



# Professional

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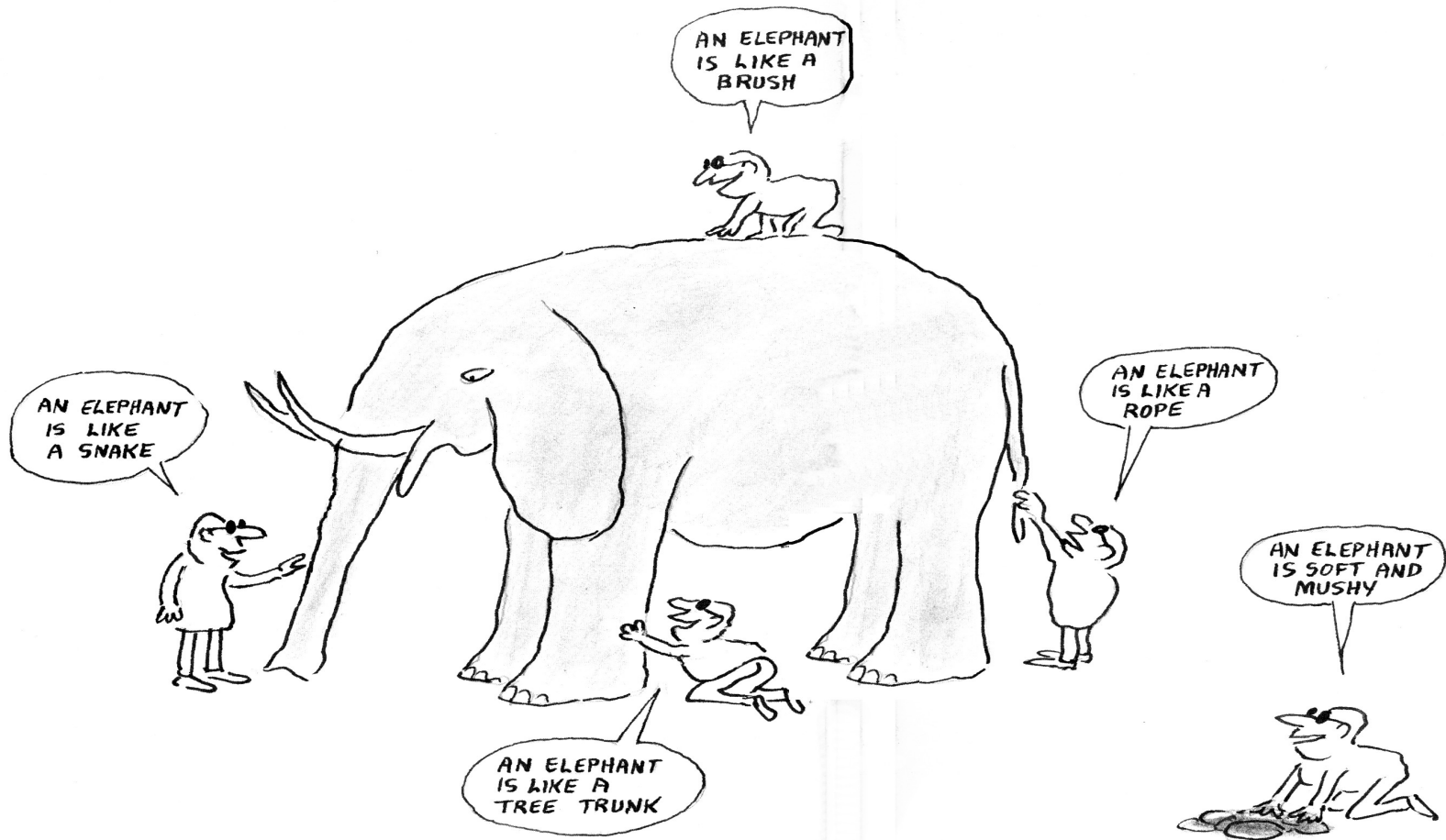
2010.11.16



# Informal

- Meaning of professional
- What are the benefits?
- What are the costs?

# What do we "see" ...



S. GROSS

# Outline

- Introduction
- Profession
  - Definitions
  - History
  - Perspectives
- Professional
  - Theory **and** Practice
  - Trustworthy

# Introduction

- Personal
  - Trustworthy professional?
    - What does that mean?
- Code of Ethics
- Body of Knowledge
- Professionals, but no Profession

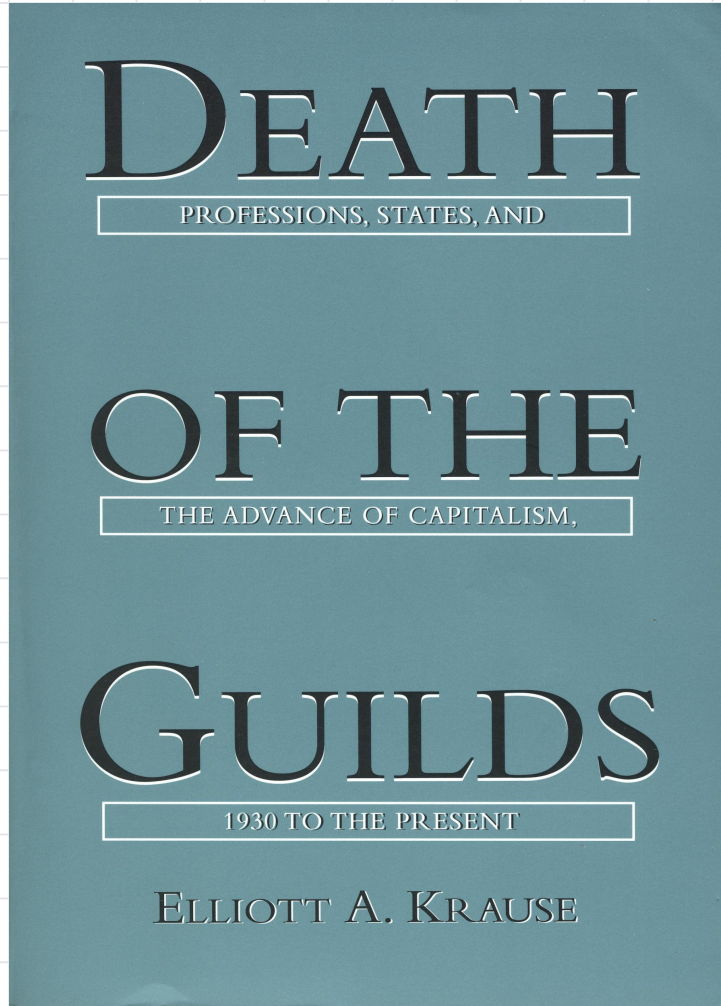
# Technology

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

# 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)

# US, UK, France, Italy, Germany



Published 1996

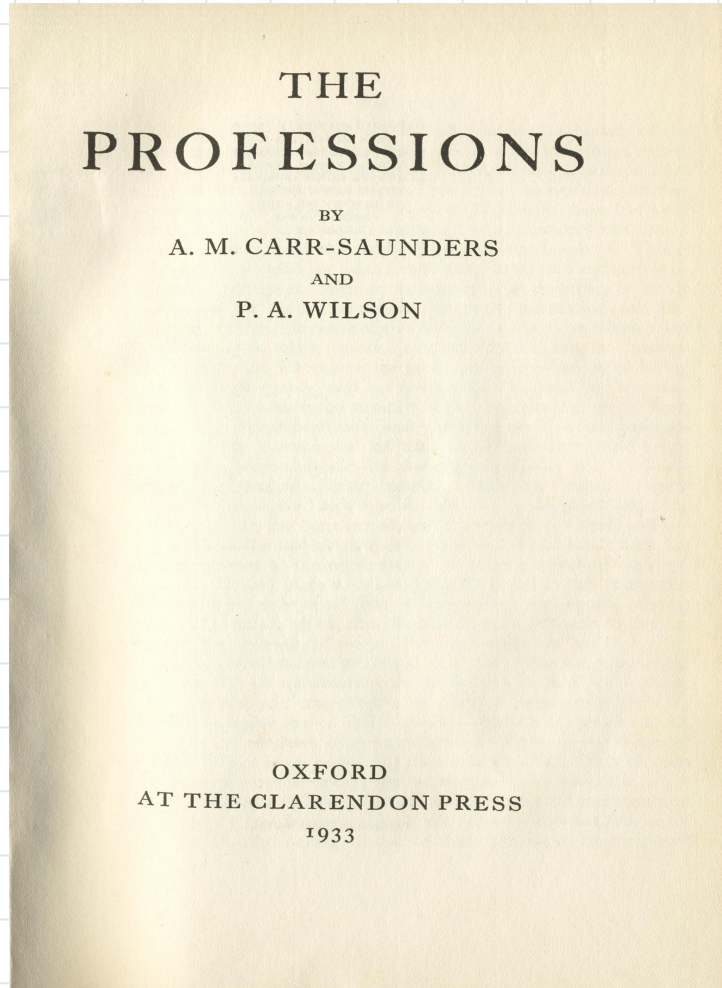
Good international  
view

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

# Early Study



Published 1933

Accepted wide range  
of “professions”

Good history of  
English learned  
professions

# Ancient 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 11<sup>th</sup> century

# 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

# “Learned”

- Originally – university prerequisite
- Today
  - Practice based (in part) on theory
  - Mastering theory prerequisite
    - Requires expensive study and preparation
  - Flexible coverage of new areas
    - Easier to maintain professional control

# Social Group

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

# 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**

# It used to make sense ...



House calls  
now rare

# Implicit Social Contract

- Profession
  - Self-governing
    - Controls who can join
    - Defines acceptable practice
    - Power to enforce its views
  - Restricted right to practice
- Society
  - Public benefit placed above all others

# Perspectives

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

# Economic

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

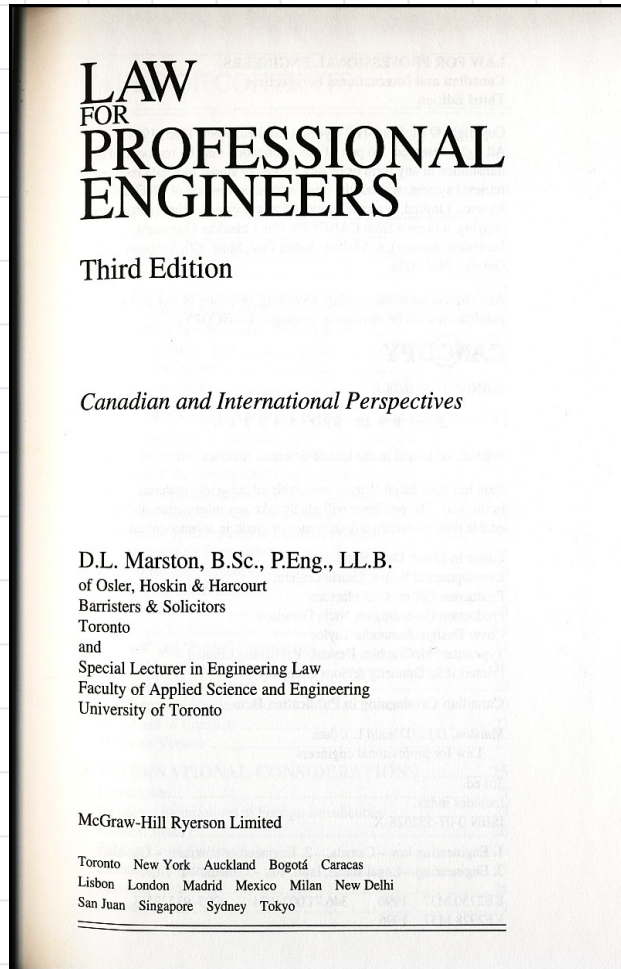
# Sociological

- 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

# 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

# Law for Professionals

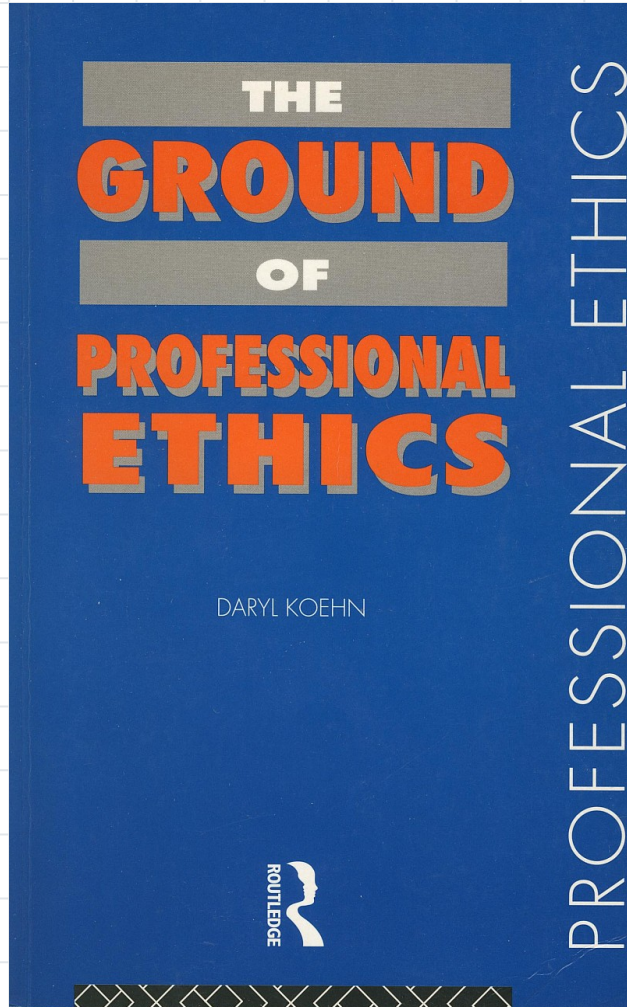


Regular updates  
Specific to Canadian  
engineers  
(common law)  
Much also applies to  
IT

# Legal

- Common Law
  - The professional may have a special “duty of care”
  - Actions judged against “reasonable professional”, not “reasonable man”
- Limited cases, outcomes uncertain

# Ethical



Published 1984

Argument

supporting special  
professional moral  
code

(I'm not persuaded)

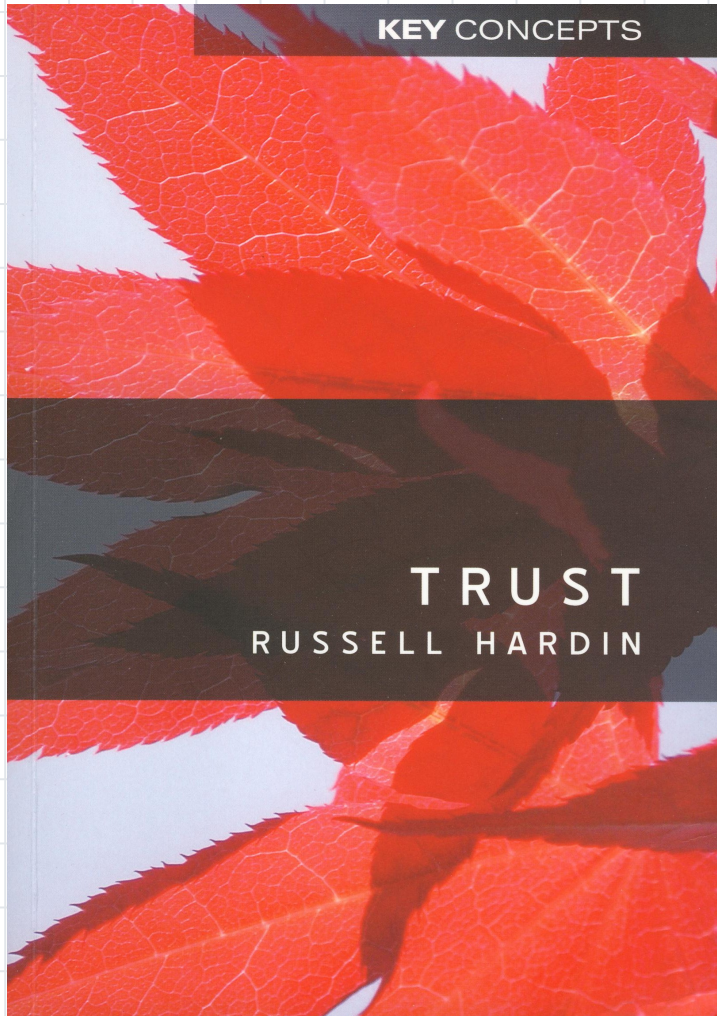
# IT Profession

- Assert: There is no meaningful IT or Computing 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

# IT Professionals

- Acceptance as trustworthy professional
  - Important to me as a person
  - Important to me as a consultant
- Can't join a society to win acceptance
  - Unlikely to change in the near term
- By our knowledge, experience, and practices we win, or don't win, standing as trustworthy professionals

# “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
- B must be able to encapsulate A's interests – key to correct intentions

# 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

# Decisions

- “Father knows best!”
  - Professional knows what is in the best interests of the client/patient/employer
- Let the client decide
  - Provide the client with the information that will allow her/him to make their own decisions
- Second is best: encapsulation is never perfect
  - And there can be implicit value conflicts

# Interesting Study

## The Abuse Of Casuistry

A History of Moral Reasoning

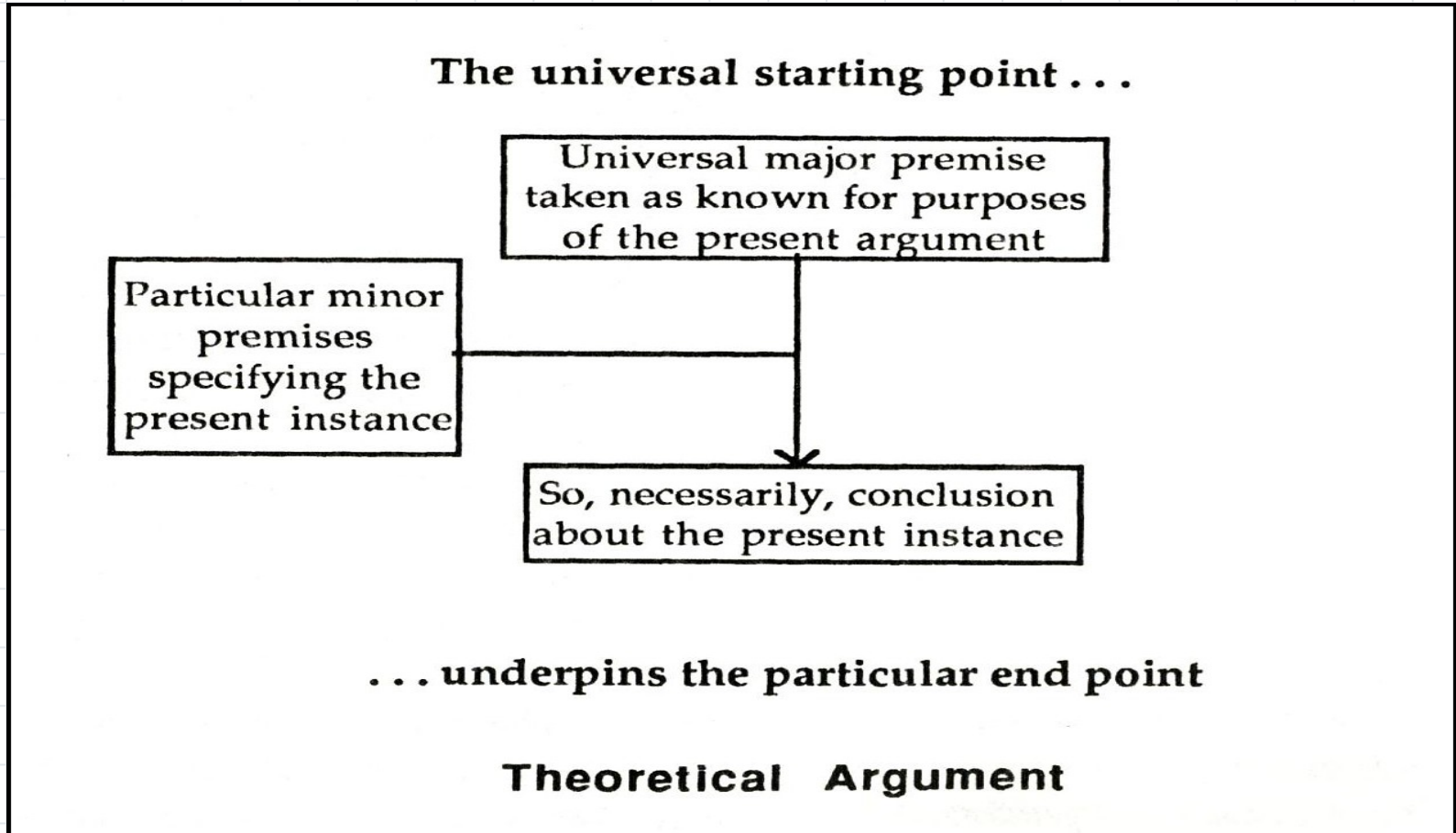
Albert R. Jonsen & Stephen Toulmin

Published 1988  
Arose from US study of medical ethics  
Mid-ground between universal and local: medieval casuistry

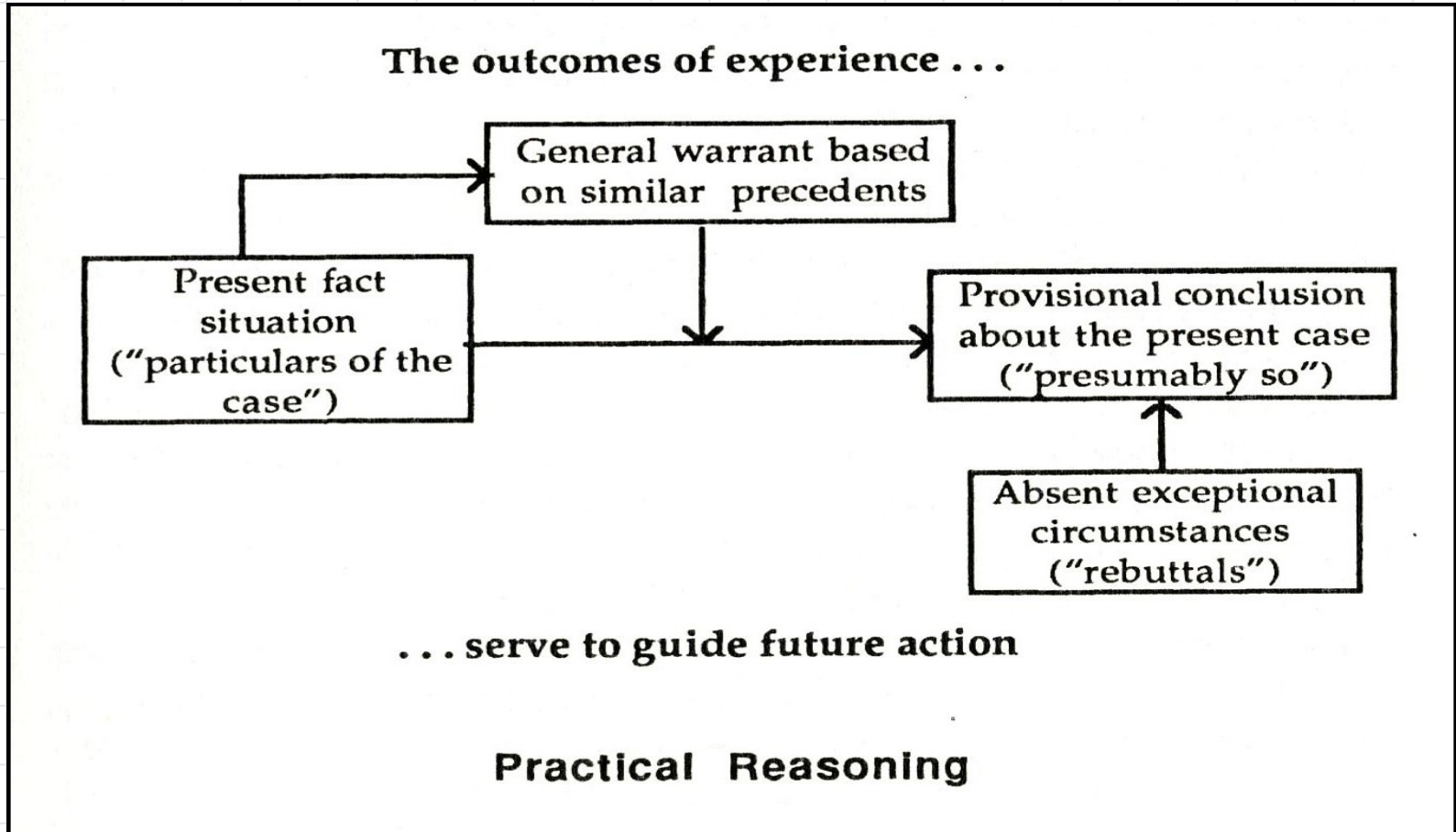
# Professional Knowledge

- 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

# Theoretical "Proof"



# Practical "Proof"



# 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

# IT Professional Obligation

Master the theory

Trustworthy intentions

- Understand the client
- Encapsulate her/his interests

Trustworthy competence

- Best practices
- Practical experience

# Consequence

Half life of professional knowledge is going down (15 years or less?)

If no new areas of knowledge, professional areas of practice must shrink

Personal: At least one new “big” idea every year.

# Next Week

This Week: What it means to be a professional

Next Week: Where to look for Best Practices in IT



Thank you ...  
questions?