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Author: E. Spence

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Abstract: The paper provides a general meta-philosophical groundwork for the theoretical and applied normative evaluation of digital information in relation to the good life. The overall general aim of the paper is to address the question how computer ethics can be expanded to more centrally include the issue of the quality of life or the good life, for individuals and for society. In offering this groundwork the paper, due to constraints of space and time, will not provide a detailed examination and evaluation of specific normative issues, which arise in the production, dissemination and use of digital information. It will, however, provide a methodological approach of how different types of some major practical manifestations of digital information (henceforth information) can be evaluated using the meta-theoretical framework proposed in this paper. The paper comprises three inter-related parts. Part (1) provides a summary of an argument I presented at CEPE 2007 (San Diego) whose primary aim is to demonstrate a meta-philosophical model, the Dual Obligation Information Theory (DOIT) to be used in the analysis and evaluation of digital information in terms of a cluster of normative categories. Those categories are the epistemological, the ethical, the axiological and the eudemonic. The overall objective of Part (2) is to examine and evaluate the theoretical and practical relationship between information, knowledge and wisdom. Crucially, this is a new and the innovative focal direction that this paper will take, using the meta-philosophical analysis provided by DOIT. Wisdom understood as a form of meta-information or meta-knowledge provides a direct conceptual and practical link between the concepts of information and the good life and more generally a direct link between computer ethics and the good life. As such, the concept of wisdom, as a type of meta-knowledge, allows for a direct evaluation of the axiological and eudemonic aspects of information in relation to a conception of a good life. Following on from parts (1) and (2), part (3) will provide a brief theoretical outline by way of offering a methodological approach of how different types of some major practical manifestations of digital information (henceforth information) can be normatively evaluated in relation to a conception of a good life through the application of the concept of wisdom as developed in section (2).

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Author Address: espence@csu.edu.au

CRO identification number: 11672

**Information, Knowledge and Wisdom: Groundwork for the Evaluation of Digital
Information and Its Relation to the Good Life**

CEPE 2009

Corfu, Greece

Edward H. Spence

**Department of Philosophy, University of Twente, Netherlands
And
Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics (CAPPE), Charles Sturt University,
Australia**

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

T S Eliot's Choruses from *The Rock* (1934)

Abstract

The paper provides a general meta-philosophical groundwork for the theoretical and applied normative evaluation of digital information in relation to the good life. The overall general aim of the paper is to address the question how computer ethics can be expanded to more centrally include the issue of the quality of life or the *good life*, for individuals and for society. In offering this groundwork the paper, due to constraints of space and time, will not provide a detailed examination and evaluation of specific normative issues, which arise in the production, dissemination and use of digital information. It will, however, provide a methodological approach of how different *types* of some major practical manifestations of digital information (henceforth *information*) can be evaluated using the meta-theoretical framework proposed in this paper.

The paper comprises three inter-related parts. Part (1) provides a summary of an argument I presented at CEPE 2007 (San Diego) whose primary aim is to demonstrate a meta-philosophical model, the Dual Obligation Information Theory (DOIT) to be used in the analysis and evaluation of digital information in terms of a cluster of normative categories. Those categories are the *epistemological*, the *ethical*, the *axiological* and the *eudemonic*. The overall objective of Part (2) is to examine and evaluate the theoretical and practical relationship between *information*, *knowledge* and *wisdom*. Crucially, this is a new and the innovative focal direction that this paper will take, using the meta-philosophical analysis provided by DOIT. *Wisdom* understood as a form of *meta-information* or *meta-knowledge* provides a direct conceptual and practical link between the concepts of information and the good life and more generally a direct link between computer ethics and the good life. As such, the concept of wisdom, as a type of meta-knowledge, allows for a direct evaluation of the axiological and eudemonic aspects of information in relation to a conception of a good life. Following on from parts (1) and (2), part (3) will provide a brief theoretical outline by way of

offering a methodological approach of how different *types* of some major practical manifestations of digital information (henceforth *information*) can be normatively evaluated in relation to a conception of a good life through the application of the concept of wisdom as developed in section (2).

1. Part (1): A Meta-Philosophical Evaluation of Information: A Universal Model for Evaluating the Normative Quality of Digital Information¹

The objective of this part of the paper is to describe and demonstrate a meta-theoretical framework for the normative and practical evaluation of digital information.

The meta-theoretical framework (DOIT) consists of two main inter-related models that together demonstrate the universal normative character of information and its global normative applicability: (A) The Inherently Normative Account of Information model (INAI) and (B) the Model of the Unity of the Right, the Good and the Good Life (MURG). Together these two models are designed to demonstrate and explain the *dual-normative structure* of information by *disclosing* the underlying epistemological, ethical, axiological and eudemonic commitments to which it gives rise and by virtue of which all *informational agents* are universally bound. INAI does so in terms of disclosing the epistemological and ethical principles and values inherent in *information as a process of communication* (Spence 2009 in press; and 2007a); and MURG does so in terms of universal rights (freedom and wellbeing) (Spence 2006; Gewirth 1978; 1996; and Beyleveld 1991) to which all informational agents are entitled by virtue of the inherent normative structure of action generally and *information action* specifically. In addition, on the basis of universal rights MURG demonstrates that these rights, in turn, give rise to *prudential commitments* to virtues, values and moral sentiments (*the good*) and to happiness, self-fulfillment (Gewirth 1998) or the preferred term used in this approach, *eudemonia* as the primary conditions for a *good life* (Spence, 2006, chapters, 5 and 10; Spence, 2007a and 2007b). In sum, together INAI and MURG are designed to be applied to objectively and universally evaluate the normative quality of digital information in terms of its ethical (universal rights), epistemological (knowledge and truth) axiological (values) and eudemonic (virtues, self-fulfillment and happiness) aspects.

Evaluating information using the proposed meta-theoretical framework provided by DOIT as instantiated jointly by INAI and MURG is essential for addressing all the key normative features of information (epistemic, ethical, axiological, and eudemonic) as they relate to and impact on all aspects of the lives of individuals and those of societies generally. The evaluation of information in terms of only one or two of those features will leave out something important that is of interest and concern to its disseminators.

1.1 The Inherent Normative Structure of Information and Knowledge

Before embarking on the exploration of the conceptual and practical connection between information and knowledge on the one hand and wisdom on the other in Part (2), I will first provide an argument for the normative structure of information with regard to its epistemological, ethical, axiological and eudemonic dimensions². In describing the Dual Obligation Information Theory (DOIT) used for the evaluation of information that comprises the INAI and MURG meta-theoretical models as outlined above, the paper will employ an epistemological account of *semantic information* based on a minimal *nuclear* definition of information (Dretske 1999, 45). Following Luciano Floridi it will define *information* as “well

¹ This part of the paper was presented at the CEPE 2007 conference in San Diego and a detailed version of it included in the proceedings of that conference.

² It is important to emphasize that the notion of information to which I refer in this paper is a *semantic notion of information*.

formed meaningful data that is truthful”³ and following Dretske it will define information as “an objective commodity capable of yielding knowledge” and knowledge, in turn, will be defined as “information caused belief”⁴.

According to Dretske’s *nuclear* definition of *information*,

*A state of affairs contains information about X to just that extent to which a suitably placed observer could learn something about X by consulting it. This, I suggest, is the very same sense in which we speak of books, newspapers, and authorities as containing, or having, information about a particular topic, and I shall refer to it as the **nuclear** sense of the term “information”...Information is what is capable of yielding knowledge, and since knowledge requires truth, information requires it also (1999, 45).*

According to Dretske’s notion of *knowledge*,

“K knows that s is F=K’s belief that s is F is caused (or causally sustained) by the information that S is F...s [is to be understood to be something] K perceives, something at an informational source about which K receives information. If K has a belief about this object, the belief that it is F, then this belief qualifies as knowledge if and only if that belief is caused (or causally sustained) by the information that it is F (1999, 86)...the knowledge that s is F requires (because it is required as a cause of belief) the information that s is F (1999, 105).

What is necessary for both information and knowledge, therefore, is truth. For information without truth is not strictly speaking information but either *misinformation* (the unintentional dissemination of well-formed and meaningful false data) or *disinformation* (the intentional dissemination of false “information”). Of course, journalists, for example, both offline and online cannot always *know* with certainty whether the information they disseminate is true or not. However, in such cases, they should at least have a reasonable justified belief, responsive to at least some minimal objective verification criteria capable of sustaining the information-caused- belief that the information they disseminate is in all probability, and in this absence of any other credible conflicting evidence, true. One could make the case, for example, that the dissemination of “information” by journalists concerning the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction before the start of the war in Iraq was not based on a reasonable justified belief capable of yielding knowledge. Insofar as this was the case, the dissemination of such “information” was misinformation at best, disinformation at worst.

Using the minimal account of information described above, we can now develop an *inherent normative account of information* (INAI), which demonstrates and describes the generic epistemological and ethical commitments that necessarily arise in the dissemination of semantic information. A central claim of the paper is that all informational processes comprising the dissemination of information, specifically as a process of *communication*⁵,

³ Luciano Floridi. Is Semantic Information Meaningful Data? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LXX, No. 2, 2005.

⁴ Fred Dretske. *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*. Stanford, CSLI Publications, 1999, 44-45 and 86.

⁵ For a more detailed account of the epistemological and ethical commitments to which information as a process and product of communication gives rise, see Spence, E, (forthcoming 2009) *The Epistemology and Ethics of Internet Information*, in a Springer book publication of selected papers from the International Association of Information Systems (Italian Chapter) itAIS Conference, Paris, 13-14 December, 2008.

commit all rational agents to both epistemological and ethical conduct; specifically, insofar as information of necessity has to be true, it commits all agents to epistemological values such as accuracy, truth, reliability, verifiability, objectivity and justification, among others, and corresponding ethical values and virtues such as sincerity, honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice or fairness.

Briefly, the argument is as follows: Insofar as information is a type of knowledge (it must be capable of yielding knowledge, one must be able to learn from it) it must comply with the epistemological conditions of knowledge, specifically, that of truth. And insofar as the dissemination of information is based on the justified and rightful expectation among its disseminators and especially its users that such information should meet the minimal condition of truth, then the disseminators of information are committed to certain widely recognized and accepted epistemological criteria. Those epistemic criteria will in the main comprise objectivity as well as the independence, reliability, accuracy and trustworthiness of the *sources* that generate the information. The epistemology of information in turn commits its disseminators to certain ethical principles and values, such as honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, trustworthiness and reliability (also epistemological values), and fairness, including justice, which requires the equal distribution of the informational goods to all citizens. Thus in terms of its dissemination, information has an intrinsic normative structure that commits everyone involved in its creation, production, search, communication, consumption and multiple other uses to epistemological and ethical norms and these norms being intrinsic to the normative structure of information with regard to all its disseminating modes are rationally unavoidable and thus not merely optional.

However, the following objection could be raised: not all forms of information might be fully accounted and explained by the epistemological account of information proposed. Information as a form of personal expression – *expressive information*, for example, personal information one might post on the Internet through Blogs or create for one’s avatar in a Virtual World, or post on YouTube, Face Book or My Space, might be such types of *e-information* – “I am John and my avatar in *Second Life* is a female called Jane”. But again, this statement could be true or false (for example, as a matter of fact, “I don’t have an avatar” or “my avatar’s name is not Jane but Petunia”) and will therefore have to meet the minimal normative conditions of the nuclear account of information (both epistemological and ethical conditions).

1.2 Information and Universal Rights

The goal of the following argument is to show that apart from committing its disseminators to unavoidable epistemological and ethical standards by virtue of its own inherent normative structure, information commits its disseminators to respect for peoples’ rights. That is, information, must not be disseminated in ways that violate peoples’ fundamental rights to freedom and wellbeing (*generic rights*), individually or collectively, or undermine their capacity for self-fulfilment (Negative Rights). In addition, information must as far as possible be disseminated in ways that secure and promote peoples’ generic rights and capacity for self-fulfilment (Positive Rights) when those rights cannot be secured or promoted by the individuals themselves and can be so secured and promoted at no comparable cost to its disseminators⁶. But from where does this authority come and what are the fundamental rights to which I refer? Alan Gewirth’s Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC) offers a description and prescription for both the rational authority (based primarily on instrumental and deductive

⁶ A. Gewirth. *The Community of Rights*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, and E. Spence. *Ethics Within Reason: A Neo-Gewirthian Approach*. Lanham: Lexington Books (a division of Rowman and Littlefield), 2006.

rationality) and the content of the fundamental rights (freedom=FR and wellbeing=WB) that persons have necessarily and only by virtue (sufficient reason) of being purposive agents.

Due to constraints of space, I will not attempt to provide a justification for Alan Gewirth's argument for the Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC) on which his derivation of rights is based, as this is well beyond the scope and limits of this paper⁷. I will, however, offer a brief summary of the rationale of the argument for the PGC by way of a schematic outline of the three major steps of that argument.

The Rights of Agents: The Rationale for Alan Gewirth's Argument for the Principle of Generic Consistency⁸

Gewirth's main thesis is that every rational agent, in virtue of engaging in action, is logically committed to accept a supreme moral principle, the Principle of Generic Consistency. The basis of his thesis is found in his doctrine that action has a normative structure, and because of this structure every rational agent, just in virtue of being an agent, is committed to certain necessary prudential and moral constraints.

Gewirth undertakes to prove his claim that every agent, *qua* agent, is committed to certain prudential and moral constraints in virtue of the normative structure of action in three main stages. First, he undertakes to show that by virtue of engaging in voluntary and purposive action, every agent makes certain implicitly evaluative judgments about the goodness of his purposes, and hence about the necessary goodness of his freedom and wellbeing, which are the necessary conditions for the fulfillment of his purposes. Secondly, he undertakes to show that by virtue of the necessary goodness which an agent attaches to his freedom and wellbeing, the agent implicitly claims that he has rights to these. At this stage of the argument, these rights being merely self-regarding are only prudential rights.

Thirdly, Gewirth undertakes to show that every agent must claim these rights in virtue of the sufficient reason that he is a *prospective purposive agent* (PPA) who has purposes he wants to fulfill. Furthermore, every agent must accept that, since he has rights to his freedom and wellbeing for the sufficient reason that he is a PPA, he is logically committed, on pain of self-contradiction, to also accept the rational generalization that all PPAs have rights to freedom and wellbeing⁹. At this third stage of the argument these rights being not only self-regarding but also other-regarding, are now moral rights. The conclusion of Gewirth's argument for the PGC is in fact a generalized statement for the PGC, namely, that all PPAs have universal rights to their freedom and wellbeing.

Applying the PGC to information, we can now make the further argument that information generally and information specifically, must not be disseminated in ways that violate informational agents' rights to F and WB, individually or collectively, (Negative Rights). Moreover, information must as far as possible be disseminated in ways that secure

⁷ For a detailed exposition and analysis of Gewirth's argument for the PGC see E. Spence. *Ethics Within Reason: A Neo-Gewirthian Approach*. Lanham: Lexington Books (a division of Rowman and Littlefield), 2006.

⁸ A full and detailed defense of the argument for the PGC against all the major objections raised against it by various philosophers can be found in Spence 2006 (Chapters 1 to 3), Deryck Beyleveld. *The Dialectical Necessity of Morality: An Analysis and Defense of Alan Gewirth's Argument to the Principle of Generic Consistency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991; and A. Gewirth. *Reason and Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

⁹ See A. Gewirth (1978), pages 48-128.

and promote the informational agents' rights to F and WB (Positive Rights). Conceived as the Fourth Estate, this places a significant and important responsibility on the disseminators of information and in particular the media, especially journalists, both offline and online.

Information generally can be epistemologically and ethically evaluated *internally* by reference to its inherent normative structure. That structure commits its disseminators, to ethical and epistemological norms. This is especially true of professional communicators (Journalists and PR Consultants, for example, on-line and off-line).

Insofar as the ethical values to which the inherent normative structure of information gives rise require that the informational agents' rights to F and WB should be respected, secured and promoted, those values are also mandated by the PGC and thus information can also be *externally* evaluated by reference to the PGC. *Expressive Information* can also be evaluated either internally or externally or both, in this way. For example, *identity theft* on the Internet is morally wrong both because it is untruthful (internal evaluation) and because it can cause harm (external evaluation).

1.3 Information and a Good Life

Although the PGC is a meta-ethical model of morality that describes what is *right*, there is still a matter of describing the other two components of this model, namely, the good and the good life.

Let us first begin with the *good* (specifically, I will only be concerned here with the notion of a *good person*): insofar as the PGC requires all agents, including informational agents, to act ethically or at least acknowledge that they ought to act ethically in respecting the rights to freedom and wellbeing of other agents including their own, and insofar as virtues of character such as the cardinal virtues of justice, courage, moderation and prudence, as well as the Humean moral sentiments, such as sympathy (positive) and remorse (negative), can be conceived as *enabling dispositions* that allow agents generally and informational agents specifically to act ethically in compliance with the PGC, then the inculcation of those virtues and cultivation of those sentiments are also rationally required, at least prudentially (Spence 2006).

Secondly, a *good life* is one that is at least minimally capable of enabling a person to attain self-fulfillment or eudemonia. For insofar as self-fulfilment, happiness or eudemonia is the ultimate object in life as Aristotle claimed, it is difficult to conceive a life that was not at least capable of leading to the attainment of self-fulfilment, as good – what would it be good for if it were incapable of realizing one's ultimate objective in life? A good life in turn is capable of attaining self-fulfillment or eudemonia if it at least accords with the minimal requirements of morality in accordance with the PGC. Those requirements can more successfully be complied with through the inculcation of the virtues and the moral sentiments, in accordance with an indirect application of the PGC. That is, a good life capable of resulting or at least contributing to self-fulfillment is more likely to be realizable if one is good – that is, if one has a good character comprising both the moral virtues and moral sentiments. And by being good one is also more likely to comply with the requirements of the PGC by respecting the rights of other people including his/her own.

The following is a summarised outline of my construction of an argument for self-fulfilment, based on Gewirth's theory of self-fulfilment (Gewirth, 1998):

- Gewirth distinguishes between self-fulfillment as *aspiration – fulfillment* and self-fulfillment as *capacity – fulfillment*. The former is the satisfaction of one's deepest desires, the latter, the process and goal of making the best of oneself (Gewirth 1998).

- According to Gewirth, “Moralitygives counsel and precepts for the self’s having a good life through personal development of one’s capacities whereby one makes the best of oneself” (1998: 107).
- A good life is one that is at least minimally capable of enabling a person to attain self-fulfillment (both aspiration-fulfillment and especially, capacity-fulfillment) and eudemonia.
- A good life in turn is capable of attaining self-fulfillment or eudemonia if it at least accords with the minimal requirements of morality in accordance with the PGC.
- Those requirements can more successfully be motivationally complied with through the inculcation of the virtues and the moral sentiments, in accordance with an indirect application of the PGC.

In conclusion of this section, the application of the Unified Model of Rights, the Good and Good Life (MURG) to information provides a convergence of Rights (Freedom and Wellbeing) plus the Good, specifically the Good Person (Virtues of character and moral sentiments) plus a Good Life (Self-fulfilment, or Happiness, which collectively I refer to as Eudemonia). Thus, the notion of a good life used in the paper is a eudemonic conception of a good life. A life, that is, that is at least capable of leading to the attainment of eudemonia.

Accordingly, the application of MURG to information requires that information must not be disseminated in ways that violate persons’ rights to F and WB, individually or collectively, or undermine their capacity for Self-fulfilment or Eudemonia (Negative Rights). Information must as far as possible be disseminated to secure and promote persons’ rights to F and WB and their capacity for Self-fulfilment or Eudemonia (Positive Rights).

Conceived as the Fourth Estate, this places a significant and important responsibility on the disseminators of information and in particular the media, especially journalists, both offline and online. For example, certain media practices such as *media release journalism* (Simmons. P and Spence, E.H., 2006), which misleadingly and deceptively disseminate media release information produced by Public Relations professionals and presented as objective and independent information through print or broadcast media sources (newspapers, television and radio) as “news” without any disclosure that these so called “news stories” are sourced from media releases produced by PR professionals on behalf of their clients, often verbatim and sometimes with the journalists’ bylines attached to them, are ethically objectionable. They are so, because they are designed to deceive and do deceive the public by stealth, sometimes in collusion with journalists and government representatives.

Moreover, these practices constitute corruption for they are conducive to the corruption of the informational processes that are essential for informing citizens on matters of public interest in an objective, truthful and fair manner (Spence, 2005). Such practices, which once appeared only in the old corporate media (newspapers, television and radio), have increasingly become more prevalent on the Internet, for example, in blogs.

Media deception is demonstrably unethical on the basis of the PGC because it can actually or potentially at least violate the rights to freedom and wellbeing that people have generally as agents and specifically, as citizens that require accurate, reliable and trustworthy information on matters of public interest. More generally, media deception through collusion by PR professionals, journalists and government representatives, violate all citizens’ rights to freedom and wellbeing collectively by undermining the democratic process itself that requires the truthful, fair and objective production and dissemination of information on matters of public interest. It is partly for that reason that media control is sought and exercised by totalitarian regimes, such as China or Iran, for example, that do not want their citizens to be well informed.

Part (2): Information, Knowledge and Wisdom¹⁰

2.1 Introduction

This is the focal and main part of the paper whose aim is the examination and evaluation of the relationship between the concepts of *information* (well formed meaningful data that is true or truthful – Floridi 2005), *knowledge* (roughly, information that we believe to be true and have good reasons based on justified and demonstrable evidence to believe it to be true) and *wisdom* (a type of *meta-knowledge* that is used in the application of information and knowledge to make right judgments in reaching appropriate decisions that are good for us personally (prudentially and eudemonically good) and good for others (ethically good). The overall objective of this line of enquiry is to determine to what degree, if any, information contributes to a good life.

In this part of the paper, MURG will be applied to the examination for determining more closely the relationship between information and the good life via the concept of *wisdom*: if wisdom is a primary and essential condition for an individual in (a) determining what a good life is or ought to be (*meta-knowledge- that and meta-knowledge- why*) and (b) a primary and essential condition in providing us with guidance and direction, as individuals and societies generally, of how to live such good lives and (c) moreover, *practically* enabling us to live such good lives for the attainment of eudemonia (*meta-knowledge-how*), to what extent and in what ways then, if any, does information contribute to wisdom and by extension to the good life?

An initial hypothesis of this paper is that one way of evaluating the *value of information* (its *axiological goodness*) is by determining *the degree* to which it contributes or is capable of contributing to the attainment of a good life *epistemologically* (its capacity to yield knowledge) *prudentially* (its capacity to contribute to one's ability in making sound judgments concerning particular practical matters – I shall refer to this type of prudence as *phronesis*, a type of Aristotelian *practical wisdom*) *ethically* (its ability to contribute to the moral good of others both negatively by causing no unjustified harm to others, and positively by causing positive good for others) and *eudemonically* (its capacity to contribute to the attainment of a good life). Having demonstrated in (Part I) the inherent conceptual connection between information and the epistemological and ethical commitments to which it gives rise as a product and process of communication and by virtue of which it universally bounds all informational agents, the primary aim of this focal part of the paper is to articulate and hopefully demonstrate the essential conceptual connection between information and a good life provided by wisdom.

Analyzing information through the application of the concept of meta-knowledge (knowledge-that, and knowledge-how knowledge-why) of what is good or evil for us and others - how it contributes or is capable of contributing to a good life for us and others for the attainment of eudemonia - is what the paper will initially postulate as *Wisdom*. To avoid confusion, I will use the term *wisdom* to define a general and holistic notion of wisdom, a notion similar to the Greek notion of *Sophia*. The concept of wisdom understood this way, can then be used to evaluate the qualitative goodness of information: its axiological value for both human beings and other species. For wisdom, at least in principle, should at the very least be capable of enabling us to live and act wisely for the attainment of eudemonia not only with

¹⁰ Surprisingly, very little has been written on this relationship in the philosophical literature, specifically with regard to information ethics. The main sources I will refer to in this part of the paper, but not exclusively, are Maxwell, N (2007); Tiberius, V. 2008; Vitek, B. and Jackson, W. (2008), Varelius, J. (2004); Kvanvig, L.J. (2003); Finnis (1983 and 1980); and generally the writings of Plato, Aristotle and the Hellenistic Philosophers (Epicureans, Sceptics and Stoics).

regard to ourselves and other human-beings but also with regard to all *informational entities* within the *infosphere*, roughly understood in this paper in Floridian terms¹¹.

In sum, insofar as a good life should at least be capable of leading to self-fulfilment or eudemonia (otherwise what is it good for?), especially self-fulfilment as capacity-fulfilment (making the best of oneself as a human-being – Gewirth 1998)¹² then *wisdom* (understood as a type of *meta-knowledge*, the acquisition of which enables one to create, communicate and use information so as to render oneself and others, whenever possible, capable of achieving self-fulfilment and eudemonia) is a *necessary condition for a good life*. An important qualification to the claim made in this paper that wisdom is a necessary condition for a good life is that such a life is conceived eudemonically. For the notion of wisdom developed in this paper and applied in evaluating the *axiological goodness* of information is itself a eudemonic conception of wisdom. However, such a eudemonic notion of wisdom is not unlike our commonsense and pre-theoretical understanding of wisdom, namely, an overarching reflective virtue the possession of which allows one to lead a good life and moreover enables one to guide others in leading fulfilling and good lives. This eudemonic notion of wisdom is akin to the notions of wisdom defended by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans and the Stoics, and later Kant and Gewirth¹³ who although postulated and defended somewhat different notions of the good life, can nevertheless collectively be described in general at least, as essentially eudemonic accounts of the good life. It can be said that a common denominator for all eudemonic accounts of wisdom is their subordination of the concepts of pleasure and desire to that of virtue. The essential link between pleasure and desire on the one hand and virtue on the other might be weaker in the case of the Epicureans and stronger in the case of the Stoics but whatever the strength of that relationship, the link between pleasure, desire and virtue is an essential characteristic of a eudemonic conception of a good life and also a eudemonic conception of wisdom. Importantly, the relationship between wisdom and a good life proposed in this paper under a eudemonic conception of a good life is *reflexive*. For wisdom guides one to the choice of a eudemonic conception of a good life and the pursuit of such a life, and a eudemonic conception of a good life, in turn, guides and motivates one to the acquisition of wisdom as an *enabling disposition*, in the form of an overarching reflective virtue, necessary for the attainment of a eudemonic life. This should not surprise us. For although wisdom acts initially instrumentally, as a necessary enabling virtuous disposition, for the attainment of a eudemonic life, once attained a eudemonic life becomes inseparable from the state of wisdom that enabled its attainment. This reflexivity between eudemonia and wisdom allows us then to say that a wise person is generally a eudemonic person and a eudemonic person is generally a wise person. However, I don't wish to exclude the logical possibility that one could be wise but unhappy although pragmatically, given our common understanding of wisdom, that would be an odd and in practice I think, an unusual phenomenon.

2.2 What is Wisdom?

¹¹ For Floridi's Information Ethics Theory see Floridi, Luciano, 2008. Informational structural realism. *Synthese* 161(2):219-53; Floridi, 2007. Understanding information ethics. *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 07(1):3-12; Floridi, 2005. Is semantic information meaningful data? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXX(2); Floridi, 2004. On the morality of artificial agents. *Minds and Machine* 14:349-79; Floridi, 2002. What is the philosophy of information? *Metaphilosophy* 33:123-45; Floridi, 2002. On the intrinsic value of information objects and the infosphere. *Ethics and Information Technology* 4:287-304.

¹² In Spence 2006, Chapter 10, I demonstrate how Gewirth's notion of self-fulfillment as capacity-fulfillment, is conceptually similar to the Stoic notion of eudemonia.

¹³ In Spence, E., (2006) *Ethics Within Reason: A Neo-Gewirthian Approach*, Chapter 10, I argue for a Neo-Stoic interpretation of Gewirth's notion of self-fulfillment in terms of the Greek notion of *eudemonia*.

Having examined in some detail what information and knowledge are and the relationship that exists between them, via an examination of the essential property that characterises both, namely, the property of truth, it is now time to turn our attention to the notion of wisdom itself before exploring further the conceptual relationship, if any, that holds between wisdom and information.

According to Nicholas Maxwell,

“The central task of inquiry is to devote *reason* to the enhancement of *wisdom* – wisdom being understood here as the desire, the active endeavour, and the capacity to discover and achieve what is desirable and of value in life, both for oneself and for others. Wisdom includes knowledge and understanding but goes beyond them in also including: the desire and active striving for what is of value, the ability to see what is of value, actually and potentially, in the circumstances of life, the ability to experience value, the capacity to help solve those problems of living that arise in connection with attempts to realize what is of value, the capacity to use and develop knowledge, technology and understanding as needed for the realization of value. Wisdom, like knowledge, can be conceived of, not only in personal terms, but also in institutional or social terms. We can thus interpret the philosophy of wisdom as asserting: the basic task of rational inquiry is to help us develop wiser ways of living, wiser institutions, customs and social relations, a wiser world” (2007, 79).

What is of interest to in Maxwell’s quoted passage for our present purposes is the relationship he draws between the concepts of *reason*, *knowledge*, *understanding*, and the *desire*, *capacity*, and *active endeavour* for the *achievement* (or as in my case *attainment*) of what is *of value in life, for oneself and others*. With the exception of *understanding*, for which I will have more to say in what follows, the other concepts to which Maxwell draws attention seems to anticipate and reflect both explicitly and implicitly, the concepts included in my own normative analysis of information and knowledge in terms of their epistemological, ethical, axiological and eudemonic dimensions, on the basis of the meta-theoretical framework of DOIT that comprises the two meta-theoretical evaluative models of INAI and MURG.

Knowledge (for) Wisdom and Knowledge (as) Wisdom

An important distinction when enquiring into the conceptual connection between knowledge (K) and wisdom (W) is the distinction between *knowledge for wisdom* and *knowledge as wisdom*. Although related the two are quite different and their difference highlights an important and crucial distinction between (K) and (W). No doubt some general knowledge about the world acquired on the basis of reliable and veridical information that causes it and sustains it (Dretske 1999) is necessary for wisdom. For with the exception of Socratic ignorance, roughly understood here as having knowledge of one’s ignorance (being aware of one’s ignorance and humbly acknowledging one’s lack of knowledge), ignorance of one’s ignorance is not conducive to wisdom. For unlike Socratic ignorance that prompts and motivates one to acquire the knowledge of which one is ignorant (knowledge understood here as some minimal general knowledge about some basic aspects of the world, e.g., history, geography, science, mathematics, literature, art, etc..) they who are ignorant of their ignorance and falsely claim to know that for which they lack knowledge, are not in a position to be motivated to acquire the knowledge they lack; and moreover, the knowledge which is at least in a minimal and general sense partly necessary for the acquisition of wisdom and by extension, the attainment of a good life and eudemonia. Thus at a minimum, and bracketing the possibility that “holy fools” though totally ignorant of facts about the world are nevertheless in some sense “wise”, some minimal and general information and knowledge

about the world is instrumentally necessary for the acquisition of wisdom. At least at a minimum, an attitude of Socratic ignorance¹⁴ might be necessary for the acquisition of wisdom. For the Socratic elenchus can be applied as a method for acquiring the knowledge that one lacks, through first recognizing and acknowledging one's ignorance, and then being motivated to gradually acquire the knowledge one is ignorant of through critical enquiry and further investigation. According to John Kekes, "the elenchus enables its practitioners to progress from a special kind of ignorance---foolishness---to a special kind of knowledge---moral wisdom" (1995, 39).

By contrast, unrecognized and unacknowledged ignorance of our ignorance, individually and collectively, is no bliss for it precludes us for ever developing the *capacity* for the acquisition of wisdom. We can therefore say that the acquisition of such general minimal knowledge about the world or an attitude of Socratic ignorance when we lack it is instrumental to the acquisition of wisdom because it provides at least part of the necessary means, that is, the capacity for the acquisition of wisdom. Moreover, the acquisition of such minimal and general knowledge of the world or in its absence, an adoption of an attitude of Socratic ignorance, is *prudential* to the acquisition of wisdom. Insofar as we consider the acquisition of wisdom desirable, valuable and essential for the attainment of a good life, we *should* (normatively) inculcate in ourselves the virtue of learning: the desire and active pursuit of the acquisition of at least a minimal and general knowledge about the world. Hence, some minimal and general knowledge about the world is necessary *for* wisdom.

What about *knowledge as wisdom*? What kind of knowledge could that be? At first approximation we could say along with Socrates, that wisdom is *knowledge of good and evil*. That wisdom is a type of *moral knowledge*. It is this type of knowledge that prompted Socrates in the *Apology* to exhort his fellow-Athenians to seek "wisdom, truth, and the best state of the soul" as a way of living a good life (Benson, 2000, 23). According to Benson, for Socrates "it is not merely he who lives knowledgeably [see my *knowledge for wisdom* above] who is happy [eudemon] but who lives "knowledgeably with respect to some particular thing" [*Charmides*, 173e6-10]. Benson goes on to say that for Socrates the particular thing that one needs to have knowledge of in order to be happy or eudemon is "knowledge of the good and the bad" (Benson 2000, 153). In the discussion that follows, I shall, following Benson, refer to that type of knowledge as *moral knowledge*. Interestingly, John Kekes (1995) refers to the acquisition of wisdom that follows from such moral knowledge, as *moral wisdom*.

Moral Wisdom

In the opening sentence of his book *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives* (1995, ix) Kekes tells us that "moral wisdom is a virtue – the virtue of reflection". A more detailed characterisation of moral wisdom by Kekes, is that

"Moral wisdom is the capacity [a psychological capacity] to judge rightly what should be done in particular situations to make life better...Because this human psychological capacity, once developed, is likely to be lasting and important, it can be identified as a character trait...We can say, therefore, that people have moral wisdom if they regularly and predictably act wisely in the appropriate situations and if so acting is an enduring pattern in their lives...Whether an action is morally wise depends also on what the agents bring to the judgements they make, such as their particular conception of what would make life better. An action bring morally wise depends therefore not just on the nature of the action and the situation, but also on the agent, and this

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the Socratic elenchos and Socratic wisdom see Hugh H. Benson (2000) *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues*, Oxford University Press.

invalidates generalisations of moral wisdom which ignore the character and beliefs of the agents.” (1995, 5-7).

According to Kekes, moral wisdom is a second order virtue whose primary concern,

“[Is] the *development of our character* [emphasis added] in a desirable direction by strengthening or weakening some of our dispositions. First-order virtues guide our actions in view of what we think of a good life; second-order virtues guide our actions with a view of developing the kind of character that reflects a reasonable conception of a good life(1995, 9).

For Kekes moral wisdom is *reflexive*.

“The subject who has the virtue is the same as the object toward whom the appropriate actions are directed” (1995, 9). He goes on to say that being a second-order and a reflexive virtue moral wisdom “involves the direction of first-order virtues” (1995, 10).

Kekes goes on to explain that

“The primary motivation behind the second-order and reflexive activities prompted by moral wisdom is the *desire to make our lives better* [emphasis added]. We can do so, however, only if we have some conception of what a good life would be. The aim that governs our exercise of moral wisdom must therefore be the realization of our conception of a good life. The reason for directing our first-order virtues is to improve our lives by transforming our characters so as to improve the chances of achieving what we regard as a good life. This valued conception of a good life, however, may not be reasonable. Since moral wisdom is concerned *not merely with means but also with ends* [emphasis added], it has among its tasks the critical scrutiny of the conception of a good life which motivates us to act according to moral wisdom” (1995, 10-11).

Importantly for Kekes,

“Moral wisdom aims further than the transformation of our character; it aims as well at the development of a conception of a life which *not only seems to us to be good but which is good* [emphasis added]. And the character that we desire to have is not just an instrumental good whose possession would be conducive to the good achievement of this genuinely good life; it is also an intrinsic good, because having the sort of character that our conception of a genuinely good life requires is an essential part of the conception. For a conception of a good life guides us to live in a certain way; living involves acting; and we normally act in characteristic ways, that is, according to our character” (1995, 11).

Kekes concludes that,

Moral wisdom is a human psychological capacity to judge soundly what we should do in matters seriously affecting the goodness of our life. The judgement is made in the light of our conception of a good life, but it concerns the evaluation of both the actions that exemplify the conception and the conception itself. Moral wisdom is thus sound

judgement involving the application of knowledge of good and evil to the evaluation of both the means to and the ends constitutive of good lives” (1995, 14).

Wisdom, Judgement and Control

Other important components of moral wisdom are *judgement* and *control*. According to Kekes,

“The eudemonistic conception of a good life is not to be understood as the endorsement of a particular form of life. It is rather a *regulative ideal that specifies some general conditions to which all good lives must conform*” [emphasis added] (1995, 24).

This claim by Kekes is insightful and very much in keeping with the eudemonic conception of a good life proposed and argued for on the basis of MURG above. For MURG is intended only as a meta-theoretical *regulative ideal that specifies some general conditions to which all good lives must conform* regardless of the particular contexts and contingencies of those lives. Central to those general conditions to which all good lives are bound are the universal rights to freedom and wellbeing to which all agents are entitled; as well, the virtues of character and associated moral sentiments and values that are prudentially desirable and required as enabling general motivational dispositions for the attainment of a good life in line with the normative directions of MURG.

Kekes correctly claims that according to a eudemonistic conception of a good life,

“Primary values [values that concern uniform and universal human goods and needs] may be thought of as establishing the moral limits and secondary values [values that vary across individuals in accordance with differences in cultural traditions, conceptions of a good life, and individual contingencies and circumstances] as establishing the moral possibilities that define good lives (1995, 25)...the former define *a grid* [emphasis added] within which human beings must endeavour to make a good life for ourselves, while the latter provide the ways in which individuals fill in the grid” (1995, 23)

According to Kekes,

“The role of moral wisdom is to acquire general knowledge of good lives and to go beyond it by bringing the general to bear on our particular character and circumstances. The component of oral wisdom that makes this possible is judgement....The need for judgement, then, would indicate a kind of ignorance; judgement would be an expedient needed to take up the slack created by insufficient knowledge....Judgement is a process, therefore, by which a decision is reached about what to do or not to do, given the good the agent wants to achieve and the agent’s concrete situation” (1995, 25-26)...The way to moral wisdom is to endeavour to fall less short [of good judgement] by making our judgements better, and that involves increasing our control. The process requires enlarging the area of our lives that we can order so as to conform to our conception of a good life. It is a process of shaping ourselves to *become the person our conception requires* [emphasis added] (1995, 74).

I emphasised the phrase in Kekes’ passage above in order to draw attention to its close similarity to Alan Gewirth’s notion of *capacity-fulfilment*---becoming the best human-being possible---discussed earlier.

Kekes concludes,

“That growth in moral wisdom depends on increasing control. The reason for this is that moral wisdom consists in living in accordance with our conception of a good life, and that, in turn, consists in using our knowledge, evaluation, and judgement to transform the complex moral situations we encounter into simple ones. The capacities we have, the situations we face, and the judgements we make are, however, subject to the influences of permanent adversities. The appropriate exercise of our capacities, facing the situation in the right way, and making reasonable judgements requires coping with contingency, conflict, and evil, and that is possible, if at all, only by increasing our control” (1995, 94).

Wisdom and Self-knowledge

According to Kekes,

“The object of self-knowledge is the knower’s character. As a first approximation, it may be said that character is composed of enduring patterns of motivation and action (1995, 115)...self-knowledge...is a mode of reflection, involving judgement, whose aim is to make our character less fortuitous and more deliberate. This is the same process as that of increasing control, for what moves our character in the desired direction is that we control it to approximate more closely than before our conception of a good life. This desirable transformation proceeds through the evaluation of our desires, capacities, opportunities, values, and actions with a view of forming out of them such enduring patterns as we regard conducive to a good life (1995, 127-28)...The process of acquiring self-knowledge is thus a mode of reflection directed toward *the transformation of our character*” [emphasis added] (1995, 136)....This transformation involves increasing our control over what desires, capacities, opportunities, values, and actions form the enduring patterns of our character. It is this way that judgement and control are connected. Control is increased by strengthening the motivational force of our conception of a good life and by weakening the internal obstacles in our character to living according to that conception. Self-knowledge is essential to this process because it is through it that we learn what the internal obstacles are and what we can do to cope with them...that account provides our moral identity and motivates us to transform our character so as to make it less fortuitous and more deliberate. *What directs this transformation is our conception of a good life*” [emphasis added] (1995, 159).

I emphasised the last sentence in Kekes’ passage above in order to re-direct attention the important reflexivity between moral wisdom and a conception of a good life to which I first drew attention earlier on. That is, a conception of a good life directs us to acquire wisdom (or moral wisdom in Kekes case) so as to enable us in attaining it, and wisdom, in turn, informs the choice of our conception of a good life. This realisation is important, because it reveals a close fit between the notion of wisdom and the eudemonic conception of a good life. That is to say, if one is morally wise one would chose a eudemonic conception of a good life as the that which has the closest affinity with wisdom; at least the notion of wisdom advocated in this paper. In turn, a eudemonic conception of a good life would direct one to acquire wisdom so as to attain and sustain such a conception of a good life. This might at first seem circular but it isn’t. For it is the desirability for attaining a eudemonic life that motivates the seeker of

such a life to acquire the necessary prudential and practical means for achieving that goal and the best candidate for providing those necessary means, is wisdom. Thus if one desires and values a eudemonic life, a life capable of leading to eudemonia, one would also desire and value wisdom as the necessary means for attaining it; and if one is wise they would desire and value a eudemonic life.

Wisdom and Understanding

According to Jonathan Kvanvig,

“Understanding requires the grasping of explanatory and coherence-making relationships in a large and comprehensive body of information. One can know many unrelated pieces of information, but understanding is achieved only when informational items are pieced together by the subject in question... the object of understanding is an ‘informational chunk’ rather than a number of single propositions... what is distinctive about understanding has to do with the way in which an individual combines pieces of information into a unified body... whereas knowledge can be piecemeal, understanding requires more completeness... such organisation is pragmatically useful because it allows us to reason from one bit of information to other related information that is useful as a basis for action, where unorganised thinking provides no such basis for inference...(Kvanvig 2003, 192, 197, 202-203).

Citing Sosa, Kvanvig relates the notion of understanding to a type of *reflective knowledge*, “Sosa describes reflective knowledge in terms of manifesting the understanding of a fact’s place in a wider whole” (2003, 206). Comparing understanding to knowledge he asks if “understanding [is] thereby more valuable than knowledge” and concludes that although he has “not argued that this is so, there is a good case to be made for it” (2003, 206).

If understanding is a feature of wisdom, and I will argue that it is, and specifically as a body of information that concerns how one ought to live a good life for the attainment of eudemonia, then there is a case to be made that understanding is more valuable than the mere piecemeal accumulation of disparate and unrelated facts on many different topics. Where the latter might not always be necessary for wisdom (consider someone who is very good at trivia competitions but quite bad at knowing how to live a good life) the former is.

Interestingly, Hugh Benson interprets Socratic knowledge as a type of understanding. According to Benson,

“Socratic knowledge (wisdom or expertise) is a strong and complete grasp of distinct F-nesses... This grasp of the respective F-ness produces correct judgements involving F-ness that yield true cognitive states consistent with the knower’s other cognitive states involving F-ness as well as the ability to answer the Socratic ‘What is F-ness?’ question in a way consistent with those other cognitive states. Moreover, being the result of such a grasp..is both a necessary and sufficient condition for the resulting cognitive states to be knowledge states. The correct judgements are knowledge-yielding judgements if and only if they are produced by such a grasp. Such a grasp is of course likely to be difficult to obtain, but obtaining it would seem to be worth the effort. Having obtained such a grasp of F-ness, one’s judgements concerning F-ness would be completely reliable. One would be, in a sense, certain of one’s

judgements concerning F-ness....While the Socratic model of knowledge I have uncovered may be implausible as an account of the contemporary model of knowledge understood as something like some kind of justified true belief, it may not be so implausible as an account of the contemporary (or otherwise) *model of understanding* [emphasis added] (2000, 211).

What emerges from the notion of *understanding* outlined above is its conceptual affinity with the notion of *self-knowledge* discussed earlier. For as with understanding, which requires a consistency in one's body of epistemic beliefs about the world, self-knowledge also requires a consistency in one's epistemic beliefs and cognitive states about oneself; for as Kekes correctly observes "the object of self-knowledge is the knower's character" (Kekes 1995, 115). For it is through self-knowledge that we can hope to discover, by critical self-reflection, inconsistencies between our beliefs, desires and other cognitive states concerning ourselves, the world and others. As such, self-knowledge can also be thought of as a type of understanding – *self-understanding*. The Socratic adage "know thyself" inscribed on the Apollo's temple at Delphi can therefore be thought of as an exhortation to self-understanding, an essential pre-requisite to the acquisition of wisdom.

Following-on from the above discussion concerning the nature of wisdom, we can say in summary that wisdom comprises at least the following essential characteristics:

1. It is a *capacity* to discover and achieve what is desirable and of value in life; a capacity to use and develop knowledge and understanding needed for the realization of value. Thus wisdom includes *knowledge* and *understanding* (reference to Maxwell, 2007). It is a *psychological capacity* to judge rightly what should be done to make life better. This psychological capacity can be identified as *a character trait* (reference to Kekes, 1995).
2. It is the *virtue of reflection*. It is a *second-order virtue* whose primary aim is the development of our character. Whereas first-order virtues guide our actions in view of our conception of a good life, second-order virtues such as wisdom, guide our actions with a view of developing the kind of character that reflects our conception of a good life (reference to Kekes, 1995).
3. It is a second-order *reflexive virtue*. The subject who has the virtue is the same as the object toward whom the appropriate actions are directed. The *primary motivation* behind the second-order and reflexive activities directed by wisdom *is the desire to make our lives better* (reference to Kekes, 1995). Notice the similarity between Kekes and Maxwell in identifying the motivation for wisdom as the desire for making our lives better (see (1)). This establishes the essential conceptual and motivational connection between wisdom and the desire for a good life. As I mentioned before, notice also how within the conception of a eudemonic model of a good life the desire for a good life is motivated and guided by virtue: the overarching second-order virtue of wisdom.
4. It is concerned not merely with means but also with ends (reference to Kekes, 1995). This characterisation of wisdom is closely aligned and is in keeping with Gewirth's Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC) as applied within the Model for the Unity of the Right and the Good (MURG) that judges the goodness of actions both with regard to their means as well as their ends.
5. It aims at the *transformation of our character*. The character we desire to have in relation to our conception of a good life. It is an intrinsic good and not merely an instrumental good for the means of attaining our conception of a good life, because the character we desire to have is an essential part of that conception (reference to Kekes, 1995).

6. It is *sound judgement* involving the *application of knowledge of good and evil* to the *evaluation* of both means and ends constitutive of good lives (reference to Kekes, 1995). Judgement is a process by which a decision is reached about what to do or not to do, given the good the agent wants to achieve and the agent's concrete situation (reference to Kekes, 1995).
7. It involves a process of increasing our *control* by enlarging the area of our lives that we can order so as to conform to our conception of a good life. It is a process that requires our becoming the person our conception requires (reference to Kekes, 1995). Notice how this process is in keeping with the notion of wisdom as a second-order reflective value whose primary aim is the development of character (see (2)).
8. It is a type of *self-knowledge* whose object is the knower's character. It is a mode of reflection involving judgement *whose aim is to make our character less fortuitous and more deliberate*. The process of acquiring self-knowledge is thus directed at the transformation of our character. In this way, judgement and control are conceptually connected. Self-knowledge is essential to this process because it is through it that we learn what the internal obstacles are and what we can do to cope with them or overcome them. In this way we acquire our *moral identity* that motivates us to the transformation of our character in relation to our conception of a good life (reference to Kekes, 1995).
9. It is a type of *understanding* that requires an individual to combine pieces of information into a unified body of knowledge. Unlike the accumulation of piecemeal bits of information and knowledge, understanding requires the grasping of explanatory and coherence-making relationships in a large and comprehensive body of information (reference to Kvanvig, 2003). As I mentioned earlier, understanding bears a close conceptual affinity with self-knowledge so that we can think of self-knowledge as a form of *self-understanding*. Ultimately, wisdom can be thought in a sense, as a form of self-understanding in relation to a conception of a good life that motivates and enables both its pursuit and its attainment.
10. Finally, wisdom itself unlike information and knowledge is *not transferable*. Being necessarily embedded in one's character wisdom can only be acquired. Of course we can learn about wisdom and how to go about acquiring it but its acquisition must be achieved by us individually. Thus although *knowledge about wisdom* is transferable, wisdom itself is not. To use a stoic term, the acquisition of wisdom is a *katorthoma* or achievement not unlike, for example, training for and successfully running and completing a marathon. You can learn of course what you must do in training for a marathon but ultimately it is only you who can run the marathon, no one else can do it for you. Similarly, the acquisition of wisdom is of necessity a uniquely individual achievement.

Part (3): The Application of Wisdom for the Normative Evaluation of Digital Information in Relation to the Concept of a Good Life

Insofar as the ultimate purpose of a good life is the attainment of self-fulfillment leading to eudemonia or happiness (see part 1) then wisdom, which both informs the conception of a good life and directs its active pursuit for the attainment of eudemonia, is an essential condition for both the conception and the attainment of a good life. As the essential condition for both the conception and guided active pursuit and successful achievement of the good life, wisdom, as a type of meta-information that consists of at least the ten essential characteristics discussed above, is thus established as the essential conceptual connection between information and the good life. This, in turn, will allow us to determine some of the generic

implications of information for the conception of a good life, in particular, a eudemonic conception of a good life. Recall, however, that as I mentioned earlier and following Kekes, this eudemonic conception of a good life is only intended as a “regulative ideal that specifies some general conditions to which all good lives must conform” (Kekes 1995, 24) As such, the eudemonic account of a good life argued for in this paper is broadly speaking pluralistic as it is in principle compatible with other different conceptions of a good life that meet the same necessary general conditions to which any notion of a good life must conform.

Having discussed generically the epistemological and ethical implications of information as a process of communication for individuals and society generally in part (1), I will in this part of the paper outline only a few of the main *axiological* and *eudemonic* implications that the production, dissemination and communication of digital information might have for the good lives of individuals and society generally, through the application of the notion of wisdom as expounded in section (2).

More Information but not More Wisdom

Wisdom as a type of second-order knowledge involves reflection, sound judgment, and understanding in the use and development of information in the form of first-order knowledge (both knowledge-that and knowledge-how) to be applied with the aim of guiding and directing our thoughts and actions in the discovery and achievement of what is of value for us in life, in relation to our overall conception of a good life.

New Media, including the internet and computers generally have made it possible for us to access and use inordinate large quantities of information. However, what seems to follow from our characterization of wisdom above is that the uncritical access and use of so much information without the appropriate reflection, judgment and understanding might not be conducive to wisdom and consequently might not be conducive to a better life. Thus, the uncritical accumulation and use of more information is not necessarily conducive to more wisdom and hence not more conducive to a good life. On the contrary, sometimes we might be better off with less information rather than more, especially if the former is directed by wisdom (less information) and the latter is not (more information).

Even in the case of critically accessing and using *contextualized information*, such information might also not be conducive to wisdom and to a good life for us, if that information is merely used instrumentally without a clear understanding of the ends which that information is intended to achieve or a clear understanding of the value of those ends. Recall that wisdom not only directs the means but also the ends of our actions. Thus the accessing and use of a lot of contextualized information on our iPhone without a clear understanding of the value of the ends for which that information is to be used, might be at best neutral with regard to the goodness of our lives and worse detrimental to the goodness of our lives if it utilizes too much of our resources to the acquisition of information that ultimately is of little or no axiological or eudemonic value for us.

Face Book and You Tube: Only Fools Rush In

The uncritical and sometimes thoughtless dissemination of a lot of trivial and personal information of oneself and others on Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Face Book and You Tube, might be not only not conducive to wisdom and a good life overall, but detrimental to them if they encourage unreflective, foolish and reckless behavior with no apparent compensating axiological or eudemonic value for oneself and one’s “friends”. Given the pitfalls of creating and accessing unreflectively information about oneself and others, without any compensating realization of value in relation to one’s conception of a good life, a wise person would thus be best served in exercising caution in using SNS. Such overall reflective

caution is also in keeping with another of wisdom's characteristics, namely, control; that is to say, the ability to narrow down the areas in one's life over which one has little or no control so as to enlarge the areas of our lives that we can order in conformity with our conception of a good life (Kekes 1995). This is a process of self-knowledge, a process of reflection involving judgments "whose aim is to make our character less fortuitous and more deliberate" (Kekes 1995, 127-28). When we allow ourselves to unreflectively disseminate information of ourselves and others on the internet we make ourselves more "fortuitous" and less "deliberate" and in so doing become hostages to fortune since we no longer have any control over that information, which now forever floats beyond our control in cyberspace. Surely such unreflective conduct is not only not wise but foolish and ultimately self-defeating if, upon careful reflection, it undermines our considered conception of a good life.

In conclusion, although *descriptively* we now live in the age of information, *prescriptively* we should, if we are wise, aim at promoting the Age of Wisdom, both for our own sake and that of others, and especially for the sake of future generations.

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