Preface

Globalization—the coalescence of the economies and cultures of this planet—has definitely been enabled by Information Technology (IT). Globalization, in altering previous economic and social structures, also raises new ethical issues. But IT is much more, I think, than a mere enabler of globalization. Within globalization, IT produces new ethical problems all by itself.

Globalization has become a contested concept. In this book my aim is neither to condemn globalization nor to praise it. Globalization is a form of human social cooperation with both good and bad aspects. To try to prove that globalization is in itself good or bad would be just as nonsensical as to try to prove that human social cooperation is in itself good or bad. Human social cooperation has produced a technological lifestyle which is dramatically better for many people. It has also produced great evils such as wars and the potential collapse of the ecosystem. Globalization has also produced benefits and harms. So instead of trying to determine whether globalization is good or bad, I will determine how globalization can be implemented in a just and ethical way.

There is already a substantial literature in philosophy and political theory on globalized ethics. I will examine the major possibilities. But for the most part theories of transnational ethics proceed by allocating ethical problems to different states and therefore are not helpful in dealing with ethical problems of ethically globalized institutions, most of which would not exist were it not for IT. (Throughout this book I use 'global' and 'transnational' to mean the same thing. I believe this is standard usage.)

In Section 1, *IT-enabled Globalized Ethical Problems*, I will show how these IT-enabled global ethical problems come about. One recent example is Yahoo's difficulties with e-mail in China. Around 2002, Yahoo provided the Chinese government with information about two pro-democracy journalists who were subsequently jailed and apparently tortured. The journalists later successfully sued Yahoo. Yahoo initially claimed that it was merely complying with Chinese law. The obvious ethical issue is whether Yahoo should do this, whether the law of a country not recognizing basic human rights should be followed. The background question is whose law, if any, should be followed by a transnational IT company? At Yahoo's 2007 annual meetings, Yahoo shareholders voted overwhelmingly against a proposal for Yahoo to reject censorship. Obviously Yahoo, as a corporation, is bound by the vote of its shareholders. But ethically do the shareholders of transnational corporations have the last word? What IT has produced in the case of Yahoo and other Internet communications companies are *ethically globalized* companies, companies whose ethical problems cannot be solved by dividing them up among different nations.

Chapter 1, *IT-enabled Global Ethical Problems*, lists the various kinds of globalized ethical problems that have arisen. **Chapter 2**, *Current Ethically Globalized Institutions*, records the globalized institutions currently involved with global ethical problems. In **Chapter 3**, *IT's Contribution to Globalization*, the nature of globalization is examined in some detail. Some concepts of globalization such as Thomas

Friedman's "flattening" encapsulate contested value judgements. After separating out a more neutral concept of globalization, I examine what aspects of IT play a role in the ethics of globalization.

Then, in Section 2, *Theories of Globalized Ethics***,** I summarize the main theories of globalized ethics and show their inadequacies in dealing with IT-enabled global ethical problems. **Chapter 4**, *The Basis of Ethical Principles*, provides a background in ethical theory. I make a distinction between ethics as principles of social cooperation and morality as rules depending on special beliefs. **Chapter 5**, *Domestic Theories of Justice, discusses various theories of justice, or ethics for particular societies*. I decide on John Rawls' two Principles of Justice (1999a) as the best theory of ethics for social cooperation.

Chapter 6, *Political Realism and the Society of Societies*, and **Chapter 7**, *Cosmopolitanism*, present current theories of globalized ethics. Authors of some of these theories do not sufficiently appreciate the changes IT makes to underlying social and economic structures. Others don't take social cooperation seriously enough. **Chapter 8**, *The Ethical Status of Globalized Institutions*, determines where globalized institutions need ethical principles, and of what kind. **Chapter 9**, *IT and Globalized Ethics*, does the same for IT in the service of globalization. A preliminary version of a global social contract is presented, and IT's special role in that contract is discussed.

In Section 3, *A Social Contract for Globalized Institutions*, I sketch a social contract approach to deal with these IT-enabled global ethical problems. The essence of this approach is that people in societies live under principles which they themselves could have chosen.[1] Its political and ethical attractiveness is that coercive social and governmental commands are grounded in free agreement rather than in arbitrary force. This approach derives from the work of John Rawls on domestic and international justice (Rawls 1999a, 1999b). **Chapter 10**, *Elements of a Global Contract*, lays out all the elements of the Global Contract. Actually two social contracts are required, the International Social Contract and the Global Economy Social Contract. The International Social Contract is a revision of Rawls' version of international ethics. Two distinctive features of the Global Economy Social Contract are that it applies only to participants in the global economy and that corporations cannot be parties to the contract. **Chapter 11**, *Globalized Ethics and Current Institutions*, explores the extent to which current institutions are in compliance with the global social contracts. **Chapter 12**, *New Globalized Institutions*, discusses whether additional institutions would be required to implement the principles of the global social contracts. An important consideration is whether cooperation between existing states or other institutions would be sufficient. Simply adding new institutions for the sake of adding them raises difficult questions about authority and oversight, so cooperative solutions between existing institutions are in general preferable. **Chapter 13**, *Ethical Implications for IT*, explores the implications of the global social contracts for IT.

Then, in the Section 4, *Ultimate Questions***,** I will consider issues beyond the reach of justice and social contracts, including issues of environmental ethics. These issues need to have priority even over the requirements of fair and just social contracts. **Chapter 14**, *IT-enabled Globalization and the Environment*, deals with globalized environmental issues and IT's role in those issues. **Chapter 15**, *The Value of IT-enabled Globalization*, deals with the value of cultural and economic globalization. Modern technology's special value status is discussed, as well as the point of view of *being* on the value of IT and globalization.

This book reflects my practical experience with IT management, both for a Forbes 500 company and as Director of Academic Computing for Woodbury University. My academic qualifications include a Ph.D. dissertation in ethics done with John Rawls and teaching many graduate and undergraduate ethics courses. My previous book for IGI-Global Press, *Contemporary Issues in Ethics and Information Technology* (2006)*,* discussed professional and individual ethical issues connected with IT. Globaliza-

tion was discussed briefly in connection with offshoring. I believe a more complete discussion is now called for.

The primary intended audience for this book is IT professionals and IT users with ethical concerns. It is not intended as a contribution to professional philosophy.[2] This is very much a book of *applied* ethics. But I have tried my best to be faithful to the spirit of Rawls' work on social contracts. As I worked on the various issues discussed in the book, I experienced once again the power of the idea of a social contract. Rawls' work has the "unique distinction among contemporary political philosophers of being frequently cited by the courts of law in the United States and referred to by practicing politicians in the United States and United Kingdom" (Wikipedia 2008). President Bill Clinton stated that Rawls's thought "helped a whole generation of learned Americans revive their faith in democracy itself" (Clinton 1999).

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ENDNOTES

[1]   Classic social contract theory was developed by the 17th and 18th century philosophers Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. These theories were the basis for American and French democracies.

[2]   It seems to me that if social contract theory can't be understood without the substantial added complexity of professional philosophy, then it is probably not workable as a practical basis for ethics--or for society.