

Individual Rights and Online Security: A Fine Ethical Balance

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This paper focuses on the ethical conundrum engendered by the implementation of online security protocols. Such protocols often rest on the collection, storage, and access of individuals' personal information (Miyazaki and Fernandez) (Gross and Acquisti 2005). For this reason their endorsement causes serious ethical and legal problems, as such protocols guarantee security at the expense of essential individuals' rights like, for example, privacy and anonymity (Moor 2007).

The paper argues that the solution for this conundrum rests on the definition of an ethical balance between online security and individuals' rights, in order to implement the former successfully while respecting and furthering the latter. It is maintained that such a balance is defined on the basis of the ethical framework provided by Information Ethics (Floridi Forthcoming). In particular, it is argued that the ecological approach of Information Ethics, i.e. considering the well-being of the informational environment as the ultimate ethical goal, provides a suitable perspective to this purpose.

On the basis of this analysis, the ethical principle for a *balanced online security* is provided. It prescribes that security protocols ought to be implemented to support the well-being of the informational environment by guaranteeing its safety and ought never to be endorsed to the point of limiting the flourishing of individuals and of those non-malicious activities, which foster the blooming of both the informational environment and of its inhabitants. The paper concludes by considering three examples of the implementation of this principle.

References

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