

The papers in the present volume are revised and edited versions of selected talks given at the *Mobile Communication and the Ethics of Social Networking* conference, held on 25–27 September 2008, in Budapest. This was the seventh international conference organized under the auspices of the COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY project, a joint interdisciplinary social science project of T-Mobile and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The project was initiated by T-Mobile Hungary (formerly Westel Mobile), and launched in January 2001. A regularly updated overview of the project, with a substantial proportion of our publications made available online, is provided by the website <http://www.socialscience.t-mobile.hu>.

Over the course of the T-Mobile/HAS collaboration, altogether thirteen volumes – four Hungarian, one German, and eight English – have been compiled. Let me here just list the English ones, all of them published by Passagen Verlag, Vienna, and edited by the editor of the present volume. The volumes *Mobile Communication: Essays on Cognition and Community* (2003), *Mobile Learning: Essays on Philosophy, Psychology and Education* (2003), *Mobile Democracy: Essays on Society, Self and Politics* (2003), *A Sense of Place: The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication* (2005), *Mobile Understanding: The Epistemology of Ubiquitous Communication* (2006) and *Integration and Ubiquity: Towards a Philosophy of Telecommunications Convergence* (2008), similarly to the present volume *Engagement and Exposure: Mobile Communication and the Ethics of Social Networking*, emerged from our international conferences; the volume *Mobile Studies: Paradigms and Perspectives* (2007), attempting a retrospective and forward-looking summary of the results of social science research on mobile communication, is a collection of essays written by members of the Hungarian research team working within the framework of the COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY project.

For the word “engagement” in the title of the present volume, I am indebted to Charles Ess, who suggested it after I had come up with the word “exposure”. Ess is the author of our first chapter. Here he strives to elevate the discussion on ethics and the mobile phone to a level more

fundamentally philosophical than has been the case to date. Moving away from the popular perspective, defined, mainly, by the usual complaints about breaches of etiquette, and dissatisfied with what he calls the first philosophical level, namely concerns with privacy, surveillance, and the like, he places the issue into the broader context of philosophical assumptions regarding self, community, and reality. The next two chapters, by James E. Katz and by Richard Harper, further broaden and enrich the range of topics that ought to be included in ethical discussions pertaining to the mobile phone and to digital social networking. Katz has second thoughts on blogging – citizen journalism appears to engender a blended model of reporting in which commentary is hard to separate from news (similar concerns will surface in the chapters by Schneider and by Csepeli). Harper questions the very belief, widely thought to be unassailable, that communicating as such is good for us (similar worries will be voiced in the chapter by Röttgers).

By contrast, Leopoldina Fortunati finds merit even in that looked-down-upon form of communication, gossip, and indeed welcomes the fact that digitally mediated gossip has become an essential element of the press, television, internet, and mobile telephony. Gossip is instrumental in the elaboration of social norms, and thereby reinforces community cohesion; it might be beneficial that, within a smaller or larger circle, “people do not want to keep their information secret”. With arguments pointing much in the same direction, Rich Ling outlines a general theory of group cohesion, illustrated by the example of digitally mediated photo sharing. Analyzing a prize-winning “pocket film”, shot with a camera-phone, Gabriela David examines what the sharing of intimate videos might ultimately imply. Why do we decide to expose ourselves? And, as she puts it, “if the body is naked, does that necessarily mean that the heart is exposed bare?” Kurt Röttgers definitely believes this to be the case. “Pornographic curiosity”, he writes, “does not only look at all the hidden details of another person’s body, but also at all the hidden details of his soul.” In contrast to modernity’s philosophical dictum *I think therefore I am*, the postmodern attitude, suggests Röttgers, is represented, in the spirit of mobile telephony, by the feeling *I can be called by everyone, therefore I am*. The issue recurs in later chapters in our volume, with Choi not at all ridiculing the formula *I am accessed, therefore I exist*, and Kondor relativizing the notion of “privileged access” in the wake of Sellars. It recurs, also, in the chapter following upon the one by Röttgers, the chapter by Anna Reading – a detailed analysis of voluntary surveillance, with a discussion of why Foucault’s views on surveillance might have, in the age of online social networking, ceased to be entirely adequate. Foucault’s notion of *counter-*

*knowledge* is taken up in the chapter by Ulrich Johannes Schneider. And two questions he specifically discusses are, first, whether the content produced by “news-contributors who are not journalists” can be regarded as counter-knowledge, and, secondly, whether images are as powerful as texts when it comes to conveying knowledge, or indeed counter-knowledge, say in the context of blogs. An overwhelmingly sceptical view of the blogosphere is offered in the chapter by György Csepeli. The future of anonymous free speech on the net, he suggests, holds out more risk than promise; he doubts if the evolution of the blog as a new information medium will increase the democratic potential of political discourse.

The social implications of the abundance and variety of *screens* is the common theme of the chapters by Jaz Hee-jeong Choi and by István Maradi. Discussing the process of transition from youth to adulthood in Korea, a transition essentially bound up with online networking in one of the most connected nations of the world, Choi describes Seoul as a city of screens large and small, continuously re-creating the conceptual and physical space in which young Koreans come to terms with themselves and their future. Maradi analyzes the change in social networking patterns as the mobile screen, the PC screen, and most recently the interactive TV screen, progressively become gateways to overlapping, or indeed identical, communities. He lays special stress on the significance of social networking now having penetrated beyond corporate firewalls. Searching for the right expertise, or contacting the right person, thereby becomes simpler; mobile working more efficient.

The transformation of the world of education, the rise of e-learning and m-learning in connection with online social networking, the right to learn in the best learning environments now available in principle, is the theme of the three papers by András Benedek, by Norbert Pachler and John Cook, and by Anna Gyórfi and Ian Smythe. Benedek focuses on the growing role of non-formal learning under the conditions of today’s and tomorrow’s new communication technologies; presents the m-learning situation as the very model of a new pedagogical paradigm; and points to the paramount importance of network-embedded knowledge. Pachler and Cook, too, stress that the fundamental challenge posed by new, convergent, portable digital technologies with a high degree of connectivity is the bridging of the gap between informal and formal learning. Gyórfi and Smythe present a fascinating experiment showing that for children with specific learning difficulties, such as, in particular, dyslexia, online social networking can be an environment in which those difficulties might in quite some measure be compensated for.

With the chapters by Giuseppina Pellegrino and by Zsuzsanna Kondor

we return to foundational questions in philosophical ethics. Pellegrino revisits the question of the human body as a philosophical topic. She examines what the body, a symbol for the social environment to which it belongs, a continuously changing metaphor in the service of defining the rules of good conduct, amounts to in today's mediated world, a world essentially informed by electronic communication. Kondor, in the concluding chapter of the present volume in the series COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY, applies the philosophical notions of embodiment and embeddedness to transcend the traditional dualistic view of the cognizing and judging human mind on the one hand and its physical environment on the other. She arrives at a position according to which moral rules evolving today can be seen, once more, as reasonable principles emerging from our new, nomadic, and mediated way of life.

In this series, we do not follow the convention of indicating, for internet references, the date when authors last accessed the site they quote. Rather, each internet reference has been checked by the editor; all internet references contained in the present volume were valid at the time the material went to press, that is, August 2009.