

Professions & Professionals

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1

Confession

- Mostly retired (no current paying clients)
- Discovered Urban Design
 - NIMBY: twin 58 storey towers, 30' from my window – (May 2011)
 - Built form (& space) shape our lives
- Parallel: Built systems (& procedures) shape our working lives

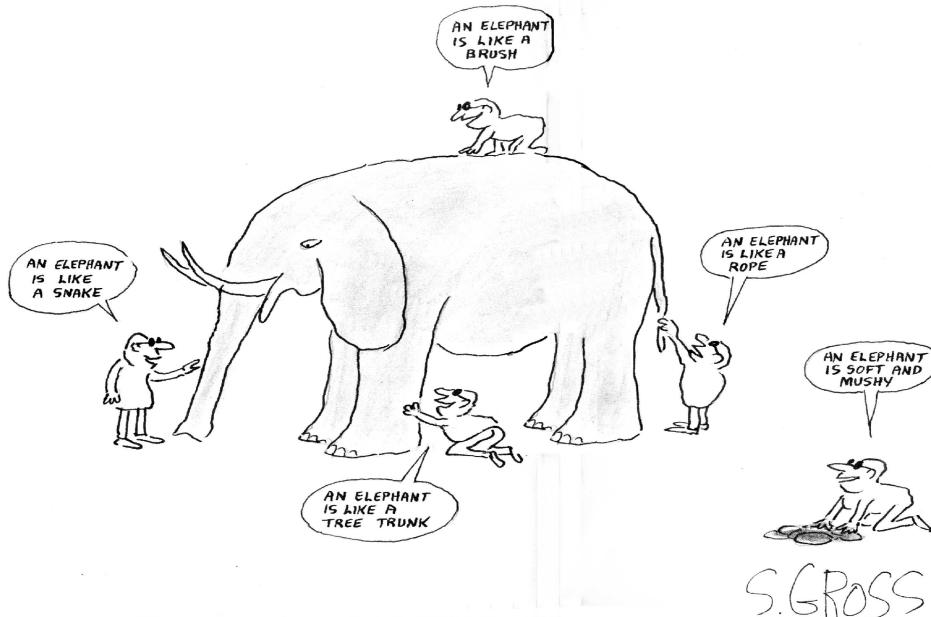
2

Informal

- What does it mean to be a professional?
 - What are the benefits?
 - What are the costs?
- Relation between profession and professional
- Distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge

3

Is a profession “soft & mushy”?



Outline

- Profession
 - Definitions
 - History
 - Perspectives
- Professional
 - Trustworthy
 - Theory **and** Practice
- Ethics
 - No absolutes

5

Technology Shaping Context

- Deskilling – aka automation
- Information devaluation
- Growing contextual importance
- Shifting boundaries
- Continuing change

6

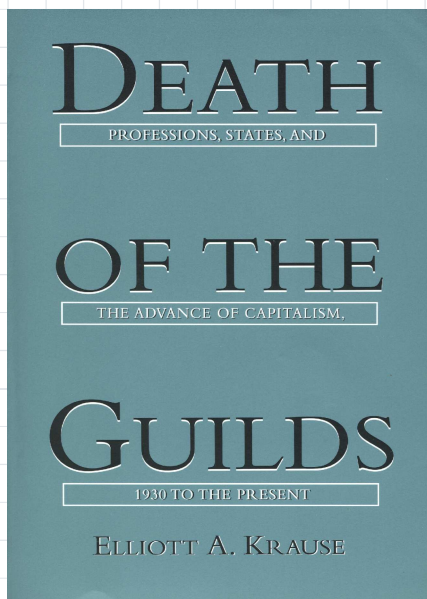
Common Definition

- "There was a time when the only *professionals* were those who practiced law, medicine, or teaching, or were members of the clergy. Although *professional* is loosely used today to indicate a person highly skilled in his trade, whatever it may be, the word properly speaking means one who has mastered his profession - a liberal art or science requiring advanced study. A profession is the main activity of such a person and is also his or her means of earning a living. A means of living other than a profession is an occupation or trade."

- *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage* (1975)

7

US, UK, France, Italy, Germany



Published 1996

Good international
view

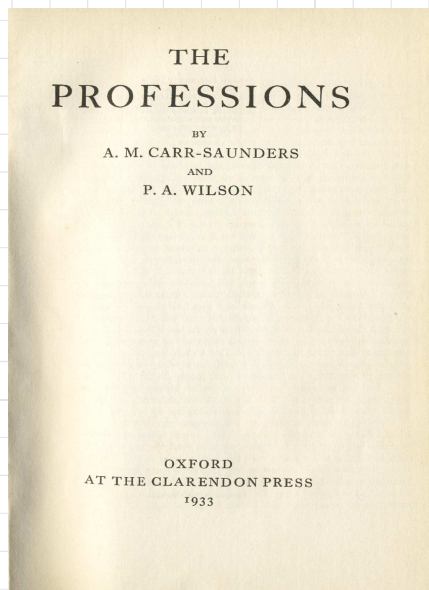
Focus on power and
control

Anglo-American

- No common usage in different countries
- Europe has greater state control
- England/USA/Canada more autonomy
 - Common Law tradition?
- Restrict to Anglo-American

9

Early Study



Published 1933

Accepted wide range
of "professions"

Good history of
English learned
professions

10

Medieval View

- Universities
 - After study, profess commitment
 - Commitment to Christ
 - Commitment to medicine, law, or clergy
 - Or to teaching
 - Professionals
 - Those who have professed their commitment
- First Oxford classes in 11th century

11

Modern History

- ~ 1850
 - Anyone was free to offer any services
 - Tradition provided some limits
- ~ 1900
 - Self-governing learned professions
 - State/Province sanctioned
 - Royal Chartered status

12

Learned Professions

- Years of post-secondary education
- Demonstrated knowledge of practice
- Takes time and costs money
- Profession evolves to cover new areas
- It “pays” to be in a Learned Profession!

13

Social Group

- A Profession is a Social Group
 - Recognizable body
 - Recognizable membership
- A Professional is an individual
 - Appropriate background, experience, practice
- Many Professionals in a Profession
 - *But not all are*

14

Model for Profession

- Members
 - Dedicated to the public interest
 - Committed to trustworthiness
 - Provided a socially important service
 - Respect the profession and professionals
- Meaningful work; comfortable living

15

It did make sense ...



Doctor & patients
had shared values

16

Social Contract

- Profession
 - Self-governing
 - Controls who can join
 - Defines acceptable practice
 - Restricted right to practice
- Society
 - Public benefit placed above all others
 - Client benefit above professional's benefit
 - (In theory)

17

Perspectives

- No one right way to view a profession
- Multiple perspectives
 - Economic
 - Sociological
 - Legislative
 - Legal
 - Ethical

18

Economic

- Information asymmetry
 - The professional commands some much greater knowledge and understanding – there is a fundamental information asymmetry between client and professional
- Credence service
 - The client is in the position of not being able to determine the value of what the professional proposes, and often cannot assess what the professional has done

19

Sociological – over time

- Profession is an occupational (social) group
- Struggle to win acceptance as profession
- Dynamic
 - Growth/contraction of right to practice
 - Superior/subordinate to other professions
 - Greater/lesser self-governing powers
- Win/Lose Members
 - Prosper/Die

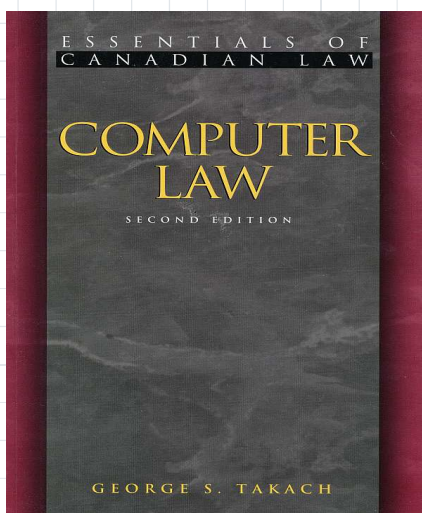
20

Legislative

- Governance of professions
 - Exclusive concern of Canadian Provinces
 - Exclusive concern of US States
 - National concern in many other countries
- The province/state can restrict who is allowed to practice the profession
- The province/state can determine the degree of self-governance for the profession

21

Canadian Computer Law



Shifting boundaries
New law constantly
required

The professional
keeps on top of
emerging new law

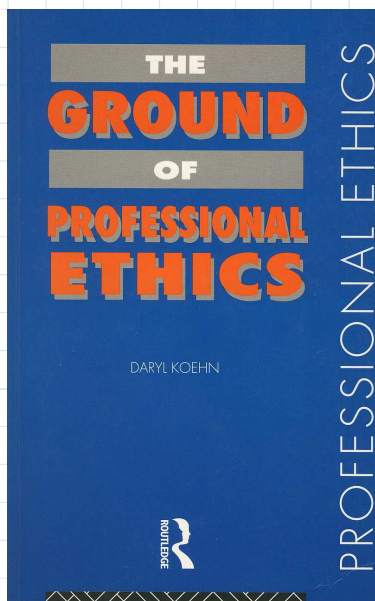
22

Legal Wrinkle

- Common Law
 - The recognized professional has a special “duty of care”
 - Actions judged against “reasonable professional”, not “reasonable man”
- Are IT professionals recognized?
- Limited cases, outcomes uncertain

23

Ethical



Published 1984

Argument

supporting special
professional moral
code

Only one of many
books on
professional ethics

IT Profession

- No meaningful IT Profession within the computing occupational group
- Evidence
 - No significant membership in any “professional” society (CIPS, ACM, IEEE-CS, etc.)
 - No meaningful restricted right to practice in area of computing
 - No enforced standards of practice in computing

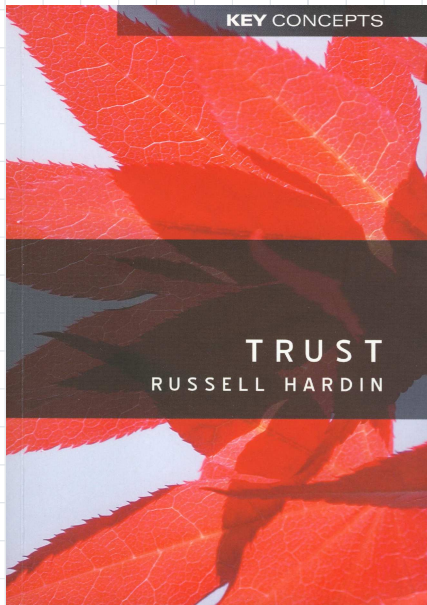
25

IT Professionals

- Acceptance as trustworthy professional
 - Important part of my self-image
 - Important part of consultant's business
- No “badge” of IT trustworthiness
 - No IT profession enforces trustworthiness
- Only our actions can win us standing as trustworthy IT Professionals

26

"Brief" Introduction



Published 2006
Excellent single
source intro to
trust literature
(only 206 pages)

Trustworthy

- A trusts B because B is recognized as trustworthy
 - Trustworthy comes before trust
- Trustworthy
 - Trustworthy intentions
 - Trustworthy competence

Intentions

- Simple: I will not place my interests above those of my client
- Realistic:
 - I will encapsulate the interests of my client
 - I will pay attention to those interests whenever making decisions or offering recommendations
 - The client isn't always right, but the client's interests are always important

29

Competence

- Can't always get it right
 - Often not clear what would be "right"
- BUT
 - Standards of practice provide base
 - Must know standards in areas of practice
 - Must have reasons to do otherwise

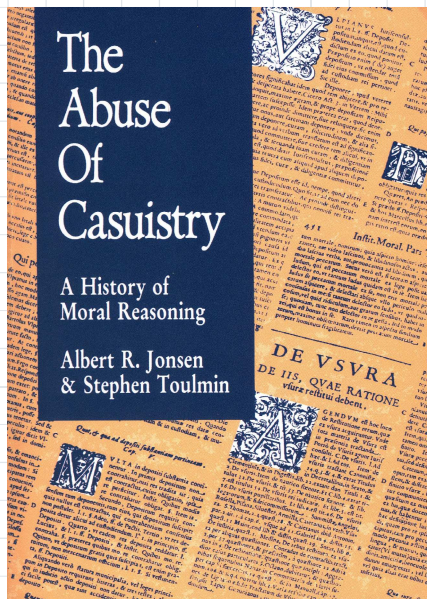
30

Choices

- "Doctor knows best!"
 - Professional knows what is in the best interests of the client/patient/employer
- "No, the client knows best!"
 - Provide the client with the information to make their own decisions
- Alas, not always clear
 - Need to make considered ethical decisions

31

Interesting Study



Published 1988

Arose from US study
of medical ethics

Absolute (ethical)
rules are very,
very rare in real
world

Personal Discoveries

- Longer arguments are less likely to be useful (or correct)
- Cost benefit numbers confirm an intuitively recognized benefit
- The best explanation is based on three critical factors

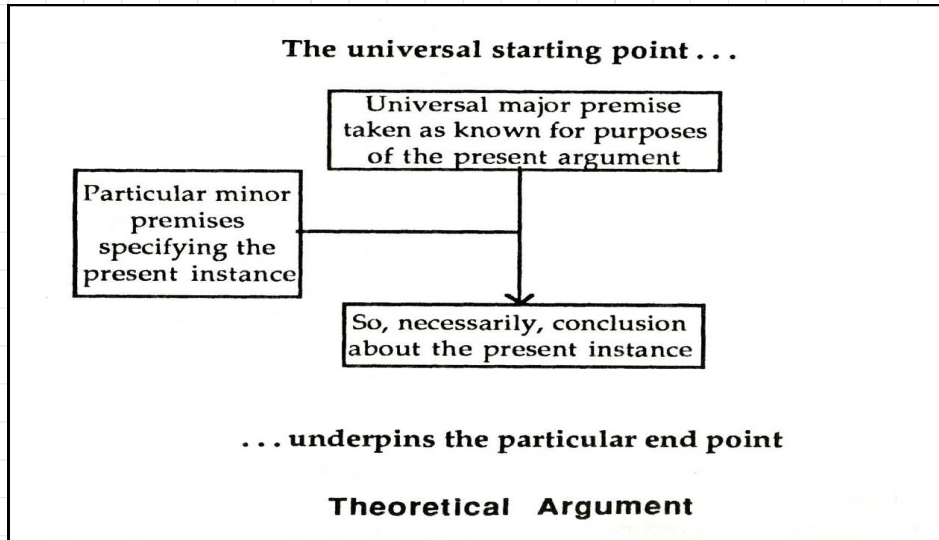
33

Important Aside

- Theoretical Knowledge
 - Context and time independent Laws
 - Conclusions necessarily follow from Laws
- Practical Knowledge
 - Context and time dependent cases
 - Presumptive conclusions, subject to change
- Mix found in medicine, law, and computing

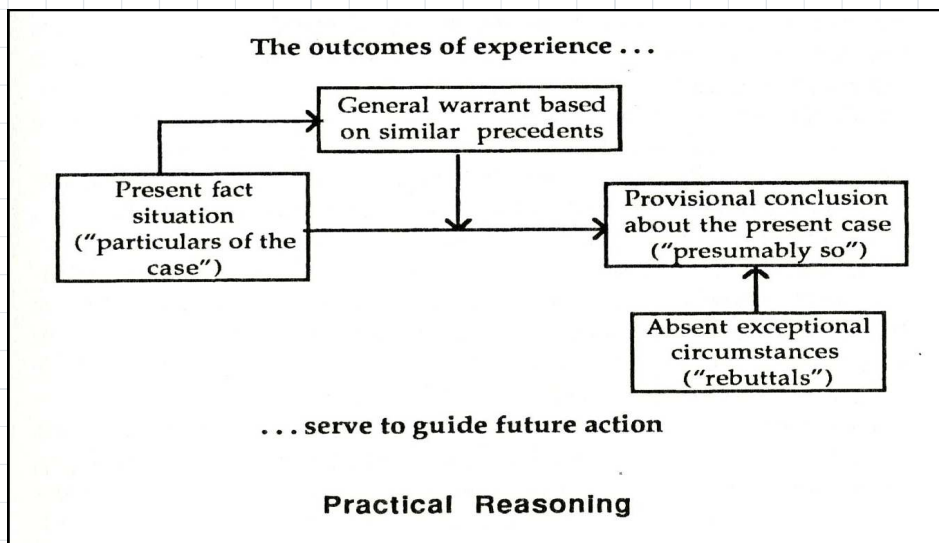
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Theoretical "Proof"



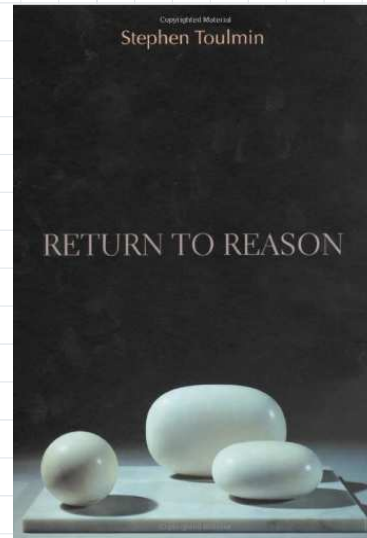
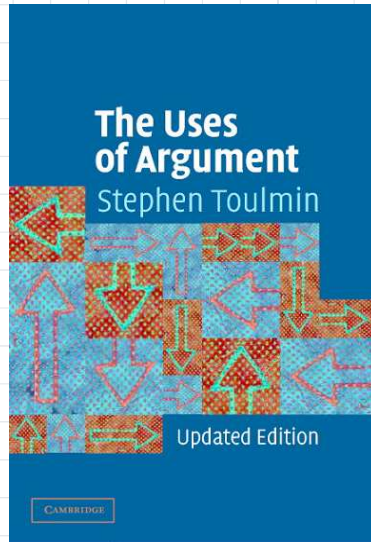
35

Practical "Proof"



36

Other Toulmin Volumes



37

Computing Knowledge

- Limited theory
 - Theory of: Computing, Communications & Hardware
- Extensive Practical Knowledge
 - Best Practices
 - Required Practices (rare)
 - Recommended Practices (uncommon)
 - Practice Guidelines (common)
 - Practical Experience
 - Working experience
 - Market experience

38

IT Professional's Obligations

Master the (limited) theory

Trustworthy intentions

- Understand the client
- Encapsulate her/his interests

Trustworthy competence

- **Best practices**
- Practical experience

39

Thank you ...
questions, comments?

40