

# **ETHICS**

### for the

### INFORMATION AGE

Effy Oz
Wayne State University



# Business and Educational Technologies A Division of Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.

Vice President and Publisher Sue Simon Acquisitions Editor Paul Ducham Managing Developmental Editor Linda Meehan Avenarius Advertising/Marketing Coordinator Jennifer Wherry Product Development Assistant Sandy Ludovissy



### Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.

Chief Executive Officer G. Franklin Lewis
Corporate Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Robert Chesterman
Corporate Senior Vice President, President of Manufacturing Roger Meyer
Executive Vice President/General Manager, Brown & Benchmark Publishers Tom Doran
Executive Vice President/General Manager, Wm. C. Brown Publishers Beverly Kolz

Copyright © 1994 by Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.

A Times Mirror Company

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-70856

ISBN 0-697-20462-6

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted,

in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America.

### **Foreword**

Information technology revolutionized the way in which we conduct many aspects of our lives. The tremendous technological advancement in the area of computers and related devices created unforeseen situations that necessitate new ethical consideration. Important issues like privacy, free speech, and protection of intellectual property have new meanings in the information age. The ease with which commercial values are transferred from one party to another with the help of computers and computer networks created new crimes. Ethics have to be modified to accommodate the vast changes brought upon us by the new technology.

As it goes to press, this book covers every area of ethical concern. To this end, I conducted an extensive research of the media news stories, the academic and trade literature, and legislative documents. As information technology is rapidly advancing, new concerns will continue to emerge.

Many educators have complained that higher education institutions produce information systems professionals who are qualified technically but are ill-prepared to deal with ethical concerns. This was my main motivation for writing this book. Therefore, I hope that teachers who share these concerns will incorporate this book, or some of its chapters, in their curriculum. The main audiences are students of management information systems, computer science, philosophy, law, and business. The purpose of ethical education should be twofold: to train students to behave ethically in their professional careers, and to equip them with enough ethical knowledge so that they can participate in the public debate of and contribute to the formulation of new codes and laws.

A few words about the organization of this book. Chapter 1 presents the term *ethics* and provides a historical overview of ethical thinking. Chapter 2 illustrates the need for new ethical codes due to changes in the way we deal with information. Chapter 3 takes a broad view of societal impact of information technology, focusing on the less bright side. Chapter 4 is fully devoted to the impact of information technology on privacy. Chapter 5 presents the different types of computer crimes. Chapter 6 presents ethical codes of professional organizations in the field of information systems. Chapter 7 describes legislation that proscribes unethical behavior with regard to information systems. It presents laws enacted by US federal and state governments and by governments of other countries. Chapter 8 discusses education for ethics in academic institutions and in the workplace. Chapter 9 deals with two important, though not necessarily related, issues regarding software. One section describes the different ways to protect software as intellectual property, and the arguments for and against

such protection avenues. The other section illustrates the elusive subject of liability for software defects. Chapter 10 concludes with a look into the future, and discussion of yet more ethical issues that will occupy society in the next decades.

Finally, I would like to encourage students and others who are interested in the subject to further explore it in the many references included at the end of each chapter. In particular, *Communications of the ACM* is a valuable resource. Peter Neumann provides real-life cases of concern on a monthly basis. Those who are especially interested in the legal aspects of information technology are encouraged to read the journal's excellent articles by Pamela Samuelson.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This book is the result of much research. It would have been impossible to complete it without the help of some diligent and dedicated people. Many thanks to my research assistants, Jayant Trewn, Jaspinder Sachdev, and Narayanan Vaidyanathan, who saved no effort in helping me find articles, news stories, and other material. I am also grateful to my student, Virginia Vivona, and my cousin, Rita Coss, for their excellent comments on grammar and style.

My students in the course Information Systems and Ethics served as guinea pigs for this text. Their comments helped me give it the final touch. Their concern and insight were incorporated here to benefit other students.

Linda Meehan was always there to help with good advice. I applaud her. And, finally, I would like to thank my wife for being so understanding, and my children, who tried to keep their voices down whenever their daddy sat down to work on this project.

My thanks to the following reviewers for their helpful comments:

Erma R. Wood—University of Arkansas at Little Rock Marlene Campbell—Murray State University Julian E. Boggess—Mississippi State University R. Waldo Roth—Taylor University Robert A. Barrett—Indiana–Purdue at Fort Wayne Sue Ellen Taylor—West Texas State University

### **Contents**

Foreword xi

### Chapter 1 WHAT IS ETHICS? 1

Ethics in the Ancient World 2
From Ancient Greece to the 20th Century 4
Major Normative Ethical Theories 8
Implications for the Information Age 11

### Chapter 2

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICAL ISSUES 15

An Overview of Information Technology 16 The Need for New Ethical Codes 19 Information Technology Opens the Door for New Offenses 25

### Chapter 3

### SOCIETAL IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY 29

Worker Displacement 29 Computer Illiteracy 32 Depersonalization 33 Overreliance on Computers 35 Health Hazards 37 Telecommuting 39

### Chapter 4 INVASION OF PRIVACY 43

Data Collection 44
Ownership of Data 60
Monitoring in the Workplace 62
Raiders of the Phone and Fax 68

### Chapter 5 COMPUTER CRIME 75

Software Piracy 76
Fraud and Money Theft 88
Information Theft 94
Service Theft 97
Data Alteration and Data Destruction 100
Program Damage: Viruses, Trojan Horses, Worms, and Logic Bombs 103
Hacking 113
Violation of Antitrust and Fair Trade Laws 117
International Violation of Laws 119

### Chapter 6

#### ETHICAL CODES OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS 125

DPMA Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct 126 ICCP Code of Ethics 126

ACM Code of Professional Conduct 127

CIPS Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct 127

BCS Code of Conduct 128

ITAA (ADAPSO) Recommended Code of Ethics for Professional Services Firms 128

CPSR Purpose and Mission 129

Critical Evaluation 130

Evaluation Framework 131

Obligations to Society 131

Obligations to Employer 138

Obligations to Clients 139

Obligations to Colleagues 140

Obligations to the Organization 140

Obligations to the Profession 141

Sanctions against Violations 142

Conflicts, Priorities, and Guidance 142

The Need for a Unified Code of Ethics 143

Recommendations 144

Mandatory Certification 146

#### Chapter 7

#### LEGISLATION FOR THE INFORMATION AGE 177

Legislation for Privacy and Access to Information 178

Freedom of Information Act of 1966 179

Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 181

Privacy Act of 1974 182

Right to Financial Privacy Act of 1978 183

Privacy Protection Act of 1980 185

Electronic Funds Transfer Act of 1980 186

Debt Collection Act of 1982 187

Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 188

Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 190

Computer Security Act of 1987 192

Copyright Protection 193

Copyright Act of 1976 193

Semiconductor Chip Protection Act of 1984 195

Computer Software Rental Amendment Act of 1990 196

Legislation Against Fraud, Hacking, and Viruses 197

Small Business Computer Security and Education

Act of 1984 197

Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986 197

Proposed Computer Virus Legislation 201

State Laws Against Computer Crime 203

Definitions 209

State of Mind 213

Unauthorized Access 214

Theft of Computer Services 216

Alteration or Destruction of Data or Software 217

Destruction of and Modification and Damage to

Computers 218

Computer Fraud 218

Denial and Disruption of Services 219

Use to Commit Crimes 219

Misuse and Illegal Possession of Information 219

Taking and Theft of Computer Equipment or Supplies 220

Interruption of Public or Utility Services 221

Viruses and Other Rogue Programs 221

Damages 222

Venue 223

Affirmative Defense 224

Civil Remedies 224

Statute of Limitations 225

Penalties 225

Reporting Violations 226

DPMA Model Computer Crime Law 226
DPMA Model Computer Crime Act 226
Computer and Information Laws in Other Countries 233
Laws Governing Data Privacy and Transborder Data
Transfer 234
Computer Crime Laws 242

## Chapter 8 ETHICS AT SCHOOL AND IN THE WORKPLACE 249

Integrating Computer Ethics in Higher Education 251 Ethical Codes of Academic Institutions 252 Ethical Awareness in the Workplace 254

# Chapter 9 OPEN QUESTIONS REGARDING SOFTWARE 273

Protecting Software as Intellectual Property 273 Liability for Software Defects 285

# Chapter 10 WHAT THE FUTURE PORTENDS 293

Electronic Data Interchange 293
Encyclopedia on a Disk 295
Artificial Intelligence: "It's the Expert System's Fault!" 296
Your Life on a Card 298
Telecommuting and Electronic Immigrants 300
The Electronic Democracy 301
Human-Robot Relationships 303

Index 307

### CHAPTER 1

### What Is Ethics?

Is my happiness more important than someone else's? (A fascist would say yes.) Is it right for me to participate in a war which I consider unjust, or should I violate my country's laws and avoid it? (A pacifist would choose the latter.) Is it right for me to live lavishly when other people starve? (Most of us in the US would agree.) Is capital punishment right? (Most Americans agree; most Europeans do not.) Is it right for you to marry your sibling? (The ancient Egyptians would say yes.) Is it wrong to let old people die in freezing temperatures? (Nineteenth centry Eskimos would answer no.) Would you copy computer programs you did not pay for? (A majority of business students would.) Is it right for a retail chain to sell data it collected on its customers? (Many retailers in the US do.)

All these questions deal with ethical issues. Ethics and morality are closely related. In fact, ethics may be looked upon as the philosophy of morality. Broadly, ethics deals with right and wrong human behavior. But who decides what is right and what is wrong?

There are no widely agreed on answers to the above questions. The answers depend on the society and time in which we live. Moreover, the response to some of the questions will vary even within the same society. One example of the different moral attitudes across societies is presented by the Greek historian Herodotus. Darius, King of Persia, summoned to his court a group of Greeks and asked how much he would have to pay them to eat their fathers' bodies. They would not do it for any amount of money. He then called in a group of Indians whose custom was to eat their parents' bodies, and asked what it would take to make them burn their fathers' bodies. They were horrified by the mere suggestion. They would not do it at any price.

Another example of the variation of moral codes within the same society over time is slavery. Less than two centuries ago, slavery was considered moral in much of the American continent. Now, no one in the US, Brazil, or anywhere else, espouses slavery. Enslaving another human being is considered one of the most immoral acts.

Therefore, we can say that there are no ethical universals. No single principle is accepted across cultures and time. Further more, individuals within the same society may disagree on what is ethical and what is not. Such differences of attitudes may bring about social chaos. To overcome this potential turmoil, leaders have imposed rules. Early rules were presented as divine decrees. An old relief shows the sun god

Shammash presenting the code of laws to Hammurabi, King of Babylon. The Old Testament tells of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai.

In ancient times, rulers and social reformers used religion to enforce and preach ethical behavior: Thou shalt not murder because that is God's will. In modern times, laws are made by duly elected representatives, or by dictators. Let us briefly review ethical thinking throughout human history.

#### ETHICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

It is reasonable to assume that ethical codes were in existence long before writing was invented. In the Middle East, a few societies had their precepts organized in groups of five. The Ten Commandments, the legacy of a Semitic tribal law, were given so that the Hebrews could better remember them, one commandment for every finger.

The earliest written lists of rules were prepared some 3000 years before the Christian era. These were instructions to boys of young Egyptian noblemen on how to behave. Actually, this was advice for the young man on how to live happily, avoid unnecessary trouble, and advance his career. In other words, this was a utilitarian moral code.

Hammurabi's Babylonian code is famous for its "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" principle. In reality, it was "an eye for an eye" when the victim was a member of the patrician class. When the victim was a commoner, the punishment was a fine of a certain amount of silver.

Unlike Babylonian law, the Hebrew law did not discriminate between social classes. Many laws were truly universal. For example, on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, all should rest. That included Hebrews, foreigners, slaves, and even the oxen and donkeys. This universalism was interrupted by the different treatment of Hebrew and foreign slaves. While the Hebrew slave had to be freed without ransom in the seventh year, this law did not include other slaves. The Hebrews also put an emphasis on help and justice for the weaker groups of society. A portion of the crop was left so the poor could eat it; servants had to be paid their wages promptly; widows, orphans, and the blind should not be wronged; and a poor man should not be denied a loan. Centuries after these laws were introduced, a student of Rabbi Akivva asked him: "Could you summarize for me the whole Torah in one sentence?" The Rabbi's answer was: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." This is a sweeping example of moral reciprocity. Do for others what you would like them to do for you.

In the Far East, moral codes developed from holistic philosophies. The oldest Indian writings are the Vedas (circa 1500 BC), which are considered the oldest philosophical literature in the world. They preached that truth and right were the same; that the right moral order

was built in the universe. Therefore, to understand the ultimate truth of human existence requires understanding of what is right. From these lofty ideas stemmed four practical applications: prosperity, the satisfaction of desires, moral duty, and spiritual perfection. To achieve all that, one had to follow these virtues: honesty, rectitude, charity, nonviolence, modesty, and purity of heart. Condemned were falsehood, selfishness, cruelty, adultery, theft, and injury to living creatures. Ethics, according to the Vedas, did not coincide with conformity to laws. Doing the right thing was one's inner desire, with the hope to achieve spiritual perfection, i.e., prolonging one's life beyond the current existence.

A few schools appeared in India as a reaction to the traditional Vedic philosophy. The Cārvāka, the materialist school, urged each individual to seek pleasures here and now. Followers of this school mocked the religious ceremonies performed by the Brahmans, the priests. They claimed that the priests needed those ceremonies for their livelihood. When the Brahmans said they were sacrificing animals to facilitate their way to heaven, the Cārvāka suggested that they kill their elderly parents to hasten *their* arrival in heaven. The Cārvāka, though, were an aberration in Indian ethical thinking.

Jainaism had a completely different outlook. While Jainas considered spiritual liberation as the highest goal, they elevated nonviolence as the most important means to achieve it, and hence, the ultimate moral code. The Jainas augmented violence to include actions against all living creatures. They were therefore vegetarians. They interpreted nonviolence very broadly. For example, to tell someone a lie meant to inflict mental injury on him. Unlike in Western societies, the Jainas did not distinguish between responsibility for what we do and responsibility for what we omit doing. Not helping an injured creature was considered a form of violence. Interestingly, because of their care for all living creatures, the Jainas established organized care for animals thousands of years before animal shelters were thought of in Europe.

Another important development occurred in India in the sixth century BC. A prince called the "enlightened one," The Buddha, established a new ethical philosophy. He preached that the ultimate goal of mankind is Nirvāna, a state of absolute peace. He refused to discuss abstract ideas like the immortality of the soul. He despised the Vedas and any other form of religion, and it is only ironic that his philosophical principles later developed into a religion. Instead of religious beliefs and ceremonies, the Buddha advocated a life devoted to universal compassion and brotherhood.

China's most prominent philosophers were Lao-Tzu and Confucius, who lived in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, respectively. Lao-Tzu rejected righteousness and benevolence because they were imposed on people from the outside. He preached for good virtues that come from one's inner soul: calm, nonviolence, and modesty. Six hundred years

4

before Jesus, he told his followers "to recompense injury with kindness." He believed that by returning good for evil a person could find his or her inner peace.

Confucius promoted the idea of a superior man (not to be confused with the Nazi Übermensch). The superior person sought good rather than profit; he was broad and fair, and did not take sides in conflicts. Probably the most important legacy Confucius left was his answer to a disciple who once asked the wise man to give him one word that could guide one's life: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

#### FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO THE 20TH CENTURY

Ethical approaches in Europe and modern America have been significantly influenced by the views of ancient Greek philosophers. Socrates' opening point to ethical thinking was that "that life which is not examined is not worth living." This approach guided his entire life, and eventually brought about his death penalty "for corrupting the youth." He did not accept any law as given, and preached that everything should be questioned. To prove his point he once gave an example of the inadequacy of a prevailing law: A friend asked him to keep a sword. After a while, that friend became insane and was liable to cause harm to himself and others. The law required that the sword be returned to its lawful owner, but should the keeper return it? By returning it he might indirectly cause injury to the friend, and perhaps to others as well.

Socrates pressed a view that is now unacceptable in Western ethics: people who know what good is do good things. This view was not peculiar in his time, because the ancient Greeks did not clearly distinguish between goodness and self-interest. They did not think that to live a virtuous life would necessarily lead to personal wealth. They also did not hold that being prosperous meant that one's life was going well.

Socrates' greatest disciple, Plato, linked ethical behavior with knowledge. The person who knows the universal good is enlightened. But even though goodness is objective, not all of us have a reason to do good things. Plato's theory was that there were three elements in a person's soul: intellect, emotion, and desire. The soul of the good person was harmoniously balanced under his or her enjoyable pursuit of knowledge.

Plato established a school in Athens called Academia. One of his famous students was Aristotle, who later was hired to tutor Alexander the Great. Aristotle viewed the world as a hierarchy in which the lower levels of existence had to serve the upper levels. At the top of the hierarchy stood the rational being. In this hierarchy, every form of life had its goal, which it should endeavor to achieve. Aristotle's theory led him

to justify slavery and the killing of animals for food. Not surprisingly, philosophers who developed theories of hierarchical social orders never placed themselves in one of the lower classes.

Whereas Plato theorized that human passions and physical desires needed to be regulated by reason, the Stoics rejected passions as a factor in determining what was good and what was bad. Our desires may make us want something, but only reason can determine if what we want is good. The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who adopted Stoism, claimed that common reason made all individuals fellow citizens. Stoism, therefore, supported the notion of a universal moral law, and rejected moral relativism.

Another famous philosophical movement, the Epicureans, regarded pleasure as the ultimate good, and pain as the ultimate bad. However, Epicurus did not refer to pleasure of the body, but pleasure of the mind. He taught that one should try to eliminate all wants but the simplest ones. Not only rich people, but every person could satisfy simple wants. We should seek justice because if we commit injustice we may be caught and punished. Even if we can get away with injustice, the perpetual fear that we may be caught and punished causes us mental pain. The Epicureans had a pure utilitarian view of ethical conduct.

Meanwhile, Jewish teachers, the rabbis, developed new ethical edicts whose roots were in the Hebrew Torah. Over centuries, the great teachers interpreted the Torah commandments to make them relevant for their times. Their sayings are aggregated in Chapters of the Fathers. Each teacher is quoted with the introduction "He used to say"; i.e., each rabbi would state what was required in his time to solve ethical problems. They commented on several important issues. Among them were: Human dignity: All people are created in the image of God, therefore every human being is entitled to respect; Humility: Since God alone knows someone's true worth, there is no reason for pride; Truth: Individuals are expected to be true to themselves and to others, never lie or defraud; Anger: Do not lose your temper because you will be sorry for the hurtful things you say; Envy: If you refuse to be envious of others, your life will be happier, and you should not favor a child or a student over other children or students, to prevent envy. The early Christians adopted many of these principles.

The influence of Greek philosophies on the societies within the Roman Empire and its European successors weakened when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman state. Although Jesus preferred the spirit of Jewish law over its letter, he accepted the old Jewish teachings. He, therefore, had no need to develop new ethical principles. Like Jews, the new Christians regarded ethics as a divine set of laws that one had to adhere to without question.

Christianity brought about a few changes in society. Since it viewed all Christians as equal, the Christian church demanded the release of slaves once they converted to Christianity. The early Christians refused to bear arms, in the name of love and peace. However, once the entire empire became Christian, this principle became inconvenient and was abandoned.

The Middle Ages saw little argument over ethical issues, but there were some attempts to explain what was good and what was bad. Since reasoning was not acceptable, good was interpreted as whatever God willed. Saint Augustine, the renowned Catholic ethicist, expressed this view in these words: "Virtue gives perfection to the soul; the soul obtains virtue by following God; following God is the happy life" (The Morals of the Catholic Church, Chapter VI).

The Reformation reopened the debate on ethics. Thomas Hobbes claimed that human beings were selfish. Under natural conditions they would try to accumulate as much wealth as they could without regard to other people. This would contribute to their own well-being, but not to the common good. This problem could not be solved by appealing to justice and morality. Rather, it could be overcome through a social contract whereby one agreed to give up some of one's desires in return for other people giving up some of theirs.

Another Briton, Jeremy Bentham, is considered the father of modern Utilitarianism. In his book An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, published in 1789, he suggested that human beings live between two extremes, pain and pleasure. We must consider our actions in light of the net pain or pleasure that they cause to all living creatures, not only to us. What brings about a net result of pleasure to most people is good; what causes a net result of pain to most people is bad. Therefore, Bentham argued, the object of all legislation must be "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

On the European continent, Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza suggested that human beings were just a part of a whole universe, and that what is seen in humans may not be the only possibility. There may be something better, and when we find it, we will solve our ethical and social problems. His views were misinterpreted as contradictory to the principles of the Judeo-Christian outlook, and led to his official excommunication by the Jewish congregation in Amsterdam.

Another European philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, described "noble savages" who led idyllic lives. Only when they claimed possession of land did the need for laws arise, and with them came civilization and corruption. Rousseau introduced the notion of "general will," the common good of society. The "general will" was not the sum of peoples' desires, neither was it the will of the majority. The common good

was that which was reached through reason. The majority of members in the community acknowledged it, but some did not. Therefore, the reason of the majority should prevail.

Rousseau's writings had some influence on one of the most outstanding philosophers of modern times: Immanuel Kant. The essence of his ethical thinking was the categorical imperative: "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." In other words, if taking a particular action or failing to perform a particular act was not right for everyone, then it was not right for anyone. For example, if you believe that you ought to be protected by your government in time of war, you have to accept the possibility that you will be drafted into the army. Kant firmly believed in reason-based ethics. He opposed the Utilitarian approach because it based ethical law on the result of actions.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel reduced Kant's universal ethics to ethics of duties. According to Hegel's approach, to be ethical meant to fulfill one's duty to the best of one's ability. This ethic of "my station and its duties" followed from his concept of the "organic community." Hegel claimed that a human's reason and desires could be bridged by the recognition of each person as a part of a body which is the community. Since the individual was shaped by the community in which he or she lived, the organic community fostered those desires that benefited all the most. Therefore, the individual would not pursue self interests that contradicted the interests of the community.

In sharp contrast to the above views stood Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch*, the "superior person." Nietzsche despised the Judeo-Christian ethical code. He made it very clear in his aphorism "God is dead." The "superior person" was one who could rise above the limitations of ordinary morality. Most scholars interpret his notion of "will to power" as condoning the use of power to oppress the weak, although some say the true meaning of that expression was self-affirmation. He spoke of different types of morality for different types of people: "One has duties only toward one's equals; toward beings of a lower rank, toward everything foreign to one, one may act as one sees fit." No wonder Nietzsche's theories served the Nazis so well.

Over the first six decades of the twentieth century, moral philosophers attempted to make their theories practical. As of the 1960s, an increasing number of ethicists had addressed practical issues such as civil liberties, racial discrimination, the treatment of women, suicide, euthanasia, and other matters. Recently, ethicists have raised issues like bioethics and environmental ethics. The first deals with moral behavior toward nonhuman living creatures; the latter, with our behavior toward the environment. We already hear notions such as "it is immoral to destroy trees" and "it is unethical to litter earth with substances that are not biodegradable."

### MAJOR NORMATIVE ETHICAL THEORIES

Descriptive ethics deals with the existing ethical codes of communities. It focuses on "what is." Normative ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with the question "what ought to be." While the preceding section provided a brief historical review of major ethical thinking in general, the following is a description and classification of major normative ethical theories.

*Relativism* suggests there is no absolute, or universal, right and wrong. What is right in one culture may be wrong in another. Therefore, right and wrong behavior should be judged relative to the environment in which the behavior occurs.

Ethical relativists hold that we are bound by the rules of our society. Since there is diversity among societies, we should not judge behavior in another society by our own standards. Obviously, this approach is disturbing. If cannibalism prevails among certain tribes, should we agree that for those cannibals, it is fine to kill and eat each other? Nadel and Wiener (1977) illustrate the problem with the following hypothetical case: Suppose computers made their debut in the early 1920s. You own a company that is a major computer manufacturer. Nazi Germany does not have computers. The world knows that the Nazis persecute Jews and political dissidents. The German government asks to buy your computers. You know very well that the government would use the computers to trace the movement of political dissidents and track down Jews. Would you sell the computers to Hitler?

The ethical relativist is bound by his or her approach to answer positively. After all, "we should not judge what Hitler does by our own standards." Relativism faces a problem when two different cultures meet. What should a Westerner do when among cannibals? An ancient adage says "when in Rome, be a Roman." Should you, indeed, adopt the host community's standards, or act on your own community's standards?

At the other extreme we find universalism: what is right is right for everyone, everywhere, and what is wrong is wrong for everyone, everywhere. Hence, the ethical universalist would not sell the computers to Hitler, because what is criminal activity is criminal activity everywhere. There are different theories within universalism. Some universalists consider the consequence of our behavior, rather than the behavior itself. This approach to ethics is called consequentialism. According to consequentialism, what is important is the consequence of a certain behavior in terms of the common good. Of course, one has to first determine what good is. Utilitarian ethics, a form of consequentialism, views good behavior as any behavior that increases happiness.

For example, if you have a job, ask yourself why you want to make a good impression on your boss. You want to make a good impression on your boss because you want a better chance of being promoted. You want to be promoted because you want to have a job that pays better,