

The Assassin Pie: an ethical approach of simple data visualization elements

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Abstract.

In the information era we live in, Ethics of Information (IE) should care for (in the classical sense of *caritas* or *ἀγάπη*) of every aspect of information. Nevertheless, with the rise of statistical technologies related to Big Data like Machine Learning and Deep Learning, most of the efforts of IE have been concentrated on making policies for Artificial Intelligence (AI). As we know, AI is useful only if learning relies on a large amount of data, but reality shows that in most organizations the decision-making process is driven by simpler statistics and easy to understand charts, like bars, lines or pies. In particular charts are considered to be the most influential communication elements in the data–information–knowledge process model, because graphic representations of data provide knowledge in the most efficient manner possible. The intrinsic power of charts obliges organizations to map areas of ethical concern before using or abusing them. In this paper, firstly I investigate the ethical value of a pie chart from an informational perspective, arguing that even a simple information agent reveals inner meanings and can affect our semantic capital. Considering that the technology of a pie chart is used to simplify the reality and make decisions in everyday life, I offer to explore its ethical impact. In order to do so, I suggest a thought experiment to illustrate its dangerousness or its uselessness and, going one step further, its possible evil or futility in a decision-making process. Finally, I shall argue that IE should be wisely used at any level of our information society.

Keywords: Information Ethics, Semantic Capital, Data visualization.