



# Chapter 8

## Ethics and Professionalism of IT

# Table of Contents

Conduct, Codes of ethics Practice

Whistleblowing

Due Diligence

Personal or professional Responsibility



# Introduction to Ethics

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with moral principles and values guiding human behavior.

It encompasses the study of what is right and wrong, good and bad, and how individuals and societies ought to act. Ethics provides a framework for evaluating the morality of actions and decisions, taking into account factors such as intentions, consequences, fairness, and respect for others.

It helps individuals navigate complex dilemmas, make ethical choices, and contribute to the well-being and harmony of society.

Ethical considerations are relevant in personal conduct, professional relationships, and the broader interactions within communities, offering guidelines for moral behavior and promoting principles such as honesty, fairness, and integrity.



# Seven Ethical Theories : 1. Subjective Relativism

Subjective relativism, also known as individual relativism, is an ethical theory that posits that moral judgments are entirely subjective and dependent on individual beliefs, preferences, and cultural influences.

According to subjective relativism, there are no universal moral principles or objective standards that apply to everyone. Instead, morality is viewed as a matter of personal opinion and varies from person to person.

Each individual is considered the sole authority in determining what is morally right or wrong for themselves.

This theory acknowledges the diversity of moral perspectives and highlights the importance of respecting individual autonomy and personal values.

However, subjective relativism can be criticized for its potential to undermine the notion of moral progress and the possibility of ethical dialogue and evaluation across different viewpoints.



# Seven Ethical Theories : 1. Subjective Relativism



An example of subjective relativism can be seen in the realm of cultural practices and customs. In some cultures, practices such as polygamy or arranged marriages may be considered morally acceptable and even necessary, while in other cultures, they may be viewed as ethically wrong or oppressive.

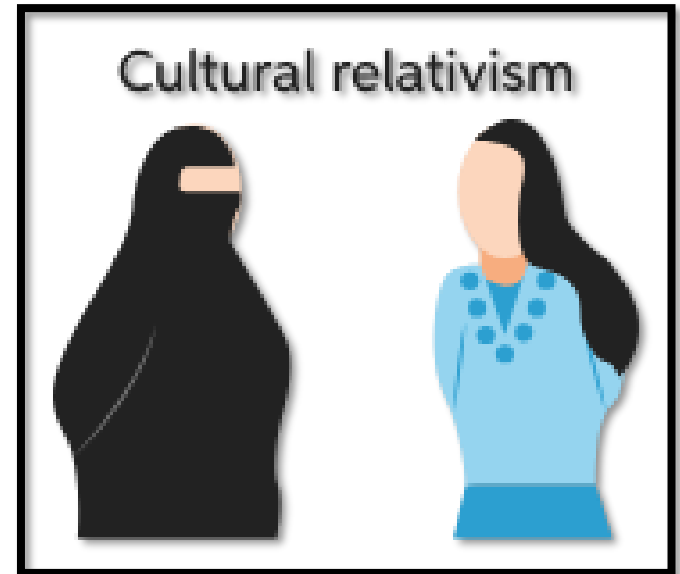
Subjective relativism would argue that the moral evaluation of these practices is solely dependent on the individual's cultural background, personal beliefs, and subjective experiences.

# Seven Ethical Theories: 2. Cultural Relativism

Cultural relativism is an ethical theory that recognizes and respects the diversity of moral values and practices across different cultures. It suggests that moral judgments and principles are shaped by cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions, and there are no universal or objective moral standards applicable to all societies.

According to cultural relativism, what is considered morally right or wrong can vary across cultures, and individuals should refrain from imposing their own moral standards on others. This theory promotes tolerance, understanding, and appreciation for cultural differences, emphasizing the importance of context and cultural context in assessing moral behavior.

However, cultural relativism has been criticized for its potential to justify and perpetuate harmful practices, as it can hinder efforts to address human rights violations or promote ethical progress beyond cultural boundaries.





# Seven Ethical Theories: 2. Cultural Relativism

An example of cultural relativism can be observed in the cultural practice of eating meat. In some cultures, consuming meat is a common and accepted practice, while in others, it may be considered unethical or morally wrong.

For instance, in Hinduism, cows are considered sacred, and the consumption of beef is prohibited. On the other hand, in many Western cultures, meat consumption is a regular part of the diet.

Cultural relativism would argue that the moral evaluation of eating meat varies depending on the cultural context.

It acknowledges that different societies and individuals hold diverse beliefs and values regarding the treatment and consumption of animals, and there is no objective standard to determine whether eating meat is universally right or wrong. Instead, the moral judgment is shaped by cultural norms and traditions, highlighting the importance of cultural relativism in understanding and respecting different perspectives on this issue.



# Seven Ethical Theories: 3. Divine Command Theory



Divine Command Theory is an ethical theory that asserts that moral values and duties are derived from the commands or will of a divine being or God.

According to this theory, an action is morally right if it is in accordance with God's commands and morally wrong if it goes against them. The foundation of morality lies in the divine authority, and humans have a moral obligation to obey the divine commands.

Divine Command Theory implies a strong connection between religion and ethics, as it links moral principles directly to a higher power. This theory offers a clear and objective standard for determining right and wrong, as it places ultimate authority in the hands of a divine being.



# Seven Ethical Theories: 3. Divine Command Theory

Example of Divine Command Theory in Islam is the prohibition of consuming alcohol. In Islamic teachings, the consumption of alcohol is explicitly forbidden, as it is considered to be harmful and detrimental to the individual and society.

Muslims believe that this prohibition is based on the commands of Allah as revealed in the Quran. The moral duty to abstain from alcohol arises from the divine authority and the belief that obeying Allah's commandments is essential for leading a righteous and spiritually fulfilling life.

This example illustrates how Divine Command Theory in Islam provides a clear and unequivocal stance on the morality of alcohol consumption, guiding the behavior and decision-making of Muslims in relation to this issue.



# Seven Ethical Theories: 4. Ethical Egoism

Ethical egoism is an ethical theory that posits self-interest as the guiding principle of morality. According to ethical egoism, individuals should prioritize their own well-being and pursue actions that maximize their own self-interest.

It asserts that moral actions are those that benefit the individual, whether in terms of personal happiness, wealth, or success. Ethical egoism places emphasis on the idea that individuals have a moral duty to act in their own self-interest, and this pursuit of self-interest ultimately leads to the greatest overall well-being.



# Seven Ethical Theories: 4. Ethical Egoism

Another example of ethical egoism can be observed in the realm of personal relationships. Imagine a scenario where a close friend is going through a challenging time and needs support and assistance.

From an ethical egoism perspective, the individual would assess the situation based on their own self-interest. If helping their friend aligns with their personal values, provides them with a sense of fulfillment, or enhances their reputation as a caring person, they may choose to provide support. However, if assisting their friend would require significant effort, time, or resources without any direct benefit to themselves, ethical egoism would suggest that it may be morally acceptable to prioritize their own well-being and decline to help.

Ethical egoism places self-interest at the forefront of moral decision-making, even in situations involving personal relationships. Critics argue that this approach neglects the moral obligation to empathize with and support others, potentially undermining the foundation of trust and compassion in relationships.



# Seven Ethical Theories : 5. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that posits the morality of an action is determined by its overall utility or usefulness in maximizing happiness and minimizing suffering. It emphasizes the idea of promoting the greatest amount of well-being for the largest number of individuals affected by an action.

According to utilitarianism, an action is considered morally right if it produces the most favorable consequences in terms of happiness and reduces negative consequences such as pain or unhappiness.

This ethical framework takes a universal perspective, focusing on the collective welfare rather than prioritizing individual interests or particular groups.



# Seven Ethical Theories : Utilitarianism Types

**Act Utilitarianism:** This form of utilitarianism focuses on evaluating individual actions. According to act utilitarianism, an action is morally right if, in a particular situation, it produces the greatest overall utility or happiness compared to other possible actions. It involves assessing the consequences of each specific action and choosing the one that maximizes utility.

**Rule Utilitarianism:** Rule utilitarianism shifts the focus from individual actions to general rules or principles. Instead of evaluating each action separately, rule utilitarianism suggests that moral judgments should be based on adhering to rules that, when universally followed, would maximize overall happiness. These rules are derived from the principle of utility and are considered to be guidelines for decision-making.

**Preference Utilitarianism:** Preference utilitarianism emphasizes the satisfaction of individual preferences or desires as the basis for determining utility. According to this view, an action is morally right if it maximizes the fulfillment of people's preferences or promotes the satisfaction of their desires. Preference utilitarianism recognizes that different individuals may have varying preferences and seeks to maximize overall preference satisfaction.

**Negative Utilitarianism:** Negative utilitarianism places a greater emphasis on minimizing suffering rather than solely maximizing happiness. It holds that reducing or eliminating suffering is the primary moral concern. Negative utilitarianism seeks to minimize pain, harm, and any negative experiences, even if it means sacrificing some potential happiness or pleasure.



# Seven Ethical Theories : 6. Kantianism

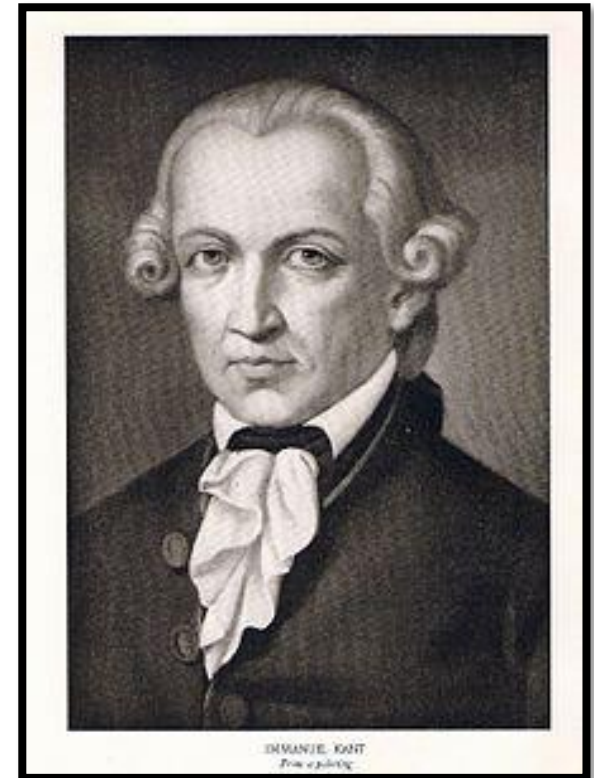
Kantianism, also known as Kantian ethics, is an ethical theory developed by the philosopher Immanuel Kant.

At the core of Kantianism is the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, which Kant referred to as human autonomy.

According to Kant, moral actions are not based on consequences or utility but on the intrinsic moral worth of the action itself. He proposed that moral decisions should be guided by the categorical imperative, a principle that requires individuals to act according to rules that could be universally applied without contradiction.

Kantianism places a strong emphasis on principles such as respect for persons, treating others as ends in themselves rather than means to an end.

It also emphasizes moral duties and obligations, believing that individuals have a responsibility to act morally, irrespective of personal desires or inclinations. Kantianism has had a significant impact on moral philosophy and has influenced various fields, including ethics, political philosophy, and human rights.



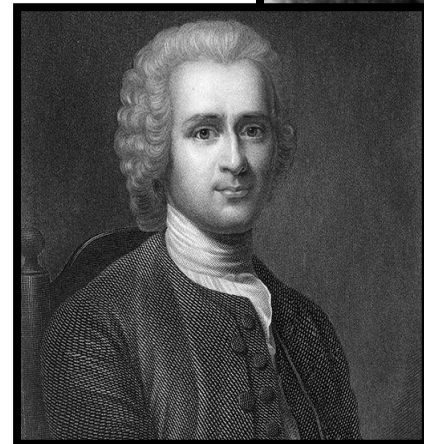
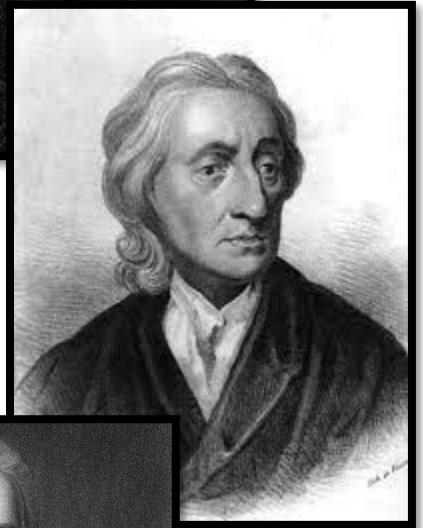
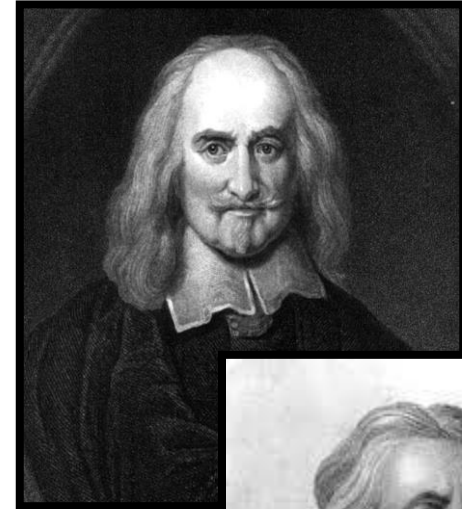
# Seven Ethical Theories : 7. Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory is a philosophical framework that explores the origin and legitimacy of political authority and the obligations that individuals have towards society.

Developed by thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the theory suggests that individuals willingly enter into a social contract or agreement with one another to form a society and establish a governing authority.

According to this theory, individuals in the state of nature voluntarily surrender some of their freedoms and rights to a central authority in exchange for protection, order, and the preservation of their remaining liberties. The social contract creates a mutual relationship between the government and its citizens, with both parties having certain rights and responsibilities.

The government's role is to protect the rights and well-being of the people, while citizens have a duty to obey the laws and support the social order.



# Professionalism of IT professionals



The professionalism of IT professionals encompasses a set of qualities, behaviors, and ethical standards that define their conduct and expertise in the field of information technology.

IT professionals are expected to possess technical competence and keep up with the ever-evolving advancements in their area of specialization. They demonstrate professionalism by maintaining a high level of expertise and professionalism through continuous learning, acquiring certifications, and staying updated with industry best practices.

In addition to technical skills, professionalism in IT also involves effective communication, both with colleagues and clients, as well as a commitment to confidentiality and ethical behavior

# IT professionals: Code of Ethics

1. Integrity and Honesty
2. Confidentiality and Privacy
3. Professional Competence and Continuous Learning
4. Respect for Intellectual Property
5. Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity
6. Social Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability
7. Compliance with Laws and Regulations
8. Conflict of Interest Management
9. Ethical Decision-Making and Accountability



# Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting or disclosing information about unethical, illegal, or fraudulent activities within an organization or institution. It involves an individual, often an employee or insider, revealing confidential or sensitive information to external authorities or the public, with the intention of exposing wrongdoing or promoting accountability.

Whistleblowing plays a crucial role in uncovering misconduct, such as corruption, fraud, safety violations, or environmental harm, that may otherwise go unnoticed.

It serves as a mechanism for addressing organizational wrongdoing and promoting transparency, integrity, and ethical conduct. Whistleblowers often face significant personal and professional risks, including retaliation or adverse consequences, for their courageous actions.

To protect whistleblowers, many countries have enacted laws and regulations to safeguard their anonymity and provide legal protections.





# Laws to protect whistleblowers

**Whistleblower Protection Act:** Many countries have enacted specific legislation, such as the Whistleblower Protection Act in the United States, to safeguard whistleblowers from retaliation. These laws prohibit employers from taking adverse actions, such as termination or demotion, against whistleblowers and provide legal remedies in case of retaliation.

**Public Interest Disclosure Act:** Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, have enacted public interest disclosure or whistleblower protection acts. These laws provide legal protection to individuals who disclose wrongdoing in the public interest, offering safeguards against retaliation and promoting transparency.



**False Claims Act:** The False Claims Act in the United States encourages individuals to report fraud against the government by offering financial incentives and protection against retaliation. It allows whistleblowers, known as qui tam relators, to file lawsuits on behalf of the government and receive a portion of any recovered funds.

**Sarbanes-Oxley Act:** The Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the United States was enacted in response to accounting scandals. It provides protection to employees who report financial fraud or violations of securities laws, prohibiting retaliation and allowing whistleblowers to file lawsuits if their rights are violated.

**European Union Whistleblower Protection Directive:** In 2019, the European Union introduced the Whistleblower Protection Directive, which sets minimum standards for whistleblower protection across member states. The directive requires organizations in various sectors to establish internal reporting mechanisms, ensures anonymity for whistleblowers, and prohibits retaliation.

# Due diligence

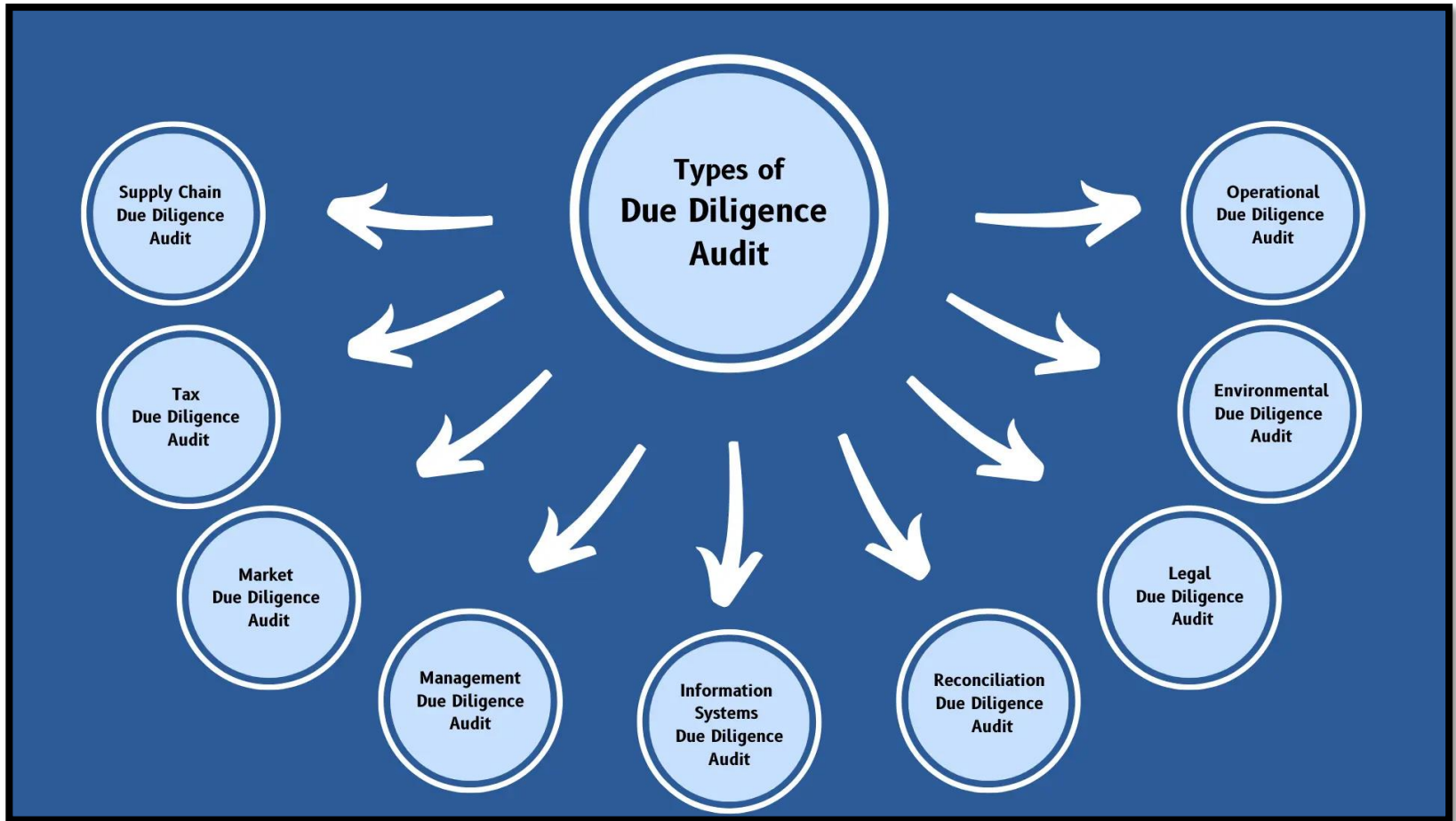
Due diligence refers to the comprehensive and systematic investigation or review process undertaken by individuals, organizations, or institutions to assess and verify the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of information before making important decisions or entering into agreements.

It involves conducting thorough research, analysis, and examination of relevant facts, records, documents, and financial data. The purpose of due diligence is to identify and evaluate potential risks, liabilities, and opportunities associated with a particular transaction, investment, or business relationship.

It helps in uncovering any potential legal, financial, operational, or reputational issues that may impact the decision-making process.



# Due diligence



# Personal or professional Responsibility

1. Continuous Learning and Professional Development
2. Ethical Behavior and Integrity
3. Confidentiality and Data Privacy
4. Information Security
5. Accuracy and Quality of Work
6. Effective Communication and Collaboration
7. Client and User Support
8. Adherence to Legal and Regulatory Requirements
9. Problem-Solving and Troubleshooting Skills
10. Accountability and Responsibility for Actions
11. Respect for Diversity and Inclusion
12. Adapting to Technological Advancements and Changes
13. Documentation and Record-Keeping
14. Proactive and Timely Response to Issues or Incidents
15. Teamwork and Collaboration



End