

# Aspetos Socio Profissionais da Informática (Informatics and Society)

## A Short Introduction to Ethics

José Legatheaux Martins

Departamento de Informática da  
FCT/UNL

# Lecture Outline

- Morality, Ethics and Law
- Ethical Analysis
- The importance of Ethics in the Information Age

These slides are partially based on slides of Prof. *Gordana Dodig-Crnkovic* - School of Innovation, Design and Engineering, Mälardalen University and on Chapter 2 of Michael J. Quinn, "Ethics for the Information Age"

# Some Examples of Moral Conflicts



# Arguments for Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) TRIPS

In the interest of the inventor, company and home country - partial

## Arguments in favour:

(1) A person who has invented or created something also has the right to control and own his or her invention or creation.

(2) IPR encourage and reward creative work and as a consequence companies have incentives to develop new technology which benefits economic development and welfare

# Arguments Against

- Prices on AIDS/HIV drugs > 100\$/month
- Millions of patients die...
- Right to medicine?

# USA Department of Justice against Edward Snowden (the whistle blower)



Edward Joseph Snowden (born June 21, 1983) is an American fugitive, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee, and former contractor for the United States government who copied and leaked highly classified information from the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013. His disclosures revealed numerous global surveillance programs, many run by the NSA and the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance with the cooperation of telecommunication companies and European governments.

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

# USA Department of Justice

- E. Snowden is accused of violating the Espionage Act of 1917 and theft of government property
- Installing backdoors in all networked devices is proportionate and necessary for the security of the State against all terrorists and foreign powers
- Storing and analyzing all possible data and meta data on every person, without any previous judge authorization is legal



# Edward Snowden and Many Others

- Storing and analysing: private data, communications, conversations, smartphone and computer memory of people in general, without legal authorization based on evidences, is a gigantic breach of privacy, civil rights, etc.
- Obliging companies to implement the means to implement it is completely unlawful

# May Be, More Than Ever, We Face Difficult Questions

- In real life, many things are not black and white
- Law may be absent or may need to be challenged
- In modern life, we face many new policy and law vacuums

# Morality and Ethics

The terms ethics and morality are often used interchangeably - indeed, they usually can mean the same thing, and in casual conversation there isn't a problem with switching between one and the other.

However, there is a distinction between them in philosophy!

# Morality and Ethics

Morality and ethics have same roots, *mores* which means manner and customs (*usos e costumes*) from the Latin and *etos* which means custom and habits from the Greek.

Strictly speaking, morality is used to refer to what we would call **moral conduct** while ethics is used to refer to the **formal study of moral conduct**.

Ethics is also often called **moral philosophy**.

# Morality and Ethics

- Morality: first-order set of beliefs and practices about how to live a good life
- Ethics: a second-order, conscious reflection on the adequacy of our moral beliefs
- Morality - PRAXIS - Often not enough
- Ethics - THEORY - The support of deeper reasoning

# Morality

- Set of beliefs, procedures and norms that we acquire by culture from the group we belong to
- These norms, in general, do not need to be written since we acquire them by education and everyday life
- Depends heavily on your tribe, group, nation, region of the world and religion
- Many moral decisions are empirical, only based on experience



# Is Empirical Morality Enough?

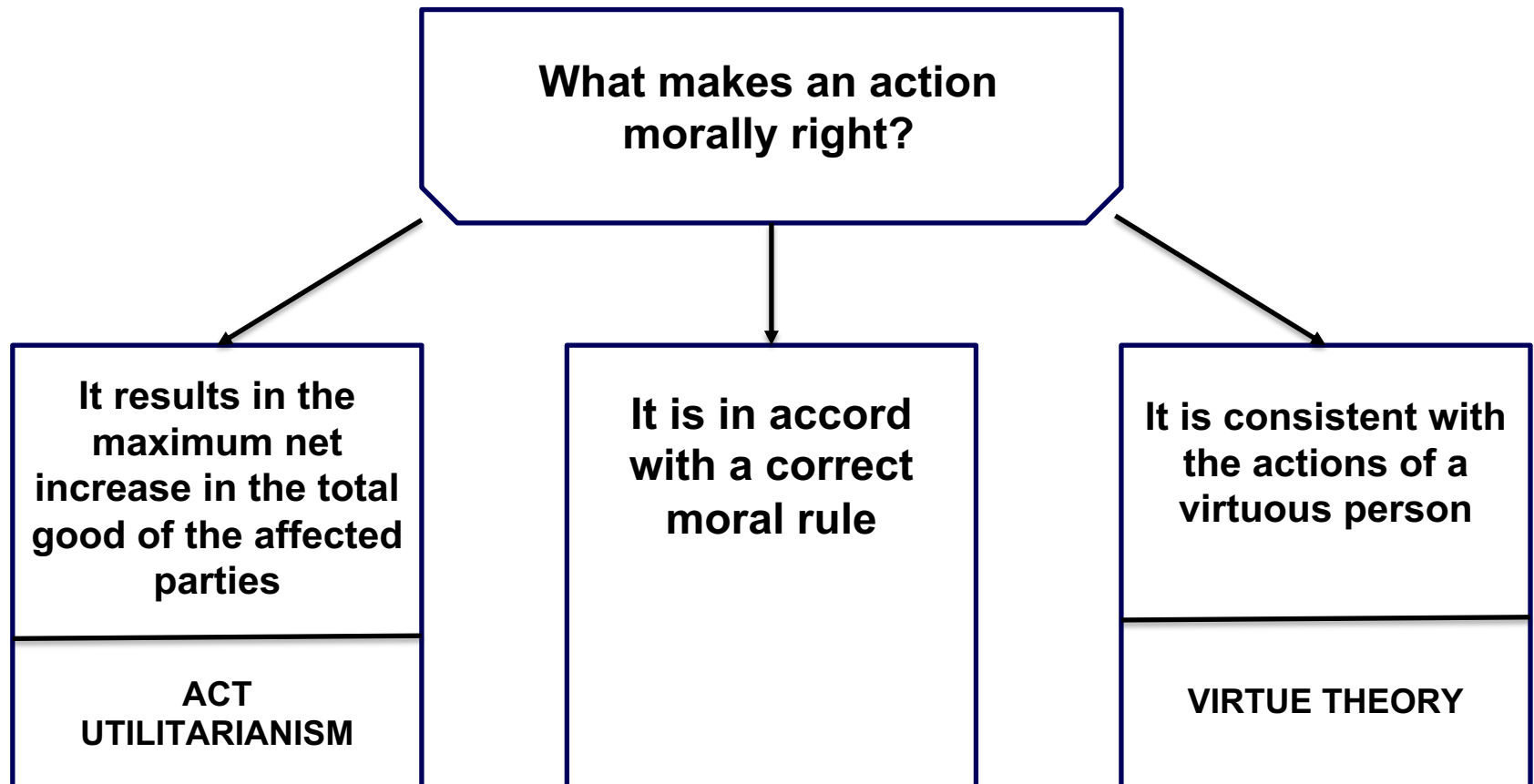
- World changes continually, and we have to interpret/construe it over and over again
- Technology is having a deep impact in our believes
- We come back to ideas again and again, finding new meaning in them
- Professional discussions of ethical issues in journals

# Unworkable Ethical Theories

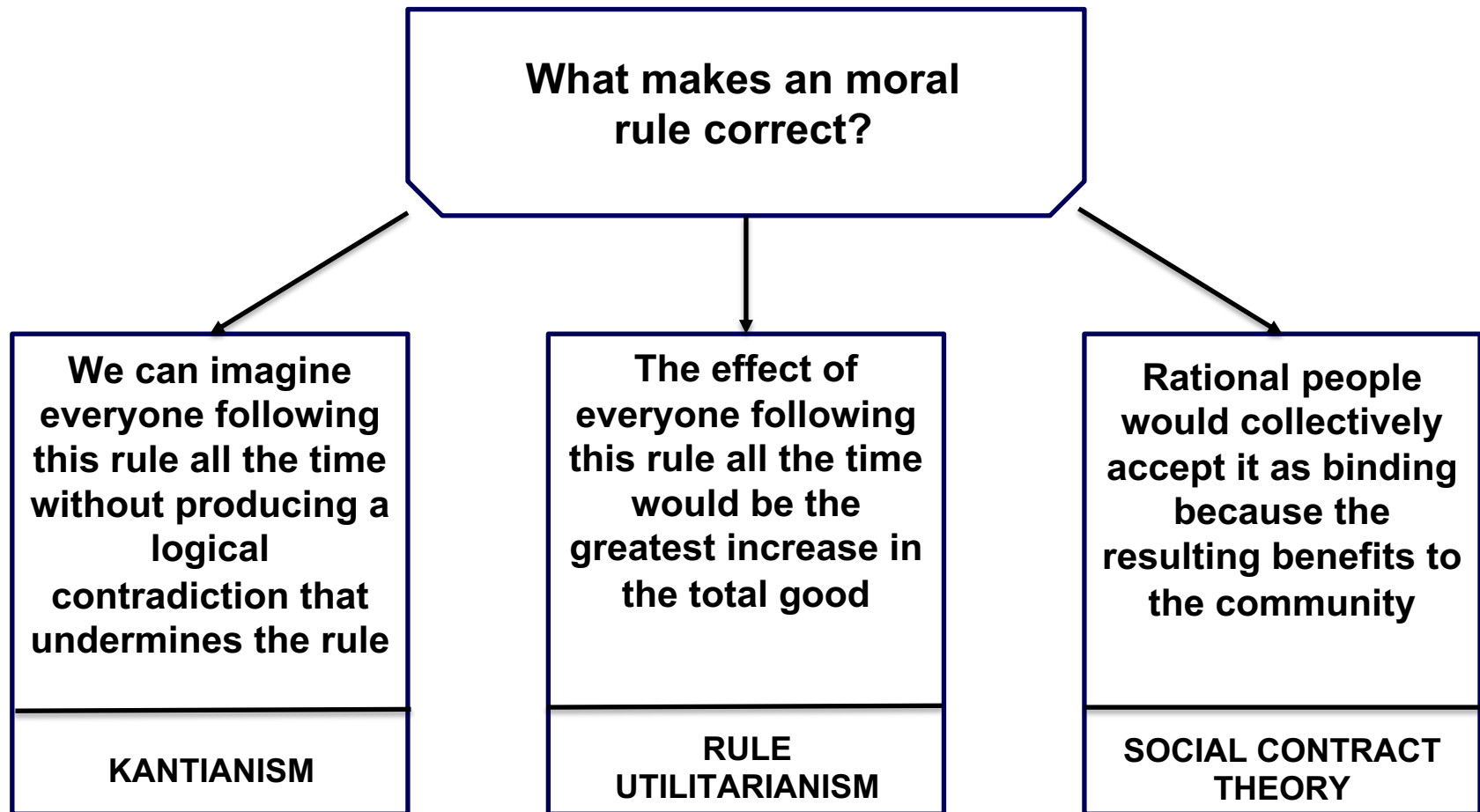
- Divine Command Theories ("My religion ...")
- Subjectivism Relativism ("What's right for you may not be right for me")
- Cultural Relativism ("It is arrogant for one society to judge another")
- Ethical Egoism ("Everyone maximizes is gain")



# Workable Ethical Theories



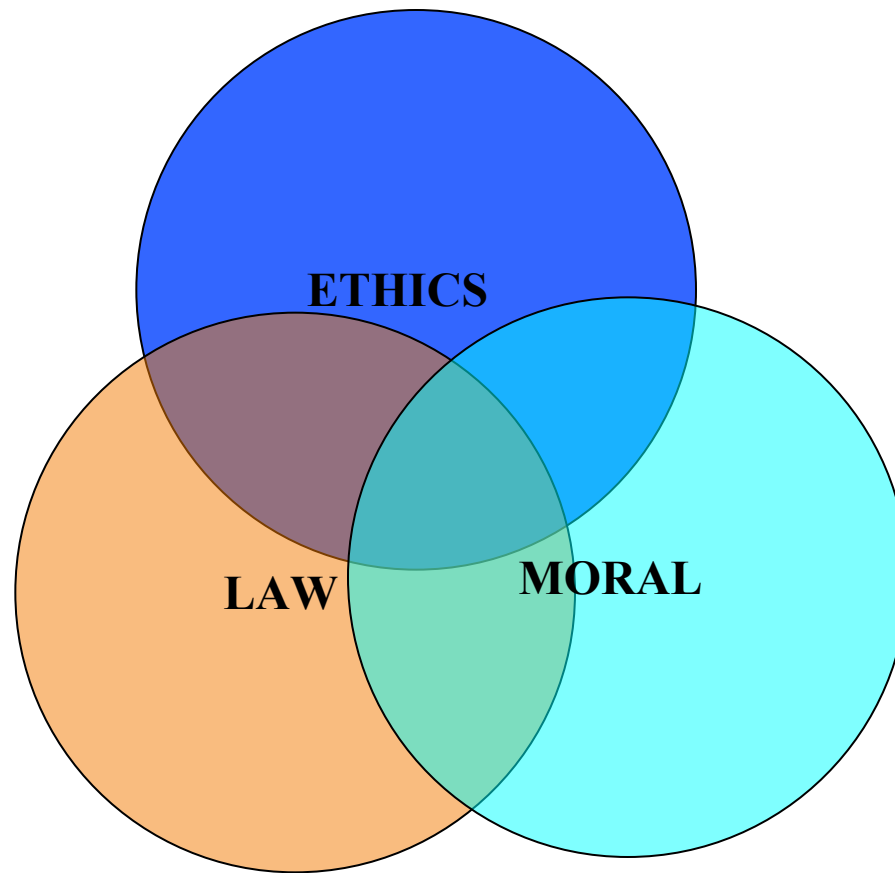
# Moral Rule Workable Ethical Theories



# The Law

- Amoral or unethical behaviours are not sanctioned in concrete terms
- Society and State establish concrete **sanctions** for the so called unlawful actions
- **Regulations and codes of conduct** - less severe sanctions (fines, professional sanctions, ...)
- **Civil law** - sanctions are fines, penalties, payments (indenizações), since the offender is not dangerous for the society in general
- **Criminal law** - sanctions include prison, detention, confinement, imprisonment

# Morality, Ethics and Law



**Why Ethics in Computing is  
becoming more and more  
important?**

# A Brave New World



**“Dear Andy: How have you been?  
Your mother and I are fine. We miss you.  
Please sign off your computer and come  
downstairs for something to eat. Love, Dad.”**

# A Brave New World

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E-mail: randyg@norwich.net



**“Hello, Bob? It’s your father again.  
I have another question about my new computer.  
Can I tape a movie from cable TV then fax it from  
my VCR to my CD-ROM then E-mail it to my  
brother’s *cellular phone so he can make a*  
copy on his neighbor’s camcorder?”**

# A Brave New World



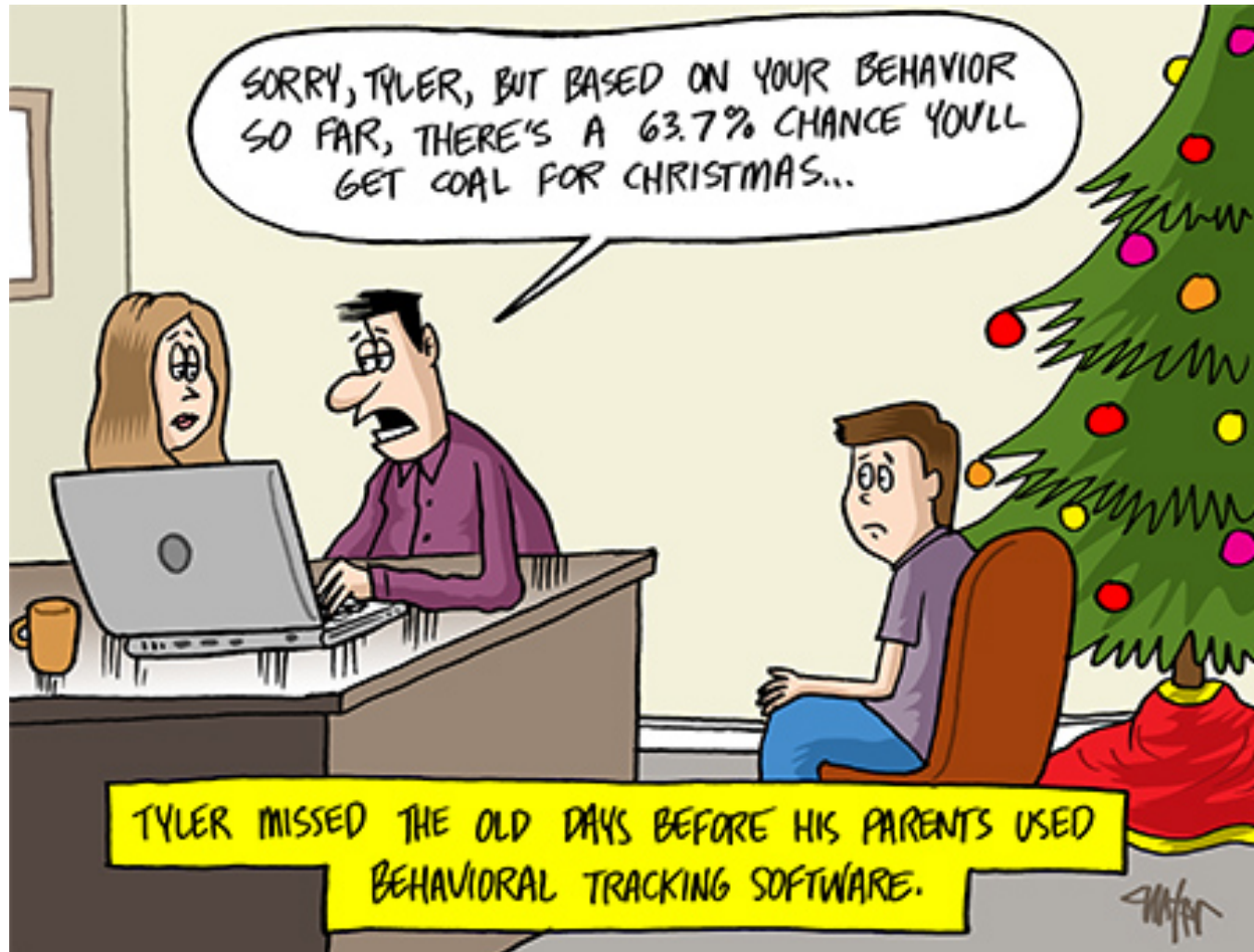


# A Brave New World



How to Extract Value  
from Big Data

# A Brave New World



# What is Special About Computing?

- Computing and life support systems
- Computing and privacy and private data
- Computing and communications
- Computing and the new media
- Computing and the old media
- Computing and commerce, publicity (behavioural tracking)
- Computing and Learning
- Computing and Entertainment
- Computing and commerce
- Computing and surveillance
- Cyber War

# The Same Fundamental Question

Too often, new technology develops with little attention to its impact upon human values



# Computing Ethics

Computing ethics is the analysis of the nature and social impact of computer technology and the corresponding formulation and justification of policies for the ethical use of such technology.

# The Aims

- Understand the impact of computing technology upon human values
- Minimize the damage that such technology can do to human values, and
- Identify ways to use computer technology to advance human values.

# Conclusion

- There are many differences among morals, ethics and law
- Ethics concerns all aspects of modern collective life and has its roots in philosophy
- Current and future computing and communication systems challenge many moral beliefs and ethics