

Dr. Golfo Maggini
Associate Professor
University of Ioannina
Sector of Philosophy

Bodily Presence, Absence, and their Ethical Challenges: Toward a Phenomenological Ethics of the Virtual

Abstract

In our paper we will deal with Hubert Dreyfus' phenomenological ethics regarding information technologies and the use of the internet. From the 1990s on, Dreyfus elaborates a multi-faceted model of ethical expertise which can find a paradigmatic field of application in the ways information highway transforms our sense of personal identity, as well as our view of ethical integrity and commitment. In his 2001 *On the Internet*, Dreyfus investigates further several of the ideas already present in his groundbreaking 1997 *Disclosing New Worlds*. A phenomenological ethics of the virtual aims at going beyond both the objectivist ideal of moral universalism, which departs from the dominant Cartesianism both in epistemology and ethics, and the postmodernist, Nietzsche-inspired moral relativism. By referring back to existentialism, especially to Kierkegaard, and to phenomenology, especially to the early Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, Dreyfus sketches a model of ethical expertise which can be particularly useful for internet users and researchers, as it combines a phenomenological anthropology of the virtual with a theory of cultural innovation and change. In our view, Dreyfus' model may help overcome the strict either determinist or relativist accounts of the ethical challenges posed by information technologies. By endorsing a strongly anti-intellectualist view of the multiple uses of information technologies, Dreyfus poses the necessity of identity and ethical integrity not just as abstract principles which require rational justification, but as context-bound everyday practices which are in conformity with the "style" of a culture and several disclosive activities within it.

In his 2001 *On the Internet*, Dreyfus **prolongs** several of the ideas already present in his pathbreaking *Disclosing New Worlds*.