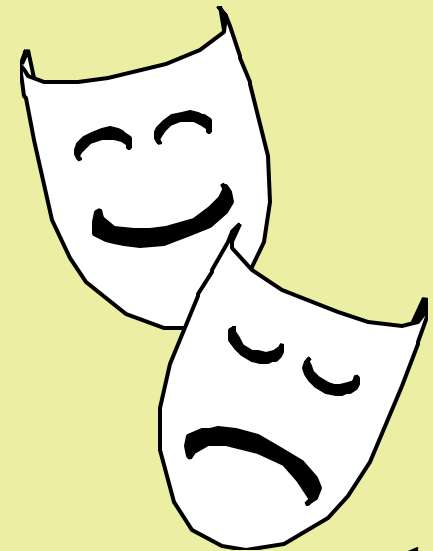


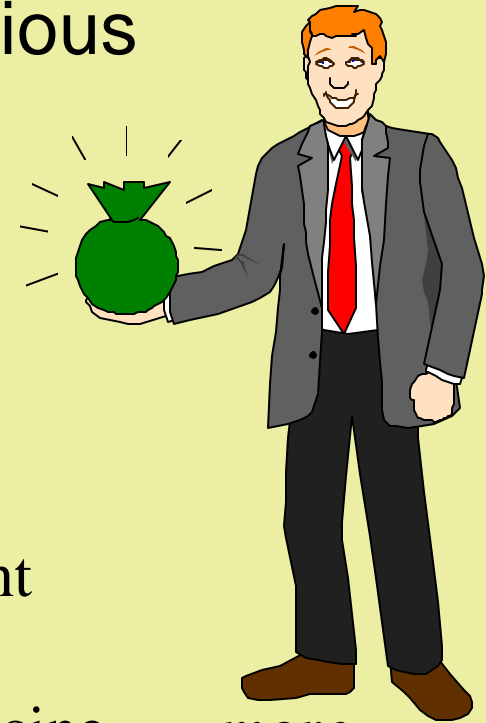
# Introduction to Societal Issues

- Information technology (I.T.)
  - broadly defined ...
- A recurring theme:
  - What are the *effects* of information technology on people? Organizations? Societies?
    - Work...
    - Conduct business...
    - Play...
    - Get information; products; services
    - Communicate; socialize
    - Perceptions of self
    - Perceptions of place



## – **Benefits** of computers are obvious

- Personal power tools
- Fun
- Get services & products fast!
- Information
- Education
- Computer-controlled car subsystems
- Other computer-controlled equipment
- Fight crime
- Science, research, engineering, medicine .....*more*



- OK: Your turn ...
  - First name; major; one major example
- With benefits come **risks and tradeoffs**. *But first...*



## ...An important digression:

- Rob Kling (RH-03) compared the computer to what?
  - How are they similar?
  - Why were they first seen as a “clean” technology?
    - What did people *not* foresee in that regard? Why?
  - What else? Why?
- Some important lessons Kling teaches?
- Hard to identify every possible hazard...why? (*use Kling's analogy*)
- Doesn't let us off the hook.....
- *Don't throw the baby out with the bath water...*

- The utopian view of IT
  - What is the utopian view Kelley (RH-01) describes about desktop computers in the workplace?
  - How does he dispute that view?
    - Do you remember the interesting analogy he used?
  - Is either view correct? Why?
- Some *easy-to-discuss* risks, to start with....
  - What is the *fiddle factor*? *Cyberlacking*?
    - Are they *different* from other low-tech time wasters? If so, how?
    - Solutions?
  - What is the *silicon imperative*? Examples?



- What sorts of frustrations does Cameron (RH-02) discuss with regard to personal computing and **IT**?
  - How did you react to his essay?
  - Other frustrations?

*Of course, we'll examine more serious issues.*

- Other recurring themes we'll meet:
  - Technological changes progress far more rapidly than do social systems.
  - Just because we *can*, *should* we?
- We'll meet lots of new problems created by *how* IT is used (*implementation*)
  - Many arise because there's a conflict among several moral senses; and struggle between morality and self interests.
  - Conflict between right of the individual v. the right of the collective.
    - Can we best protect both? How?

# Overall course objectives (from the syllabus)

Identify a number of *controversial* issues relating to I.T. and its use.

Promote *ethical thinking* that relates to those issues:

- examine all the facts related to the issue
- examine multiple sides of the issue
- identify the risks and tradeoffs of each side
  - consequences?
- find a moral position you can defend
- identify how to minimize risks of your position



"The greatest fear I have—my *greatest* fear—is that we've become so *comfortable* with the technology, that we get so many *benefits* from the technology, that we are becoming *anesthetized* by the technology.

It may well be that we are just going to sleep; that we are just not caring or understanding enough to take that step back and say, WAIT—this is great stuff, these are wonderful machines, but let's keep it on the plus side. Let's make sure that we try to *understand* what the **dilatory** side effects are. Let us control the technology; don't let the technology control us."

***Arthur Miller, Harvard Law Professor***

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