Information Systems and Ethics

Regulate Human Behavior

- Social Customs
  - values, norms, sanctification
- Political/legal system
  - Rules, regulations, laws and penalties
- Ethics
  - Eliminates courses of action

Ethical Assumptions

A Decision Theoretic Approach to Ethics

GOAL

C1
C2
C3
....
Cn

O1
O2 X
O3 O4
O5
O6 X
....
On X

ETHICS GIVES A GREEN LIGHT!
# Ethics and IT

## Systems for Decision Making

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<tr>
<td><strong>Categorical Imperative (Kant)</strong></td>
<td>&quot;If everyone did this, what be the consequences for the social system? (e.g., family, organization, tribe, country)&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>Repeated Decision Making (Decartes)</strong></td>
<td>If it can not be taken repeatedly, then it should not be taken</td>
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<td><strong>Utilitarianism</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Greatest good for the greatest number.&quot; Results in compromises.</td>
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## Systems for Decision Making (cont)

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<tr>
<td><strong>Pluralism</strong></td>
<td>Do what is &quot;morally right&quot; to protect the weak; e.g., ADA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Risk Aversion Principle</strong></td>
<td>Do what causes the least harm or produces the least costs</td>
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<td><strong>Enlightened Self-Interest</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Transaction Ethics&quot;. Act in ways that promote win-win</td>
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## Analyzing Ethical Situations

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<td><strong>General Steps</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Identify the facts</td>
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<td>- Define the conflict. Identify higher order values.</td>
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<td>- Identify the stakeholders</td>
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<td>- Identify all courses of action, both acceptable and unacceptable</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Determine likely consequences of all COA's</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pick appropriate course(s) of action based on consequences or application of ethical framework</td>
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## IT Trends and Ethics

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<tr>
<td><strong>Advances in data storage and retrieval</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Advances in telecommunications</strong></td>
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<td><strong>advances in intelligent technologies</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Need for Information Ethics</strong></td>
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Ethics and IT

IT Ethical Concerns

- Information rights and obligations
- Property rights
- Accountability and control
- System quality
- Quality of Life

Information rights and obligations

- Who owns information about ourselves?
- Who can access it?
- Can it be bought and sold?

Property rights

- Who owns the rights to ideas, inventions and other intellectual property?
- How do we balance the rights of ownership with innovation?
- Who owns (and is liable) for knowledge encoded in AI systems?
- Trade-off with copyright, patents, and trade secrets?

Accountability and control

- Who is liable if a system fails? An AI system?
- To what extent should free speech be regulated on the net?
Ethics and IT

System quality

- When is enough?
- Application of strict liability
  - Due diligence in manufacturing
  - Testing
  - Warnings on use

Quality of Life

- IT that puts people out of work
- Dehumanizing influences
- Effects on personal life
- Reporting (e.g., HIV)
- Ergonomics

Computer crime

- Stealing data
- Shipping data to competitors
- Viruses

Solutions

- Enlightened management
- Codes of ethics (formal)
- Organizational norms and values
- Application of ethical thinking
Ethics Exercise: Lotus Equifax

- Analyze the Lotus-Equifax decision to offer this information on CD-ROM in terms of:
  - The 6 ethical frameworks: Kant, Decartes, Utilitarianism, Pluralism, Risk Aversion, and Enlightened Self-Interest.
  - The General Framework
  - Q’s: Are the solutions the same? Do they match the actual actions taken by the firm? What ethical principles did Lotus-Equifax actually use, if any?

end...