IT, ethics and organization
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Do we need ethics?
• There are really no problems! Just follow the law, the rules, or your moral feeling!
• Education in ethics cannot make people better!
• It is impossible to use ethics education in real life!
What is morality and ethics?

- **Content**: “Right actions are moral but wrong actions are immoral”
- **Choice**: “Morality and ethics are related to choice”

IT and ethics

- IT is necessary, modern society can not function without it
- IT affects significant values for persons and organizations
- IT is malleable, it can be a tool for almost everything
- IT have a much bigger impact, both positive and negative, on all aspects of life, compared to any other artifact

Ethical usability?

- Ethical aspects have an increasing impact on IT usability
- Good IT do not cause conflicts
- Good IT satisfies important values and interests
- People do not want to and cannot use IT that do not satisfy the above, independent of its other usability aspects
Do we know what is right?

- World: changing, global, unpredictable, complex
- Scientific and technical development
- Problems vary, are personal, different
- People are complex, isolated, undefined
- No functioning authorities & guidelines
- Decentralization, delegation
- Intense public and media interest

Can it be serious?

- Low usability and less profits
- Bad service, no trust
- Higher stress, worse environment
- Confusion, fear, desperation …

Sub optimality: Nothing spectacular but devastating in time

Is it easy or difficult?

Generally we are constrained because of our nature but ethics are harder:
- Incompatible values decide right and wrong
- Contradictory cases, e.g. double standards
- Strong emotions
- Authority is very important
- Focus on content not on process
Gaining Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature, technology</th>
<th>Society, morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Answer Facit</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method Process Skill | Yes | No |

Ethical insecurity?
Handling of moral issues creates a big risk: *Important myths can be destroyed*
- For persons: Resolution of problems, personal development, but risk to lose enthusiasm, get disoriented, lost, cynical
- For organizations, society: Hero, e.g. whistle blowing (courageous, responsible), or offender of persons and principles (show no respect, disloyalty, treason, hostility)

What do we need?
- Ethical competence: Know how to handle ethical issues, how to think
- Ethical processes: Roles, procedures, mechanisms in organizations
- Ethical confidence: Know that we can find good solutions (i.e. know that our skill and our way of handling moral issues is working)
How do we think?

- **Heteronomy**: automatic, dogmatic, constrained, authoritarian thoughts, instincts and reflexes
- **Advantages**: Quick, safe, economic, avoid responsibility
- **Disadvantages**: Bad control, chancing, difficult to explain

Could we do better?

- **Autonomy**: Critical searching, systematic thinking, supervision, holistic
- **Disadvantages**: Demands time, resources and skill, create anxiety
- **Advantages**: Good control, insight, awareness, responsibility, easy to explain

Ethical Competence

1. Ethical awareness
2. Personal skill in ethical problem solving and decision making
3. Organizational processes in handling ethical issues and creating principles
4. Argumentation
5. Ethical confidence, emotional strength
Ethical Competence

Ethical competence is the ability of a person or a group, who confronts a moral problem, to choose the right way to handle the problem at hand.

To do this one has to be able to see the difference between different ways of handling moral problems, and to be a master of thinking and acting in a way that independently, systematically and critically considers all relevant values, principles, interests, feelings, duties, needs and beliefs.

One example

You are the president of a company developing a new personnel administration system for another company where information on its employees will be stored. There are many security levels to choose among but your customer wants the cheapest one which also happens to be the less secure. You are convinced that hackers or even employees will be able to access this information. You have warned your customer but they want to take the risk.

Heteronomy: giving up control and responsibility, one thought dominates

Automatic reactions
- It is going to be a big scandal!
- It is the customer’s responsibility!
- Don’t worry! It’s going to be alright!
- This is the way to do things, etc.

Dogmatic fixations
- People’s integrity must be respected!
- You should always obey the law!
- Image is very important!
- Finances are very important!
- Customers should be respected!
Autonomy: take control and responsibility, holistic

Relevant values and interests
• Do I want to support the customer?
• Is the relationship to my customer important?
• What do customer’s employees feel?
• Do I care about my image or finances?

Possible alternative actions
• Design according to customer?
• Follow your own plans?
• Negotiate more?
• Give up?

How do the different alternatives affect values?

Autonomy Skill
• Analysis of the concrete situation instead of general moral principles
• Specification of own and relevant others’ essential interests, values and feelings
• Generation of alternatives and weighing against the essential values
• Building a comprehensive picture of the problem situation to reflect upon before decision or action

Autonomy Skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomy thinking</th>
<th>Own economy</th>
<th>Employees integrity</th>
<th>Customer’s finances</th>
<th>Own reputation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design acc. customer</td>
<td>Positive but risk for bad image</td>
<td>Risks for personal integrity, but still at work</td>
<td>Chance to make profit but risk for conflict</td>
<td>Cynical, but responsible for own company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate</td>
<td>Customer gets tired, but maybe a safer contract</td>
<td>Chance to secure rights, but risk to lose job</td>
<td>Higher losses, but avoidance of conflict</td>
<td>Indecisive, fearful, but cautious and serious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cont.)
Ethical organization?
• Leader-based
• Principle-based
• Skill and process-based

Ethics more difficult in organizations
• Social loafing
• Conformism
• Group polarization
• De-individuation
• Authority obedience
• Groupthink

Ethical competence in organizations
• Processes for construction of ethical codices and guidelines
• Processes for revision of ethical codices
• Dialog groups, support structures, ethical committees etc.
• Special roles, e.g. ethical officers, coordinators
• Continuing education for ethical competence
• Ethical leadership focusing on organizational and personal development
Ethical codices and competence

- Codices have to be created by people who know how to do this
- Codices demand always interpretation and adaptation. Rules and principles cannot applied automatically
- Ethical codices can work against their goals:
  - They can never be exhaustive and what is missing can be interpreted as being allowed
  - Rules can be used with rigidity, with fanaticism or simply in a wrong way

Types of Ethical Codes

- Marketing, goodwill
- Prescriptions, laws, punishment and reward
- Checklists created by external experts
- Knowledge support in problem solving

Only the last one can work as the others but it has to be created by the users and it has to be continuously adapted

Construction and use of rules

Knowledge tool based on and used to support ethical skill
Flexible guidelines and critical thoughts in their form and content
All have to get prepared and to participate
Continuously ongoing process
One example
You are the president of a company developing a new personnel administration system for another company where information on its employees will be stored. There are many security levels to choose among but your customer wants the cheapest one which also happens to be the less secure. You are convinced that hackers or even employees will be able to access this information. You have warned your customer but they want to take the risk.

Construction of ethical rules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomous principle construction</th>
<th>All involved values, interests, persons, groups, organizations, society, etc.</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Work climate</th>
<th>Law (cont.)</th>
<th>…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational actions, decisions, functions, etc.</td>
<td>Employee integrity</td>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td>Flexibility but lower planning</td>
<td>Great but difficult in discussing problems</td>
<td>Follows the law but risk for violation of information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example of a rule…

1. Our actions must always respect the integrity of the employees because it is according to the law, it facilitates internal relations and cooperation, and allows safer planning of business activities.
2. However, there is a risk for lower business flexibility, violation of employees’ and others’ right of information, and may be difficult to handle internal conflicts openly. If we do not care about the integrity of the employees we could easier adapt and handle difficult business situations, but there is a great risk for internal conflicts, bad image, and difficulties to hire new employees...

(1, 2, 3, 4 All four parts have to be included!)
Ethics and psychology

- How people handle their own moral problems
- Focus on the process, not the content
- Description, assessment and training of ethical skills
- Focus on possibilities rather than risks and problems