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Some Ethical Consequences of Global Information

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GOOD WILL AND POWER Floridi, who also holds an appointment as an Associate Professor of Logic and Epistemology at the Dipartimento di Scienze Filosofiche, [Università degli Studi di Bari](#) in Italy, says humanity has an ever-increasing amount of information available, and most of us have the will to want to do good - but we don't always have the power to affect change.

TECHNOLOGY AND RESPONSIBILITY This inability to act on our knowledge is the tragedy of modern times, but one that will change, Floridi predicted. "Humanity is increasingly responsible for designing and implementing the way the world is," he said. Biotechnology, feats of engineering, advances in genetics, nanotechnology and a range of other information-based advances mean that humanity can play the role of Plato's demiurge, the intelligent being that brings order and structure to the world.

AUGMENTED ETHICS At the same time, the stores of information available to us and its richness mean that humanity is accountable, morally speaking, for the way the world is. This increased moral responsibility demands what Floridi labels "augmented ethics", an ethical approach that requires humanity to be much more proactive, based on the knowledge and information we have at hand, and much less respectful of the status quo in our willingness to change things.

ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS We will also have to develop

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ethical approaches to what Floridi calls "artificial agents", or groups, organizations, institutions, and governments that are made up of individuals who, on their own, may act morally and ethically, but when gathered in a group or institution, do not as a collective have the inherent ability to act morally. This challenges us to find ways to build or create moral institutions, he said - to reform the United Nations, for example, to ensure that it does good.

If moral institutions cannot be created, then we must find a way to educate them so that they can do good, or failing that, humanity must find a way to control these "artificial agents" so they act in humanity's best interests.

- *Nancy Bazilchuk*

More Information

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