

Call for Chapters/INC Theory on Demand

Economies of Virtue: The Circulation of ‘Ethics’ in AI and Digital Culture

Edited by Thao Phan, Jake Goldenfein, Monique Mann, and Declan Kuch

Who funds research into the ethics of AI technologies? How does AI ethics relate to issues of power? And how does an industry-sponsored ethics agenda impact the production of knowledge about AI systems? This edited volume will explore these questions in the context of such issues associated with emerging forms of socially responsible and ethical AI and related automated decision-making systems.

In response campaigners, industry insiders and civil society actors raising concerns about ‘bad AI’ there has been a wave of social science led research around AI ethics. This field has been instrumental in driving new agendas and initiatives in algorithmic fairness and justice and the development of AI ethics frameworks across industry, government, and academia.

As this field of inquiry and practice grows and becomes more mainstream, it too is at risk of its own ethical crisis. Accusations of wide scale “[ethics washing](#)”, in which initiatives towards ethical AI have delivered either underwhelming results or have been panned as performative PR, have led to urgent questions about whether ethical AI is possible within current systems of social organisation. The social and political pressures for companies to behave ethically has been met with an industry-led agenda encompassing conferences, new institutions and more.

The influence of industry (and industry funding) in the field has raised such questions as: if AI ethics is concerned with understanding the causes and effects of AI failures, identifying approaches to ‘fix’ these problems, and designing mechanisms to make AI ‘ethical’, who should fund it and to what effect? The influx of industry support is occurring against a backdrop of eroding public funding to the university sector, pushing researchers to turn to the private sector for research income. At what cost do these new arrangements come to society?

In this context we are seeking contributions to the edited collection that seek to address the following types of questions:

- **Ethics Owners:** how is ethics managed at a practical level within organisations? Who devises metrics and accountability mechanisms for ethical conduct and outcomes?
- **Funding Ethics:** what funding structures are associated with industry-led agendas for “ethical AI” and how might these create conflicts of interest, compromise academic independence, or research integrity? How might this relate to the politicisation of the university as an industry sector and as an institution?
- **AI and the New Extractivism:** How can we expand on narrow conceptualisations of AI ethics as merely detrimental algorithmic outputs to address broader issues including the ethics of extraction? What can be learned from fields such as political economy, labour studies, political ecology, critical race studies, and activism in order to centre power, politics, and history over abstract terms like ‘ethics’?
- **Ethics Onwards:** what futures are imagined by ‘Ethical AI’ and how might these be re-imagined? What alternatives might we look to aside from ‘ethics’ as a model for social responsibility and social justice? How can we resist these developments?

This edited collection follows on from the two-day Academy of Social Sciences in Australia funded workshop in July 2021. For more information visit:

<https://socialsciences.org.au/workshop/economies-of-virtue-the-circulation-of-ethics-in-ai-and-digital-culture/>

We now welcome submissions from actors both in and outside of academia, including activists and civil society groups. Co-authorship, group-authorship, or network authorship is also encouraged.

Deadline and Review Process

Potential contributors should submit a 500 – 700 word abstract with chapter title and short author bio(s) to editorial assistant Wynston Lee wynston.lee@deakin.edu.au by **Friday 27th August, 2021**.

Abstract submissions will be selected by the editorial team and successful submissions will be invited to submit full chapters of 4,000 – 6,000 words in length by **19th November, 2021**. We aim for publication June 2022.

This collection will not be produced through a traditional model of blind peer-review but will instead adopt a collective editorship model. Chapter

authors will be openly allocated other chapter manuscripts to review by the editors. This will discourage disciplinary gatekeeping, accommodate challenging topics and themes, and to encourage reviewers to be accountable for their feedback while working together to improve the quality of the text and argument.

For questions or enquiries regarding the CFP or review process, contact Monique Mann at monique.mann@deakin.edu.au and/or Declan Kuch d.kuch@westernsydney.edu.au