

### ROBERT STEWART DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

# MARTIN HELLMAN

## The Technological Imperative for Ethical Evolution



Almost overnight, the Manhattan Project transformed ethical decision making from a purely moral concern into one that is essential for human survival. Recent technological advances, including genetic engineering, AI, and cyber-technology, reinforce that imperative. This talk explores how to accelerate our ethical progress and thereby increase our odds of not only surviving, but also thriving. It uses several personal lessons that I learned the hard way. In 1976, when confronted with a decision that NSA told me could cause “grave harm to national security,” I thought I made my decision ethically, but later I realized that I had fooled myself—and how easily we all can make that mistake. The talk then explores several other lessons including how to use the evolution of ethical standards over time to accelerate that process.

Martin E. Hellman is best known for inventing public key cryptography, the technology that enables secure Internet transactions and that protects literally trillions of dollars in financial transactions every day. Among other honors, this work was recognized by the million-dollar ACM Turing Award and election to the National Academy of Engineering. He was a professor at MIT (1969-1971) and moved to Stanford’s faculty in 1971, retiring as a full professor in 1996. He now is professor emeritus, as well as being affiliated with Stanford’s Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC). His recent work includes rethinking national security and assessing the risk of nuclear deterrence. In 2016, he and his wife wrote *A New Map for Relationships: Creating True Love at Home & Peace on the Planet* that a former Secretary of Defense said “should be read by couples seeking peace at home, as well as by diplomats seeking peace in the world.”

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**SUN ROOM**

**MEMORIAL UNION**