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Ethics, Law and the Politics of Information

A Guide to the Philosophy
of Luciano Floridi

 Springer

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Preface

Ivan Locke, the eponymous hero in the film “Locke” (2013), is on an hour-and-a-half night drive towards his destiny, in the sole company of his inexorable sense of responsibility. As a construction foreman, Locke is well aware of the difficulties inherent to the building process: like forging one’s own life or assuming responsibility for a life not yet born, it is a process fraught with formidable challenges and tragic moral choices. Living up to our moral obligations can be so taxing that we risk destroying everything: “Make one little mistake and the whole world comes crashing down”, as Locke remarks. The only recourse we have in dealing with moral choice is to take what Goethe called the “right path”. For Locke, this means journeying through the night, compelled by a sense of responsibility towards an urgent and inescapable moral call that cannot be postponed (as indeed most moral calls cannot). Locke spends the entire journey on his car phone with a series of invisible off-screen characters representing the real or phantasmal interlocutors of his moral life. While listening to these conversations, we come to realize that the process of creation – whether it be of a building or of a life – is not just about producing something *ex novo* but about becoming aware of our limits and assuming full responsibility for them. The film ends, significantly, at dawn, with some dramatic release of tension. However, it offers no definitive resolution, for as in real life, responsibility is an endless journey, and moral life is a dawn that gives rise to an infinite series of new days.

Like Locke’s incessant telephone calls, a book is also an attempt at creating a meaningful conversation with unseen interlocutors. A book is a response to those who have inspired us and addresses itself to our imagined audience, the readers, in order to further that conversation. As soon as a book has been written, it is the author’s turn to retreat from view, leaving space for the reader’s response. This, then, is what writers and readers do: by imbuing words with meaning, they exchange information with the absent other. Writing and reading are thus also about overcoming solitude and creating connections, for they impart our lives with meaning, the only true tie that binds. In this sense, people are made up of information. Information allows us to experience meaning that goes beyond and transcends the individual, drawing us into an overarching whole. Information lies at the core of our humanity.

Humanity, however, is nothing more than the empty space across which we seek to communicate with one another, and every epoch has been concerned with a specific, idiosyncratic perception of what humanity means. Our epoch is informational. It brings to completion our self-understanding as informational systems that produce, process and exchange information with other informational systems in an environment that is constituted of information. Luciano Floridi was the first to recognize the full breadth and depth of this assertion. What makes Floridi's philosophy so remarkable is that he treats information not only as a means of deconstructing and understanding our reality but also, and above all, as a means of constructing and, it is hoped, of improving it.

This is the reason for my long-standing engagement with the philosophical meditation of Floridi. The present book aims to keep that conversation alive and to invite to it all of those willing to embrace these three notions: we construct our world and ourselves informationally; by constructing our world and ourselves, we thereby become aware of our limits; it is precisely these limits that make us become human beings.

The long-standing theoretical conversation I have been engaged in with Ugo Pagallo and Luciano Floridi has always been, and continues to be, an enriching and inspiring intellectual experience, and I wish to thank them both. This book would not have been possible without them. To Ugo, I am particularly grateful for the constant reminder of Hegel's claim that philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought and for impressing upon me that ours is the age of the technological. Luciano taught me the fundamental Kantian lesson that constructivism is the only way to hold together knowledge and responsibility without privileging either. Thank you for this. Great lessons are to philosophical enterprises what rafts are to castaways.

Over the course of many conversations with Luciano Floridi, I have come to a better understanding of several crucial philosophical topics that have brought about major improvements to this book. I am also indebted to Patrick Allo, Pompeu Casanovas, Ugo Pagallo, Giovanni Sartor, Mariarosaria Taddeo and Herman Tavani for their insightful remarks, shared ideas and bibliographical suggestions. Many of the considerations in this work are also the outcome of fruitful interactions with graduate and Ph.D. students at the Law Department of the University of Turin.

I would also like to thank the Springer editorial team and, notably, Christopher Wilby, Senior Publishing Assistant at Springer, for having encouraged me to commit myself to this project, for his input at several stages of the work and for his precious support throughout the entire process of producing the book. The anonymous reviewers appointed by Springer provided me with valuable suggestions and kept me on the right track. My thanks also to Laura McLean for her linguistic revision of the manuscript.

Finally, I would like to thank a bright young girl, full of life and joy, for having taught me a most important lesson. “I don’t like people who suddenly stop walking and then stand there looking at you, insisting that you need to stop, too”, she told me once. “I think people should keep walking together and looking straight ahead”. And she is quite right. The only way we can walk together is by moving forward as one and looking straight ahead, sharing this *something yet to come*, politics, love and democracy; it is not ours to know exactly what. This book is dedicated to her.

Turin, Italy
8 May 2017

Massimo Durante

Contents

Part I Theoretical Tenets and Issues

1	Methodological Issues	3
1.1	Introduction.....	3
1.2	Technology as Constraining Affordances	5
1.2.1	The Limits of Instrumentalism	5
1.2.2	The Limits of Techno-determinism	6
1.2.3	The Limits of Empiricism.....	7
1.3	The Epistemological Principle of Complementarity	8
1.4	Epistemological Levelism: The Method of Levels of Abstraction	11
1.5	Informational Resources as Constraining Affordances	14
1.6	Conclusions.....	17
	References.....	18
2	The Informational Environment	21
2.1	Introduction.....	21
2.2	The Infosphere	23
2.3	The Laws of the Infosphere	28
2.4	The Principle of Ontological Equality	31
2.5	Conclusions.....	35
	References.....	37
3	The Centre of the Universe	39
3.1	Introduction.....	39
3.2	The Ontocentric Approach.....	42
3.2.1	The Process of Universalization of Moral Worth	44
3.2.2	The Relation Between Freedom and Responsibility	45
3.3	The Class of Moral Subjects.....	49
3.4	The Constructionist Values of <i>homo poieticus</i>	52
3.5	Conclusions.....	56
	References.....	58

4	The Morality of Artificial Agents	61
4.1	Introduction.....	61
4.2	Characterisation of an Agent	63
4.3	The Characterization of a Moral Agent	67
4.4	Objections to the Morality of AAs	72
4.4.1	The Teleological, Intentional, and Freedom Objections	72
4.4.2	The Responsibility Objection	74
4.5	Why Extend the Class of Moral Agents	76
4.6	Conclusions.....	79
	References.....	81
5	The Informational Construction of the Self	83
5.1	Introduction.....	83
5.2	The Synchronic and Diachronic Unity of the Self.....	85
5.3	The Identification and the Individualization of the Self	88
5.3.1	The Diachronic Identification of the Self	88
5.3.2	The Synchronic Individualization of the Self	90
5.4	The “Three Membranes Model”	91
5.5	Conclusions.....	96
	References.....	98
 Part II Normative Implications and Challenges		
6	The Value of Information as Ontological Pluralism	103
6.1	Introduction.....	103
6.2	The Ontological Foundation of Information Ethics.....	104
6.3	The Informational Dimension of the Ontological Equality Principle	106
6.4	Information and Informativeness	108
6.5	Lack, Difference and Relation	109
6.5.1	Lack	109
6.5.2	Difference	110
6.5.3	Relation.....	110
6.5.4	The Value of Information.....	111
6.6	Ontological Pluralism	112
6.7	Conclusions: The ‘Nazi Example’	114
	References.....	116
7	The Ontological Interpretation of Informational Privacy.....	117
7.1	Introduction.....	117
7.2	Informational Privacy and Ontological Friction.....	120
7.3	The Transition from Old to New ICTs.....	122
7.3.1	Agents	124
7.3.2	Environment.....	126

7.3.3	Interactions	128
7.3.4	The Value of the Ontological Interpretation of Informational Privacy	130
7.4	Challenges to the Theory of Informational Privacy.....	132
7.4.1	Cultural and Linguistic Context.....	133
7.4.2	The Axiological Context.....	133
7.4.3	The Context of Application of the Notion of Informational Privacy	134
7.4.4	The Context of Publicness	135
7.4.5	The Context of Information Ethics	136
7.5	Conclusions.....	137
	References.....	139
8	Ontic Trust and the Foundation of the Information Society.....	141
8.1	Introduction.....	141
8.2	The Social Impact of ICTs.....	142
8.3	Beyond Socio-technological Determinism	144
8.3.1	Non-instrumentalism	144
8.3.2	Potentiality	145
8.4	The Crisis of the Modern Tradition of Contractualism	146
8.5	New Political and Legal Subjects	149
8.5.1	From “Stand” to “Standing”	151
8.5.2	From “Citizenship” to “Informationship”	151
8.5.3	From an “Agent-Oriented” to a “Patient-Oriented” Model of Responsibility	152
8.6	A New Social or Natural Contract.....	153
8.7	Conclusions.....	157
	References.....	159
9	An Informational Approach to Politics	161
9.1	Introduction.....	161
9.2	The Transition from the First to the Second Axial Turn in Politics.....	164
9.3	The MAS as the Main Information Agent	170
9.3.1	Identity and Cohesion.....	171
9.3.2	Consent	172
9.3.3	Political Space vs. Social Space	173
9.3.4	Legitimacy	175
9.4	Infraethics and Good Governance	176
9.5	Conclusions.....	179
	References.....	183

10	An Informational Approach to the Law	185
10.1	Introduction.....	185
10.2	Law as a Normative System and the Governance of Reality	187
10.3	Centralized and Decentralized Models of Law.....	190
10.3.1	The First Phase: A Bounded, Centralized Model of Law.....	191
10.3.2	The Second Phase: Centralized vs. Decentralized Models of Law	191
10.3.3	The Third Phase: Distributed vs. Decentralized Models of Law	192
10.3.4	The Stratified Reality of the Internet	193
10.4	Information Taxonomies and Legal Information	195
10.4.1	The First Taxonomy of Information	195
10.4.2	The Second Taxonomy of Information	201
10.5	Informational Notions and Legal Categories.....	206
10.5.1	Legal Subjects.....	207
10.5.2	Legal Provisions and Expectations	207
10.5.3	Legal Objects	209
10.6	Conclusions.....	210
	References.....	212
	Bibliography	215
	Index	223

Introduction

The Information Revolution

We live in information societies. The term “information society” was originally used to describe (mainly sociologically and economically) the impact of networked and digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) on our societies and the way society has been transformed by the growth and dissemination of information. However, the change driven by ICTs is much more profound. It is altering our representation and understanding of reality and of ourselves by putting to the test our most traditional and deep-seated categories and agencies. We are witnessing an information revolution, or informational turn, that Luciano Floridi (2010) has dubbed the “fourth revolution”, to follow the Copernican, the Darwinian and the Freudian revolutions:

After Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543), the heliocentric cosmology displaced the Earth and hence humanity from the centre of the universe. Charles Darwin (1809–1882) showed that all species of life have evolved over time from common ancestors through natural selection, thus displacing humanity from the centre of the biological kingdom. And following Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), we acknowledge nowadays that the mind is also unconscious and subject to the defence mechanism of repression. So we are not immobile, at the centre of the universe (Copernican revolution), we are not unnaturally separate and diverse from the rest of the animal kingdom (Darwinian revolution), and we are very far from being standalone minds entirely transparent to ourselves, as René Descartes (1596–1650), for example, assumed (Freudian revolution) (Floridi 2010, 8–9).

This process of reassessing human nature is indeed peculiar¹ and forces us to stop thinking of ourselves as “standalone entities, but rather [as] interconnected informational organisms or *inforgs*, sharing with biological agents and engineered artefacts a global environment ultimately made of information, the infosphere” (Floridi 2010, 9). We are thus part of a global environment made up of information, the infosphere, which is constituted, in turn, by “all informational processes,

¹As Floridi points out (2010, 8–9): “Oversimplifying, science has two fundamental ways of changing our understanding. One may be called *extrovert*, or about the world, and the other *introvert*, or about ourselves. [...] Since the 1950s, computer science and ICTs have exercised both an extrovert and an introvert influence, changing not only our interaction with the world but also our self-understanding”.

services, and entities, thus including informational agents as well as properties, interactions, and mutual relations” (Floridi 2010, 9; 2003). It may be useful to recall that such an informational universe is constituted by both analogue and digital data (Floridi 2010, 24). This informational representation transforms the world, not in what the world is (i.e. in noumenal sense), even if in a certain sense it does touch on the ultimate nature of reality,² but in how we know and experience the world (i.e. in phenomenal sense). This leads to an important philosophical consequence that is relevant, as we will see through throughout this volume, both from a theoretical standpoint and a practical standpoint:

The criterion of existence – what it means for something to exist – is no longer being actually immutable (the Greeks thought that only that which does not change can be said to exist fully), or being potentially subject to perception (modern philosophy insisted on something being perceivable empirically through the five senses in order to qualify as existing), but being potentially subject to interaction, even if intangible. To be is to be interactable, even if the interaction is only indirect” (Floridi, 2010, 12).

Our networked and globalized world is thus subjected to the methods, practices and innovations of information technology, and reality is disaggregated into the elements and the data of interoperable software coding and reconstituted into novel social, economic, political, ethical and legal forms. Rendition of the world and of reality as information is creating new conditions of possibility for the emergence of new opportunities as well as of unpredicted policy vacuums and problems. To gain an understanding and be able to manage these opportunities, vacuums and problems requires scholars to elaborate an original and complex epistemological and ethical framework that can account not only for the consequences of the growth of information (the quantitative dimension) but also for the reontologization of reality brought about by that growth (the qualitative dimension). As remarked by Hegel, there is a point at which quantity becomes quality. Thus, this framework cannot just consist of regional epistemologies and standard, applied microethics. On the contrary, it is necessary to elaborate a more general epistemological analysis of information and to develop an innovative, applicable macroethics that are broader in their scope and capable of handling the profound transformations affecting the fabric of our own reality.

Scholars must firstly revise the long-standing and traditional epistemological tendency to consider reality in terms of stable and enduring structures ultimately based on or reducible to the objective existence of a material world. Secondly, it is crucial to understand that our reality is increasingly the outcome of information automated processes and software agents’ behaviours that are capable of producing morally, politically and legally loaded consequences for humans, which cannot be

²Floridi (2010, 12): “What we are currently experiencing is therefore a *fourth revolution*, in the process of dislocation and reassessment of our fundamental nature and role in the universe. We are modifying our perspective on the ultimate nature of reality, that is, our metaphysics, from a materialist one, in which physical objects and processes play a key role, to an informational one. This shift means that objects are de-physicalized in the sense that they tend to be seen as support-independent (consider a file)”.

understood and accounted for by means of established and traditional categories and forms of agencies, based on a rigid and impervious anthropocentric perspective. Thirdly, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine the agent that is to be held morally, politically or legally responsible in a network of relations and interactions that requires a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the whole environment in which agents behave and interact.

To help us address these issues, we turn to Luciano Floridi's work in the field of information theory. We believe that Floridi's philosophy and ethics of information is the finest conceptual prism through which to decode the informationally reontologized reality and to frame in theoretical and practical terms the problems that are brought about and fostered by the ongoing information revolution.³ The main thrust of Floridi's work is both centripetal and centrifugal: centripetal, in that it concerns the centrality of information as the main mode of understanding and representing reality, and centrifugal in that it concerns decentralization of the anthropocentric perspective within that understanding and representation of reality. However, this should in no way lead us to conceive of and label Floridi's philosophy in terms of posthumanism. Posthumanism – and post-humanist thought – only just begins to broach the profound changes that philosophy must concern itself with in our technological age. While philosophy is still concerned with the human capacity to provide questions with relevant answers, there has been a dramatic shift in the theoretical strategy taken to accomplish this task. This strategy requires us to realize that we depend on technologies just as technologies depend on us. We cannot escape this complex circularity, which calls us to responsibility as constructionist human beings (*homo poieticus*) who build their world through constant interaction with technologies in terms of constraining affordances that, while not dictating agents' behaviour, do configure the environment in ways that shape agents' engagement. Any instance of the universe may be experienced as an informational object (constituted by a packet of information) by an epistemic agent at the proper level of information. Accordingly, agents need not be thought of anthropologically, but as information systems that create, store, disseminate and exchange information, by interacting with each other and participating in the construction of the infosphere. This requires philosophy to accomplish a double turn: to adopt a non-anthropocentric and constructionist approach to theoretical and practical issues. We believe that Luciano Floridi's theory of information paves the way to this pivotal philosophical turn. Our book aims to show what this philosophical turn requires conceptually. We therefore need to adopt a theoretical hypothesis to guide our analysis and investigation. This may easily be summed up by stating that Luciano Floridi is "the last humanist" and "the first constructionist".

³For an introduction to Floridi's philosophy and ethics of information, see the *Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Artificial Intelligence* (2015); Beavers and Jones (eds.) (2014); Demir (ed.) (2010 and 2012); Allo (ed.) (2011); *Etica & Politica/Ethics & Politics* (2011); *Metaphilosophy* (2010); *Knowledge, Technology and Policy* (2010); Ess (2009); and *Ethics and Information Technology* (2008).

Luciano Floridi: “The Last Humanist” and “The First Constructionist”

The claim that Floridi is the last humanist may be understood in two ways. It can be interpreted in the sense that Floridi is the last of the humanists, that is, he is a philosopher who has finally given up on an anthropocentric approach to theoretical and practical issues in our technologically mediated society. It can also be interpreted in the opposite sense, meaning that Floridi is the last possible humanist, that is, a philosopher who believes that the only way at present to support humanism in a technologically mediated society is to endorse a non-anthropocentric approach to theoretical and practical issues. In this work, we wish to show that both interpretations are true. A non-anthropocentric approach to theoretical and practical issues is required by the fact that technology is so profoundly embedded in our world that our lives, i.e. the way we relate to each other and the environment, are technologically mediated. Today, a uniquely anthropocentric perspective is not sufficient theoretically or practically to account for all of the different types of interactions we might experience.⁴ Floridi’s ontocentric approach, however, does not displace the role of human beings; on the contrary, it highlights and reinforces it, since it expands the class of both moral agents and patients. On the one hand, this means that there are more sources of morally relevant actions, while on the other, there are more patients to whom we owe moral respect. This may lead us in the long run to increase the sense of universality and hospitality on which we wish to construct our information societies. This leads us to another aspect of our hypothesis: the relevance of a constructionist perspective.

Philosophy has long been characterized by a deconstructionist perspective, which has mainly concerned itself with a strong *pars destruens* of the philosophical narrative. Philosophers set out to denounce humanism, how its promises were regularly unfulfilled and to what extent human culture, norms and values could not prevent even the most ominous and ruthless tragedies. Against this backdrop, technology has been repeatedly evoked in support of this negative view and to demonstrate the human tendency to progressively lose control of reality. A faithful and unadorned account of the human condition was, in this perspective, the best that philosophy could be expected to offer us. *Good news is no news*. However, times have (slightly) changed. Our generation is more concerned with a *pars construens* of the philosophical narration. We have no special reason to support optimism (which, in fact, we do not), given that we live, think and work in an age of crisis. Nonetheless, this has provided us opportunities for rethinking our mindset and renegotiating our relationship with traditional and deep-seated categories, values and agencies. Crisis is not somewhere out in the world; it is an integral feature of Western societies as we

⁴Floridi (2013, XV): “[Ethics] is still largely centred on a standalone, Cartesian-like, ratiocinating, human individual [...] when the world has in fact moved towards hybrid, distributed, and multi-agent systems (there is probably more ‘moral agency’ occurring at the level of governments, non-governmental organizations, parties, groups, companies, and so forth, than in the life of millions of individuals)”.

have constructed them. That is why we have to adopt a constructionist perspective with regard to theoretical and practical issues.

Luciano Floridi is not only the last humanist. He is also the first constructionist, because he believes that constructionism today is both theoretically and practically the first methodological commitment of the philosophical inquiry.⁵ Theoretically, constructionism is concerned with the understanding of philosophy in terms of “conceptual design”:

By ‘conceptual design’ I mean to refer to a *constructionist* (not a *constructivist*) philosophy that can explain (better: account for) our semantic artefacts and design or re-purpose those needed by our new infosphere. [...] I much prefer speaking of *conceptual design*, especially in view of the fact that design is neither discovery nor invention, nor a matter of tinkering, fixing, or improving, but indeed the art of implementing requirements and exploiting constraining affordances intelligently and teleologically, in order to build artefacts in view of a specific goal. Philosophy as conceptual design is therefore a realistic philosophy, which treats semantic artefacts as mind- *and* reality-co-dependent, in the same way as a house is not a representation but the outcome of a specific architectural design both constrained and afforded by the building materials (Floridi 2013, 2).

This means that philosophy is mostly fashioned by the set of questions being posed and the answers being answered for a specific purpose.⁶ Philosophy is not some sort of picture of the world or of the intrinsic nature of the system we are analysing. Rather, it provides a way to construct models of systems that delimit the range of the consistent answers that might be offered to the relevant questions. Floridi’s epistemic constructionism is the theoretical foundation of and counterpart to the ethical conception of the *homo poieticus*, i.e. the demiurgic attitude of informational agents that are called upon to design technologies and to construct their world in a responsible manner. In practical terms, this means that we bear responsibilities for the way we design technologies and construct our world through interaction with others and the environment. It also means, however, that we are not just creators but also created entities that are part of a whole that is always cocreated. Constructionism is not meant to restore the sense of human narcissism that a radical non-anthropocentrism approach is meant to displace. Floridi’s notion of ethical

⁵Floridi (2013, 2): “I take [philosophy] to be a foundationalist enterprise (something not very fashionable these days). Again, relying on the previous analogy and the conceptual undercurrents, I do not take philosophy to be in business of repairing but rather in that of building the raft while swimming, to paraphrase Neurath. The emphasis is on the radical and difficult nature of the philosophical task ahead of us, not on any anti-foundationalist suggestion. Understanding philosophy as conceptual design means giving up not on its foundationalist vocation, but rather on the possibility of outsourcing its task to any combination of logico-mathematical and empirical approaches. At the same time, understanding philosophy as conceptual design enables one to avoid epistemic relativism at the expense of representationalism”.

⁶Floridi’s philosophical inquiry moves from problems (i.e. a set of questions and answers) and develops through them. In this perspective, the constructionist view advocated in his philosophy may be put into relation with Deleuze’s and Guattari’s (1994) understanding of the philosophical task, as Floridi himself remarks (2013, 2, footnote 2).

constructionism is not so much concerned with the *egopoietic* construction of the self as it is with the *ecopoietic* construction of the environment in which we live:

We shall be in serious trouble if we do not take seriously the fact that we are constructing the new physical and intellectual environments that will be inhabited by future generations. [...] The task is to formulate an ethical framework that can treat the infosphere as a new environment worth the moral attention and care of the human inforgs inhabiting it. Such an ethical framework must be able to address and solve the unprecedented challenges arising in the new environment. It must be an *e-nvironmental ethics* for the whole infosphere. This sort of *synthetic* (both in the sense of holistic or inclusive, and in the sense of artificial) *environmentalism* will require a change in how we perceive ourselves and our roles with respect to reality, what we consider worth our respect and care, and how we might negotiate a new alliance between the natural and the artificial. It will require a serious reflection of the *human project* (Floridi, 2013, 18; the last emphasis is ours).

The Structure of the Book

This book is organized in two parts. The first is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the main theoretical tenets and issues of Luciano Floridi's theory of information. The goal is not to provide the reader with an exegesis of Floridi's thought but to attempt to trace the reasoning and strategies that have guided his philosophical construction and theoretical choices. We will highlight the most original acquisitions of Floridi's thought, that is to say, his contribution to the theory of information, from a philosophical and ethical standpoint, as well as to the philosophical tradition as such. While Floridi is steeped in and highly versed in the philosophical tradition, he makes a concerted effort not to remain tethered to this tradition, which he in fact successfully revamps in several crucial ways, as we shall discuss.

Part I specifically Chap. 1 is concerned with methodology. Floridi develops and makes use of the method of levels of abstraction, which is the philosophical basis of his constructionism. This method is widely applied by Floridi in his theory of information and is very often referred to in the present book because of its crucial importance. Its philosophical significance, which rests on a fruitful reading of Kant's transcendentalism coupled with the employment of specific notions (i.e. observables, variables and gradients of abstraction), derives from the fact that it enables Floridi's theory of information to escape from the Scylla and Charybdis of both subjectivism and objectivism. Since all entities are perceived, understood and experienced at a specific level of abstraction by an epistemic agent (there is no level of abstraction-free entity), all agents bear an inevitable epistemic responsibility for the adopted level of abstraction. Chapter 2 is concerned with the transformation of our world engendered by the information revolution stemming from the technological evolution of ICTs. This evolution shapes our world in a way that has been devised by Floridi in terms of an informational environment. This requires a change of paradigm in the study of technology and in the comprehension of our world, which requires us to rethink the notion of space, from Newton to Leibniz and Kant. This chapter thus focuses on the informational nature of the environment in which we live and act in. Accordingly, we explain the infosphere, the laws that are meant to

govern it and the essential principle that underlies the ontology of the informational environment. Chapter 3 is concerned with the role of human beings in the transformed technological scenario of the informational environment. Human beings can no longer be understood as standalone entities, legislators of all things, according to a deep-seated anthropocentric perspective. Floridi suggests we adopt an ontocentric approach, based on the notion of informational object, in order to consider the role of agents and patients in a non-anthropocentric perspective and to extend the class of what counts as a moral subject. In this chapter, our aim is hence to elucidate how a non-anthropocentric approach does not necessarily turn into an anti-humanistic rhetoric that inflates postmodern philosophy; it instead strengthens the notion of human responsibility. This point is further remarked upon and analysed in Chap. 4, which is concerned with the morality of artificial agents. Investigation of the revised notions of agency and autonomy from the informational standpoint sheds further light on the moral experience of accountability and responsibility. As for the patients of the moral experience, the extension of the class of moral agents in the direction of non-human agents can help us to better grasp the role of humans in moral responsibility and to tackle more adequately new theoretical and practical problems arising from the current interaction with artificial autonomous agents. Finally, Chap. 5 deals with the informational construction of the self (personal identity). This subject concludes Part I of the book because the informational construction of the self is no longer understood in a traditional way as the fundamental starting point of philosophical reasoning, but rather as the dynamic result of interaction with other entities and with the environment. Furthermore, it is the notion of informational construction of the self (i.e. the idea that we are constructed by a consistent packet of information that may be experienced at different levels of abstraction) that enables us to recognize that our personal identity is not a fixed, built-in entity to which one can gain immediate access with no regard to context or purpose.

Part II is devoted to the presentation and analysis of the main consequences of Floridi's theory of information expounded in Part I, primarily from a normative perspective concerning the fields of politics and law. Our purpose is twofold. Firstly, we intend to measure the concrete relevance of Floridi's speculation in the area of practical reason with reference to law and politics. Secondly, we aim to better understand the normative dimension of information, i.e. in what sense and to what extent information can function as a rule of behaviour, by providing people with the background against which they build their beliefs about reality, make decisions and behave, by interacting in a multi-agent system, in which they increasingly rely on information and depend on information and communication technologies (ICTs). In the end, we believe that our reflection on Floridi's theory of information will enable us to sketch out the general framework of an informational approach to politics and to law, which are becoming so important to our globalized, networked societies of information.

Part II specifically Chap. 6 deals with the philosophical foundation of pluralism, one of the main consequences of Floridi's theory of information. Floridi's approach allows us to give an ontological foundation to pluralism understood in informational terms. An ontological foundation of pluralism, or, in other words, a pluralistic

conception of being, is central from a theoretical and practical standpoint, because it provides us with a deeper understanding of Floridi's ontological approach to ethical issues (concerned with the requirements of hospitality, universalism and pluralism). Moreover, it provides a way out from the quicksand of a merely relativistic attitude to the crucial idea and fundamental value of (the respect of) differences in our pluralistic societies. Chapter 7 is thus concerned with the ontological interpretation of informational privacy. This chapter develops and applies the idea of the ontological construction of personal identity in the field of management and protection of our constitutive information. It explores the notion of privacy as constructed and understood in informational terms and consistent with the progressive digitization of our personal identity in the information society. The informational approach to privacy provides us with an understanding of how personal data may be accessed, inferred and aggregated and thereby manipulated and put at risk. It also discusses how the ontological friction assuring the protection of privacy needs to be balanced with the opportunities resulting from the creation and sharing of informational resources. The first two chapters of Part II, like the last chapter of Part I, are mainly concerned with the effects of the informational revolution at the individual level. The remaining chapters of Part II turn to the social aspects. Chapter 8 is concerned with the philosophical foundation of the information society. This chapter revisits the political and legal tradition of contractualism by reconsidering the structure of the conflict (from which political and legal modernity emanates) and the statute of their participants. Notably, this perspective is intended to defeat the "human narcissism" on which the traditional anthropocentric construction and understanding of the society are based. Such a perspective requires us to envisage a new social or natural contract for the globalized, networked information society, which acknowledges a third perspective, namely, that of the infosphere. This chapter establishes the philosophical premises of the last two chapters, which are concerned with politics and law. Chapter 9 describes an informational approach to politics. The information revolution has a strong impact on our conception of politics, since it affects two basic political ideas in the modernity: regulation (the relation between rulers and ruled) and space (a territory governed by a sovereign power). Politics is no longer understood, in descriptive terms, as a form of control over a territory and, in normative terms, as the art of taking collective decisions. In the information age, politics is understood as the efficient and effective management of and control over the life cycle of information, which surpasses the spatial boundaries of nation states. Against this backdrop, the subject of politics is no longer the dichotomy or dialectics between rulers and ruled, which characterizes the idea of government. It is instead the dichotomy or dialectics between what is governable and what is ungovernable that characterizes the notion of governance when understood as a measure of the degree of complexity of our information societies. Chapter 10 is concerned with an informational approach to law. The information revolution can affect the law in many ways: firstly, it multiplies the sources of norms (legal information); secondly, it entails competition between different normative systems; and thirdly, it changes the reality that law is expected to govern, since it reontologizes the reality.

Technological normativity is thus embedded in our societies and in our democracies alike. This not only implies that we move from state regulation to a multi-agent and multilevel form of technologically mediated regulation; there is a major turn at stake: our normative mindset towards the representation of reality. Our normative beliefs guiding our decisions and behaviours are no longer regulated and based on a traditional and deep-seated representation of reality; they depend on an informational representation that is increasingly made up of virtual realities, informational objects and streams of information. This changes the reality of what is subject to the law.

Luciano Floridi's theory of information revisits many aspects of the current paradigm of philosophy, opening up original and unexplored paths of research and reflection. His approach to philosophical and ethical issues sows the seeds for a different way of understanding and for dealing with old and new theoretical and practical problems concerned with the role of information and ICTs in information societies. Innovative and radical, Floridi's thought is often challenging and confrontational. Not everybody is expected to agree with it. Overall consensus is not required and often not even hoped for. We only wish that our book might offer some readers with valid reasons and arguments for supporting Floridi's approach and require others to strengthen their reasons and arguments for dissent.

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