A professional software developer should first and foremost “Contribute to society and human well-being” (1.1). Contributing to society in a positive manner should be the main goal of every professional, but is that always the case. Sure, the ACM code of ethics gives programmers and other people associated with the field of computing a pretty clear and obvious set of moral and ethical guidelines, but other professionals outside the field of computing with a not so well defined moral compass might not adhere to these same ideals. Clearly this can cause problems when respectable rule abiding professionals are working with, or for, less respectable individuals. This can cause a situation in which a computing professional who tries to contribute to society is working for someone who might have immoral uses for the work done. This is a case when “Honor[ing] contracts, agreements, and assigned responsibilities” (2.6) and “Contribut[ing] to society and human well-being” (1.1) cannot be satisfied.

In this supposed case, a software developer is working on a software that can analyze human speech for keywords and store this information in a database. This could easily be used in a way to aid humanity, as forms of this software have been implemented before. However, in this case, the developer is being contracted by a privately owned defense contractor that intends to use sell it as a spy software. In this case, this software would be harming human well-being and not “Respecting the privacy of others” (1.7), two very important moral imperatives in the Code of Ethics. However, it is the engineer’s duty to honor the contract. Of course, if the engineer find out the purpose of the software, he may refuse to work on it, but it could be that he doesn’t know the exact purpose of the software. In any case, the engineer “must accept the responsibility for the consequences” and even if he does not know the exact purpose of the software, he is still responsible.

It is the job of a professional software developer to analyze the risks and impacts of the program being made, but with pretty much every software there can be good and bad uses for it. The software to analyze human speech can be used to make smart phones faster or be used in the medical field, but there could also be many negative consequences of this software. Clearly, a professional in the area of computing is in a sort of grey area here, and has to make their own decision based on their own judgement; and suffer the consequences of that decision.

"Association for Computing Machinery." *ACM: Code of Ethics*. 16 Oct. 1992. Web. 20 Mar. 2015. <http://www.acm.org/about/code-of-ethics>.