

SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Hacking Digital Ethics

As lead editors, we are excited to write this introduction to Belliger and Krieger's *Hacking Digital Ethics*, the second authored volume in the Anthem Press Ethics of Personal Data Collection Series. We appreciate ongoing cooperation with the acquisitions editor Megan Greiving, whose initial communication with Colette inspired our cooperation after speaking with the publisher Tej P. S. Sood.

The series builds on a special issue of *Genocide Studies and Prevention* organized by Colette at the invitation of Professor Douglas S. Irvin-Erickson, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Virginia, and Yasemin Irwin-Erickson, with funding for workshops at New York University provided by a grant from the Robert Bosch Foundation in Stuttgart, Germany. We are most grateful to Carolin Wattenberg, senior manager to the board of management, and Dr. Stella Voutta, program director, at the Bosch Foundation, as well as Anda Catharina Ruf, advisor for private foundations and philanthropy, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH), for their helpful and timely assistance in Germany.

Belliger and Krieger have been at the bleeding edge of thought on ethics and technology for the past few decades. Our earliest memory relative to this series was Belliger's publication *On Networking: A Hermeneutics for the Digital Age* (2012). Our aim is to explore the ethics of personal data collection because we identify personal data as the most microscopic measure of our information state. More specifically, we understand data as the new matter. Our expectation is for a data point to be identifiable with every piece of physical matter. Via data we are identifying the essence of what we are. In their exploration of network theory during the 2010 decade, Belliger and Krieger had to examine the methodological interpretation of philosophical texts like those of ancient religions, including the Abrahamic beliefs.

James recalls becoming familiar with our coauthors after giving a talk at the Transhumanism and Spirituality Conference in 2010, sponsored by the Mormon Transhumanist Association at the University of Utah's Marriott Library. After a presentation titled "Integrationalism: Spiritual Disincentives for Humanity," James was approached by Common Ground Publishing to expand his paper into a book (published in 2012) and was directed to Belliger's paper. James considered that his and Belliger's thoughts overlapped, if only slightly, in her study of a hermeneutics for the digital era and his use of data science to examine both popular ancient theology and modern

religious speeches to find a central objective of spirituality. In a word cloud, *connectivity* stood out among the rest of the concepts presented. Data based on the meaning of language used over the past five thousand years has yielded versions of the word *connectivity*. James studied spirituality to see if connections were incentivized by the spirit.

Throughout the decade, in technoprogressive communities like Humanity Plus, the Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technology, Lifeboat Foundation, Singularity University, the Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford, and many others, we all nurtured concepts like concluding the Information Age. As digital data became something that we discovered to be coupled with all things, and information became something that we understood existed via data, it would only be a matter of time until a new age of knowing arrived. The revolution heralds an era in which the intangible and even spiritual starts to come into view, via the network of humanity. We are excited to introduce the original research in this manuscript to the Anthem Press Series with familiar authors.

This specific volume is rare in the authors' effort to hack the typical methodological approach to ethics as a scientific sect. In the context of the Anthem Press Series, *Hacking Digital Ethics* expands the concepts defined in Kaliya Young's volume, *The Domains of Identity* (2020), which is rooted in a consideration of the many individuals and institutions that might enforce one's self-sovereignty. This volume further expands the series to consider the idea pioneered by Belliger and Krieger, which is that, in a fully digital world, it is necessary to consider the network's or the community's rights along with the individual's normalized human rights. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are reminded of the ethics of contact tracing and the paradoxical potential of a community's right to a safe space with self-sovereign individuals wearing masks. Belliger and Krieger's volume is a bridge between domains of identity and a forthcoming volume edited by Mazzucelli, Keith, and Hollifield, *The Ethics of Personal Data Collection in International Relations: Inclusionism in the Time of COVID-19*. It is a bridge between the 14 domains of managed identity that Kaliya Young presents and the redesign of 7 norms that Belliger and Krieger explain.

Personal data collection presents a unique dynamism that has not been acknowledged in the modern literature. The reality that individuals are at their best when they identify with a community is not at war with the reality that communities are at their best only when they identify all of their individuals. In that regard, we insist on translating the ethic of what Belliger and Krieger call *the informational self* with norms that networks-of-humanity demand, like flexibility, authenticity, transparency, participation, communication flow, and, of course, connectivity.

At the macro-level in which Belliger and Krieger reason, the ethical concerns we face require anti-surveillance protection of a legal nature to prevent indefensible surveillance and incessant accumulation of personal data. Only in this way will the growing power of states to control every facet of the lives of targeted communities be held in check. It is no longer enough to define human rights in terms of limits placed on arbitrary state power in defense of individual freedom, as liberals do. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, billions of people across the planet are interconnected in ways that are a matter of life and death. In a "post-pandemic world," the survival of the human species is dependent on connectivity, which is a core objective of spirituality. This second volume in the series asks readers to rethink ethics in the context of the fragile community, which

is composed of individuals vulnerable to surveillance capitalism as well as what John Sexton identifies in *Standing for Reason* (2019) as “secular dogmatism,” which contributes to the increasing polarization in societies. In thinking about the relevance of *Hacking Digital Ethics*, throughout our world today the macro- and micro-levels connect with considerable tensions in play: to counter the dangers of the surveillance capitalism Zuboff defines (2019), as Wu explains, “A little less knowledge is what will keep us free,” whereas to address the pitfalls of secular dogmatism, only a great deal more awareness may safeguard the peace in community.

We look forward to developing network partnerships, drawing on the ideas presented by Anne-Marie Slaughter in her volume, *The Chessboard & the Web* (2017), with the Institute for Communication & Leadership in Lucerne, Switzerland, where the authors of *Hacking Digital Ethics* hold key positions. By developing projects with colleagues within the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt Responsible Leaders Network, the contributors to this series intend purposefully to exchange ideas and propose initiatives that speak to various themes first introduced by Kaliya Young in her timely analysis.

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