Right and Wrong - Moral, Ethical and Legal

Let's start with some definitions:

> ***Moral*** - of or being principles of right and wrong in conduct / conforming to a standard of right conduct / operating on one's conscience or moral judgement.
>
> ***Ethical*** - conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct or morality.
>
> ***Legal*** - based on the written law.

In all of the dictionaries I checked there was little to differentiate between the definitions of the words 'moral' and 'ethical'.

The key difference between the word 'legal' and the two words 'moral' and 'ethical' is that a legal judgement is based on a written law, whereas moral and ethical judgements are down to one's conscience.

During the trial of Buchanan, the counsel for the CPS rather casually asked me a huge question. I was in the middle of three days of interrogation as a witness for the prosecution, when, out of the blue, he asked me as an addendum to a previous question, "But surely you knew the difference between right and wrong." My brain went into overdrive wrestling with the facts of the situation that I had unwittingly found myself drawn into by Buchanan. As far as I was concerned I had done what was right; I had protected my customers who had trusted me. I had a moral responsibility not to betray that trust. After a short pause I simply answered, "Yes."

Their definition of right and wrong is defined purely in terms of the written law. Moral or ethical judgements are beyond the scope of our justice system, which in itself can be grossly immoral.

Judging purely by the written law makes it easy for the courts. If they have to make moral judgements then that calls for a little humanity, which is something our barristers and judges appear to have had removed as they are put into such all-powerful positions in our injustice system. Are you guilty or not guilty according to the law of the land? Is it black or is it white?

I broke the law in order to protect my customers, not for any personal gain. Yet my punishment has been so destructive. A legal judgement alone does not take sufficient account of the moral rights or wrongs of a case. Faced with a dilemma to either protect my customers or reveal the facts to NCR, I chose what I believed was the right thing to do in the circumstances. A moral judgement is very simply what I would call 'doing the right thing'.

Usually it is not hard to know what is the right thing to do. Surely it is just a part of being human. We have been given the mental capacity to assess a situation, think through the

consequences of our actions, make a judgement and 'do the right thing'. However, external forces and pressures may mean that the consequences of our actions turn out to be far different from those that we originally expected.

Sometimes 'doing the right thing' is 'the hardest thing to do', but there is always a 'right thing to do' even though, on occasions that might mean breaking the law.

Maybe my response to the counsel for the CPS should have been; "Yes I do know the difference between right and wrong, but do you?"