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Information Ethics as a Conserving Activity: November 8, 2016

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Abstract

The following paper questions the practicability of Information Ethics to help solve political problems.

Introduction

If, as Kay Mathiesen (2015, 427) defines it, Information Ethics (IE) “is the study of normative questions related to the creation, preservation, organization, access, presentation, and control of information,” then the recent U.S. election provided enough concerns about most aspects of IE to warrant stopping and analyzing at that point. This paper will avoid the minute-by-minute news cycle environment of the current U.S. presidential administration: what we now know about Russian entanglements and influence, the emoluments clause in the Constitution, recent tweets, or information mop-ups by cabinet members add details, but not anything essentially new to our perspective. The events of the election implicate understandings of IE from the commonplace to the esoteric, and by virtue of being a reader of this journal one can reasonably assume that—irrespective of one’s social or fiscal conservatism or liberalism—IE in a democracy is of importance. We have much about which to be concerned within IE at this time: The same political system that elected Abraham Lincoln with less than 40 percent of the vote produced majorities—albeit bare ones—



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in just enough states to ratify an onslaught of lies. So enshrined were lies leading up to November 8, 2016, the consensus of political analysis is that the 2016 winners went way beyond the shading of truth, the shaping of argument, modest concealment of defects, and political rhetoric.¹

This is a problem, and in recent papers the author has put forward three analyses—integrated here—that suggest a needed change in IE. Why a needed change? IE has little “cash value” in William James’ (1997, 113–114) sense of practical explanations (does the idea work out in experience?) of causes or the consequences of November 8, 2016. This is an issue arguably at a critical, even a crisis stage for the informational-ethical conditions of democracy, and IE has too little foothold to explain much of what went on before the election. The key observation is the lack of analysis and/or a public presence of a field called “information ethics” before and after November 8, 2016. The precursors of the campaign, the campaign itself, and its aftermath cry out for analysis and comment precisely around information ethics, and that has been strikingly absent from IE. We expect—and get—context and analysis from historians on Confederate monuments, from sociologists on racism, and so on. We do not get the same from IE on a plainly-troubling issue that should be in its wheelhouse. Why is that so? This paper interweaves a number of factors the author has previously identified:

- (1) In light of IE’s primary commitments and assumptions it has become “depoliticized and preoccupied with philosophical concerns (e.g., analytical precision in definitions and context ... and foundational issues of the reasoning process)” (Buschman 2016, 421).
- (2) As a result, IE is ill-equipped to make sense of the claims, actions and decisions of a public that has “not reckoned with the full flower of the results” of policies and politics they have supported, leaving it “unsettled and de-centered” (Buschman 2017a, 66).
- (3) Consequently, other explanations and theoretical descriptions more accurately anticipated and captured the environment leading up to November 8, 2016 (Buschman 2017b; forthcoming), despite the fact that many issues in and about the campaign were within the theoretical wheelhouse of IE.

The remainder of this paper will expand on each of these three points, with a conclusion on the nature of the task now facing IE.

1. The Primary Commitments of IE

The following will of necessity foreshorten a complex field and in so doing it will be provocative, but there is arguably a valid core point in this perspective.

Much as John Rawls is the starting point for contemporary theoretical work on justice in political theory, Luciano Floridi and Rafael Capurro can be said to be the main trunk of contemporary IE. Floridi is the centerpiece of reviews of IE theory by numerous established scholars,² is prominent in an important encyclopedia entry on IE (Bynum 2008a), and is the editor of a standard handbook on the field (2010)—and a frequent subject within it. Capurro was the centerpiece of the 2014 Information Ethics Roundtable held at the University of Alberta (<https://sites.google.com/a/ualberta.ca/ier2014/home>), and is the focus of numerous reviews of IE as well.³ He is the author of a standard encyclopedia entry on the field (Capurro 2013) and is also prominent in the definition of and growth in the field according to the same encyclopedia entry featuring Floridi (Bynum 2008a). They both cite one another frequently in accounts of the establishment and growth of IE (Floridi 2008; Capurro 2008).⁴ A very recent overview of IE takes both to be foundational to the field (Fuchs 2016), and Mathiesen (2004) writes that “the first use of the term in print was in 1988, when it was used by ... Rafael Capurro (a philosopher) in “Information Ethos and Information Ethics,” along with two others; she then mentions Floridi who had since “written a number of articles developing a theory of information ethics.” One author goes so far as to write that a “new initiate stumbling into the current evolution of Information Ethics ... might assume that the entire phenomenon is constructed and directed entirely by Floridi and Capurro, two key players whose thought seem [*sic*] to dominate the field, and whose works consistently play off of, critique and reference the other” (Bielby 2014).⁵ While intentionally overdrawn, the point is made nonetheless.

As foundational to contemporary IE, any number of overviews of Floridi’s and Capurro’s work—including their own—make it clear that their primary commitment is philosophical. They are, as it was put, “philosopher[s] of information first and then [turn to] information ethics as a natural development of ... philosophical explorations” (Sturges 2009, 245). Floridi makes clear the spread of disciplines and fields that IE either covers or relates to, and he seeks to clear up the welter of concepts they all use or invoke to establish the credibility of the field within philosophy by formulating “proper theoretical foundations” that overcome problems within Kant, consequentialism, deontology and contractualism (Siponen 2004, 279–280).⁶ In so doing he explicitly grounds IE in the philosophy of information via an analysis of “the constitution and modeling of information environments” (Floridi 2002, 44). That is, information is abstract, of intrinsic value, everywhere, and constitutive of the “infosphere”—defined essentially as information processes at work via their technologies; it follows that IE “should be able to address and solve the ethical challenges arising in the infosphere” (Floridi 2008, 3).⁷ Both the language describing the characteristics of the infosphere and its apparent link as a neologism to the concept of the biosphere are meant to convey a new information nature or naturalness; as such, entropy is to be avoided or removed, the “flourishing of informational

entities ... ought to be promoted,” and the “basic moral question [of] IE is: what is good for informational entities and for the infosphere in general?” (Floridi 2008, 17, 3). Capurro (2013, 471) understands IE “as a philosophical discipline dealing with good and bad practices of human communication.” As such, he formulates a “concept of information ethics that ... stress[es] ambiguities ... not unrelated to a Hegelian and Marxian dialectical logic [and] analysis of antagonisms” (Fuchs 2016, 174). For him, IE “makes more sense to the degree information is related to a content and not a machine that handles the content,” and its topics are thus social (Froehlich 2000, 279). Capurro’s (2008) search for a foundation for IE is grounded in both classic philosophical debates and philosophical understandings across and between cultures. He understands the project “as a reflection on morality ... to bridge ... differences [and] creat[e] common moral codes” (Capurro 2008, 649) and “as a self-referential process” that uses communication to understand how “moral identity is understood” (in Carbo and Smith 2008, 111).⁸ Contra Floridi, the question for Capurro is “not just ‘What is good for an information entity and the infosphere in general?’ but: ‘What is good for our bodily being-in-the-world with others in particular?’” (Capurro 2006, 182).

Privacy is a good stand-in to further examine those primary commitments of the main trunk of IE. Without documenting it exhaustively here, privacy is a core concern of IE: it has been the theme or the strong sub-theme of many of the 15 Information Ethics Roundtables (<https://ischool.arizona.edu/information-ethics-roundtable>), is a prominent theme in Bynum’s (2008a) standard encyclopedia entry on the field which cites many works from prominent privacy scholars (like Helen Nissenbaum) who enter the IE debate from the vantage of the intersection of privacy and technology. Given his highly elaborated framework, Floridi naturally enough proposes “ontological friction in the infosphere” as the idea behind privacy for IE: less friction equals less privacy; more friction (thicker walls in apartments, search tools that do not allow capturing of data or profiling) equals more privacy (Doyle 2010, 173). Floridi does not see a violation of privacy “tied to an agent’s personal rights,” rather for him “it is linked to conditions affecting the information environment that the agent constitutes” and information breaches directly implicate one’s *identity* in the infosphere (Tavani 2008, 148–149). Similarly for Capurro, privacy now relates to the “physical body as digitally grasped ... privacy understood as data protection is expanded from the idea of digital data about the person to the body conceived as an information system” (Capurro 2005, 47). IE so conceptualized has come to cast privacy concerns as a series of individual and philosophically-inflected issues, effectively negating its political content: “it shifts the locus of a violation of privacy away from conditions tied to an agent’s personal rights involving control and ownership ... to conditions affecting the information environment” (Tavani 2010, 267; Buschman 2016). We’ve not really come very far from McCloskey’s (1980, 27) formulation of almost forty years ago that “clarity of

thought is to be achieved by separating the questions of what privacy is, what is its domain, and what infringements of privacy are justifiable, what is unjustifiable.”⁹ Even among those who engage IE *and* seek to theorize about privacy outside of the Floridi-Capurro industrial complex, different questions are raised, but frequently cast as “philosophically challenging” (Moore and Unsworth, 2005, 11).

To bring this point about the primary commitments of IE into a focus on the recent U.S. election, neither philosopher is terribly informative on our current post-truth environment. Floridi is more interested in a technical definition of disinformation (“false information is not information”) that would be so damaging to the infosphere, and the distinctions that distinguish the conditions of disinformation (Fallis 2011; 2015). Capurro (2011) has only briefly engaged the topic of lying within a contextual analysis of online social life vs. engagement in the scientific community. To be of relevance here IE would have to be practical, toggling between the IE theory “reflected upon in tranquility” and then “acted out in [the] confusion” (Walzer 1986, 135) that is our current technologically-saturated society and, especially now, our politics. Floridi (2008, 19; 2002) demurs on the practical application of his ideas, stating that “one must polarize theory and practice to strengthen both,” and Capurro (1985, 116) notes the “difference between ethical arguments and codes [and that] the discussion on ethical problems should be the key issue” because the practicalities of professional and ethical codes are not intellectually supple enough to philosophically capture the nature of the grounds and conditions of IE. But this “is not just a theoretical exercise”: these and other kinds of practical issues are engaged in our current politics just as they are encountered in libraries all the time (Fallis 2007, 26; Mathiesen and Fallis 2008), and the issues swirling around privacy remain of core practical-ethical concerns (Rubel 2014; Zimmer 2014). “By contrast, it is difficult to tell what IE will say about almost any textbook issue” (Doyle 2010 171) because of its level of philosophical abstraction. Such turning away from questions of fact to questions of how-do-we-know-we-know-it—essentially a retreat into epistemology— is deeply problematic (Latour 2004).

2. Developments in the Infosphere and the De-Centered Public

To be fair, these two philosophers have not been obtuse. For Capurro (2006, 182), we should be “concerned not only with the ... ‘ethics in the infosphere’ but [also] an ethics *of* the infosphere.” Floridi (2008, 3) describes the move to an information society in the form of “business and property services, ... finance, and insurance ... education, public administration, [and] health care” and their relationship to technology *create* the infosphere, along with

many of our current ethical dilemmas. That joint framing—the *move to an information society as constitutive of the infosphere and an ethics of it*—implies a history.¹⁰ This is too constricted a view in historical terms to successfully explain the post-truth environment leading up to November 8, 2016. Our current era is the response to the Keynesian welfare state settlement, defined as equalitarian activist economic policy in the form of government regulation to smooth out business cycles (protecting capitalism from itself), worker protections (unions, unemployment compensation, stability of employment), income and welfare redistribution, access to schools and training, and encouraging home ownership and consumption—that gained and then held sway for roughly 45 years until the mid-1970s (Collin and Apple 2009, 87–90; Cohen 2003, 54–56). It has been described as a “comparatively fair and progressive period” when people “earned enough money and benefits so they could claim they were in the middle class” because big businesses “were not able to be [as] aggressive as they were before” (Brosio 2013, 269).¹¹

That era contained within it the seeds of its own demise in several forms. First was the full flowering of “economic interest in full competition with political participation” (Wolin 2004, 251)—prosperity and economic stability became the center and point of politics. Second, this then fueled the “conservative restoration”—the backlash response to the political and social activism of the 1960s that this broad prosperity engendered among the young (Shor 1986). Third, strategic and economic post-war American dominance led to the Cold War standoff, conducted in large part through the development, control, and proliferation of nuclear weapons to counteract the overwhelming presence of the Soviet Army in the east of Europe; the result was the security state that both eroded privacy and relied on secrecy (Ambrose 1971; Maret 2014). This generated a politics: “Once the identity and security of democracy were successfully identified with the Cold War and with the methods for waging it, the stage was set for the intimidation of most politics left of right. [A] steady erosion in the power of various nongovernmental groups and institutions [and] a long and seemingly irreversible decline set in [for the] independent trade union movement, with its disrupti[ons] of strike and boycott ... portrayed as a potential threat to the mobilization of America’s economic power” (Wolin 2008, 34). It took some time to fully take root, but the result is the neoliberalism of our current era¹² which valorizes the market and market freedoms (especially financial and labor markets and challenging environmental protections), and has established an “equality of insecurity” (MacPherson 1992, 253) among wage earners.

Put at its simplest, neoliberalism implies postmodernity. The political-economic arrangements that enable the move to an information society (neoliberalism) are constitutive of the infosphere and postmodernity, which is to say, the social and cultural trends and arrangements that characterize (most) contemporary societies.¹³ Postmodernity in turn implies de-industrialization: the

move to a media-intensive, finance, and information-manipulation based economy.¹⁴ Socially, the results consist of an emphasis on identity and “maximal opportunity for self-creation” in social and political arrangements (Mara and Dovi 1995, 1; Giddens 1999). Together, both are particularly impactful on the family (Castells 1996). In postmodernity’s media-heavy environment, there is an eclecticism, a “diversity [and] plurality of surfaces which is possible to produce [by] the rich technological bases of modern cultural production which enable us endlessly to simulate, reproduce, reiterate, and recapitulate” (Hall 1986, 49). As a result, culture is now separate from ideology and does not cohere as it formerly did (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2000; Hartley 1994). The results pull in multiple directions simultaneously: enabling globalization at the same time as fragmentation and localization, challenging the concept of a state or nation via borderless flows of people, money, media—and thus common social and political interests—while creating violent ethno-nationalisms along with specialized groupings that are mediated by technology, but are not actual communities with all that implies.¹⁵ These are notable and relevant absences in IE’s account of the infosphere and its ethical challenges, with IE-relevant fallout from a de-centered public that has undergone highly rapid changes to the basis of its existence.

For instance, there is a deepening and persistent inequality under neoliberalism; upward mobility—defined as doing as well as or better than one’s parents—is declining, and inequality is increasing; such upheavals—economic and social displacement together—have historically brought on unrest and conflict (Leonhardt 2016; Krugman 2014; Lozada 2017). We are seeing some version of that currently. “In the neo-liberal fantasy of individualism, everyone was supposed to be an entrepreneur, retraining and repackaging himself or herself in a dynamic economy, perpetually alert to ... technological revolutions”; instead, the revolutions which brought hope and aspiration left much of that public behind to feel cruelly abandoned in limbo (Mishra in Lozada 2017). Politically, circumstances are such that the “temporalities, rhythms, and pace governing economy and culture”—that is, a media-and-marketing saturated environment (Wolin 1997)—have produced an “anti-political ethos inherent to those systems” which is of real consequence to democracy (McIvor 2011, 74). Consequently there is predictable anger, ethno-nationalism, mistrust of political and civic institutions, and a population inured to the lies spoken by a rebellious strongman on behalf of overlooked truths about their lives that they feel—and for which they voted (Ignatius 2016; Applebaum 2015). We now face a public that putatively agrees with the arguments in support of the economic, social, technological, and political forces that have been unleashed in the form of the politicians they elect, but they have not reckoned with the full results, and IE is ill-equipped to help that public make sense of November 8, 2016. Privacy-as-ontological friction or the physical body as digitally grasped does not help us parse the claim of privacy in a Presidential candidate’s withholding of tax

returns amidst strong questions about his business ties to a hostile, authoritarian regime in Russia. Likewise, a “self-referential process [and] an unending quest on explicit and implicit use of the moral code, ... of respect or disrespect, with regard to individual and social communication” (Capurro in Carbo and Smith 2008, 1111) does not help us address the admixture of lies, ethno-nationalism and self-regard that was ratified on November 8, 2016. We have crossed a threshold (or to be more historically accurate, re-crossed a threshold that had been reestablished), and IE is ill-equipped to deal with it.

3. November 8, 2016: Better Explanations

Necessarily only briefly sketched here, there are a number of sources of theoretical insight that IE should actively interrogate and integrate into its program because they have long engaged the ethics of the infosphere in a way and at a depth that could prove of use.

- The first is Neil Postman’s (1979; 1988) early analysis of the media environment. He examined the technologies and media that were altering the bases of fundamental concepts like privacy, freedom of information, intellectual freedom, and rational inquiry, making them largely irrelevant. Numerous scholars have since elaborated on his basic points. For instance, as a result of these changes “the way you communicate is [to] fashion a ‘package of stimuli’ that will ‘resonate’ with what is already and continuously communicated. [T]he search for the ‘responsive chord’ ... crowd[s] out all other impulses” (Rosen 1992, 23). Habermas (1985, 97) described well its apotheosis: we inhabit an environment of “an increasing substitution of images for words, [the] inter-mingling of categories such as advertising, politics, entertainment [and] information... the banal coalesces with the unreal [and] the highly personalized, consumeristically polished bizarre.”
- The second is Steven Lukes’ (2011, 22–23) revival of the concept of false consciousness: acquiescence “and even enthusiastic support for ... spokesmen [for an issue] can be the result of ... mistaking or misconceiving where our interests lie. ... [T]his need not be because we have been bamboozled by the powerful; we can be fully engaged in bamboozling ourselves.” That is, power can and is applied to mislead, convince, obfuscate, or set decision parameters and agendas—or provide rationales to do so to oneself. False consciousness remains controversial if only because it *feels* patronizing, but as Lukes (2007, 60–61) states, “any view of power that cannot allow for this possibility fails to account for what we can all recognize to be a possibility and ... a widespread actuality, however uncomfortable we may feel in justifying that recognition.” This

is in fact what happened on November 8, 2016: the very people who would benefit from such policies voted against “expansion of health-insurance subsidies for low- and middle-income Americans; investments in education and retraining; middle-class tax cuts; and a higher minimum wage [which] would do far more to help the economically precarious ... than ... top-heavy tax cuts and trade wars” (Rampell 2016).¹⁶

- The third strand is unfashionable in philosophical terms, but essential in democratic and political terms. IE shares an overlapping consensus (Rawls 2005) with many related fields, and at the center of that overlap is a concept of verifiability—that some information can (and some cannot) be verified, that this does not depend on who is doing the verifying, and that this is based on evidence (Fallis 2004). IE in large measure works off the proposition that there is more-true information which is worth ethically accessing, organizing, seeking, or exposing (Mathiesen and Fallis 2008). In other words, IE posits—if information and its systems are to be “ethical”—some corrigible notion of truth. Without some grounding commitment to truth, however contingent, IE is incoherent. We rely upon and exist within social institutions that are so grounded like universities, courts, journalism, libraries, and democracy (Allen 2016). It is worth pausing for just a moment here. Truth in this sense is experiential: No one is denying that objects of different mass fall at the same rate in a vacuum; what is at stake are political truths (it was unnecessary that the U.S. invade Iraq in 2003). A “traditional lie ... concerned only particulars”—that is, deceiving one person or the enemy; the political lie is an “attempt to change the whole context” (Arendt in Shore 2017). The experience of totalitarian regimes and their sociology provides us with the example that the existence of truth was confirmed by the social results of the widespread political experience of lies (Shore 2017). IE has a professional space to fill between the individual and the systems in which she is enmeshed, and approaching lies deployed so broadly in our political life with a retreat into philosophic distinctions is a kind of casuistry that has real-life political implications (Snyder 2017, 40, 65; Shore 2017). Without moving that commitment more to the center, IE will resemble “those mechanical toys that endlessly make the same gesture when everything else has changed around them” (Latour 2004, 225).
- Fourth and last is the postmaterialism thesis: that “growing up taking survival for granted makes people more open to new ideas and more tolerant of outgroups (with insecurity having the reverse effect)” (Inglehart and Norris 2017, 443; Tufis 2000). That is, economic instability and insecurity—the everyday essence and driver of neoliberalism—produces a more conservative and authoritarian outlook and political attitudes.

Data have borne this out: postmaterialist values like “self-expression, belonging, and the nonmaterial quality of life” (Inglehart 2001, 684) no longer take precedence over security (Inglehart and Norris 2017; Inglehart and Baker 2003). Without descending into economic determinism, for IE not to grapple with the interrelated social, political, and economic fallout of neoliberalism is to stop well short of addressing one of the generative factors producing conditions so inimical to IE.

Conclusion

IE is not alone in this conundrum,¹⁷ so it is not entirely a surprise that there might be a gap between its work and contemporary conditions. But this is a gap that must not widen. We must and should attend to it and our new environment should inform a change in the arc of IE. The rhythms of the economy and culture eliminate the space and time needed to deliberate and compromise and to decide a consequential question, and “change is institutionalized and manufactured” becoming a force supporting political and economic authoritarianism and reaction (Wolin 1988, 184; 1997). In this sense librarianship and LIS—at least as they overlap and inform IE—have been considerably out front engaging the issue and the relevant facts on the ground.¹⁸ If IE is to adjust, then it follows that some change in intellectual perspective must happen, and Postman provides one avenue. We now have what Postman (1979, 18) calls a *curriculum* in the form of our politics—a curriculum broadly consisting of an environment or a set of circumstances which instructs through its arrangements, media, and messages. As he notes, “the stability and vitality of an environment depend not on what is *in* [it] but on the interplay of its elements; ... on ... diverse and dynamic complementarities [and] the most important complementarity is opposition.” In Postman’s (1979, 20) terms, IE’s task is “to make visible the prevailing biases of a culture and ... to oppose them [because] the business of a culture is to keep itself in working order[:] steady and balanced.” To carry on IE in this environment, following his logic and language, is to engage in opposition, what he calls a *conserving activity*. Clearly the neoliberal media and political environment has produced a kind of ratification of principles inimical to IE (and by extension, the health of democracy). To oppose them is essentially now both political and conservative in particular meanings. IE is now political in the sense of the current urgency of concern over what is shared, or held in common (Wolin 2004), arising through an investment in the consequences of contemporary political culture (seen in the November 8, 2016 ratification of lies¹⁹) and a broader good (Dewey 1927, 15–16). That concern is now practical (in terms of democratic functioning) and organizational (in terms of democratic institutions and the interests of the publics they serve). In other words, our definition of political is critical and normative (Warren 1999, 208–

209). IE is conservative in the contemporary need to nurture an “entailed inheritance derived to us” (Burke 1992, 381) and to keep “fundamental old principles” that served our state and society well over time, honoring the “partnership ... between those who are living, ... those who are dead, and those who are to be born” (Burke 1996, 353). That is, to engage in a conserving activity in Postman’s sense: political opposition to political lies.

This is not a time to be comfortable in IE, but there is some cold comfort in a cognizance of history. We know that American democracy was *designed* to be an abstract and buffered experience of self-governance: Staggered representation and indirect elections toggle between an “instrumental substitute for stronger forms of democracy” vs. the “selection and organization of political elites” and are complexities that continue to inform a variety of concerns right up to democratic governance on a global scale (Urbinati and Warren 2008, 388; Wolin 1993). Our contemporary problems of a deeply fractured public reflect the classical problem of “participation in public matters which related to the shared advantages made possible by ... social cooperation and ... shared burdens” (Wolin 1977, 20)—a delicate equipoise between collectivity and individualism that has always been a difficult problem to solve as history tells us. Even fake news is not new: In the 1920s, Walter Lippmann “drew attention to the way the media spread rumors and deliberate lies, and he sounded the alarm about a public ill-equipped to sort through conflicting ‘facts’ [and] was concerned about filter bubbles and the power of gatekeepers” (Foer 2017, 48). Joseph Schumpeter (2001, 147) dourly remarked in 1942 that “Information is plentiful and readily available. But this does not seem to make any difference” in our democratic decisions. If, as Lippmann (in Foer 2017, 48) argued, we are to preserve liberty we must understand it as “the name we give to measures by which we protect and increase the veracity of the information upon which we act.” To do otherwise is to concern ourselves not “with great tyranny but with smaller ones” (Wolin 1988, 191) and abandon any public function. Like it or not, we in IE are all conservatives now.

Notes

1. For a quick list of examples and further reading see Buschman (2017b, 281).
2. See Bynum (2010), Doyle (2010), Ess (2009), and Siponen (2004) for instance.
3. See Froehlich (2004), Carbo and Smith (2008), and Kelly and Bielby (2016) for instance.
4. Floridi is the much more-cited of the two according to GoogleScholar, but both outdistance other IE scholars in their citation counts.
5. Fuchs (2016) makes the same point.
6. See also Floridi (2008; 2002); Ess (2009) and Mathiesen (2004).
7. See also Doyle (2010), Fuchs (2016), and Bynum (2008b).
8. See also Capurro (2006; 1985).
9. On the social-political nature of information, knowledge, and privacy see also Tavani (2008) and Cohen (2012–2013).

10. One much like Gleick's (2011) where modern informational history begins around 1948 with Norbert Weiner.

11. Arguably even this is too foreshortened. Industrialization changed far more with extensive land displacement, urbanization, and the strict discipline of wage labor (Hobsbawm 1962, 241; 190–191), and we are still struggling with *those* epochal changes to basic social and economic arrangements (Bailyn 1960; Laslett 1962).

12. This has been the dominant public philosophy for decades now: see Buschman (2012), Sniegocki (2008), and Harvey (2007).

13. There is a distinction drawn here between *postmodernism* and *postmodernity* (Buschman forthcoming): *postmodernity* has been defined above, and *postmodernism* is broadly the intellectual parallel—in aesthetic and critical postures—to the social and cultural changes represented by *postmodernity*. That is, *postmodernism* represents an intellectual challenge to “subject-centered reason, monological texts or readings, grand narratives, general truth claims and the normalization of Enlightenment rationality” (Calhoun 1993, 77).

14. See Kumar (2004), Castells (1996), Halcli and Webster (2000), Calhoun (1993), and Harris, Hannah and Harris (1998).

15. See Miller (2008; 2014), Calhoun (1998), and Appadurai (1998; 1990).

16. See also Krugman (2016a; 2016b) and MacGillis (2015).

17. Political theorists were famously caught off guard by the political revolutions of 1989.

18. See for instance Miller (2017), Berry (2016), Lupien and Rourke (2017), Baer (2017), and the special issues of *Library Quarterly* previously mentioned.

19. Postman (1988, 42) is very clear on the consequences this: a discourse “immune to truth” in fact sweeps away the building blocks of reason and truth.

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