



Switch off your Mobiles Phones
or
Change Profile to Silent Mode



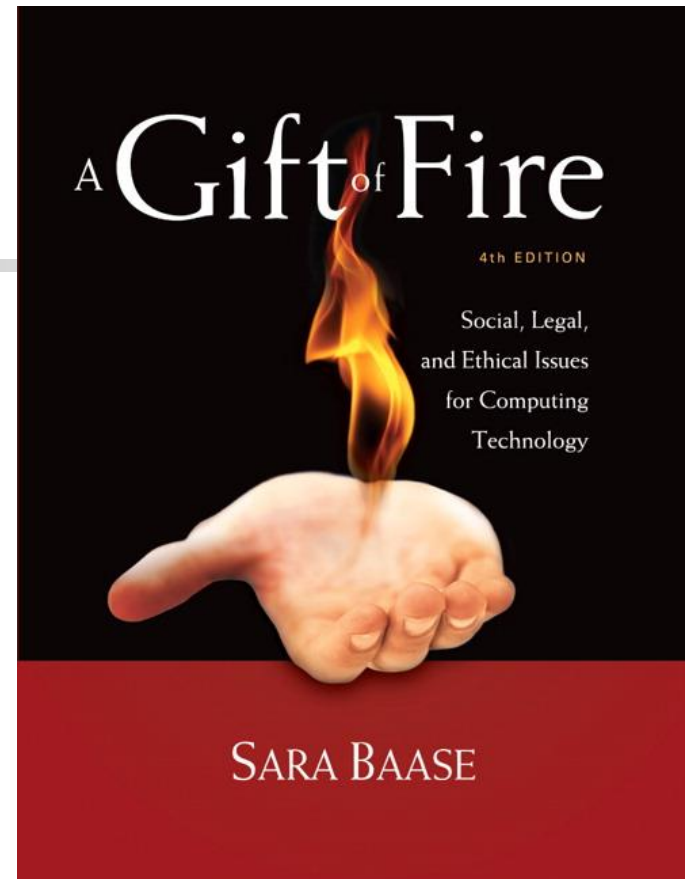
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A Gift of Fire

Fifth edition

Sara Baase

Chapter 2: Ethics





Topics



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- What we covered last week
 - The Pace of Change
 - Change and Unexpected Developments
 - Themes
- What we will cover this week
 - Ethics

New Technology – and Ethics

■ How to make Ethical Decisions

- Should you download Movies / Music from Unauthorized Websites?
- Is taking on the Mobile Phone while Driving on Highway ok?
- Should you hire Foreign Programmers who work at Low Salaries?
- Should you fire Employee who criticizes your business in Social Media?
- Should you attempt to prosecute employee who whistle-blows by releasing data to press?



Ethics



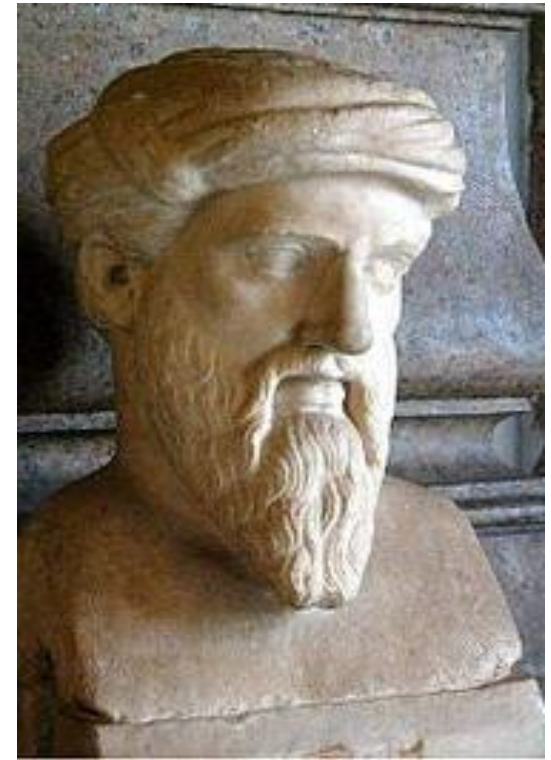
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What is Ethics?

- Study of what it means to **“do the right thing”**.
- They have an impact on how individuals **make choices and live their life**.
- Assumes people are **rational** and make **free choices**.
- **Rules** to follow in our interactions and our **actions** that affect others.

Pythagoras of Samos

- Born – Circa 495 BC – Samos – Ancient Greece
- Mathematician and a Philosopher known for Pythagorean Theorem.
- Formed a brotherhood that was devoted to moral, political and social life.
- This society was known as Pythagoreans.
- Influenced philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and, through them, Western philosophy.



Socrates



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- Born – 469 BC – Athens – Greece
- Credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy.
- Interested in the thinking process.
- The Socratic Method clarified the concepts of Good and Justice. If you have any problem, break it down to a series of questions and you find your required answer in those responses.
- Process of questioning is called the **“Socratic Method”**.

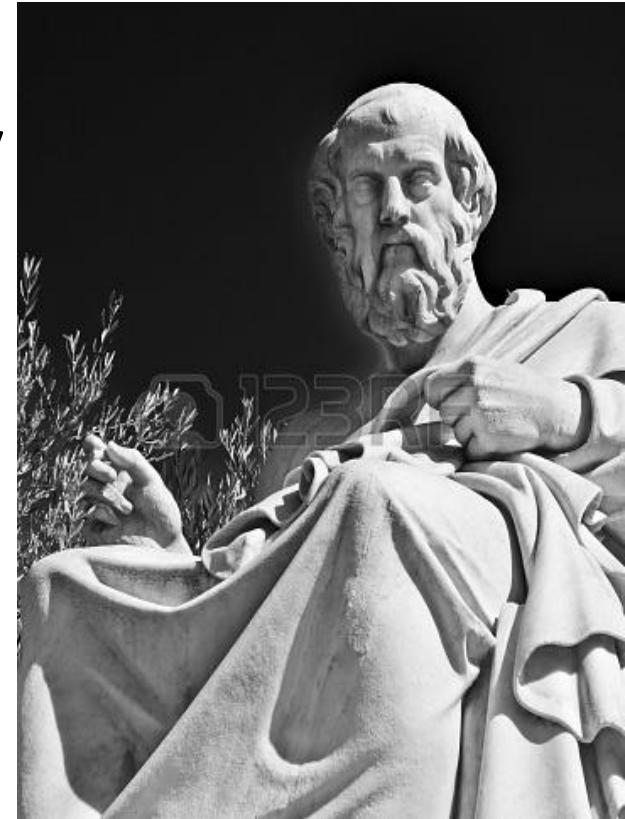


Plato



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- Born – Circa 428/9 BC – Athens -Greece
- Socrates' student
- Recorded the speeches made by Socrates
- **Known for** founding Academy north of Athens, traditionally considered the first university in western world.
- Plato wrote his ideas about an “ideal state” in a book called ***The Republic***.



Aristotle



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- Born (c. 384 B.C. to 322 B.C.) philosopher and scientist
- Founder of the Lyceum and the Peripatetic school of philosophy and Aristotelian tradition.
- Along with his teacher Plato, has been called the "Father of Western Philosophy"
- Began tutoring Alexander the Great.
- Examined human behavior in the context of society and government.



What are Ethical Rules?

- Rules to follow during the interactions between people and actions that affect other people.
- Goal of ethical theories: **to enhance human dignity, peace, happiness and well being.**
- Apply to all of us.
- Intended to achieve **good results for people in general and for situations in general** – not just for ourselves, not just for one situation

Ethics - differing viewpoints:

- Can be viewed ethical rules as fundamental and universal, like the laws of science

Or

- Rules of games that provide framework on how to interact with people in a peaceful, productive way.
- No need to decide which view is correct. In either case include reason, introspection, and knowledge of human nature, values, and behavior.
- **The main aim of any ethical theory is to do what is right and good since it involves moral rules or acting based on specific ethical values**

Ethical theories

Some ethicists make distinctions :

- Ethical theories that view certain acts as good or bad **because of some basic aspect of the action** – deontological "obligation, duty" (or non consequentialist) theories

And

- Ethical theories that view acts as good or bad **because of their consequences or results** – consequentialist theories (judgment about the rightness or wrongness)



Ethical Principles



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1. **Virtue Theory:** A branch of ethical philosophy that focuses on character instead of rules.
2. **Deontological Ethics:** An ethical approach that emphasizes on the right or wrong of actions rather than actions.
3. **Utilitarianism:** Ethical principle which explains importance of action in respect to general utility.
4. **Rights:** In ethical theories based on rights, the rights established by a society are protected and given the highest priority

Virtue Theory

- Emphasizes on merits or moral character; rather than one's duties or rules or consequences of actions .
- A virtue ethicist is likely to give you this kind of moral advice: ***“Act as a virtuous person would act in your situation.”***
- Began with Socrates, was subsequently developed further by Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno.
- Take inspiration from Aristotle who declared that ***“a virtuous person is someone who has ideal character traits”***.

Virtue Theory



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- Aristotle suggested, a person can improve his or her character by **practicing self-discipline**, while a **good character can be corrupted** by repeated **self-indulgence**.
- He said that having virtue just means **doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, in the right amount, toward the right people**.



Example



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Walking home from a movie, you see a person being mugged. What action will you take?

- Your impulse might be to say that a courageous person would run over there and stop the mugging, because courage means putting yourself in harm's way for a good cause, right?

Example

- A virtuous person – in the Aristotelian sense would first understand the situation.
- If you size up the mugger and have a good reason to believe that he could safely intervene, then that's probably the courageous choice.
- But if you recognize that intervention is likely to mean that both you and the victim will be in danger, the courageous choice is not to intervene, but to call for help instead.



- Aristotle said that you can't have too much of a good thing. So, being courageous doesn't mean rushing headlong into danger.
- A courageous person will assess the situation, they'll know their own abilities, and they'll take action that is right in the situation.

Deontological theories

- Deontology is an ethical theory that uses **rules to distinguish right from wrong**.
- A person will follow his or her obligations to another or society as upholding one's duty is what is considered ethically correct.
- For instance, a deontologist will always keep his promises to a friend and will follow the law.
- **Non consequentialist**





Immanuel Kant (1724 –1804 Germany)

- He proposed three important ideas
 - **Principle of Universality** – We should follow rules of behavior that we universally apply to everyone.
 - **Rationality is the standard for what is good** - deontologists argue that logic or reason determines rules of ethical behavior, that actions are intrinsically good because they follow from logic
 - **Principle about Interacting with People** - One must never treat people as merely **means to an end** but rather as **ends in themselves**


Ethics – Deontological theories

Immanuel Kant

- Kant took an extreme position on the **absolutism of ethical rules**:
- He argued it is always **wrong to lie**.
- **Example**: If a person is looking for someone he or she intends to murder, and he asks you where the intended victim is. *Is it wrong to lie to protect the victim?*
- Most people would agree there are cases in which even very good, universal rules should be broken because of consequences.

Deontological theories

- Kant believed that ethical actions follow universal moral laws, such as **“Don’t lie. Don’t steal. Don’t cheat.”**
- Deontology doesn’t require weighing the costs and benefits of a situation.
- This avoids subjectivity and uncertainty because you only must follow set rules.



Suppose you're a software engineer and learn that a nuclear missile is about to launch that might start a war. What will you do?



- You can hack the network and cancel the launch, but it's against professional code of ethics to break into any software system without permission. **And, it's a form of lying and cheating.**
- Deontology advises not to violate these rules.
- However, in letting the missile launch, thousands of people will die.
- Following the rules makes deontology easy to apply. But it also disregards the possible consequences of our actions.

Utilitarianism



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- Based on one's ability to predict the consequences of an action.
- To a utilitarian, the choice that yields the greatest benefit to the most people is the one that is ethically correct.
- **John Stuart Mill** (May 20, 1806, - May 8, 1873), English philosopher, economist, and exponent of Utilitarianism



Ethics - Utilitarianism

Main example of *consequentialist* theory: **John Stewart Mill** guiding principles:

- **Key purpose is to increase happiness or utility**
- A person's **utility** is what satisfies a person's needs and values
- An **action** may decrease utility for some people and increase it for others.
- Two types of **utilitarianism**, **act utilitarianism** and **rule utilitarianism**



Principles of utilitarianism.



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- Pleasure or Happiness Is the Only Thing That Truly Has Intrinsic (Core) Value.
- Actions Are Right Insofar (to the extent that) as They Promote Happiness, Wrong Insofar as They Produce Unhappiness.
- Everyone's Happiness Counts Equally.

Utilitarianism



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Valuable theory: says that the only thing that's valuable is **happiness and the absence of suffering**.

- The theory of right action says that the right action is the one that maximizes and produces the most expected value.
- If you put these two pieces together, you get utilitarianism.

Example

- Utilitarianism will tell us to divide the drug, saving five and allowing Needy to die.
- Why? Because saving the five lives provides more happiness than saving just one life.
- It's important to notice that we accept the utilitarian claim that **the right action is the one that makes the most value.**
- “We should **act always** so as to produce **the greatest good** for the **greatest number.**” - principle of utility.

Utilitarianism - Act version



Considers the Consequences of individual Acts or Actions (Act Utilitarianism)

- “In any given situation, you should choose the action that **produces the greatest good for the greatest number**”.
- An act is **right** if it tends to increase aggregate utility. An act is **wrong** if it tends to decrease aggregate utility.
- *A person performs the acts that benefit the most people, regardless of personal feelings or the societal constraints such as laws.*

Problems with Act utilitarianism



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- Sometimes, the act that will produce greatest good for greatest number can seem just wrong.
- **Who** determines **what** increases the happiness (utility) of people affected by an **action** – the decision maker[s] or the people affected?
- How do **we** know what **they** would choose?
- Should some people's utility carry **more** weight than others?
- Should a thief's gain of utility be **equal** to the victim's loss of utility?

Example



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heart - waitlist



lung- waitlist



kidney - waitlist



kidney - waitlist



liver - waitlist



Example



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heart - waitlist



lung- waitlist



kidney - waitlist



kidney - waitlist



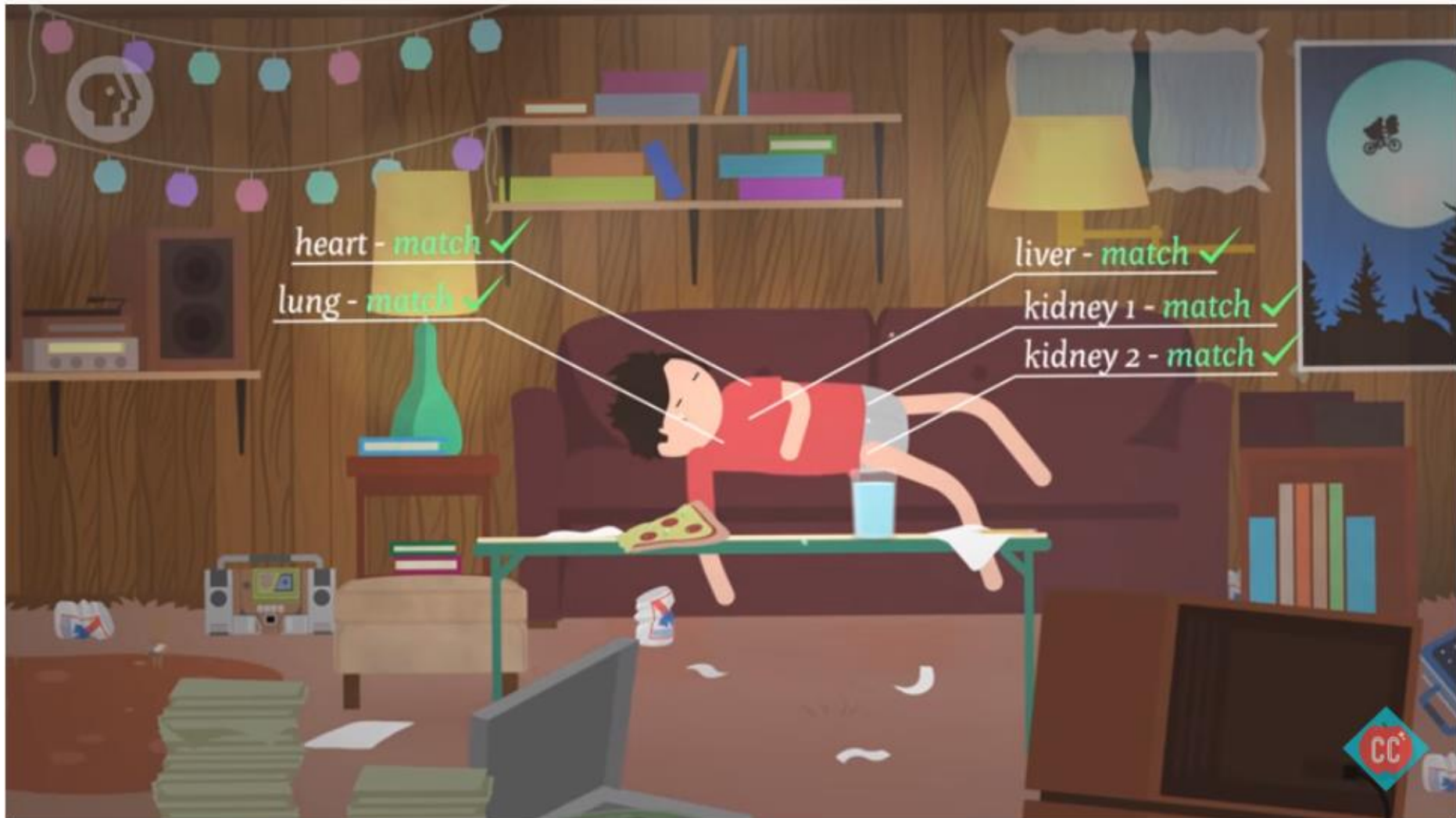
liver - waitlist



Example



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Problems with Act utilitarianism



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- A fundamental (and ethical) objection is that it does not recognize or respect individual rights. It has no absolute prohibitions.
- Would you kill one innocent person to distribute their organs to several people who will die without an organ transplant?
- Should you steal the property of a rich person and distribute amongst poorer people?

Ethics - Utilitarianism – Rule version

Rule utilitarianism a variant form of utilitarianism

- Applies utility principle not to individual **actions** but to **general ethical rules**.
- This theory says **that we ought to live by rules that, in general, are likely to lead to the greatest good for the greatest number.**
- Rule utilitarian's want us to think long-term, and on a larger scale
 - A **rule utilitarian** might argue that the general rule “**Do not kill**” will increase total utility

Problems with Rule utilitarianism

- Does not use **utility** as its way of evaluating actions
- If utility demands it, so should utilitarianism, but Rule Utilitarianism does not.
- **Recognizing** that widespread lying, killing and stealing decrease the security and happiness (utility) of all, a rule utilitarian can **devise rules against these acts**.



Note:



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- Act utilitarianism says **action becomes morally right** when **produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people**. Rule utilitarianism says **moral correctness of an action** depends on the **rules that help gain the greatest good**.
- In Act utilitarianism it is alright to break a rule for greater good. Rule utilitarianism says if following rule does not bring greater good then breaking it will not either.

Ethics – Rights



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- Established by society and given the highest priority.
- Considered to be ethically valid since a large population endorses them.
- John Locke (1632 – 1704) English philosopher and physician, was one of the primary supporters of this system.
- Focused on three major topics:
 - Epistemology- theory of knowledge
 - Political philosophy
 - Religious toleration.



Ethics- Rights



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- When people talk about rights, they are often speaking about two different kinds of rights.
- In philosophy books these are usually called
 - Negative rights (liberties or natural rights)
 - The right to act without interference
 - Positive rights (claim-rights)
 - Impose an obligation on some people to provide certain things for others



Ethics – Negative Rights

- The right to act without interference. The only obligation they impose on others is not to prevent you from acting.
- Called “**natural rights**” because in the opinion of some philosophers we can derive them from the **nature of humanity**
- **John Lock, argued that we each have an exclusive right to ourselves, our labor, and to what we produce with our labor**
- He saw **protection of private property** as a **moral rule.**



Negative Rights Includes

- Right to life (no one should kill anyone)
- Right to be free from assault
- Right to use your property
- Right to use labor, skills and mind to create goods and services and to trade with people in voluntary exchanges.
- Freedom of speech and religion
- Right to privacy
- Right to access the internet seems obvious in many countries.
- However authoritarian regimes restrict it. Which?



Ethics – Positive Rights



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- A positive right is **an obligation by others** to provide **benefits to the rights holder**.
- A right is a causal effect of a mistake, so if you have a right to something, it implies that eliminating that right or not providing some benefit is wrong or unlawful for others.

Ethics – Positive Rights



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- **Positive right to a job** could mean that someone must hire you
- **Positive right to life** may mean that others have to pay for your food or medical care
- **Positive right to freedom of speech** may mean that we require to broadcast, my, your, everyone's views
- **Positive right to freedom of information** may mean no confidentiality allowed
- **Positive right to access the internet** could result in others having to pay for your internet access

Ethics – Conflict Between Negative and Positive Rights



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- **Some people think that negative rights (liberties) are almost meaningless/worthless and that:**
 - Society must devise social and legal mechanisms that satisfy everyone's positive (claim rights)
 - Even if this means diminishing the liberties of some

Ethics – Conflict Between Negative and Positive Rights



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- Others believe that there can be no, or very few, positive (claim) rights for some people without violating the liberties of others
 - They see the protection of liberties, or negative rights as essential
- How about **privacy** as a **negative right (liberty)** and **freedom of information** as a **positive (claim) right**? **A possible conflict?**

Ethics



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A variety of ethical views (cont.):

- Golden rules
 - Treat others as you would want them to treat you.
 - Confucius and the Bible
- Contributing to society
 - Doing one's work honestly, responsibly, ethically, creatively, and well is virtuous.



Ethics



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A variety of ethical views (cont.):

- Social contracts and a theory of political justice
 - People willingly submit to a common law in order to live in a civil society.
 - The foundations of this are in the writings of Socrates and Plato
 - In the 1660's a philosopher called Thomas Hobbes stated that:

Ethics



According to 17th century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes, (**social contract theory** book *Leviathan* (1651)).

- “Man is rational and will seek a better situation even at the cost of giving up some independence in favor of common law and accepting some authority to enforce this “social contract”.
- Which means, right acts are those that do not violate the rational agreements made that makes lives better.
- Philosopher **John Rawls** took **social contract theory further**, developing provisions of the “contract” based on his view of justice as **fairness**.

Ethics



A variety of ethical views (cont.):

- No simple answers
 - Human behavior and real human situations are complex. There are often trade-offs to consider.
 - Ethical theories help to identify important principles or guidelines.
 - Ethical theories do not provide clear, incontrovertibly correct positions on most issues. We can use the approaches we described to support opposite sides of many an issue.



Ethics



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A variety of ethical views (cont.):

- Do organizations have ethics?
 - Ultimately, it is individuals who are making decisions and taking actions. We can hold both the individuals and the organization responsible for their acts.

Ethics



Some important distinctions:

Dilemmas in how to act / behave / decide

- Right (ethically obligatory?)
- or Wrong (ethically prohibited?)
- or Okay (ethically acceptable?)

Distinguishing wrong and harm

- What if you, or your company, were to develop a new product that puts a competitor out of business – people will lose their jobs (harm) . Is this wrong?



Ethics



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Separating goals from constraints

- Goal – financial success
- Working hard and making sensible investments may achieve this
- So might stealing - ethically prohibited –a constraint
- You, or the company you work for, should strive to achieve goals by ensuring that both you're and the company's actions are consistent with ethical constraints



Ethics



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Discussion Question

Can you think of examples of liberties (negative rights) and claim-rights (positive rights) that are at opposition to each other?

A possible topic

- the right to freedom of speech versus the need to protect children from materials that are inappropriate for them. Who are the affected parties?
- What are the negative and positive rights for the different parties?
- Note: the laws pertaining to this particular issue are discussed in chapter three of “A gift of Fire” (Basse 2013).

Personal preference and Ethics

We might find something distasteful but is it ethically wrong?

- Some people may not consider a job opportunity in, for example, the arms industry because they do not like the products the company produces, e.g. nuclear bombs
- Are they doing this on ethical grounds or is it a personal preference?

Personal preference and Ethics

We might find something distasteful but is it ethically wrong?

- Two people with opposing political or social views may both claim they are morally and/or ethically correct – i.e. claim the “moral high ground”

Law and Ethics



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What is the connection between law and ethics?

- Sometimes very little
- History allowed the slave trade?
- New law lacks new technology for good reason.
- It takes time to recognize new problems associated with the new technology, consider possible solutions, think and debate about the consequences of various proposals and so on

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Law and Ethics

- Ethics precedes law in the sense that ethical principles help determine whether we should pass specific laws.
- Ethics fills the gap between the time when new technology creates new problems and the time when legislatures pass reasonable laws
- A good law will set minimal standards that can apply to all situations, leaving a large range of voluntary choices.



Any Questions?
