

Topics on professional ethics

João Joanaz de Melo



NOVA SCHOOL OF
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

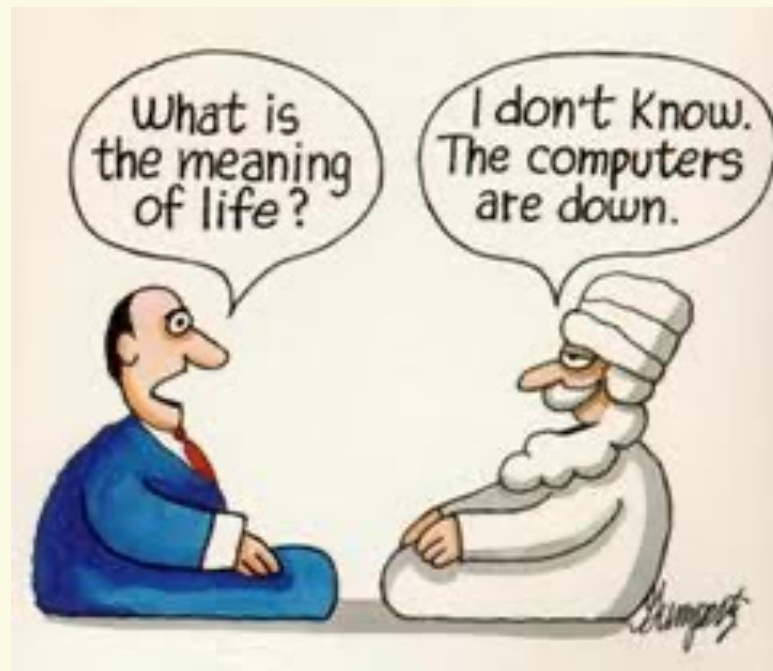
Concepts

- ✓ Ethics – set of values that determine the behaviour of a society / branch of Philosophy dedicated to the study of morality
- ✓ Morality – rules to tell Right from Wrong / rules of social conduct dictated by superior authority (natural order or divine inspiration)
- ✓ Deontology – professional ethics

Ethics: what for?

Science tells you what you **can** do

Ethics tells you what you **should** do



Learning ethics

Ethics can not be taught because,
though framed by social mora,
it is always a personal choice

But it can be learned...

Topics for reflection

- ✓ What does society expect of us?
- ✓ Relevant codes of ethics and conduct?
- ✓ Major professional duties?
- ✓ To whom do we answer?
- ✓ Kinds of conflicts of interests?
- ✓ Limits to our responsibility?
- ✓ What do we want of ourselves?

What society expects of us

- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Technology
- ✓ Wisdom
- ✓ Exemplary behavior
- ✓ Magical solutions



Code of Ethics of the International Association for Impact Assessment

1. The member shall carry out his or her professional activities, as far as possible, in accordance with emerging principles of sustainable development and the highest standards of environmental protection.
2. The member shall ensure the incorporation of environmental protection and social or socioeconomic impact considerations from the earliest stages of project design or policy development.
3. The member shall not conduct professional activities in a manner involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation or bias.
4. The member shall not advertise or present the member's services in a manner that may bring discredit to the profession.

Professional duties

- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Confidence
 - Truth
 - Confidentiality
- ✓ Dignity towards the profession
- ✓ Social duties such as public health, environment

To whom do we answer?

- ✓ Our conscience?
- ✓ Our family?
- ✓ Our client or employer?
- ✓ Our professional corporation?
- ✓ The scientific community?
- ✓ Society at large?
- ✓ Future generations?
- ✓ The planet Earth?

Conflicts of interests

- ✓ Client wishes versus social or environmental consequences
- ✓ Instructions of employer versus professional judgement
- ✓ Personal, party or corporate interests versus the truth
- ✓ **Where does our responsibility stop?**

The limits of responsibility

- ✓ You are often subject to a hierarchy
 - Written, legal orders are mandatory, if your superior has authority and assumes it
 - Illegal orders or mere suggestions are not!
- ✓ No one can make you sign something against your professional judgement
- ✓ Your conscience is your true limit

What do you expect of yourself?

