Ethics and Morality - a business opportunity for the Amoral?

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Preamble

It is common for speakers at computer security conferences to tell audiences that 'they should do' this, and 'should do' that. The word 'should' is regularly thrown about as some jumbled-up mixture of efficiency and ethics, without any justification of the imperative.

This paper will concentrate on the ethical issues, and so it will quickly dispose of 'efficiency,' leaving detailed argument for another time. Then, taking the devil's advocate position, it will focus on demolishing the certainty behind the ethical obligation, by questioning the role of ethics in society in general, but specifically in computer security. Indeed this paper will claim that an unsuspected morality and ritual lies behind many real-world security choices and much so-called 'objective' academic analysis. Furthermore, it will propose that such moralistic positions are highly problematic, and that all recommendations phrased in terms of virtue rather than pragmatism be treated as highly suspect.

The quest for efficiency, where any form of redundancy is viewed as 'inefficiency to be eliminated,' is a perverse and decadent view. It was anticipated by Northcote Parkinson (1986), when he warned that "perfection in planning is a symptom of decay." Efficiency is bad for business. In Darwinian terms (Darwin, 2003), efficiency optimizes a species to a niche, and when that niche changes, as it must, the species will become extinct. For redundancy is not waste. It has its uses. It can: help reinforce or reject values; allow for human forgetfulness and for social checks and balances; allow for error tolerance; give time to reflect, reconsider and experiment; allow for the variety, which although valueless in an old order, can benefit the new.

Unfortunately the prevalent distortion of Taylor's Principles of Scientific Management (1911) portrays all of these reasons as human faults, to be corrected in the world of the virtuous machine. This brave new world will not be one of ordered, constrained and controlled lives, but a rule-based bureaucratic shambles (Angell, 2000).

Introduction

Now for 'ethics,' starting with some definitions. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1933) 'ethics' are the 'moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.' That immediately begs a definition for 'morality': 'the principles behind a distinction between good and evil. A particular system of values.'

However! It's two o'clock in the morning. A policeman sees a drunk scrambling around on his hands and knees, under the street lamp. The policeman demands to know what the alcoholic is doing. "I'm looking for my keys, I lost them over there", he slurs, pointing into the darkness. "So why look here?" asks the policeman. "Because this is where the light is!" The policeman has learned what every drunk already knows: lamp-posts are there for support, NOT for enlightenment (Angell, 2005).

What if morality too, is there for support, not enlightenment? What if the light of morality fails to illuminate most of the human condition? What if the keys to success are to be found by scrabbling around in the dark? If this is so, then why is it that we so often fail to see the absurdity of our position? Why do we go on deluding ourselves that everything is so eminently clear and sensible? The problem is society itself. For society is self-referential, self-organizing via rituals, and optimized to fit our observation of the recent past. Such rituals frame the world in terms of the fundamental believable lies that make 'us' what 'we' are. They

turn uncertainty into risk, and so enable us to interact with a world as bizarre as ours.

We have no choice other than to impose constraints on our actions. However, we should recognize, but very rarely do, that all these constraints are self-imposed and society-imposed. What if the world is "Beyond Good and Evil?" (Nietzsche, 1990) Then there is no true and false, no good and evil, no morality except as social construction and ritualized delusion. 'There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena' (ibid). It is ritual that maintains the pretence of truth, by creating "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1977). Morality is a bi-product of ritual, not vice versa. Goodness and morality are made intellectual and absolute, rather than visceral and conditional. Truth is error become orthodoxy, via promotion through ritual. Untruth on the other hand is everything that is unacceptable, unpalatable (Angell, 2000).

Pragmatism and Power

So where does this leave the world of security, when we conveniently overlook the fact that "the victory of the moral ideal is achieved by the same 'immoral' means as every other victory: force, lies, slander, injustice?" (Nietzsche, 1968) All morality is partial, in both senses of the word: that is it is incomplete, and biased. It is hypocritical, aimed only at safe targets - Situation Ethics: the doctrine of flexibility in the application of moral law according to circumstances. Examples are legion in every 'moral' society. British clerics claim that fox-hunting and the export of live animals is immoral, but their silence speaks volumes when it comes to the ritual slaughter of conscious animals in Muslim ceremonies, such as the festival of Eid-El-Kebir: just another example of the hypocrisy of bounded sentimentality, and of professional courtesy, both of which transcend morality - paradoxically such amoral pragmatic attitudes are just as crucial to social stability as the morality itself.

In this brutal and brutish world it is well to remember Baudelaire's words: "one is punished for being weak, not for being cruel". All is Power, and the "Will to Power" (Nietzsche, 1968): everything else is sheer sentimentality. "I have often laughed at those who thought themselves good because they had no claws." (Nietzsche, 1969)

There is no intrinsic power in morality, in societal truth. Power always has to be there first. "Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes,

and rewards its pursuit. In the last analysis we must produce truth as we must produce wealth. In the end we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living and dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power." (Foucault, 1977)

Morality is a reflection of this power, in essence the prejudices of the powerful. That makes Ethics mere socially constructed bigotry. Cause and effect have been inverted. In this way the effect (the morality, the prejudice) seems fundamental - a cause, and therefore right, in tune with the world order that delivers power to the society.

Ritual

However, every society's underlying order, its certainties and truths, its sense of self-righteousness and goodness, its "formal tautologies" (Nietzsche, 1990) are flawed. Such ritualized invocations deliver the security of a false familiarity. Ritual is bound up with the persuasive version of the world as represented in and by society. It is the conditioning of society by society with the repeated application of 'formulae' - ceremony and repetitive behaviour. Ritual is persuasive because it is self-referential, self-validating; it suspends judgement. It does not uncover truths, rather it institutes and imposes them. It is society as magician, whose sleight of hand makes 'us' look in the wrong place, so that we don't see what we don't want to see in the darker corners of our society. Neither do we see how the trick is done. "What convinces is not necessarily true - it is merely convincing" (Nietzsche, 1968). It is mere "fabricated reason and its reasonableness" (Heidegger, 1999).

Morality is "the triumph of one-dimensional reality over all contradiction." (Marcuse, 1991) It fabricates a favourable history, a voluntary cage with invisible yet identifiable bars, that separates 'us' from 'them', and where everything that is different (immoral) is dangerous (evil.) In this way a society can combat 'social pollution': those actions, unknowns, behaviours, uncertainties, 'evil sprits' that contradict or are antagonistic to that society's accepted and comfort-able (ethical) view of the world: the accepted morality. This morality is perceived to give members of society power to cope in a world of uncertainty, made certain by ritual. This paper claims that computer security is mostly framed in terms of such social pollution, and the consequent technological responses are ritualistic, reinforcing the moral position.

The primary role of ritual is its influence, which gives coherence and identity to a community. Beneficial rituals direct routine behaviour, and reconcile society to the problems it must face. Ritual creates a boundary around ourselves, and all those that are like us: an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). By imposing repetition and similarity on the world, ritual produces a state of well-being in the general community, a confidence in the way that we interpret our world, an effect whereby we are even unaware that there are problems - we just don't see them. Much of the confidence we feel in applying the 'best practice' supplied by business consultants and academics, as well as the various related standards like ISO17799, comes from their confidence-inspiring ritualistic nature, rather than their masquerade as 'mechanistic solutions.'

The mutual reaffirmation of what is ordinary creates both the very experience of a society, and the feeling of cultural and personal identity bestowed through it. Because of this shared but unspoken accord, we members of a community use self-evident and implicit assumptions. We reinforce that membership whenever we socialize with our fellows within the guidelines laid down by ritual, thereby reaffirming member-ship. Indeed, that explains much of the form taken by, and the behaviour of delegates to academic and commercial conferences. However, in being 'one of us', 'we' are blinded to the oddities and failings of our own society. Those outside our community will be seen as different: they are not 'one of us'. Of course from their strange ritual position 'we' are just as peculiar.

Because of ritual, social complexity is lessened, society is self-organizing, control of members becomes easier. Morality is encouraged by the leaders in society because it is a means of forging conformity amongst members, and in doing so generates and reinforces the platform of authority. So it is in the academic world, which justifies itself in terms of methodological rigour and form, instead of the practical advice requested by practitioners. In doing so academics separate and alienate themselves from those practitioners, who don't read academic papers, particularly in the so-called 'A-journals', which they see as peculiar and irrelevant. This is hardly surprising as most texts are an exercise in legitimacy and a self-justification of academic method, a sure sign of a driving morality! Referencing, such as in this paper, is in essence an act of ritual deference, rather than any genuine attempt to inform. Method and rigour are NOT the moral justification of the academic approach, rather they are the self-conscious rituals that separate the academic community from others, and as such form the

basis for advancement within that community. "Higher education: essentially the means of directing taste against the exceptions for the good of the mediocre." (Nietzsche, 1968)

Hypocrisy

Unquestioned subservience to ritual leads to the "mediocratizing of man - a useful, industrious, highly serviceable and able herd animal man" (Nietzsche, 1990) to their chosen community, but not to others. In doing so, this "'one-dimensional man' has lost, or is losing, individuality, freedom, and the ability to dissent and to control one's own destiny." (Marcuse, 1991) However, in complying with morality even the mediocre can feel valued, can feel self-important. The greater the mediocrity, the greater the call for morality. Form (morality) becomes more important that content, and method (ritual), can be seen as the first, the last, the only resort of the mediocre.

Add in a hefty dose of hypocrisy, and morality is kept intact among the herd. This self-reinforcing blindness insinuates that we remember the security of yesterday, rather than seeing the dangers of tomorrow. In wider society, there has always been abortion, euthanasia, corruption, chauvinism, sexual harassment, paedophilia etc., only previously we just didn't bother to see them except in extreme situations or where the perpetrators were of no social consequence. Why? Uncovering such acts is disruptive. Better to use our rituals to make them ignorable; invisible even.

For decades the Roman Catholic Church denied any knowledge of its paedophile priests, as did the Anglican Church of its homosexual clergy. It has been uncovered, not because of any increase in the scale of such behaviour, but because the blinkers of an old morality no longer blind us, and bind us. Church leaders can no longer protect their immoral and amoral colleagues behind a pragmatic wall of hypocrisy.

Moral Relativism

Who knows what good is any more? The genie of moral relativism is out of the bottle; although the word relativism merits a particularly virulent sneer from the moralists. But is it moral relativism … or moral choice? And with choice we enter a state of anomie: with no viable norms and standards. But when old rituals fail, what happens to the 'community of belief'? We see displacement activity of the pious; vacant and repetitive chanting of the rules; gratuitous acts of societal self-abuse and self-mutilation. The greater the threat, the greater the

dependence on morality. The extraordinary must be denied, and yet denial is impossible. Every problem is blamed on outsiders.

However, those who "have most emphasized the instrumental effects of their rituals are most vulnerable to disbelief" (Mary Douglas, 1984). In this unfettered atmosphere of relativism, the moral, indignant with virtue, target both the waverers and the amoral. The pragmatic but now degenerate old leadership can no longer control the moral majority, and self-appointed fundamentalists seize control. These are the pious commentators of society who think they have the right to pass their comments on anything, and that society must concur. In the political sphere we see a surfeit of political correctness, and a recent vast increase in its formal expression: regulation. The equivalent phenomenon in the academic world is the insistence that readers are not allowed to decide for themselves - a self-referential higher authority decides what is 'legitimate' by censoring publications. Peer review castrates articles of all radical content, so that the academic literature becomes a champion of orthodoxy.

However, information and communication technologies have complicated matters by introducing dissatisfied members of a society to alternative world-views. Many are experimenting with alternatives; and the Internet makes it is so very much easier to find out about other communities, other moralities, other ideas, and then to compare and contrast their relative merits. The malcontents now have a choice, a world of choice. No longer isolated among the moralists of their society, and hence compliant, the disillusioned have no difficulty in using new technology to find fellow travelers with similar immoral and amoral urges. Who is to say they are wrong? Certainly not the security specialists, who, with no understanding of the ambiguous moral context, are increasingly called upon to police the malcontents.

The many alien choices and behaviours available are, of course, not new in our cultures. But in the past, borders have kept the influx to a minimum, thereby holding society firmly under control. However, now the scale of the problem is set to explode because it is easier for individuals to act on their immoral and amoral urges. The fact that increasingly they have the choice to make amoral decisions (immoral to the moral) is proof that our societal rituals are failing. If the bigots don't like it and try to stop it, then the amoral can escape, physically or electronically, outside of their jurisdiction.

Moral Breakdown

Once the imposition of a morality on a society fails, or the hypocrisy of pretending to impose a morality fails, then that society is no longer homogeneous. With large numbers of a community proclaiming a new morality; with an end to shame, an end to guilt, and an end to sentimentality, then society is no longer a single community.

Such knowledge is power, and with this new-found power individuals are pulling away from their old communities (countries, companies, academic disciplines), pulling apart their old moralities. This must lead to confrontations as societies split into sub-communities, each sharing their own but differing common values. There can be no meeting of minds when fundamentally different views of the world are in conflict.

The proof of the breakdown of morality is seen everywhere in the world of practical politics. Political parties are in terminal decline and single-issue battles for women's rights; globalization; ageism; racial equality; sexual orientation; environmentalism proliferate. The religious taboo against abortion is breaking down - is euthanasia next? There is rampant drug and alcohol abuse; illegitimacy rates are soaring; excessive gambling. Pornography has become a 'lifestyle choice' - it is frowned upon everywhere, and yet it is found everywhere. Such hypocrisy has found its way in the academic business world. The battle between VHS and Sony-Betamax is a case in point. The official (morally approved) version is that VHS won because its standard was widely licensed, unlike Betamax, which was proprietary. However, in the bar of an evening, a very different story is told. Betamax did not allow the pornography business to use its system; VHS did. VHS won!

Control of the Moral High Ground

Pandora's box has been thrown open, and all the evils (that is alien moralities, amoralities and immoralities) of the world pour out, and in. Society's moralists are obligated to do good, and smash these evils. Community leaders, hanging on to their power, will scramble in a ritual frenzy to the old moral high ground, and trample innocents in the rush. Human Rights and Civil Liberties will be seen as a phenomenon of 20th century, and they will disappear along with their century.

Moralists believe in an absolute morality: their own codified prejudice, of course. They fail to understand there is no point in arguing about the most appropriate prejudice. That is best left to natural

selection. Natural selection, not the virtue in morality, will ultimately arbitrate between winners and losers. And there will be battles because the children of the Enlightenment cannot go back to the superstitions of an earlier age, and its pathetic rituals?

What should individuals do when they find themselves 'out of synch' with the official morality? and as authoritarians "become virtuous from indignation" (Nietzsche, 1968). The leaders of society will try to impose a consensus on the herd, by "intimidation and glorification" (Barthes, 1953): "domination is transfigured into administration" (Marcuse, 1991). Such behaviour could explain the massive increase in regulation seen in the West (Sarbanes Oxley, Patriot Act in the U.S., the RIP Act in the UK to name but very few). The number of global anti-money laundering bureaucracies is exploding (Demetis and Angell, 2006). However, according to the old Chinese proverb: when empires are doomed, they have many laws.

Thus it is that governments around the world see it as a moral duty to keep track on their citizens with new technology. Force ID cards on them? When implemented, ID cards and databases will be used to invade the privacy of honest citizens, turning them into compliant herd animals: the hell of a collectivist heaven. Hi-tech Branding.

Governments take the moral high ground and tell citizens that identity management is for their benefit. As President Reagan so eloquently put it: "the nine most terrifying words in the English language: 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help!'" Or should that be 'I'm here to watch, YOU'. The moralists justify ID-cards by claiming that they can be used in the war on terrorism, or against identity theft, and other crimes.

However, terrorists and criminals will corrupt, threaten or blackmail officials with access to the database. The ID card, far from eliminating identity theft, will be a one-stop-shop for fraud; foreign terrorists with an illegally acquired card will be waived past all immigration checks. Governments will sell data to cover their costs without checking the bona fides of their clients, as happened with the DVLA (Driving Vehicle Licensing Agency) in the UK. This doesn't stop the politicians, who all subscribe to the 'pixie dust' school of technology. For them, computation is a magic dust that they sprinkle over problems for something wonderful will happen. No surprise then that governments have an appalling record of slippage, price overruns, and failure with large government IT projects.

Radio Frequency Identity (RFID) tags

The moralizing 'control freaks', the pious commentators in government, have read 1984 (Orwell, 2004), and all they see is a wish list. They will use the war against terrorism as an excuse to have their way. They want us all to be acquiescent, disposed to obey orders to an excessive degree - to comply - they want an ideal society composed of a well-behaved herd in an Animal Farm. (Orwell, 1996) They will force RFID tags on us, embedding them in money, and in ID cards, invading our privacy, and turning citizens into compliant herd animals. The tagging of pets has been very successful, so governments are thinking: "why not implant tags in people - the logical next step from ID cards?" It will help in the efficient running of hospitals, prisons, and social security benefit offices. Why have a credit card when you are tagged, especially since the supposedly secure 'chip-and-pin' technology proved anything but secure?" Who could possibly object to this utilitarian utopia?

However, before anyone volunteers for the implant, they should take heed of the Book of Revelations, Chapter 13, verses 16-18:

16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

The state is a moralising beast! They will survey society with an all-seeing Panopticon, and construct a complete record of the personal debits and credits on all citizens, thereby spinning a web that connects all buyers and sellers, so that the Inland Revenue can, not only calculate every tax bill, but also cancel the RFID tags in money, thereby seizing payment.

Freedom to choose

Because of ritual, members fail to recognize their servile position; in the ant-hill of human ritual no individual thought is allowed. But what happens when human ants discover that they are ants? "All liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude" (Marcuse, 1991). "Give me Liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to my conscience, above all other liberties." (This quotation, taken from

Samson Agonistes by John Milton, has pride of place in the foyer of the Chicago Tribune Building, put there by editor 'Colonel' Robert R. McCormick, who saw his role, and that of his newspaper, as limiting the excesses of governments and politicians).

The liberated will come to approach the world in a different way. Consequently, the communal efficacy of morality is challenged and any attempt to stress the instrumental efficacy of the herd's rituals will appear to them 'primitive' and absurd. So what happens when moralities collide? Fertility treatment for the over 60s; or with the frozen sperm from a dead husband; GM crops; cloning; stem-cell research; the production of land-mines; nuclear power; surveillance technology - any issue from science, technology or medicine?

Moral Arbitrage

What will business do? What happens when popular prejudice and sentimentality is at odds with an amoral business making a profit? The fact is morality doesn't come free, it incurs transaction costs. And who pays? Not global enterprises. They do not identify with any particular country, and they walk away from a country just as easily as they enter it.

Thomas Jefferson recognized this truth over two hundred years ago: "merchants have no country. The mere spot where they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gain." Businesses, along with their profits, will go to where the morality isn't. Morality is a business opportunity for the amoral - Moral Arbitrage. When scientific research and development has a financial or militaristic advantage, governments can't allow it to escape. In the short-term democratic governments may have to listen to their vocal sentimental voters (that are not necessarily the majority, as was the case with the Volstead Act (Prohibition)). However, in the long-term 'spin' will ensure that ethics go out the window. When pragmatic business and political leaders see profits going elsewhere, the lust for business profits, and the attendant taxes, ultimately negate morality. The town where we are holding this conference, Las Vegas, proves the point. Vegas would never have come into existence if gambling hadn't been illegal/immoral in most of the US.

Each society is a world of moral intent; but it exists in a world of perverse amoral consequences. To succeed in the world of economics, societies must reject the notion that ethical behaviour forms a causal link between intention and consequence. In the world of real

politik it is simply not good enough to comply with the uncritical usage of morality. Only an unsentimental understanding of what is 'sensible' will do.

Moralisers can bleat all they like, that this is unfair: however, natural forces, in particular economic forces, have no conscience. "Nature is not immoral when it has no pity for the degenerate" (Nietzsche, 1968).

The Ethics of Business

Business has always been run on a different code of ethics, to the guardians of any collective is seen as unethical. In the past a society's leaders have had the power to treat business with contempt. In mediaeval times, no man whose parent, grandparent, or great-grand-parent was a merchant would be admitted into an order of chivalry. Franciscus Gratianus, a medieval monk from Bologna was clear: "business is nothing but the struggle of wolves over carrion, men of business can hardly be saved for they live by cheating and profiteering." Dante (2006) placed usurers alongside sodomites in one of his circles of hell.

But no more! For the guardians of modern societies have now become totally dependent on the wealth of business to fund their profligate expenditures. If the rituals of a morality are imposed with disregard of the commercial consequences, and instead are carried out in staunch defence of their validity, then disbelief and disassocia-tion will be the result among the business community adversely affected.

Transitory Morality

Morality gives only a stable veneer of understanding that covers the more chaotic whole that is the human condition. Every veneer is transitory. Each ordered design is prone to reinterpretation and quite often dismissal, and the ill-fated authority that backed it is compromised and loses credibility. Uncertainty, as always, precedes the transition to a new order - to new moralities.

For "the froward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as an innovation" (Bacon). As society's rituals fail to deliver safety, ultimately the society will lose faith in itself. A point will come when that society knows something is radically wrong and rituals fail to deliver safety.

I include failing to find employment for citizens, or to raise the money needed to pay for vote-winning social programmes. Then ultimately the society will lose faith in itself, but because of ritual, it is blinded and unable to recognize just what the problem is. What is then interpreted as reality, and therefore seen as important, is the contrivance of the ritual, rather than the reality itself. (Following this observation, there has to be a passing reference here to the academic justification of method and rigour.)

The Sovereign Individual

However, politicians will go on insisting that all businesses are run for their benefit. The James Bond Myth, that the state is good, and global business is bad, is just a morality tale told by tax collectors. The guardians of modern societies have become totally dependent on the wealth of business to fund their profligate expenditures. All taxation is theft. It is the state obtaining money with menaces: legitimate organized crime. How else can the state afford to subsidize the benefits to preferred voters? Once when Ralph Waldo Emerson was visiting Henry David Thoreau in jail, where he had been imprisoned for non-payment of taxes, Emerson asked "why are you here?" to which Thoreau replied "why are you not here?" Thoreau saw himself as a prisoner of conscience, a political prisoner, and was asking why all free men were not acting in the same way, defending the right of the individual against coercion by government.

According to Ayn Rand (Rand, 1957), business IS ethical. Human good does not require human sacrifices and cannot be achieved by the sacrifices of anyone to anyone. The prevalent Judaeo-Christian morality of the democratic state is really a morality of thieves, with the high priests, the politicians, sat atop of mountain of morality, demanding payment.

"The rational interests of men do not clash - that there is no conflict of interests among men who do not desire the unearned, who do not make sacrifices nor accept them, who deal with one another as traders, giving value for value. The principle of trade is the only rational ethical principle for all human relationships, personal and social, private and public, spiritual and material. It is the principle of justice."

Any ethical system that operates on the principle of envy will promote a 'mediocracy' that ultimately kills the potential wealth creation of a society. It is the morality of altruism that promotes and supports mediocrity by denying the right of an individual to self-ownership and

self-determination, making him the property of leaders of the society.

"The basic principle of altruism is that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that service to others is the only justification of his existence, and that self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue and value.

Do not confuse altruism with kindness, good will or respect for the rights of others. These are not primaries, but consequences, which, in fact, altruism makes impossible. The irreducible primary of altruism, the basic absolute, is self-sacrifice - which means; self-immolation, self-abnegation, self-denial, self-destruction - which means: the self as a standard of evil, the selfless as a standard of the good.

Do not hide behind such superficialities as whether you should or should not give a dime to a beggar. That is not the issue. The issue is whether you do or do not have the right to exist without giving him that dime. The issue is whether you must keep buying your life, dime by dime, from any beggar who might choose to approach you.

The issue is whether the need of others is the first mortgage on your life and the moral purpose of your existence. The issue is whether man is to be regarded as a sacrificial animal."

"Is man a sovereign individual who owns his person, his mind, his life, his work and its products, - or is he the property of the tribe (the state, the society, the collective) that may dispose of him in any way it pleases, that may dictate his convictions, prescribe the course of his life, control his work and expropriate his products"

According to Hayek (1972) "The principle that the end justifies the means is in individualist ethics regarded as the denial of all morals. In collectivist ethics it becomes necessarily the supreme rule; there is literally nothing which the consistent collectivist must not be prepared to do if it serves 'the good of the whole', because 'the good of the whole' is to him the only criterion of what ought to be done".

Conclusion: what does this mean for the security community?

So what has all this to do with security? What exactly is the moral behind all this discussion of morality? We are living in a time of Profound Uncertainty. The 'different' can no longer be ignored, nor can they be tolerated. In our society "change is no longer thought of as achievement, as opportunity, as progress, but as an object of fear" (Carr, 1990).

In this present climate of uncertainty (and fear), security has been

brought to the forefront of discussion by both government leaders and company boards. Increasingly these two leadership groups are becoming more and more impotent in the face of terrorist or criminal or ecological or commercial uncertainty, be it Al Qaeda, Enron or global warming or globalization etc. Both groups respond with moral outrage, and demand total loyalty - a sure sign of failing confidence. Enforced compliance with government regulations or bureaucratic company procedures solves nothing. These are merely external statements of the ambiguous communal morality of the group, a rain-dance aimed at maintaining social cohesion at a time when leaders are unable to inspire confidence. That rain-dance doesn't bring rain, it is the ritual of 'smoke and mirrors' that tries to focus the attention of society on some-thing other than its main problem, the lack of rain; otherwise disruption will occur. This is the leadership using morality to protect itself - morality called upon as a justification of the status quo.

Consequently, in support of the leadership, the computer security community will find itself at the sharp end of enforcement of regulations and procedures. Governments will insist that security professionals act as secret policemen for the state, and spy on citizens; the company will expect surveillance of employees, suppliers and customers: we're all Stasi now. This leaves the professional with a moral dilemma: to comply with these demands or not!

Unsurprisingly, most of our community will comply without question, framing their approach to the various stakeholders in similar moral terms. They will practice the standard defence of "only obeying orders." But what of the rest of us, those whose understanding has been disconnected from the prevalent authority whose legitimacy is ritualistically anchored in its now-defunct ambiguous moral stance?

We must accept that the unimaginable can and will happen, and be prepared to deal with it on the level of personal choice, unconstrained by debased morality. This could leave us to face the wrath of the powers that be with the impotence of the popular misquotation of Martin Luther: "Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir. Amen." (Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.) Far better to join with the amoral, and sing along with the much more optimistic words, "VIVA LAS VEGAS" (Elvis Presley, 1964), of a far more modern icon.

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