

## **Ethics and Professional Communication**

**Three major approaches in the traditional literature:**

**A. Teleological--concern with the consequences of a given behavior: the greatest possible good for the greatest number. (Mill--utilitarianism)**

**B. Deontological--**

- 1) I can only do what I would have everyone in society do. (i.e., Kant's categorical imperative). We must adhere to moral law regardless of consequences.**
- 2) Treat others as having intrinsic value in themselves, not as being means to achieve one's ends.**
- 3) Level of generality can be an issue: I can't make a universal law out of "If John Smith of Megabyte University borrows \$50 from his two sisters, he should not repay it. But we can't say "You should always repay your debts." because someone may delay paying a debt in order to feed his starving child. So the key question is "Could I wish that everyone would follow this law under similar conditions?" (Donaldson & Gini, p. 9).**

**C. Situation Ethics--should follow traditional legalistic ethics but be willing to deviate when the situation and rationality calls for it. The situationist is a rational relativist--one who thinks before breaking a basic ethical rule. This relativistic position has been called by some critics not an ethics so much as an anti-ethics.**

**Donaldson, T. & Gini, A. R. (1990). Case studies in business ethics (2nd ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.**