Please read Case 11 ("Citicorp") in the appendix of the textbook. It is also helpful, though not essential, to have seen the video on the Citicorp shown in class. An aspect of the case not discussed in the textbook but mentioned in the video is the fact that the public was not told the truth about the nature of the repairs to the building. Instead of being told that the building was vulnerable to collapse in a 16-year storm, the public was told that the work being done on the building was of a relatively minor nature. The reasoning was probably that, if the public were given the information, people might refuse to work in the building and even in surrounding buildings. No doubt you can think of other arguments for this position. On the other hand, the public was misled about the serious nature of the problem and deprived of the opportunity to make their own decision regarding work in or near the building.

The decision of engineer LeMessurier and officials of the City of New York is sometimes characterized as an instance of paternalism, which is defined as depriving others of the ability to make a decision regarding their own welfare and, instead, making the decision for them "for their own good." There are two kinds of paternalism: weak and strong. In weak paternalism, I make a decision for you because I believe you are not capable of making a free and informed decision for yourself. The reasons for your incapacity might be that you are being forced to make a certain decision (coercion) by others, or that you are too young to make a responsible decision, or that you are under too much emotional stress, or that you lack proper information. There might be other justifications for weak paternalism. In strong paternalism, the argument is that, even though you might be able to make a free and informed decision for yourself, you might not make the "right" decision, by my standards. So I will make it for you.

Assignment

The assignment has two parts.

Part One (2 points)

In the first part, give arguments, to show whether you believe withholding the truth from the people of the City of New York about the danger from the Citicorp building was an example of weak paternalism, an example of strong paternalism, or not a paternalistic action at all.

Part Two (6 points)

Perform a line-drawing analysis to determine whether the decision to withhold the truth from the citizens of New York and in fact misrepresent the true nature of the situation to them was morally justified. Use three features in your line-drawing analysis. The negative paradigm should be a situation, similar in some ways to the actual one, in which withholding the truth would clearly not be morally justified. The positive paradigm