

# A Study on the Basic Problems of Information Ethics

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**Abstract:** This passage has recalled the formation of information ethics, the author studied analytically the current status of information ethics, general essence and special essence of information ethics, and predicted the future trends of information ethic.

**Keywords:** information ethics, computer ethics, ethics essence

## 1. The formation of information Ethics

Information ethics originally comes from the study of computer ethics. With the extensive application of information technology and information science in-depth study, the scope of study on ethics related to the field of information is broadening gradually. From computer ethics to network ethics, it has expanded extensive exploitation and utilization of information, namely information ethics.

Information ethics consists of information technology and information society with informatics, philosophy, computer science, communication, sociology and traditional ethics with crossing and blending<sup>[1]</sup>. The study includes various ethical problems which emerge in the process of information production, information processing, information transmission and information utilization.

The rise and development of information ethics is rooted in the conflict of interest and the moral dilemmas caused by extensive application of information technology, and the need of establishment of a new moral order of information society. With the developing and strengthening of information ethics as a new and independent discipline, the study of information ethics will affect more and more aspects, such as globalization, the Internet's governance and control, user behavior, the state information policy, information legislation, direction of technological improvements. The

study of information ethics will help to solve the problems in these areas, and it is also beneficial to the coordinated development of individual, society and technology<sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, the study of information ethics has far-reaching significant.

## 2. The Current Status of Information Ethics

### 2.1. The Localization of Information Ethics

Information ethics originated in the west, though western information ethics relying on strong position of culture may lead to a strong impact on cultural system in non-western countries, and there are not lack of the voice about comprehensive recognition of western information ethics in non-western countries, it will not allow western information ethics to outshine others in the field of globalizing information, because of exuberant vitality of unique local cultural resources in many countries and its deep-rooted national impact on the nationals. On the contrary, the trend of diversification is inexorable based on localization.

### 2.2. The Integration of Information Ethics under the different Cultural Backgrounds

Information ethics reflected the actual conditions can play an effective regulatory

role at home, but it may not be able to be accepted by the other countries under different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, if people under different cultural backgrounds associate on the internet, and judge the right or wrong of behavior according to their individual information ethics, it could lead to contradict conflict in information exchanges, and even the exchanges can not be carried on. From this, in the internet, and in the global information exchanges, we must form a common view about information ethics for the behaviors in the information exchanges. Thus, it is necessary to integrate information ethics from different cultural backgrounds, and seek common ground while reserving differences, in order to provide an ethical normal system universally accepted by different people in their global information exchanges.

### **3. Essence of Information Ethics**

#### **3.1. General Essence of Information Ethics**

General essence of the information is different from other things, and it is the sum of inherence relations of basic organizational elements and a series of own necessity and regularity<sup>[3]</sup>. There are four points of view in the field of philosophy: (1) Information is the characteristics of mental entities. (2) Information is common adjunct of bodies. (3) Information is the third existence tied again with object and spirit. (4) Information is special combination of matter carrier and consciousness ingredient. Obviously, we should first discuss the definition and meaning of information. Shannon considers that information is the thing used to reduce the random uncertainty. The definition does not include the content and value of information, and does not answer basically what is information. Wiener believes that information is the name of content exchanged with the outside world in the process of adaptation and reaction in the outside world. The definition contains the content and value of information, but some limitation exists because of exchange fuzzy. Because when people interact with the outside world, there are exchanges of matter and energy at the same time. Therefore, information is the result of the interaction of things, the performance of the

result is exchanges of the content between things, the role of the exchanges is eliminating the state of uncertainty in the interaction of things. It is now clear that the essence and phenomena of things is not information, general essence of information is the state changes in the interaction of things.

#### **3.2. Special Essence of Information Ethics**

Special essence is the second highest level with conditional constraints, and it can be called the epistemological level. Wiener believes that information is the name of content exchanged with the outside world in the process of adaptation and reaction in the outside world. He ignored what is the purpose of adapting and exchanging with the outside world. From the way of human's understanding and expression, information can be found that it is being used to grasp the shape and status of things outside world in social life practice in order to adapt to achieve the state of knowledge of information source. That is to say, exchanging with the outside world means knowledge on nature and other individuals, and it is the interaction of knowing your enemy and knowing yourself. Information shows the effectiveness of knowledge by the way of exchange and it achieves interests of human survival contained in information in social life practice. The objective purpose obtaining and using information is not to own in the abstract, abstractly remove the random uncertainty, but to survive, grow and develop in real cruel, fierce living environment. Therefore, we can regard the special essence of information in the practice level as the ethical essence of information.

### **4. The future trends of Information Ethics**

With the development of information society, a variety of practical ethical problems during information activities are becoming increasingly numerous and visible. A lot of the information ethical practice will significantly promote the innovation and development of the theory of information ethics. Globally, information ethics will be presented multicultural development. Information ethics will show the following trends: the integration of computer ethics, network ethics and

information ethics net; the information ethics based on new information technology applications; the information ethics integrated multi-disciplinary theory and methods; the empirical research solved important information ethics issues; the establishment of

unique national information ethics system; the comparative study on information ethics in the oriental and occidental cultural environment; the global information ethics research in global information trend.

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