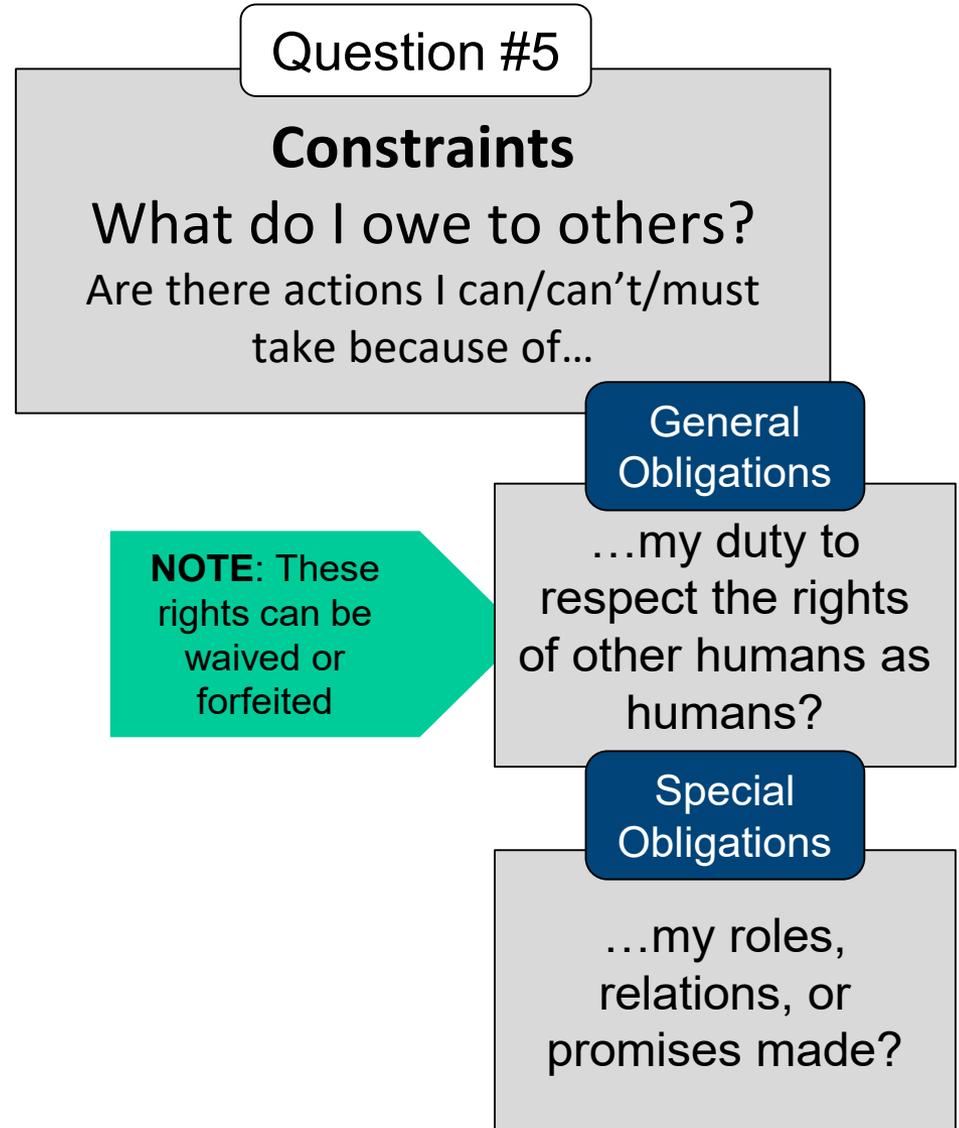
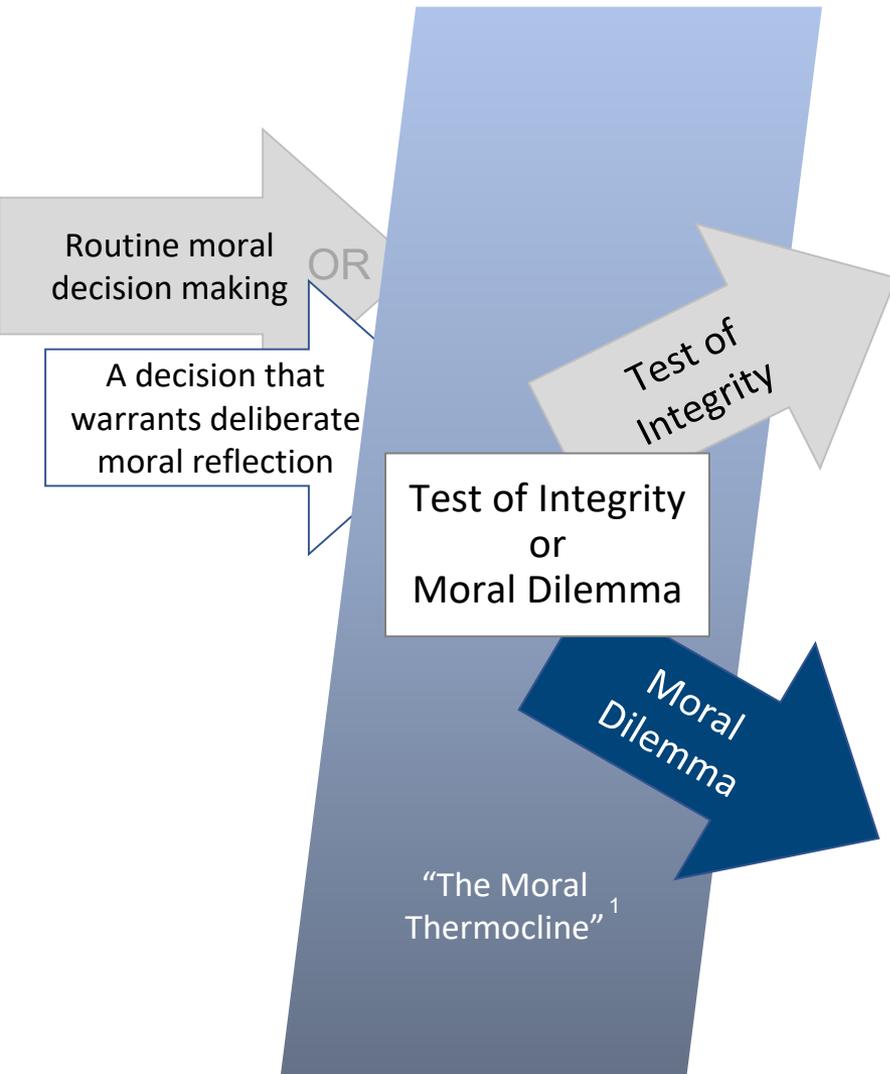
# Question #4 continued



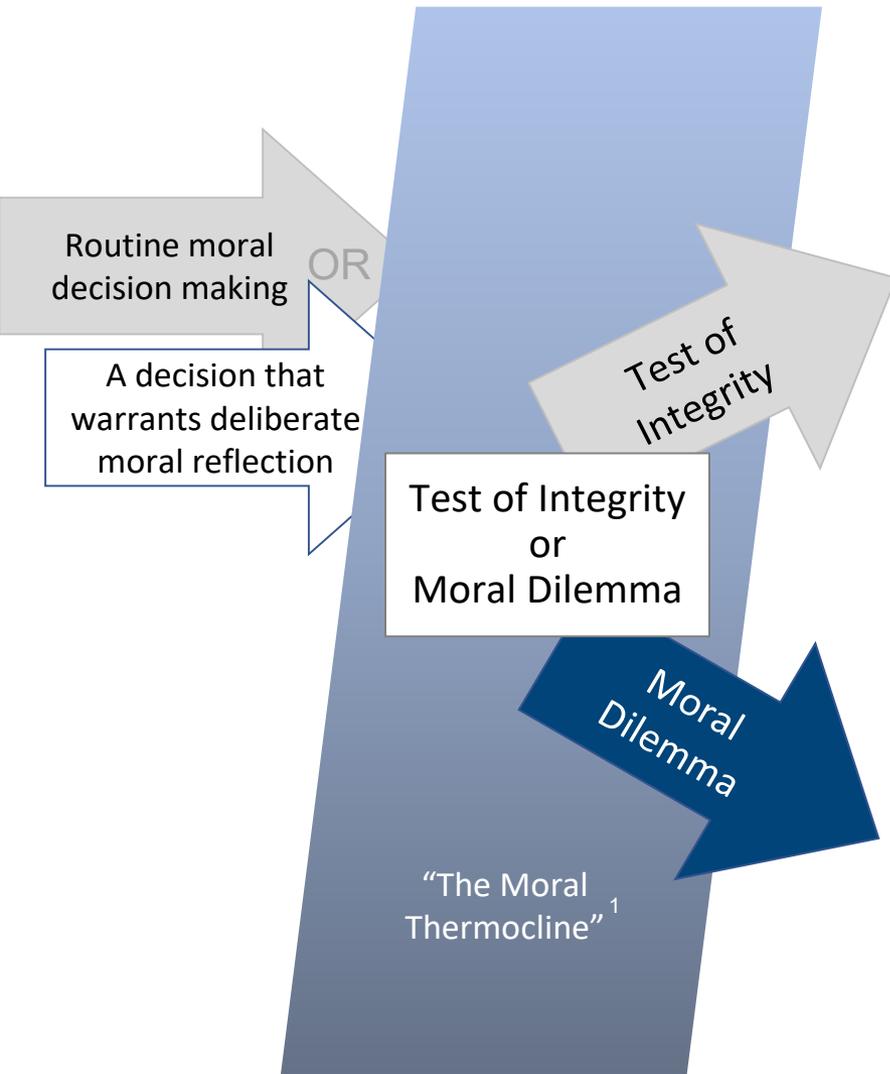
(Kidder, 2006)

(Baker, 2015)

# Question #5



# Question #6



## Question #6

### Consequences

What are the foreseeable consequences of my act?

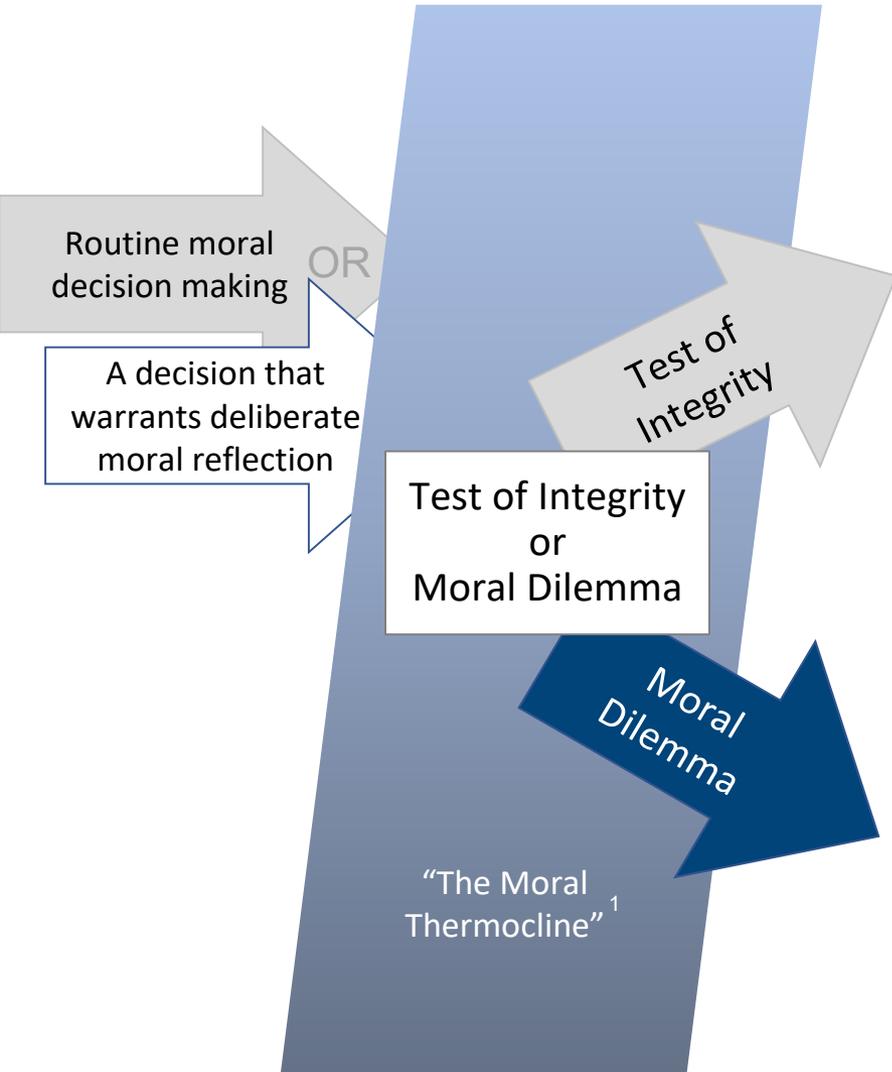
The net good or harm for all affected

Immediate effects

Long term effects

The moral precedent set by my act

# Question #7



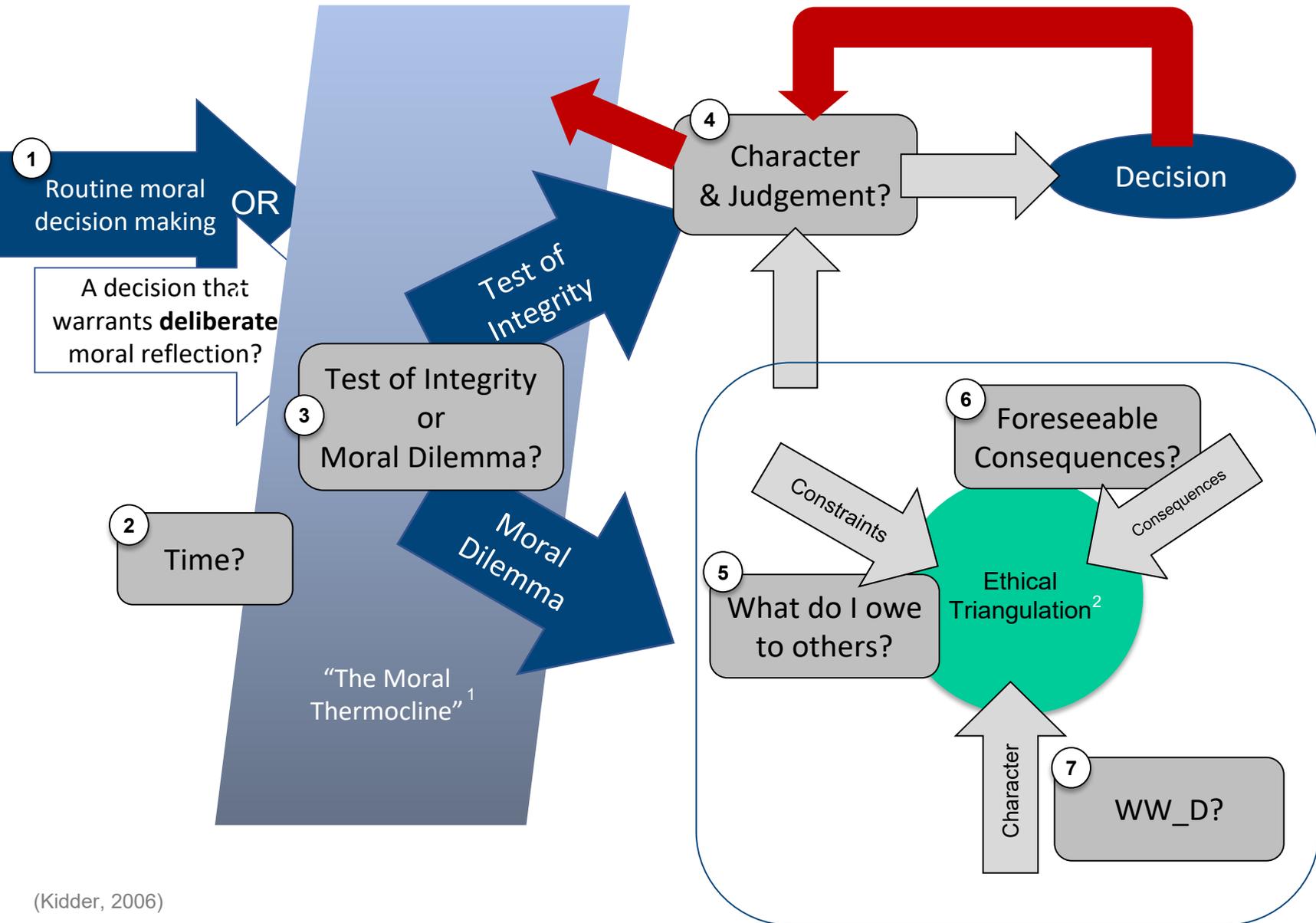
Question #7

**Character**

How will this decision affect my character?

WW\_D?

# Summary



(Kidder, 2006)

(Baker, 2015)

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# Key Takeaways

- Choices with significant moral content warrant deliberate moral analysis.
- A framework for moral reasoning (like the 7-question framework) won't spit out answers, but it will reduce the likelihood of missing important moral considerations
- Moral failures often result from failures to recognize that the situation at hand warrants deliberate moral analysis.
- Moral failures often result from a false sense of urgency; you likely have more time than you think.
- When we make choices with significant moral content, our character is affected: it is either strengthened or degraded.

# References

Baker, Deane-Peter (Ed.). (2015). *Key Concepts in Military Ethics*. New South.

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Kidder, Rushworth. (2006). Remarks during the *US Naval Academy Leadership Conference*. US Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD

Questions?

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