


ILLINOIS TECH | College of Computing

ITMM 485 / 585

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Legal and Ethical Issues in Information Technology




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Ch1: Introduction to Ethics and the Law

Part 4: Brey's Disclosive Method for Cyberethics



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### Learning Objectives:

- Describe/discuss Brey's "Disclosive" method for cyberethics

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### A "Disclosive" Method for Cyberethics

- Brey (2004) believes that because of embedded biases in cybertechnology, the standard applied-ethics methodology is not adequate for identifying cyberethics issues.
- For example, Brey notes that we might fail to notice certain features embedded in the *design* of cybertechnology.
- Using the standard model, we might also fail to recognize that certain *practices* involving cybertechnology can have moral implications.

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### Disclosive Method (Continued)

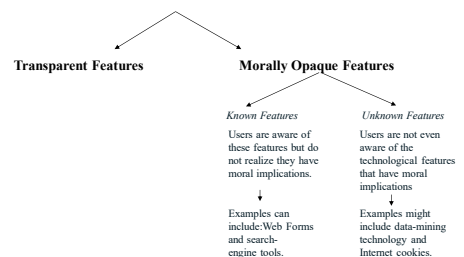
- Brey points out that one weakness of the "standard method of applied ethics" is that it tends to focus on *known* moral controversies
- So, that model fails to identify practices involving cybertechnology which have moral implications but that are not yet known.
- Brey refers to these practices as having *morally opaque* (or *morally non-transparent*) features, which he contrasts with "morally transparent" features.

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Figure 1-2: Embedded Technological Features Having Moral Implications



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## A Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Level Method for Cyberethics

Brey's disclosive method is *multidisciplinary* because it requires the collaboration of:

- computer scientists,
- philosophers,
- social scientists.

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## A Multi-Disciplinary & Multi-Level Method for Cyberethics (Continued)

Brey's scheme is also *multi-level* because the method for conducting computer ethics research requires three levels of analysis, i.e., a:

- *disclosure level*,
- *theoretical level*,
- *application level*.

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**Table 1-3: Three Levels in Brey's Model of Computer Ethics**

Level	Disciplines Involved	Task/Function
<i>Disclosive</i>	Computer Science Social Science (optional)	Disclose embedded features in computer technology that have moral import
<i>Theoretical</i>	Philosophy	Test newly disclosed features against standard ethical theories
<i>Application</i>	Computer Science Philosophy Social Science	Apply standard or newly revised/ formulated ethical theories to the issues

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## A Three-step Strategy for Approaching Cyberethics Issues

**Step 1. *Identify*** a practice involving cyber-technology, or a feature in that technology, that is controversial from a moral perspective.

- 1a. Disclose any hidden (or opaque) features or issues that have moral implications
- 1b. If the ethical issue is descriptive, assess the sociological implications for relevant social institutions and socio-demographic and populations.
- 1c. If the ethical issue is also normative, determine whether there are any specific guidelines, that is, professional codes that can help you resolve the issue (see Appendixes A-E).

1d. If the normative ethical issues remain, go to Step 2.

**Step 2. *Analyze*** the ethical issue by clarifying concepts and situating it in a context.

- 2a. If a policy vacuum exists, go to Step 2b; otherwise go to Step 3.

**Step 3. *Deliberate*** on the ethical issue. The deliberation process requires two stages:

- 3a. Apply one or more ethical theories (see Chapter 2) to the analysis of the moral issue, and then go to step 3b.
- 3b. Clear up any conceptual muddles involving the policy vacuum and go to Step 3.
- 3b. Justify the position you reached by evaluating it against the rules for logic/critical thinking (see Chapter 3).

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